

illuminated carry meaning based on learnt associations. In some societies, the coding of status through design is readily observable and in others it is highly subtle.

Possibly the most important culturally based variable for urban design is the attitude towards individualism and cooperation. Much-admired urban places such as Piazza San Marco in Venice were built piece-by-piece over the centuries with each new developer and architect being conscious of fitting in with what had already been built. They had, what architectural historian Peter Kohane calls, a 'sense of decorum'. The same attitudes were a hallmark of traditional Islamic societies where a host of unwritten laws drawn from the Koran governed the design of individual components of the environment, ensuring an integrated whole. Such attitudes do persist but they are not a significant characteristic of the societies in which the case studies included in this book exist. The reason urban design has emerged as a field of professional endeavour has been in order to seek cooperative procedures that will enhance the quality of specific areas of cities.

Cultures evolve; they are not static. In an era of globalization, not only of the economy but also of information, various patterns of the public realm are perceived by officials as symbolically desirable because of what the international media promote as desirable. The desire for universal images in the public realm of cities often means that the requirements of many local activity patterns are overridden in the search for international symbolic patterns that enhance people's self-image. Many professionals receive their education, particularly at the advanced level, in societies other than their own and they bring home the patterns appropriate to their host societies as part of their intellectual equipment. They take time to readapt to facing their own societies' needs. Some never do!

## **The Public Realm of Decision-making**

The obligations that members of a society have to each other establish the respective roles of governments and individuals in the conduct of their lives. The debate over what is private and what is public, and what the rights of individual are versus the rights of the community (however one defines the term) is central to urban design. The debate is over the rights of individual property owners to build what they want versus the rights of their neighbours and the broader society to impose restrictions on those rights in the name of the public interest.

## ***The Scope of Concern of Public Sector Decision-making***

Perceptions of what should be public concerns and what private vary over time. The twentieth century saw the flow and ebb of the welfare state. The late 1980s saw the beginning of the second capitalist revolution and a greater emphasis being placed on the individual and individual rights than earlier in the twentieth century. The belief is that personal freedom of action benefits everybody. In many ways the translation of this ideology into action has been highly successful especially at the global marketplace level of finance. The processes of change have, however, been