product. The natural world is in a constant state of change – today's bare site is tomorrow's grassland and next week's woodland. Much conservation management is about arresting or reversing natural succession. The demographic profile of local communities changes, and with it their needs from, and demands upon, their local environment. For a couple of decades safe and stimulating spaces for children may be at a premium, after this places for more quiet recreation may be needed.

Whatmore *et al*. (2003) have studied the relationships between local people and the open spaces that are important to them. This has led them to propose the existence of 'vernacular ecologies', the importance of recognizing that urban greenspaces are literally 'living spaces', and the necessity for management processes to be driven by local people with expert assistance, not the other way round.

Buildings and enterprises come and go, creating both opportunities for, and threats to, open spaces, parks and wildlife sites. Too often one interest (usually economic development) has dominated the process of change.

A sustainable city landscape is not one set in aspic, unchanging, looking back to what has, or might have been. It is one which provides for today whilst looking forward to what will be needed. It should incorporate some constants (no one is going to move the River Thames or Hampstead Heath out of London), but needs also to be capable of adaptation. In the past, changes to open spaces have tended to be *ad hoc*, reactive and marginalized. By understanding how land-use relates to and affects people's lives and the quality of their environment we can incorporate changes in a planned and proactive way, and move open spaces into the mainstream of urban planning and design.

CITY METAPHOR

6

INTRODUCTION

A number of theoretical forms have been suggested for the sustainable city. All are based on the notion of reducing the need for movements by private motor car, and a reduction in the transportation of goods by road. From continental European sources the compact high-density city is advocated. At another extreme are proposals for low-density decentralized urban areas. A third school of thought suggests an urban form based on policies for 'decentralized concentration'. The fourth theoretical position develops the concept of the Sustainable City Region, extending the ideas of Howard and the Garden City Movement (Breheny and Rookwood, 1993; Elkin *et al*., 1991a; Howard, 1965; Owens, 1991). Authors advocating a darker green philosophy suggest that the city should be located within a largely self-sufficient region. There is also a difference amongst authors about the preferred type of detailed city structure for sustainable development. Such preferences include: linear forms, dispersed structures, centralized and polynucleated urban forms, or some variation of the grid. Despite the many theories and the strength of views held by some of the advocates, there is, at the moment, little hard evidence in terms of urban metabolic efficiency or even energy efficiency to support any of the structures unequivocally. It is not possible to state categorically that one particular theoretical urban structure is more sustainable than another. In view of the inconclusive evidence, this chapter will review the origins of the ideas for city form. In particular, it will discuss the nature of the three main metaphors which have been used as a basis for understanding and coming to terms with the city. The theme of the chapter is symbolism and the city: it will form the basis for the analysis of specific city forms in Chapter 7.

THE FIRST CITIES

City formation is an act of human will. However obscure the reason, however ineffective the means and however tawdry the result, city development or reformation is a conscious act. The act of city foundation