

spaces both internal and external where public access is welcomed – if controlled – such as private shopping centres or rail and bus stations; and the interiors of key public and civic buildings such as libraries, churches, or town halls.

This wide definition, encompasses a broad range of contexts that can be considered ‘public’, from the everyday street, to covered shopping centres, to the open countryside. Inevitably the management of these different types of context will vary greatly; not least because:

- the latter two examples are likely to be privately owned and managed, and therefore subject to private property rights, including the right to exclude;
- the shopping centre is internal rather than external and likely to be closed at certain times of the day and night;
- the intensity of activity in the open countryside is likely to be vastly less (at least by people) than in the other two contexts.

For these reasons, a narrower definition of public space would exclude private and internal space, as well as the open countryside. This definition provides the basis for the work:

Public space (narrowly defined) relates to all those parts of the built and natural environment where the public has free access. It encompasses: all the streets, squares and other rights of way, whether predominantly in residential, commercial or community/civic uses; the open spaces and parks; and the ‘public/private’ spaces where public access is unrestricted (at least during daylight hours). It includes the interfaces with key internal and external and private spaces to which the public normally has free access.

This second definition does not imply that the wider definition is invalid; merely that it is possible to interpret a term such as public space in many different ways. For the purposes of this book, the narrower definition helps to focus attention on the areas where many have argued the real challenge for enhancing public space lies, in the publicly managed, external, urban space. It sets the limits and limitations of this book, which are further limited by a focus on public space in the context of (predominantly) Western, developed countries.

How the book is structured

The structure of the book aims to gradually unpack the range of issues discussed so far, initially by focusing in greater detail on the nature and evolution of public space, and then on its management. To do this, the book is structured in two parts. *Part One: Conceptualising public space and its management*, constitutes the first four chapters of the book and sets the scene for the empirical research that follows in Part Two. It airs a range of theoretical and practical debates around public space and its management.

In Part One, this first chapter introduces the concept of public space and explores issues surrounding its inherent complexity and the complexity of its management. Chapter 2 then provides a historic context for the discussions that follow by tracing the evolution of public space through history from antiquity to the modern era. Examples of public spaces in London – the historic market place, Georgian residential square and the grand civic square – are contrasted with spaces from New York – the town square, downtown space and the corporate plaza. The historical discussion draws out the changing balance between public and private in the production, use and management of urban space, and key issues for the contemporary management of public space.

The historical review is followed in Chapter 3 by a discussion of contemporary debates and theories concerning public space. The intention here is to draw from a range of literature from different scholarly traditions – cultural geography, urban design, property investment, urban sociology, etc. – to establish the key tensions at the heart of public space discourse. Conflicting definitions of public space will be discussed, and evidence presented about the use and changing nature of contemporary public spaces. The chapter concludes with a new classification of urban space types.

The final chapter in Part One focuses on the management literature, aiming to draw out discussions about the nature of public sector management as an activity and a policy field, and how it relates to public space. A typology of approaches is presented encompassing the paternalistic management of public space by the state, privatised models of public space management, and devolved community-based models. Drawing from the literature, the pros and cons of the different models are articulated, as well as the implications of each for some of the debates discussed in Chapter 3.

Part Two: Investigating public space management presents the four empirical research projects in turn, projects that have systematically addressed the different challenges for public space management identified through the literature discussed in Part One. Together, the projects extend across the national and international stages, and from strategic to local dimensions of public space and its management.