

housing, all with good quality surroundings, including homes for families, affordable properties to rent and buy.

## **Sustaining cities in the face of change**

The future form of cities and the strategies that they should adopt in a global economy and information age is still being debated (Graham and Marvin, 1996; Borja and Castells, 1997). A highly attractive alternative for cities to the current unregulated, indiscriminate change taking place is urban sustainability (Wackernagel and Rees, 1996), based on the principles of allowing present generations to meet their needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs (WCED, 1987). Within the present economic framework there is no incentive for cities to take responsibility for the externalized damage of their activities. Redevelopments that only address a superficial image do not provide any socio-economic or environmental solutions. In contrast to the strategy of city-image enhancement, sustainable development offers a very different approach.

A foundation to urban sustainability is the overriding objective to achieve a high quality of life for the whole community within a socio-economic framework that minimizes the impact of the city on the local and global environment. For it to be successfully realized, the city must tackle the dimensions of sustainability: social, ecological, as well as economic. Sustainable cities ensure well-being and a good quality of life for citizens, are environmentally friendly, and socially integrated and just.

There is no shortage of ideas for how environmental sustainability can be achieved:

- **use of renewable energy and a dramatic increase in energy efficiency**
- **recycling and reuse of materials**
- **food production within cities**
- **an end to edge-of-town retail, leisure and business development to protect the countryside and retaining jobs in cities**

Urban density is cited as a potential proponent of sustainability, offering opportunities for increased energy savings and reducing the need for travel. What is missing is the political question of how such a strategy could be implemented (assuming that sustainability as a strategy will be imposed on the city). In this context there has been much less consideration of the social, economic, political and cultural policies that underlie the process by which urban sustainability could be attained.

## Achieving urban sustainability

Fundamental to achieving progress towards sustainability is an economy that concentrates on well-being and quality of life for all. Essentially, the economy should be regarded as being inextricably linked to the livelihoods of its residents, rather than simply as the production, consumption and possession of commodities. The relationship between the economy, society and the environment needs addressing with the recognition that one cannot exist without the others. Human life, activity and culture depend on their wider environment (Davidson, 2000; Giddings *et al.*, 2002). At present most economic policy concentrates on the production of greater wealth often measured in terms of monetary value. This ignores the wealth created by the non-market economy of family and community (the social capital) and prioritizes profit rather than meeting the human needs through the production of goods and services (Hutchinson *et al.*, 2002) (Figure 1.7).

From an ecological perspective it is also important that the economy is local. If city economies do not connect with their local region, it is inevitable that they will have ecological footprints far greater than their area. If there is much greater local sourcing of resources and materials from within city regions rather than from undifferentiated global markets and a dramatic reduction in the waste and pollution exports, then the connections between cities and their surroundings will be strengthened. As cities reclaim their clear and distinct character of dense activities, population and connections, with a built

Figure 1.7

The local economy as livelihood, community, sociability and meeting human needs: Naples, 1994 and farmers' market in Oxford, 2004. (Sources: Bob Giddings and Mike Jenks.)

