

Old compton street



Old Compton Street is a contemporary UK street. In many ways it is a unique street in its own way. In some others, however, it is not that different to City Road or indeed many other streets in the UK with similar architecture, comparable street features, a diverse range of businesses and a diverse community. In this essay I will be describing ways in which order is made and repaired in Old Compton Street in London. Situated in the heart of Soho, London's Theatreland, Old Compton Street has continuously been made and repaired by migrants, merchants and business traders.

Originally a wealthy street of aristocrats and the upper classes that progressively left the area, the street became a site where Italian immigrants and protestant French refugees began to settle in the late 17th century (1). With the successive arrival of artists, merchants and business traders, the street soon produced new business opportunities and a new way of life that flourished creating new bonds, relationships, and a new community between people from various different backgrounds.

Today, like City Road, most social activity in Old Compton Street revolves around the production, consumption and disposal of food ('The Street' 2009, scene 1). Many original nineteenth century's shops have disappeared and been restored to cater for the needs of a new community and a new way of life. Most outlets in Old Compton Street have had several owners that have constantly redefined their businesses throughout decades to meet consumer and social demands. Former old cafes and diners have been transformed into modern, organic food restaurants with a wide choice of healthy foods.

Takeaways now offer freshly cooked food and recycled, disposable containers that are kinder to the environment. Pubs have also needed to

restructure their space allowing new outdoor areas for smokers and serving drinks in disposable plastic containers, as opposed to glasses . Other businesses may offer less clear signs of change. Remaining unchanged and keeping a connection with the past, can sometimes make some businesses more popular highlighting their traditional style.

' Taste Buds Cafe' in City Road (' Making Social Lives Street', 2009, scene 3), Jose Ramos Suarez's business, Old Compton Street hosts long running Italian cafes and French patisseries, like Cafe Amalfi and Patisserie Valerie that, perhaps due associations with their Italian and French history, remain significant landmarks on the street. Popular both with local residents and tourists, these cafes have experienced little change in the way the business is run, the manner in which waiters wear traditional waiting attire and even the language they use, most of them being native personnel from these countries .

In many ways, Old Compton Street has a unique sense of identity. As the centre of London's gay community and part of the West End's with its theatres, bars and restaurants, most of its business activities are designed to attract and connect people predominantly during the evening and night time. As a busy street with an array of bars, nightclubs, sex shops and adult entertainment outlets, most businesses run a different operation during the day than during the night.

A quieter landscape of shops, cafes and restaurants that foster connection between tourists, youngsters and locals during the daytime, becomes a livelier almost exclusively adult-driven scene of happy hour bars, pre theatre menu restaurants and neon lights during the night, converting some of these

businesses into live entertainment venues that reinvent themselves every night to maximise profit . Unsurprisingly, renovations do not only take place in commercial outlets.

Property owners also take advantage of this affluent location. Many buildings have been restored and transformed in the last 20 years, accommodating a wealthier part of society attracted to the exclusive, luxury lofts redesigned above the street? s businesses and shops. These trendy new accommodation competing harshly with long term residents who suffer inequality and disadvantage from a prosperous new community who quietly expects them to leave the area and sell their property for much lower prices.

Social lives and the way in which order is made and repaired are constantly changing. Commercial values have often prevailed throughout history in the way buildings, roads, businesses and a great deal of social interaction have been made and repaired. These days, the globalisation is making our countries, cities and streets, more and more alike. Old Compton Street may appear unique, but in many ways the way in which the street has evolved and reshaped itself is no different to many other streets in the UK, City Road