The word 'typology' is ambiguous. In its purest sense it refers to the study and theory of types and of classification systems. Here typology refers to a classification system. A good one is simple but powerful. It must be easy to use and cover all the types of concern with clarity. It has the least number of variables that can explain phenomena. It must enable a person to understand the constancies that lie behind specific examples.

Categorization helps us to organize our thoughts. One simple way is to distinguish among the various product types generally subsumed under the rubric 'urban design' and, more importantly, procedural types. The former deals with the products of urban design work and the latter the processes by which they are implemented. It is the latter, as argued in Chapter 2, that really gets to the heart of urban designers' activities.

In a diverse field it is inevitable that types of activity overlap and are not necessarily easy to categorize. Is a building such as the Unité d'Habitation, a vertical neighbourhood, a work of urban design or a work of architecture? Or both? It was part of a broader plan for the city of the future (Le Corbusier, 1953). The investment in individual buildings so that they act as catalysts for urban development is both a policy issue and a concern for buildings as urban design. As a result, the idea of buildings as catalysts for urban development appears in two chapters in this book: under the rubric of 'The Products of Architecture and the Nature of Urban Design' (see Chapter 6) and 'Plug-in Urban Design' (see Chapter 10). The ambiguities in any categorization can be disturbing but have to be tolerated. As the field of urban design develops so no doubt will the precision of the categorization of its types.

The Utility and Problems of Typologies

The design fields rely heavily on types in thinking about designing building programs, or briefs, and buildings themselves (Symes, 1994; Francis, 2001). All professional offices have books describing building, street, or open space configurations pertaining to classes of activities. Any classification system that can help recall information and/or bring attention to key variables that have to be addressed by a designer in a particular situation is helpful. How good is the typology developed here?

Fifty-odd case studies have been classified in this book. The typology presented has enabled them to be classified firstly according to the process by which they were generated and built, secondly, according to the type of product they are and thirdly, according to the urban design paradigm within which they were designed. By using the typology presented here a person can begin to understand the process, the product and design ideology within which a particular design was created.

The potential problem in using any typology is that it focuses on classifying the similarities between examples and not their differences. In practice it is easy to see the situation one is facing as being a particular type because of some superficial similarities and then to use the procedures common to that category in trying