

Using any two examples, show how social categories manifest themselves in space e...



Everyone in society is born into a social category, and this social category will affect the rest of your life. There are many social categories within society, the most recognised being class, gender and race. Beyond these groups one can find age, disability, sexuality, religion and culture. All social categories are clear to see within society, some more so than others. For this essay, one has chosen two contrasting social categories, class and sexuality, to explain how they manifest themselves in space (within the landscape).

From the moment a person is born they are ascribed to a social class.

Social class mainly depends on wealth and income however there are influencing factors such as assets, accent, your parent's class, education and occupation. The basic method of categorising people into a class is by using the 3 main classes, these are the service class (which includes company directors/executives), intermediate/middle class, and the working class (factory workers, non skilled manual). As time has moved on, so has the way in which classes place themselves within space. One way of looking at how they do so is to look at the structure of cities.

If we look back in history at the pre industrial city, one can see a model that has emerged linking space and class. The model above is Sjoberg's idealized model of the social and geographical structure of the pre industrial city (Knox, Pinch 2000 p25). According to Sjoberg the elite with higher status and class were located within the centre of the city, these had control of religious, political, administrative and social functions of the city. Traditional values determined power and status and this was the main key within this particular model. As one moves further out of the city the social class and status decreases.

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Sjoberg's model can be summarised by the following when looking at class; the city has three classes, residential status declines with distance from the core, elite occupies the centre, and residential areas are differentiated by occupation. When industrialisation of the city occurred this model changed. The modern city has inherited few of the social or morphological characteristics of the pre industrial city, but overall the city has been turned inside out. The service and middle classes have exchanged their central location for the peripheral location of the poor.

This was evident in London in 1900 through the work of Booth, 1903 who provided a series of ' social maps which showed zones that separated classes within space.) Power and status in the city are no longer determined by traditional values but by wealth. This is a key feature when looking at class within today's society as class is mainly structured upon wealth and occupation. The cause of this realignment and exchange of location is primarily economic. Due to this growth in industry the wealthy moved out of the centre of the city to the urban fringes away for the industrialized cities.

Also since the size and the quality of the buildings were linked with price and with builders profit, housing built for the lowest paid, in the working class group was of the lowest quality, crammed in at high densities in order to cover the cost of the ground rent. These homes were built adjacent to the factories giving more reason for the upper/middle class to move away as they wanted to add physical distance to the social distance between themselves and the dreary, misery of the growing working class adjacent to the factories.

Figure 2 Distribution of council flats and maisonettes in Newcastle upon Tyne

Working class environments were made more distinct within space by the introductory of council estates. Three and four storey walk up flats were built in the 1930s for slum clearance families, which developed a poor reputation (figure 2 shows large scale building schemes undertaken from 1950-70's which were predominantly working class within the inner city). However in the 1980's the sale of public housing under the right to buy legislation has had a dramatic effect upon the social geographies of the British cities.

People who have bought their council homes have now modified their homes with new windows, doors and stone cladding of the outer walls, freeing themselves from past images of working class homes. However these are still seen as the less desirable estates and are within the inner city. Figure 3 A modified Burgess model Above is a modified version of Burgess's model of urban structure by Kearsley: 'he tried to incorporate contemporary aspects of urbanisation including inner city decline, gentrification and decentralization' (Knox & Pinch p 218) One can see how classes manifest themselves in space.

The upper middle class have separated themselves from the working class. The middle classes have now developed commuter villages where they live in larger homes, situated with more rural surroundings and commute to the city where they work. 'Honey pot' sites have been created where the more affluent people live away from the city. As explained before upper and middle class people wanted to move out of the city away from the working class, where the environment is cleaner and children of upper/middle classes can go to better schools where there are less working class people.

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Whereas the working class live nearer to the inner city with cramped housing estates, near development schemes, where the area is more urban.

Sexuality is one of the most controversial social categories in history and today. For many centuries people in society were pressured to conform to the standards set, these being that everyone is to be heterosexual. Most of these standards came from traditional family values, politics, cultural values and the most reinforcing power, the mass media.

Homosexuals hid themselves away and did not reveal their true sexuality.

However in today's society people's sexuality is celebrated, homosexuals show their sexuality to the public, sexuality is made visible within society.

The city is seen as the space where sexuality is most visible: 'Historically the city has been regarded as a space of social and sexual liberation because the urban is perceived to offer anonymity and an escape from the claustrophobic kinship and community relations of small towns and villages'² (Valentine & Skelton 2003).

