

In Chapter 5, a first research project examining the management of everyday urban public spaces in England is introduced. This, the first of two chapters dealing with the project, examines typical practice through interrogating the results of a national survey of local authorities in England and findings from interviews with a range of key stakeholder groups. The intention is to understand the multiple drivers and barriers confronting public space decision-makers in their attempts to improve the quality of public space. Chapter 6 is a second linked chapter which examines a range of innovative practice via case studies identified through the national survey and interviews. Each case study featured one or more initiatives intended to address the perceived decline in public space quality. Lessons with wider application to the barriers identified in Chapter 5 are drawn out from the experiences.

In Chapter 7 discussion moves on to the international stage but focuses on a research project that examined the management of a particular type of public space – urban public open spaces. In this chapter, the stories of eleven cities from around the world with a reputation for the high quality of their open space environments are begun. The particular focus here is the context within which open space management occurs. Chapter 8 is the second chapter in this pair which re-focuses the discussions of the eleven cities onto the day-to-day practice of open space management as a means to extract common lessons with wider application elsewhere. In both chapters a common structure is used to aid comparison and to enable key lessons to be extracted.

A third project is examined in Chapters 9 and 10, focusing in some depth on three internationally iconic public spaces. In these chapters, discussion moves from strategic management concerns to a focus on particular spaces and their place-specific requirements. Chapter 9 focuses on Times Square in New York and also includes an overview of the research methodology for both chapters. Chapter 10 focuses on Leicester Square and Piccadilly Circus in London. In both, an in-depth analysis of the spaces based on detailed on-site observation and related interviews is presented. The chapters discuss how new management vehicles are challenging the status quo, but also raising profound questions about exclusion, ownership and the future of public space.

Chapter 11, the final chapter in the book, revisits the previous discussion and attempts to link in a systematic manner the theoretical discussions in Part One with the empirical findings presented in Part Two. The use and nature of public space is discussed, and the argument is made that too often academic discourse has seen public space in black-and-white terms, whereas public space management is in practice far more complex and nuanced. As a postscript to the book, the results of a fourth and final empirical research study are used to illustrate this. The project addressed the issue of what the users of public space actually want, as

opposed to what academics, public space managers, politicians, or other interested parties think is good for them.

Understanding public space

Why is public space and its management important?

Most writers on public space issues recognise a general decline in this realm, although the causes and the cures prescribed are often very different. Broadly, the literature demonstrates a dichotomy amongst critics.

Many of the best-known critics choose to focus on what they view as the over-management of some types of external (and internal) public spaces that manifests itself in what they see as the commodification and homogenisation of space (for example, Sorkin 1992; Boyer 1994; Zukin 1995; Loukaitou-Sideris and Banerjee, 1998 – see Figure 1.2). Others focus on what they view as the under-management of external public spaces and paint a picture of a rubbish-strewn, poorly designed and insecure public realm (Figure 1.3). Many of the former set of concerns revolve around formal, high profile public space types that, through a wide variety of development and policy processes, have become increasingly privatised and therefore more or less exclusionary. These are very real concerns which are dealt with in some depth in Chapter 3, and which underpin critiques of some of the recent trends in public space management that are discussed in Chapter 4.

Critics of the latter type are not new. Classic urban design texts such as Jane Jacobs (1961) and Oscar Newman (1973) have long since bemoaned the tendency to design environments that encourage uncivil behaviour and a heightened fear of crime. In this tradition, Alice Coleman's (1985) work examined how the design of the built environment could support activities such as littering, graffiti, vandalism and other anti-social behaviour, leading all too quickly to a degraded environment and a disadvantaged community. A huge literature has spawned from these pioneering studies, much of which challenges the details, although perhaps not the fundamentals, of the early work.

THE VALUE OF PUBLIC SPACE

The existence of literature from both sides of the Atlantic making essentially the same observations about the deterioration of public space illustrates the portability of such concerns. In fact, as shall be demonstrated in Chapters 7 and 8, these concerns about public space quality and its better management are shared across the developed world; and in many parts