public goods required by society, but not a consequence of private profit-seeking endeavours, is more of an issue. Yet even here one can argue that for private organizations to flourish, public needs require attention. Still the question of who pays is a central one to what can and cannot be accomplished through urban design. In almost all the case studies presented here, public–private partnerships have played a role (see also, Fosler and Berger, 1982; Frieden, 1990; Frieden and Sagalyn, 1991).

The Degree of Control

Last but not least we come to the basic issue in urban design. It is one of long-standing. It concerns the rights of individuals to do what maximizes their own interests in competition with the rights of other individuals and the community as a whole. How much should governments intervene in the way the market shapes cities and their precincts? During the years covered by this book, the answer has varied. It has differed considerably from society to society and within the same society over time. It would seem that the public interest concerns rise to the forefront when cities appear to be in trouble or when opportunities for making cities better places are missed as the result of private greed or political indecision.

The design of buildings, the way they meet the street, their configuration and even some details were heavily constrained in some of the examples described here. The goal was to achieve precincts with a unified character through a unity in architecture and landscape. This goal is clear in all the total urban designs schemes mentioned. They, from Brasília to the Avenue of the Victory of Socialism to Kresge College, were seen to be and, in a sense, are single architectural designs. In city and large precinct design is this a good idea?

A sense of unity with some diversity has been achieved in all-of-a-piece schemes such as Seaside, Battery Park City, Pariser Platz and Paternoster Square. Many have foreground and background buildings by decree (e.g. La Défense, Canary Wharf and Battery Park City). At La Défense with a lengthy history of development behind it, the individual buildings reflect the design ideas/fashions prevalent in the decade in which the buildings were built with the whole project being held together by its landscape. The level of design control fluctuated and some architectural diversity has been achieved. Much, however, is sterile. Canary Wharf, on the other hand, has seen a heavier set of controls in place and as a result has ended up with a more unified set of buildings despite their individual nature. Yet it is less sterile than La Défense. Unity is, apparently, now not something sought in the World Trade Center development. The landscape will be crucial in holding that scheme together if it is to be perceived as a single project.

The debate of when to seek unity (or diversity, or chaos) in an urban design will continue. How controlled the design process should be, will continue to be argued. Few people are opposed to the use of zoning and building codes to ensure the meeting of public health and safety needs – the fundamental human needs identified in Figure 1.6. Will developers and their architects design sustainable environments, for instance, without being forced to be do so by design