

# Preface

The term 'urban design' may have been coined in the mid-1950s but 20 years later it was still largely unused outside a small circle of people concerned with the four-dimensional development of precincts of cities. Now it is used for almost anything concerned with human settlements. This change has occurred for two reasons. The first is the importance of urban design's spheres of interest in providing opportunities for the development of, if not for determining, the quality of life of people and, indeed, of the planet. The second is that mainstream architects and city planners have come to understand that it was foolhardy to distance themselves, intellectually and professionally, from urban design activities however demanding they may be. The distancing was a response to the criticism that architectural ideologies and the resultant multi-building architectural schemes of the 1950s and 1960s had received. Those works were based on the paradigms of environmental quality that were inherited from the Modernists. Luckily, a relatively small group of, primarily, architects scattered around the world learnt from the criticism and took the emerging field of urban design forward to the point where it can be seriously discussed as a potential discipline in its own right.

The writing of this book has been motivated by a need: (1) to provide a typology of procedures and products that makes some sense of what various people (and fields) are talking about when they refer to urban design; (2) to present professionals and students with a number of case studies that illustrate the range of interpretations of urban design and (3) to provide an incipient set of such studies that can be used as evidence in arguments about how to proceed in specific circumstances. Urban designing, like any creative activity, is an argumentative process. As the United States Supreme Court decreed during the 1990s, arguments need to be based on evidence, not just opinions or claims of professional expertise. Case studies constitute one source of evidence.