



**10.13** Signs of civility: public toilets and telephone boxes in Leicester Square

fact, as is common in many English town centres, most of the cameras are owned and operated by private businesses around the square, and used for the surveillance of their own premises.

## SPACE 2

Space 2 consists of Swiss Court and Coventry Street (Figure 10.14) and contained 16 more CCTV cameras. There are few elements to describe in space 2, apart from the more general features of the Swiss Centre and Court mentioned earlier. Of note, at the time of survey, were four licensed vendors grouped together, selling newspapers, souvenirs and ragga jungle mix cassettes, and through their position creating a focus for activities in that space. Street furniture was restricted to four telephone boxes and one letterbox.

## SPACE 3

Space 3 is Piccadilly Circus (Figure 10.15). At its centre is the statue of Eros whose base has always been a place to sit and meet because it has steps that users can sit on and survey the misshapen circus and surrounding activity. In addition to Eros, another strong visual feature of the space is a large equestrian statue and fountain set into a recess on the corner of Piccadilly and Haymarket.

Piccadilly Circus is a very complex and busy traffic interchange as well as a major tube station with two lines of the London underground. Its role as a nodal public space – and the notions of civility and community this conveys – is represented by the five entrances to the underground station around the circus. The station also constitutes another layer of public space below ground, with shops, vendors and public toilets.

Surprisingly, there were fewer CCTV cameras in this space, eleven at the time of survey. Of the five cameras, two were directly linked to the control and management functions of the BID. These survey the statue and the steps, both monitored by the Leicester Square wardens from the

upstairs room of the TKTS booth. Apart from these cameras, there are no strong reminders of state or BID control in Piccadilly Circus.

A large number of licensed vendors trade in this area, and in the process gave the space some of its life, some selling souvenirs, others ice cream, and several selling newspapers. The newspaper vendors also displayed selected headlines on their stalls, providing an element of civic life in the form of news. There were only two telephone boxes in the area, both full of the ubiquitous prostitutes' cards that characterise public telephones in central London.

## Managing the area

As with Times Square, the analysis attempted to determine how the expected increase in control and surveillance that tends to come with emerging forms of public space management was felt in the case study area. The fieldwork in the area took place in April 2002, well before the Heart of London BID was formed. At that time, only Leicester Square was under a special management regime, and wardens were beginning to appear as the visible embodiment of a new form of public space management.

In 2007, wardens patrol the whole of the BID area, and there are uniformed cleaners and police officers and the police station dedicated to the BID area. The existence of a system of active control of the space and its use is therefore far more evident, although still far from the idea of all-encompassing total control that is often conjured up by critics.

## SPACE FOR SITTING AND LOITERING

In comparison to Times Square the London study area contains an abundance of spaces for sitting and loitering (Figures 10.16–10.18). Leicester Square Gardens has 120 bench spaces, and at least room for several hundred more people on the grass and the low walls. Unlike the Father Duffy statue at Times Square, Eros has not been railed off, and at least 50–100 people can and do sit on the steps around it.

The pedestrianisation of Leicester Square and the southern side of Piccadilly Circus in the 1990s also created far more activity and loitering space. The north side of Leicester Square is a favourite site for buskers and street performers, while the west side contains licensed pitches for street artists. This is in stark contrast to Times Square with its dominance by vehicular traffic. The wide pavements in Coventry Street and Piccadilly Circus allow for licensed and unlicensed vendors to bring activity to the space, although the space to loiter is countered by the dominance of CCTV cameras throughout the area.