

form rooted in sociability and inclusion, this will aid the countryside to re-establish its own identity.

If considered as city regions, cities can benefit their rural hinterland through mutually beneficial exchanges. While getting food, energy and water from their surroundings, they in turn provide other vital components of sustainability including health services, festivals, education and manufactured goods. Often the best way to strengthen the centre of cities is to support the existing local people, business, activities and culture. They enhance the quality of the environment without gentrification, encourage walking, support public places and buildings, and design for people (Figure 1.8). While this may not appeal to the property developer, it is a necessary organic step to re-connect the city to its wider region in a durable and sustainable way, while supporting the distinctiveness of places, rich in diversity and activity (Jacobs, 1994; Gratz and Mintz, 1998).

As Healey (1998) has pointed out, place does matter, contrary to the claims of some neo-liberals and advocates of globalization. Sense of place and community is the soul of the cities and the principles of a renaissance of cities celebrate that experience. Cities need their unique sense of being a distinct place, yet many cities have had this undermined by urbanization and urban sprawl. The distinction between city and countryside needs to be redefined without returning to the simplicities of medieval walls. While the countryside should be accessible to city residents, the countryside should primarily be a place of work and life which are connected to the landscape. If rural dwellers are oriented to a city lifestyle based on car commuting, the land becomes merely an object of consumption and the attractive nature of the land is compromised with traffic, pollution and increased road infrastructure.

The need for meaningful citizen participation

Crucial to the development of a sustainable city is the commitment and will of the population. There is a growing trend in government to conclude that the market is an accurate reflection of individual choices and an appropriate way of influence decisions. There is an emphasis on people as consumers rather than as citizens. For Bookchin (1995), the erosion of citizenship would mean the end of cities. He has argued for a change in politics to reclaim citizenship, public involvement in decision-making and deep-rooted democracy. Gentrification and

Figure 1.8
Vastra Hamnen Bo01 –
sustainable urban design
creating identity, using
renewable energy, recycling
waste and water, encouraging
sustainable transport use, and
involving local people with a
broadband community
network: Malmo, 2003.
(Source: Nicholas Low.)

