of other decisions. Urban design as a separate design activity arose largely because city planning neglected the built environment in its deliberations of urban futures.

The quality of the urban landscape is a major contributor to perceptions of the qualities of cities. A city's physical character is defined by the nature of its streets, squares and other open spaces in terms of how they are shaped by enclosing elements (Goldfinger, 1942). The biological health of cities depends on the interactions between the natural and the artificial. Few landscape architects since the era of Olmsted have, however, engaged themselves in urban design. They have tended to shy away from dealing with more than designing open spaces. They have been concerned only with select types of products (see Chapter 5).

Architects, as architects, too have looked at urban design in terms of specific types of products: buildings as objects rather than as space makers (see Chapter 6). The leadership in developing urban design as a professional field has, nevertheless, come from architects with broader concerns. They have been interested in the design of complexes of buildings, and what cities and neighbourhoods might be like. Some of their ideas and conceptual schemes have been based on rationalist thought and others on empirical observations about cities. Still other architects have, however, been highly pragmatic. They have been concerned only with how to get projects initiated and carried through. Some of the projects reviewed here may have been whimsical ego-trips but most, I would argue, have been based on a sense of idealism.

Part of the difficulty in defining the scope of urban design today is that each of the professions wants to claim it as its own. Architectural societies give urban design awards to single buildings, landscape architects to squares, and city planners to a wide variety of items. Urban design, however, involves all these matters, not individually but in concert. It is a collaborative effort between public and private sectors, between professions, and between practitioners and researchers. It deals with the four-dimensional inhabited world.

Commentary

Urban design covers a multitude of professional activities. It does involve *design*. Defining the context, political and physical, of urban design work with precision is difficult. The model of the purposes served by the public realm and the built environment in general as shown in Figure 1.6 provides a framework for considering what variables have been of importance in the different cases to be covered in this book. The more multipurpose the public realms in the case studies covered here are supposed to be and the more varied their contexts, the more complex the issues and the process of decision-making. Many more actors are involved. The more open and diverse a society, the more intricate and involved are the debates over ends and means and the more diverse the opinions about the results achieved. Collaborative work dealing with planning, landscape architecture and architectural concerns as well as those of various types of engineering in a politically volatile context is difficult and, often, highly stressful.