

controls? Will they give a hoot about the context, geographical or cultural, of their proposals without having to work within design guidelines? A sense of place is also a basic human need. The degree to which the qualities of the built environment contribute to meeting it is unknown, but it is not insignificant. Should the design of the environment be left to multi-national companies whose idea of a sense of place is one that promotes themselves? At present, the answers emerge as a result of how the design process is conducted. It is a by-product of other decisions and not one addressed head on.

What is clear from the case studies is that the precision with which design objectives are stated, the guidelines are operationally defined and the review process is transparent, the greater the likelihood that the implemented design will meet the goals set for it (see Table 8.2). The goals that are set will always be political; the knowledge we have from the case studies and on ongoing person-environment research enable us to design the means to achieve ends with some confidence.

Commentary

The knowledge of case studies is important. While every situation faced by an urban designer is unique, many generic problems are addressed. The typology presented here demonstrates commonalities both in product and process types. Architects and other design professionals rely heavily on precedents, much more heavily than they do on abstract theoretical constructs of how the world functions. Every now and then a new paradigm is unveiled. The most recent in urban design is that of the New Urbanism, or Smart Growth, with its transect design paradigm (Ellis, 2002). The fundamental issues in urban design, however, remain remarkably the same. How we address them will differ over time and will depend on what we learn from experience, our own and from that of others.

The issues raised in this chapter are recurring ones. They have engaged the attention of city planners and urban designers, in particular amongst design professionals, over the span of time covered in this book. They will do so in the future. New concerns will certainly arise. Some will have stamina; others will be ephemeral. The consideration of what the nature of the public interest is, the way of defining it and designing based on that definition, will remain central to the work of urban designers in democratic countries.

Design professionals have many roles. One is certainly the public role of bringing the attention of both politicians and the lay-public to the opportunities for improving the built environment of cities. It is an activist role. There are architects and landscape architects vitally concerned with the future state of our planet who are strong advocates for designing 'with nature in mind'. There are those who are concerned with problems of particular population groups, particularly those whose voices are seldom heard in thinking about designs. They enrich the debate about what should be done about the public realm of cities. Ultimately, however, urban design is an *act of will* on the part of developers, public and private,