

forward into the future for more than one generation. Looking further ahead with any degree of accuracy is questionable. The saving grace for urban designers is that despite piecemeal changes taking place all around us, many patterns of behaviour tomorrow will be the same as today. Yet the world is not static. Changes in modes of transportation and communication shaped the present physical geography of cities. The basic physical structure of streets and open spaces inherited by cities at the precinct level adapted well to change over the whole course of the twentieth century. At the beginning of the twentieth century, who could have predicted the technological changes that occurred during it, particularly those of its first five decades, that have changed our lives so much? The automobile has enabled the development of far-flung suburbs but necessitated links that afford high-speed driving between them. Yet the street pattern in the very core of much-loved cities is essentially that of the nineteenth century and often earlier.

Who Pays?

The fortunes of urban design projects as they were implemented fluctuate with world economic conditions. A number of projects described here – Canary Wharf in particular – were boosted by the business booms of the early 1980s and late 1990s and battered by the economic recessions of the late 1980s and early 1990s. La Défense was similarly hit by economic ups and downs and the development of Lujiazui has stuttered with blips in the Chinese economy. The case studies show that deep pockets are extraordinarily helpful in getting projects built. The question is: ‘Whose pockets?’ One might presume that it is the public who should pay for the building or rebuilding of the public realm of cities. It is the ‘public realm’ after all. In the long run the public does pay for it either through taxes or through the increase in prices of goods and products when private sector players pay for the public realm upfront. It is more a question of who pays at the outset that is important.

One of the major questions that crops up, particularly in the design of infrastructure systems, is whether it is the users of a scheme or those who benefit from it who should pay for it. Presumably all the tourists who visit Paris, including those who never visit La Défense benefit from the centre’s existence. Without it, central Paris might have become just another busy international city. Automobile drivers benefit from the development of public transit systems. They take traffic off roads. How does one tax the beneficiaries of an urban design project for what they gain from it?

The case studies described in this book show a variety of approaches to funding projects. In some cases developers have had to pay for some of the cost of the public or quasi-public infrastructure (as in the skyway system of Minneapolis). In other cases individual developers have to pay for the infrastructure piece-by-piece in order to get an all-of-a-piece design functioning. The incomes of Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) are derived from taxing owners whose properties fall into the district (see Chapter 9). The right of the public to have private enterprises pay for