



2.25 Standards-dominated space

- to facilitate commerce
- to project power, sacred or political
- to display the status and wealth of the ruling class
- to foster civility and community.

The production and use of public space has been both formally planned from above and generated organically from below. In practice, however, both are subject to the unending urban cycle of change and conflict, dissolution and regeneration. Management therefore needs to adapt to competing and ever changing public space functions and demands.

The three London studies illustrate that public and private urban space have derived from a wide variety of ownership, access, and functional patterns. Now even the highest profile central spaces are increasingly subject to commercialisation pressures and increasingly this is generating new forms of management to eliminate perceived elements of 'disorder'. Discussion of the English marketplace demonstrated, however, that marketplaces have long been regulated, for commercial motives, whether by public or private owners, whilst still maintaining their civil and community functions. Civic and residential spaces have also been carefully managed, and after a period of universal decline in the quality of public space, as attention switched to the needs of the motor car, a new realisation has dawned that new modes of management may be required, not least to enhance the image of London in the global tourist market.

New York, like London, has struggled against increasing decay and disorder in public space, and in many cases has chosen privatisation and/or regulation as a means of addressing this, both of which are more prevalent in New York than London. Sometimes it is the City of New York

that is regulating private interests through legislation, for example, the use of zoning ordinances to give some order to the provision of public space. Elsewhere government intervention is acting to facilitate the private sector in the provision and management of public space.

The differences between the political systems of the UK and the US help explain why the New York studies are historically and currently more dominated by commercial considerations. New York City receives very little federal funding compared to London's financial dependence on central government, and therefore has to constantly seek global commerce in an effort to stay financially stable (Fainstein 2001: 82–4). The city almost went bankrupt in the 1970s, and now has to raise much of its income from business tax. This explains the financial drives behind the New York studies, particularly Times Square.

The chapter has demonstrated how the production, use and management of public space is shaped by the changing dominant forms of power, wealth and ideology. The discussion of London and New York show, however, that a diversity of historic public spaces types, shaped by different regimes, have increasingly converged in the age of globalisation. Contemporary postmodern public spaces are increasingly characterised by links to global commerce and to leisure and entertainment, and by the intensive management required to maximise financial returns and user satisfaction. Following the short-lived cul-de-sac that was modernist urbanism, increasingly the 'traditional' 'positive' forms of space that characterised earlier times have also been embraced. These eschew the simplistic overly logical physical forms of modernism, but, as future chapters will show, have not yet moved beyond highly compartmentalised modes of management.