



Conclusion: Future Forms for City Living?

Achieving sustainable urban development is no easy task. The complexities of the scale and variety of urban forms, and the intimate interweaving of environmental, social and economic issues, could all too easily suggest that, as everywhere is so different, consistently meaningful action is almost impossible. However, the research in this book suggests that there are many pathways to achieving sustainability. There is certainly no 'one size fits all' solution, but there are strategies and actions that have some commonality within particular urban contexts. So what are the future forms for city living?

At the regional and city scale the concept of polycentric development, linked closely with transport infrastructure, appears to have potential. Both Okabe and Bertolini cite the Randstad, an urban region comprising four major cities, linked by an excellent public transport system. This has a clear polycentric structure, but Okabe goes further and suggests that Tokyo also has a similar, although 'hidden', spatial structure. Green's characterization of Bristol with surrounding centres of economic activity, and his proposals for new transport links again suggest a polycentric structure as a sustainable form. These forms suggest intensification around sub-centres and transport routes, and an intention to protect green spaces. However, there are potential problems. Bertolini notes a relationship between speed of transport and spread of the urban development – a point pertinent in Japan where the ultra-fast 'bullet train' links the two mega-cities of Tokyo and Osaka into a virtual urban agglomeration of some 40 million people. Yet in smaller-scale rural environments, as Echenique shows, a polycentric form (necklace of villages) appears to have negative transport consequences and is not a popular option.