public sector cultures, structures and procedures (Goss 2001; Leach and Percy-Smith 2001; Pierre and Peters 2000).

Moreover, an increasing public policy focus on problems that seem intractable, persistent and not amenable to simple solutions such as environmental quality, social exclusion, sense of safety (i.e. the 'wicked issues' of the literature – Clarke and Stewart 1997), has strengthened the case for collaborative forms of making, managing and delivering policy (Sullivan and Skelcher 2002: 33). Recent trends in the management of public spaces are therefore part of the process whereby 'government' – an analytical and practical focus on the formal structures of government and on the state as the central governing actor – is being replaced by 'governance' – a focus on the process of governing and on the multiple state-society interactions that constitute it (Kooiman 2003: 4).

What is happening to public spaces and their management is therefore a re-shaping of the specific sets of institutional arrangements in a context of more general change in the way urban governance takes place in an increasingly diverse, fragmented and complex society, and in which no single social actor has the solutions for the policy problems at hand, or the power to implement them (Hajer and Wagenaar 2003: 7). Changes in public space management are therefore a reflection of wider changes in the relationship between government, especially local government, and society, which have concrete manifestation in the management of most public services (Goss 2001: 24).

RE-DISTRIBUTING POWER

For public services in the UK, this has meant a substantial redefinition of how they should be funded and delivered, what type of standards should guide delivery and how they should respond to changing user needs. An increasing emphasis on cost effectiveness, competition among providers and on consumers' choice has underpinned a retreat of government from direct service provision, the transfer of public management responsibilities to private and community stakeholders, an increasingly complex trade-off between service quality and public control, and so forth. In this regard, the provision and management of public spaces seems to fit a general pattern followed by other public services in which forms of collaboration between different sectors and jurisdictions have become widespread (Sullivan and Skelcher 2002; Bailey 1995). This is at the core of the notion of the 'enabling' local authority, whose main role as far as public services are concerned, is to 'stimulate, facilitate, support, regulate, influence and thereby enable other agencies and organisations to act on their behalf' (Leach and Percy-Smith 2001: 162)

Public sector and local government reforms in the 1980s and early 1990s were translated into privatisation, agencification and the flowing of

power to subsidiary bodies within and outside the formal boundaries of the state (Rhodes 1997, Stoker 2004). This has led to a multiplication of agencies with a stake in the delivery of public services, and it has been no different with public space services. Managing public space might now involve a plethora of privatised public sector bodies, utility providers, area-based urban regeneration organisations, local authority departments, semi-public delivery agencies and so forth, all responsible for parts of the space, or for different services, or different operations within the same service.

The spread of contractual relationships in service delivery has added to the fragmentation. For example, compulsory competitive tendering (CCT) for all local public services in England was progressively introduced in the 1980s to increase competitiveness and efficiency, but it added another layer of fragmentation as it separated the client and contractor functions (Leach and Percy-Smith 2001: 162–3 – see a more detailed discussion in Chapter 5). With services such as refuse collection, grass mowing, street cleaning, grounds maintenance and so forth having to be contracted out to the lowest bidder in a competitive tendering process, integration between service design and delivery became dependent on increasingly complex contractual or quasi-contractual arrangements between the client commissioning the services and the contractor delivering it. This occurred whether or not the contractor was the in-house delivery arm of the client organisation or a private company. Although this practice ceased towards the end of the 1990s, it contributed towards shaping attitudes to service delivery and management as well as to the service delivery structures which are still in place.

CHANGING CONTEXTS

At the same time, demographic and cultural changes have put new diversified and often conflicting demands on public spaces with corresponding new pressures on management systems. In English town and city centres, for instance, the emergence of a young, alcohol-based sub-culture providing the mainstay of the evening economy, and vital for the economic viability of those areas, has created a context for the use and management of public spaces dominated by conflicts between uses and rights of use across space and time; in this case between night-time and day-time users, or between different age groups (see Chapter 3). Similar conflicts between the needs of a growing, sometimes gentrified and increasingly important leisure economy and the resident population have been reported elsewhere around the world (McNeill 2003; Smith 2002).

Conflicts in the use of public space are, of course, nothing new and it was precisely the coexistence of highly polluting industries and housing in the nineteenth-century industrial cities in Europe and the US that led to the birth of urban planning. What is new is that such conflict should