to television (and today, one supposes, the Internet) and the privatization of leisure activities.[9]

Still another aspect of this narrative of loss involves public incivilities and loss of territorial control as explanations for the retreat of the general public from spaces in the public realm. According to this view, the steady decline in the quality and supply of public spaces is a product of a general decline of civility and decorum in public spaces. The "broken window" syndrome—weakened social control and lack of enforcement—is widespread in the inner city, and panhandlers, drug-dealers, and the homeless have expropriated public spaces. The presence of graffiti, trash, and vandalism intimidate the general public. According to one protagonist, such public spaces should be recaptured through strict regulation of land use and behavior in public (Ellickson, 1996).[10]

Privatization of public life and spaces

For many observers, the sense that the public realm is declining is further corroborated by a growing trend of what is commonly described as "privatized" public spaces. (Or should we say "publicized" private spaces, as some might wonder?) Seemingly an oxymoron, the term is used commonly to describe the corporate plazas and open spaces, shopping malls, and other such settings that are increasingly popular destinations for the public. Of course, none of these privately owned and managed spaces is truly public, even though they might have been created through incentive zoning programs of an earlier era, in exchange for additional Floor Area Ratio (FAR) for the developer and the property owner (see Frieden & Sagalyn, 1989; Loukaitou-Sideris & Banerjee, 1998). There is a presumption of "publicness" in these pseudo-public spaces. But in reality they are in the private realm. In many parts of downtown business districts, a thin brass line or a groove cut in the sidewalk, often accompanied by an embedded sign, makes it clear that the seemingly unbounded public space is not boundaryless after all. The owner has all the legal prerogatives to exclude someone from the space circumscribed by sometimes subtle and often invisible property boundaries. The public is welcome as long as they are patrons of shops and restaurants, office workers, or clients of businesses located on the premises. But access to and use of the space is only a privilege, not a right. In San Francisco, the planning department requires owners to post a sign declaring that the space is "provided and maintained for the Enjoyment of the Public [sic]"[11] but any expectation that such spaces are open to all is fanciful at best. Many of these spaces are closely monitored by security guards and closed circuit television cameras, which has prompted critics such as Mike Davis (1990) to refer to them as "fortress" environments. Because of their designs, locations, and management policies,[12] for the most part corporate open spaces remain insular and mostly empty, save for perhaps a lunchtime crowd and occasional clusters of smokers. Heroic efforts like San Francisco's to the contrary, limitations of public access and use of such spaces have been taken for granted in most cities.

Shopping malls, however, are a different story. Over the last 50 years, shopping malls have become the "new downtown" (Rybczynski, 1993) and replaced the Main Street culture of America to become perhaps the most ubiquitous and frequently visited places today (Kowinski, 1985). When the kind of public activities typical of downtown public spaces—distribution of leaflets, political discussions and speeches, solicitation for funds or signatures, sale of home-baked cookies, voter registration, and the like—started to occur in the shopping malls, their managers responded by excluding such activities and people. Legal challenges ensued. The issue of public access in shopping malls has been tested in the U.S. Supreme Court and the highest courts of seven different states (for details, see International Council of Shopping Centers, 1987). The critical question in all of these court cases was whether the shopping centers, by dint of becoming a de facto downtown, could also be considered the kind of public forum that the downtowns once represented. As of 1987, only Massachusetts and Washington courts had ruled in favor of requiring public access, while Connecticut, New York, North Carolina, Michigan, and Pennsylvania allowed denial in their decisions (International Council of Shopping Centers, 1987). In sum, more often than not shopping centers are not to be construed as public forums.[13] The same principle applies to corporate plazas.

Collectively, the shopping malls, corporate plazas, arcades, gallerias, and many such contrived or themed settings create an illusion of public space, from which the risks and uncertainties of everyday life are carefully edited out. The distinction thus created between the private and public are not unlike Mircea Eliade's (1987) notion of sacred and profane spaces, or Mary Douglas' (1980) treatise on purity and danger as the basis for separating the unwanted from our public experience. Thus the sanctity of the private spaces is