



1.2 Privatised public space: Euston, London



1.3 Deteriorating public space: The Bund, Shanghai

of the developing world (Zetter and Butina-Watson 2006). Arguably they are underpinned by a growing awareness of the value of public space that now reaches to the highest political levels.

In the UK, for example, in his Croydon speech of April 2001, former Prime Minister Tony Blair marked a decisive shift in national policy by calling for cleaner and safer streets where communities are given the opportunity to thrive and not just survive. This interest from the very top reflects an increasing perception about the importance of public space issues as a political concern (see Chapter 5), but also an awareness of a growing body of evidence that public space is able to deliver a range of benefits across economic, social and environmental spheres (see Woolley *et al.*, n.d.). Empirical evidence now strongly suggests that public space:

Economically,

- can have a positive impact on property prices – research suggests variously by between 5 per cent (Colin Buchanan and Partners 2007) 8 per cent (Luttik 2000) and 15 per cent (Peiser and Schwann 1993) or even up to 34 per cent in some circumstances (CABE 2005a);
- is good for business – boosting commercial trading by 40 per cent in one case (DoE and ATCM 1997);
- raises land value and levels of investment (Luther and Gruelin 2001; Phillips 2000);
- helps boost regional economic performance (Frontier Economics 2004).

For human health,

- can encourage exercise with associated health benefits – for example reducing the risk of heart attack, diabetes, colon cancer and bone fractures (Hakim 1999; Diabetes Prevention Group 2002; Slattery, Potter and Caan 1997; Grisso, Kelsey and Stom 1991);
- can influence a longer life (Takano *et al.* 2002);

- provides a space for formal and informal sports and games (Woolley 2003; Woolley and Johns 2001);
- reduces stress and enhances mental health (Hartig *et al.* 2003; Halpern 1995);
- enhances child health – for example helping parents manage children with attention deficit disorder (Taylor *et al.* 2001).

Socially,

- delivers learning benefits to children, creative play, and reduces absenteeism (Fjortoft 2001; Taylor *et al.* 1998);
- nurtures social and cognitive skills (Pellegrini and Blatchford 1993);
- can help to reduce incidents of crime and anti-social behaviour (McKay 1998; Conolly 2002; Painter 1996; Loukaitou-Sideris *et al.* 2001; CABE 2005b);
- promotes neighbourliness and social cohesion (Baulkwill 2002; Massey 2002; Quayle and Driessen van der Lieck 1997; Kuo *et al.* 1998; Appleyard 1981);
- provides a venue for social events (Schuster 1995);
- reduces child mortality – by avoiding car-dominated environments (Living Streets 2001; Maconachie and Elliston 2002);
- provides a venue for social interchange and for supporting the social life of communities (Mean and Tims 2005; Dines and Cattell 2006; Jones *et al.* 2007; Watson 2006).

Environmentally,

- can encourage the use of sustainable modes of transport (Gehl and Gemzøe 1996; 2000);
- improves air quality, reduces heat island effects, pollution and water run-off (Littlefair *et al.* 2000; Whitford *et al.* 2001; Shashua-Bar and Hoffman 2000; Upmanis 2000);
- creates opportunities for urban wildlife to flourish (Shoard 2003).

Public space therefore has the potential to influence a wide range of benefits: as a stage to encourage social cohesion and interaction and