



10.9 The study spaces

possess a sense of a meeting and stopping place set amongst the constant flow of the busy vehicular and pedestrian traffic all around (Figure 10.8). The space, the statue and the properties surrounding it are public space, but in a form that is different from most other pavements and streets in London. They are not owned by the local authority, but instead belong to the Crown Estate, a corporate body that manages a portfolio of former royal properties on behalf of the state, including the famous Regents Street which extends from one corner of Piccadilly Circus up to Regent Park to the north.

Legibility

Using Lynch's (1960) analysis of urban elements, the gardens in Leicester Square represent a dominant node in the area and the epitome of the district with four entrances and exits. The gardens contain the landmarks of the central statue of William Shakespeare, and the smaller busts of famous residents of the square at each corner. The TKTS ticket booth (mirroring that in Times Square) and the Odeon and Empire cinemas create strong visual landmarks around the edge of the square.

The route between Leicester Square and Piccadilly Circus contains no nodes, instead having the characteristics of a dynamic path. Landmarks include the Swiss Centre, and particularly the clock on the Leicester Square corner and the 'Swiss Cantonal Tree' on the west side of Swiss Court. Other landmarks are McDonald's, TGI Friday's, Planet Hollywood, and the entrance to the Trocadero Centre, itself an internal node.

Piccadilly Circus is an important node on a London-wide scale, as the convergence of five major and two minor streets. Although spatially poorly defined, it contains the Eros statue (Figure 10.2) as a visually and perceptually important landmark. Set amongst a wide surrounding pavement, this can be interacted with by standing and sitting around its raised steps. Other key visual landmarks include advertising on the

north-east corner, the London Pavilion, Tower Records, and Lillywhites. Collectively the images of Leicester Square and Piccadilly Circus are amongst London's most memorable and legible.

Land uses

The analysis of the land uses around the Leicester Square/Piccadilly Circus study area, as at Times Square, concentrated only on the framing buildings – those that face Leicester Square, Coventry Street, or Piccadilly Circus. For the purpose of this analysis the space was divided into three main spaces. Leicester Square is space 1; travelling east is space 2, which starts at Swiss Court on the easterly side, and leads down Coventry Street until Haymarket; space 3 is the most westerly and covers all the buildings and spaces around Piccadilly Circus. (Figure 10.9).

In general, patterns of land use in the study area are similar to those in Times Square with tourist and entertainment uses predominating. The main difference is the absence of office skyscrapers and therefore of a large tier of upper-floor uses. Another significant difference is in the large number of venues (bars, public houses and night clubs) that serve alcohol. Three large bars and two night clubs front onto Leicester Square, for example, with many more in the side streets leading off the square. The small size and low quality of the tourist souvenir shops in the study area also contrasts with those in Times Square.

The dominance of multinational companies and chain stores was evident from the land use survey. Not surprisingly, all the multiplex cinemas are linked to international operators: a 12-screen Odeon, a 7-screen UCI, and a 9-screen Warner cinema. The dominance of chain operators was also evident in the public houses and bars in the area, including: Yates, Moon Under Water, and All Bar One, all of which front on to Leicester Square. Global branded shops, cafés and restaurants such as Starbucks, McDonald's, Pizza Hut, TGI Friday's, Planet Hollywood, Haagen-Dazs,