encourage city living through calls for improvements to the quality of urban design and support for public space (Urban Task Force, 1999; DETR, 2000a, 2000b). However, many of these proposals do not tackle the deep-rooted trends that undermine the socio-economic quality or environmental sustainability of urban life. Much of the emphasis is on external appearance with less consideration for the content and use of buildings and spaces. The pace and scope of development has often been driven by property developers, with no interests within the city, so that the urban scale and appearance is defined more by the needs of capital (Smith, 2002). As governments have abandoned Keynesian or social-democratic policy in favour of neo-liberalism, the priority of policy has moved from meeting social needs to attracting and meeting the needs of capital (ibid). Privatization and budget cuts have limited the role for public planning and construction leaving the private sector as the main initiator and producer thereby determining the character and priorities of developments. The role of city authorities is mainly in support of the private sector, striving to attract investors, to support property development and increasingly to encourage the private provision of services.

Instead of concentrating on the needs of the existing populations of cities the emphasis has been on place marketing and gentrification (Borja and Castells, 1997). Almost universally, the policy aim of cities is to attract international capital to invest, higher-paid executives and professionals to settle and tourists to visit. The main benefit for some city authorities has been an increase in property tax income (Hackworth and Smith, 2001). Almost all cities now have major marketing strategies. For many, this includes the widespread transformation of former docks from places of work into exclusive islands of leisure with expensive flats, bars and restaurants. Cities are now being sold as a commodity to be consumed, rather than a place where production, living and consumption take place (Philo and Kearns, 1993). The notion of cities as a complex cultural expression and as a set of buildings and spaces in which a range of activities occur is being superseded as cities theme themselves.

Ironically the drive for image in city redevelopment often ignores or undermines what is distinct about each city, including its social character, urban landscape and economic focus. The global reach of retail chains and trends of international style also diminish the rooted distinctiveness of place. The result is urban theme parks rather than real living

and working places. These trends undermine diversity, increase social divisions, diminish culture and close off spaces for genuinely local businesses.

Bianchini (1991) and Worpole (1992) criticize the declining quality of life and public space in British cities due to the omnipresence of retail superstores, the domination of cars and the privatization of services. They identified art and culture as the primary factors in improving the quality of city life. However, far from their proposals for local art set in, and used for, the community, culture and the arts are instead being used to create images in the marketing of cities. Instead of being rooted in the vernacular, art and culture are offered primarily as commercialized leisure and an incentive for tourists to visit. In the process, urban history has been transformed into heritage. An *image* of historic cityscapes and workplaces may be recreated but the real function and roots of community and industry have been lost (Figure 1.4). Behind the glossy image is a remaindered population living in poverty and largely ignored (Holcom, 1993).

This disjointed glossy imaging is illustrated in urban regeneration and large-scale redevelopment which is often based on retail and commercialized leisure and culture – hotels, multiplex cinemas, entertainment complexes, sports stadiums, art galleries and conference centres. It is claimed that such developments will strengthen the local economy and make it more attractive to visitors. The architecture of such

Figure 1.4
The commodification of heritage, with open-topped bus and recreated history pre-packaged for tourists: Oxford, 2004. (*Source*: Mike Jenks.)