

Instead they focus on the limited objectives of particular services, and not on what each service contributes to the whole, to what the public actually experience.

Everyday public space users, by contrast, find it difficult to break their view of the local environment down into its constituent parts, because they do not think in that way. Instead:

- They take a holistic view of public space, and equate the quality of their local environment directly to broad socio-physical constructs such as their sense of community.
- Certain factors repeatedly emerge as key priorities for individuals using public space – safety and security, cleanliness and tidiness, and a sense of belonging – as do a wide range of other interrelated factors that they do not immediately associate with this agenda, for example, how attractive an area is, the levels of pollution, or whether retail units are in active use.
- Levels of deprivation influence these priorities and perceptions of local environmental quality, with some (particularly lower income) communities more accepting of the levels of quality they are provided with than others.

The key challenge will be to cut through the complexity whilst raising the game through extending the notion of holistic public space quality

across all services with a role to play in its delivery. In essence this typically means dealing with the unglamorous everyday stewardship of public space that impacts so disproportionately on users' sense of well-being, pride and belonging. This means actively managing streets to keep them safe, secure, clean and tidy.

The evidence presented earlier in this book suggests that even some of the most advanced societies have a long way to go to meet the basic aspirations for high quality public space demanded by the people that really matter; the public. There is nevertheless significant cause to be optimistic, with an increasing number of cities and communities – worldwide – recognising the importance of such concerns, and putting in place the necessary policy, resources, regulatory and management frameworks to deliver on this agenda.

Notes

- 1 As described in the focus groups, 'functional' was the least understood term, perhaps explaining its lowly rating;