An example of this would be the East End of London where it has provided a space for homosexuals where gambling, illegal sports, gay clubs, bars and stereotypical gay relationships are present. Such cities as San Francisco, New Orleans and Sydney, gay gentrifiers have established their own residential communities, and gay consumption enclaves such as Soho have been created through pink economies. Geographers and urban sociologists have developed maps of gay urban environments, and again have found they are situated within bustling cities, that are not only for gays but for heterosexuals as well.

The two different sexualities mix together within the city, they quote: ‘

Indeed, gay spaces in major cities such as San Francisco, Sydney, Amsterdam and Manchester have become clearly defined districts that are successful not only at attracting a gay clientele, but which have also become popular as venues for heterosexual clubbers and tourists’³ (Whittle et al, 1994) Marches and parades such as the ‘gay pride’ run through the U. K as gays celebrate and show their sexuality.

When looking at the housing of gays, they can vary. However one important gay space is that of the Marigny district of New Orleans where property developers exploited the demand for property, causing lower income gays to move into a middle class area by exploiting the rent gap. This city like Manchester and Amsterdam went through similar process and now depend on gays for gay tourism to help the economy and now promote gay cities.

Wright also quotes that: the hidden and covert character of gay activity in selected areas has been replaced by distinctive residential districts composed of substantial proportions of gay people in which gay lifestyles are explicitly displayed’⁴ (Knox and Pinch 2000 p317) However despite this, it has been found that gays only cluster where there is high tolerance due to the high rates of homophobia and violent attacks on gays throughout the world. In some secret gay bars even there are bells to warn people that the police are coming, therefore do not make any contact with other men.

Gays have to find areas of minimal risk to show their sexuality. Ponte shows this in a study: ‘the requirements of successful tearooms, public toilets and areas of parkland that facilitated cruising and sexual liaison [are,] sites had to

be in areas that minimized the risk of recognition, they had to be situated near major transport routes,... sufficiently exposed to facilitate recognition of potential customer and the toilet needs a vantage point to keep watch for police's (Knox Finch 2000 p317)

This quotation shows that although there are tolerant cities and in today's space people sexuality is overt, there is still discrimination that affects gays space within society. Gays tend to cluster together, and still keep their sexuality discreet to stay in a comfort zone and keep away from abuse. An example of how gays cluster together is to look at the famous district of Castro, the origins of this district can be traced back to the second world war, where homosexual service men and women were sent here rather than go back to their home town, thus creating a gay society.

Weightman also found that within such cities, gays were playing an important role in the procedure of gentrification, as they moved into the inner city creating a gay community and lifestyle displacing the poor residents. Few studies have been concentrated on lesbians, but the ones that have found that lesbians lead a much more quiet covert life than gays. The reason being for this is that they are more vulnerable from physical homophobic attacks from men, and also that society is heterosexual and still dominated by men.

Winchester and White's study in Paris found that lesbian's space tended to take the form of squats, housing cooperatives and housing associations. Due to them having more fear of discrimination, lesbians tended to opt for relatively inexpensive housing, whereas gays tended to live covertly within

the city as they have a need for territorial expression and a desire to dominate. However in contrast with this, Valentines argues that not all gays cluster together, they do not always live in the city as they want to hide away from discrimination.

Valentine also argues that all space is affected by sexuality and it is both homosexual and heterosexual: '... such a focus on gay spaces tends to conceptualise them as different when, in reality all spaces in cities are constructed in a sexualised manner'6 (Knox & Pinch 200 p 319). Thus meaning that all spaces are affected and constructed in a sexualised manner whether it is heterosexual or homosexual, and through this it is the city that sexuality is made manifest.

Class and sexuality have very different ways in manifesting themselves within space but both are very evident and clear to see. Both have two contrasts within them, for example within class one can find the upper class living on the urban fringe/rural areas, living in a commuter village, within large homes which is of the highest quality, then one finds the working class who live within the city near the industry so they are close to work and live in cramped small and sometimes poor conditions.

Then when looking at sexuality one can see that gays manifest themselves within space by the creation of gay cities and pink economies, and then there are the gay clusters that hide away because of fear of abuse and discrimination. When looking at this a reoccurring factor comes into play, this being the city. Therefore, both sexuality and class, using a variety of ways, are able to manifest themselves in space by using the space of the city.