2.1 The acropolis of Athens

as Mumford (1961: 138–9) notes, during the height of Greek civilisation, only one-seventh of the population were citizens; women, foreigners, and slaves could not be citizens, and therefore did not have access to many public spaces. Therefore, whether one was citizen, foreigner, woman, or slave not only dictated one's place in society but also what public space one had access to. Issues of exclusion, a theme returned to time and time again in this book, are therefore nothing new.

The focal point of the early Greek polis was the acropolis (Figure 2.1). Starting as a hilltop fortification, the acropolis evolved into a public space for religious and secular assemblies and commerce (Kitto 2000: 33). As Greek civilisation developed, public space shifted towards the agora (Figure 2.2), with less emphasis on fortification and religion. Mumford describes the agora as a place where citizens could meet for 'daily communications and formal and informal assembly' (quoted in Carr *et al*. 1992: 52), while Hall (1998: 38) describes it as 'no mere public space, but the living heart of the city'. The agora, like the acropolis, had multiple functions, but evolved principally into a marketplace, and in this function was open to all, not just 'citizens', despite the calls of some – Aristotle and Plato, for example – for greater restrictions (Hall 1998: 39).

The earlier Greek polis developed in an organic fashion containing few planned public spaces. Yet as Greek cities began to be developed in a more formal and organised way – often around a gridiron structure – public space took on a greater prominence. As organic growth gradually gave way to planned urban form, the conscious design of public space increasingly reflected the notion that its aesthetic quality would impart an experience to the soul of its users. For example, applying a non-axial design to public space in order to emphasise the three-dimensional qualities of the space (see Figure 2.2; Goldsteen and Elliott 1994: 74–7).

Discussion of the ancient Greek polis therefore identifies several key themes that still have resonance in debates about public space today:

- the notion of public space having multiple functions
- public space being democratic space, where citizens can interact and discuss issues pertaining to the city

- public space being used for commercial purposes
- public space as an informal meeting place and community space
- the aesthetic qualities of public space giving rise to pleasure
- notions of restricting access to public space, with some people having greater rights than others.

From Greece to Rome

Roman cities were far larger than the Greeks polis, Ancient Rome itself reaching a population of over one million. The Roman urban fabric was therefore richer and more varied.

The nucleus of the Roman city was the forum. Carr *et al*. (1992: 53) describe the Roman forum as a combination of the Greek acropolis and agora. The larger forums contained open, semi-enclosed, and enclosed spaces, while their functions embraced markets, religious meetings, political events, athletics, and informal meetings. They contained piazzas, important civic buildings such as basilicas, and temples to the different Roman gods. The basilica was an indoor space that could be used for judicial or commercial purposes. Temples fulfilled a double role, being used as a meeting place (e.g. for the senate in the case of the Temple of Concord), as well as for religious purposes.

Despite these early spaces being used for formal and commercial purposes, the former always took priority. Therefore, as Roman cities grew, single function forums were established, with forums being cleared of the clutter of statues, arches, monuments and so forth that had built up over time (Mumford 1961: 221–3). Hall (1998: 625) notes that by 113AD Rome had 'vast spaces for walking, business and pleasure'. The cities of the Roman Empire had pushed forward urban civilisation well beyond that of the polis by this time, not least because of the high level of public works.

Roman cities had therefore introduced a more planned approach to the production of urban public space. It was carefully integrated into the fabric of the city, creating a downtown area with social spaces, cultural