

stronger than they are. A design is then imposed on a situation for which it is inappropriate (see Brodin, 1976 and Marmot, 1982 for examples). The problem being addressed in each case and the success or failure of the patterns used to solve it have to be clear.

## **Case Studies: Successes and Failures**

Case studies represent the accumulated history of many fields of human endeavour. The design fields use them extensively although what is meant by 'case study' varies. When designing we rely heavily on the knowledge developed through individual cases being cumulatively converted into prescriptive theories or paradigms. The design fields are not alone in acting this way. Law and medicine rely heavily on case histories in both practice and education.

If Orwell had been writing today not only could he have included urban design in his set of dubious terms, but also case studies. What we designers call 'case studies' tends to be descriptive statements of the geometric qualities of specific designs. The way the schemes were brought into existence (if they have been), the dynamics of the political forces that shaped them, their cost, and modes of financing, even the way they function, all fall outside the realm of concern of such studies. If done thoroughly, however, case studies can provide empirical evidence of the processes and methods used to achieve specific design ends.

Case studies take a variety of narrative forms. The form chosen here is descriptive and analytical. The purpose is to demonstrate the nature of urban design and urban designing to both professionals and lay people, particularly politicians. The form should also be useful in the education of budding designers. The objective is thus to provide professionals with an information base that they can use in the creation of the appropriate design and implementation process for tackling a given urban design problem, and students and other interested people an understanding of the scope of urban design.

Good case studies present comprehensive histories of projects from their inception to their conclusion. They distinguish between the pertinent and the peripheral, identify the problems being addressed in context, the constraints acting on the development of solutions, the solution and how it evolved, and the strategies and implementation devices used to reach it. They can also identify the successes and failures of design projects in place.

What is perceived to be a success or a failure depends on a perspective. Many of the schemes included in this volume are highly regarded because of their financial successes. Financial benefits and costs can be measured although the arguments as to who has benefited and who has not persist. Yet a number of these apparently financially successful projects have been challenged in terms of the quality of life they provide specific segments of the population that inhabit or use them. The multi-dimensionality of the functions of the built environment means that every project that is studied here is successful in somebody's eyes and a failure in somebody else's.