



5.14 The ICC in Berlin. This building is carefully organized to allow for great ritual in maintaining 'public' distance for speakers in a very formal way. Germans seem particularly fond of this way of dealing with space

whole building was designed to engineer exactly the effect I had experienced both through its plan and its section (Fig. 5.14).

My hosts at this event had to manufacture all this public distance carefully for me, although I would very much have preferred they did not. For really important people this seems to happen automatically. Just as we observe that dominant animals have larger personal distances, so very important people are often afforded public distance by others. Hall quotes a description from Theodore White's book *The Making of the President*. This describes the moment it became apparent that John F. Kennedy would win the nomination to run for President of the United States of America (Hall 1966). Even senior politicians of the day suddenly gave him a greater distance at a social gathering:

The others in the room surged forward on impulse to join him. Then they halted. A distance of perhaps 20 feet [7 metres] separated them from him, but it was impassable.

By contrast, interpersonal distances can also be reduced by context. Sommer amusingly quotes a newspaper excerpt in which the owner of a suburban cinema noted the differences in the densities of queues waiting to see a film. He calculated that when a film like *Tom Jones* was showing, the foyer would accommodate about three times as many people in the queue compared with a film like *Mary Poppins* (Sommer 1969).

### **Cultural variation**

When in the Middle East and as far west as Turkey we find a much greater acceptance of bodily contact in public. Indeed the average European or American is likely to feel rudely jostled in cities like Istanbul. To be in public spaces in such cities is a much more socially