



2.1 • Streets and patterns as overlap or void between design professions.

the existence of streets when submitting design concepts to fit the realm of conventional engineering practice, or suspend belief in the existence of those conventions at the creative stage of envisioning urbanistic grids of 'streets', 'mews' and 'boulevards'. And so, although there may be a consensus that there is a need for reform, it is not so clear what exactly should be reformed and what should be retained.

For a start, we seem to have lost the art of designing street grids. The street grid lies in a disputed territory between the spheres of influence of the transport and urban design professions. For many years, while Modernism held sway, this territory became a kind of no man's land in design terms, since streets themselves – and hence street grids – were out of favour. In the ensuing theoretical void, engineers simply got on with designing layouts of 'roads in urban areas' (Figure 2.1).

The advent of neo-traditional urbanism and the revival of the street have changed all this. Urban designers and planners are showing renewed interest in both streets and street patterns; they may rue the ceding of this design territory, and wish to 'reclaim the street', and with it, street pattern. These now represent an overlapping area and a potential area for conflict. The reconciliation of this conflict – or the filling of the 'void' with something positive – represents the challenge tackled by this book as a whole.<sup>2</sup>

Chapter 1 set out in a broad sweep the general challenges of transport and urban design. This chapter now focus on the specifics of the challenge of urban layout constituted by streets and patterns, by looking in more detail at key areas of the professional design debate. It examines existing priorities and issues for design guidance, demonstrating the lack of clear articulation of desired street types and patterns from an urban design perspective. In doing this, it sets out the different areas of confusion and conflict between different aspects of street pattern, structure and hierarchy. This stimulates the investigation into the nature of street type and pattern that forms the core part of the book.

## STREETS

**The types of street to be included in a scheme are the key to its overall character.**

*Urban Design Compendium*<sup>3</sup>

A street can be seen as a road that happens to have an urban character; or as an urban place, that happens to serve as a right of way.