

form of an arch. It is topped by an art gallery and viewing platform. The competition for the Arche site attracted 424 entries. An architectural jury selected four finalists. They were submitted anonymously to Mitterand who selected Spreckelsen's entry. Today the Arche is a major tourist attraction and gives La Défense a sense of place in Paris. It also allows for the further extension of the axis starting with the Champs Elysées and continuing through the Arche to the far distant Versailles. The landscape between the Seine and the Grand Arche – the D'allée Centrale – is to the design of Dan Kiley, the North American landscape architect. Working in 1978, Kiley sought a classical modernism of fountains and art works. Four long lines of pollard London Planes reinforce the visual axis.

In many ways La Défense might have been better included in the Chapter 10 as a plug-in design where buildings of various types and architecture, ranging from Modernist to post-modern with neo-classical overtones are plugged into a framework. It has turned out to be a poorly organized all-of-a-piece design. The conceptual diagram and how to achieve it were never carefully articulated. The building guidelines varied over time as the result of political pressures and economic necessity. The scheme was much affected by successive presidents of France, each attempting to leave his imprint on Paris.

The first set of design controls limited height and sought an architectural unity for the precinct. As the design evolved the specifications of what should be built were loosened in order to get some life into the scheme. A *laissez-faire* attitude ultimately prevailed. By the early 1970s companies were encouraged to build distinctive *gratte-ciels*

(skyscrapers). They have done so. Each corporation has tried to outdo the others with its building. Yet few buildings are touched by post-Modernist design patterns. The result has been a haphazard collection of buildings that are perceived to be out of context with the dignity and grandeur of the *axe historique*. EPAD appears not to care. It has created the premier business district in Europe and has the statistics to prove it. It is the landscape that ties the complex together (Figures 8.14 and 8.15).

Has La Défense been a success? Admirers regard it as a modern day Utopia; detractors think it is part of the Brave New World. It has been dismissed as a 'business slum' (Eriksen, 2001). Despite efforts to rectify the design it remains a series of Modernist parts. The open spaces are disconnected and poorly related to the buildings; there is little on the deck to attract pedestrians. Although it is relatively free of air pollution, the high winds on the deck level promoted by the tall buildings make the pedestrian environment particularly inhospitable in winter and even on some summer days. EPAD has made a valiant effort to make the esplanade more attractive by adding trees for aesthetic reasons and also to ameliorate the wind conditions. It has increased the amount of shopping, and promoted the development of art galleries, as well as including more sculptures to make an open-air museum. A carousel has become a permanent feature.

From a business point of view La Défense is a resounding success. Fourteen of France's top 20 corporations are located there. In 2000, 130,000 people worked in the precinct for 3600 companies. Over half of the people employed have been described as 'executives'. Those two figures are indicators of one measure of success. They are what