

happen in spite of the highly regulated urban environment, suggesting an inability of urban management tools to deal with the new context. Moreover, these conflicts and their consequences are being addressed in an increasingly risk-averse culture (Giddens 1999), which implies a more direct and expanded liability of the state for the services and facilities for which it is statutorily responsible. The increased level of liability facing public space managers, for example, has had an influence on the design of spaces and the equipment they contain, including the suppression of equipment and facilities deemed to increase the potential for law suits (Kayden 2000). It also impacts on the deployment of management routines and thereby on the nature of the relationship between providers and users of public space (CABE 2007).

In addition, as public space is perceived as a vital component in strategies of urban regeneration, city marketing, place identity, neighbourhood renewal, social inclusion, and so forth, it has been required to accommodate an increasingly complex range of expectations. The potential conflicts associated with this plurality of functions require management structures that can cut across specialised remits and understand the cumulative impacts of apparently unconnected activities, in the process mirroring the scope of urban policy objectives. For example, streets are increasingly expected to provide a focus for community life, provide a distinctive identity for an area, be a safe space for all, vibrant and vital at all times, and at the same time provide an efficient corridor for public and private transport (see Audit Commission 2002a, ODPM 2002).

The cumulative results of these contextual demands on public space and its management have exacerbated the shortcomings of public space services as traditionally delivered. They have made more acute the need to re-think the very notion of public space and its place in urban policy and challenged the exclusive focus on iconic civic spaces and parks and lack of focus on the variety of more ordinary public spaces.

A GLOBAL PHENOMENON

If the process as described above refers centrally to the UK, it is far from being unique. Indeed, there is plenty of evidence of similar processes elsewhere (see Chapters 7 and 8). The need to find ways of funding and operating public services in the context of a globally competitive economic environment, the challenges to traditional forms and practices of the welfare state by economic groups and by citizens, the multiple demands arising from differentiation of lifestyles, growing social fragmentation, city competition and so forth are global phenomena, which are impacting on the management of public services, and public space services across the world. The rhythm and intensity of those pressures and the responses to

it might differ, but even here the similarities are more noticeable than the differences.

The evidence from the literature and research reported in this book suggests that pressures for changes in the way public spaces are managed are bringing about a different understanding of what is public space, which management activities should be prioritised, how they should be resourced and implemented, and how they should be accountable to users. Consequently, new ways of dealing with the management of public space have emerged, which try to address issues of fragmentation, responsiveness, and quality over a broader range of public space types. However, this is an ongoing process, and as Part Two of the book will show, traditional and new ways of dealing with public space issues coexist, and are being combined to tackle the challenges found in localities.

It is also the case that a re-thinking of public space management has not affected equally the different services that make it up, or even the totality of public spaces. English historic parks, for example, have benefited from a long-standing tradition of coherent management structures, even if recently partly dismantled and starved of funds, as a basis on which to address the kind of problems discussed earlier. More than two decades of town centre management schemes have also provided a good starting point for their streets and squares. The challenge remains far greater with the range of ordinary spaces that make up so much of the urban realm.

The next section explores the emerging alternative approaches to public space management and their implications.

The management models

The literature, recent trends in the UK, and the empirical research reported in Part Two of this book all point to three emerging models of public space management (i.e. three different ways of addressing the issues of coordination, regulation, maintenance and investment). One represents a modified version of the current framework of public provision of public-space services, with public agencies playing the roles of coordinators, regulators, maintainer and funder. The second involves partial or complete delegation of those roles to private-sector organisations through contractual arrangements and reciprocal agreements. The third is similar to the second, but roles are devolved to voluntary and community-sector organisations as part of a move to reduce the distance between user and provider of services.

These are not mutually exclusive, and places and services have used a combination of them, depending on policy priorities, the relative strength of the various social agents with a concern for public space, and