

behaviour occurs and the second specifies how communal decisions are made by governments and in the marketplace as defined by a country's constitution (or in the case of the United Kingdom by precedent). The first affects perceptions of the elements of urban design and the second, the process of urban designing.

## **The Physical Public Realm**

Does the physical public realm simply consist of all the open spaces outside the private domain of building interiors, secluded courtyards, and gardens? Is it everything that can be perceived (seen, smelled, heard or touched) from places to which everybody has right of access? Does it consist of all those elements that have an impact on the quality of publicly owned open space and/or space to which the public has freedom of access? All answers to these questions are politically charged.

The physical public realm is not necessarily coterminous with publicly owned property. In a society where property rights are sacrosanct and where individuals have the right and freedom to build what they desire, the public realm and public open space – spaces to which the public has right of entry – may refer to the same thing. The definition has, however, often been extended to include all publicly owned property, such as schools and libraries, whose location is determined by the public sector.

In an editorial (27 December 2002), the French newspaper, *Le Monde*, took the position that anything visible *in situ* should be part of the public realm in terms of photography work. The position taken here is that the public realm consists of those places to which everybody has access, although this access may be controlled at times. It consists of both outdoor and indoor spaces. The outdoor spaces include streets, squares and parks, while the indoor may include arcades, and the halls of railway stations and public buildings, and other spaces to which the public has general access such as the interiors of shopping malls.

The problem is that the nature of many 'public' places is ambiguous because although the public has relative freedom of access to them they are under private ownership. As the common domain of cities is increasingly privatized (or rather, the private domain is providing public spaces), this ambiguity is likely to continue. If past history is any guide, attitudes towards what is private and what is public will follow a cyclical pattern in the future. The scope of what is regarded as public will wax and wane. The perceived need to control or not control in the name of the public interest what is designed will follow as political attitudes vary.

## **The Elements of the Physical Public Realm**

Any statement of what constitute the elements of the public realm of built forms is likely to evolve over time. It will depend on a political stance and help to define that stance. In the 1930s, Le Corbusier wrote that the basic elements of urban design are: 'the sun, sky, trees, steel, cement, in that order of importance'