



**Figure 11.11** Battery Park City seen from across the Hudson in 2004.

### ***The Impact of Vandalism, Crime and Terrorism***

Vandalism and crime in general have a major impact on city life especially for the vulnerable in society. The vandalism of playgrounds, street furniture and other elements of the public realm has long been a problem and has resulted in the impoverishment of the environment in many societies (Ward, 1973). Graffiti has many defenders but hardly raises the self-image of the citizens of a city except for those who create it. Fear of crime has resulted in children having fewer opportunities for independent behaviour. Consider the impact of social and behavioural problems at Pruitt-Igoe or in many large British or French housing estates on everyday life.

The failings, real and imagined, of developments such as Pruitt-Igoe led Oscar Newman to formulate the concept of ‘defensible space’ (Newman, 1974). He argued that in housing precincts where there are clear demarcations of territories allocated to specific groups of people, eyes on the street and positive symbolic aesthetics that enhanced residents’ self-image people take responsibility over the areas in which they live. The opportunities for criminal behaviour are thereby reduced. Often, however, in the design of prestigious building such as the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, other issues are perceived to be more important and defensible space patterns are neglected. The focus is on the building as a sculpture set in its own territory.

Reducing motivations to commit criminal behaviour is not an architectural or urban design problem but physical design responses – barbed or razor wire on walls, roller shutters blanking out shopwindows at night – reduce the attractiveness of the urban environment. We have learnt to live with television surveillance of many parts of the public realm but playgrounds, bus shelters and street furniture continue to be destroyed. Graffiti besmirches many walls. These acts are all annoyances and a threat to public safety. The threat of terrorism is, however, frightening.

There has been a growing concern, particularly in the United States with designing to reduce the impact of terrorism. The images of the destruction of the World Trade Center towers are so indelibly imprinted on people’s minds, that