

describe it in terms of zones of activity – ‘This is the relaxing zone, and this the dining zone’, for example. This almost exactly matches one of Edwards’ original architect’s remarks: ‘One tends to group around the television set in the relaxing zone rather than in the eating zone’. In reality, the residents were more likely to sit in easy chairs while eating their meals and watching television. Life for them was simply not functionally compartmentalized, and therefore not spatially zoned or planned. When asked where they got the information from which they used to predict how the furniture would be arranged, nearly all the architects said they based it on their own experience or preference. Since architects have a highly developed sense of space in its formal sense, this does perhaps lead them to make what other people might regard as odd predictions.

We have seen the same principles at work in a great deal of city centre town planning in the second half of the twentieth century. We have business quarters, residential areas, cultural zones and many more such artificial inventions in our cities. A planner in my own city described to me with obvious pride how they encouraged applications for building types that neatly fitted their own zoning of the city and discouraged those that did not. He even went on to describe a preferred colour scheme for delineating commercial, educational and cultural buildings. Such policies have successively led to the downfall of life in the western city centre that Jane Jacobs was to warn of many years ago. Thankfully, today many authorities are moving away from such regimentation and are trying to reintroduce residential accommodation into their city centres and to mix together activities in such a way that each part of the city lives for 24 hours a day, and not just for a few hours of the day or night.

It is certainly true that in many great cities areas have grown up that are known for particular activities – for example, the West End of London with its theatres and restaurants, or the jewellery quarter of Birmingham, or the central business and banking quarter of Singapore. However, in most cases these zones were not pure, and were never subjected to the planning equivalent of ethnic cleansing we have seen in conscious planning policy. Such policies led planners to restrict areas not only to a limited range of building types and activities, but also to colours, materials and scales. In fact, what makes most great cities fascinating is their very quiriness in this regard. It is the contrast in purpose and scale that gives them their life, for these things speak of people and activities, not abstract building forms. It is, for example, the extraordinary juxtaposition of Covent Garden vegetable and flower market with its great opera house immortalized in George Bernard Shaw’s *Pygmalion*, later to become *My Fair Lady*. It is the way the massive and formal church of Sacre-Coeur sits right next to the tiny and chaotic streets of artists’