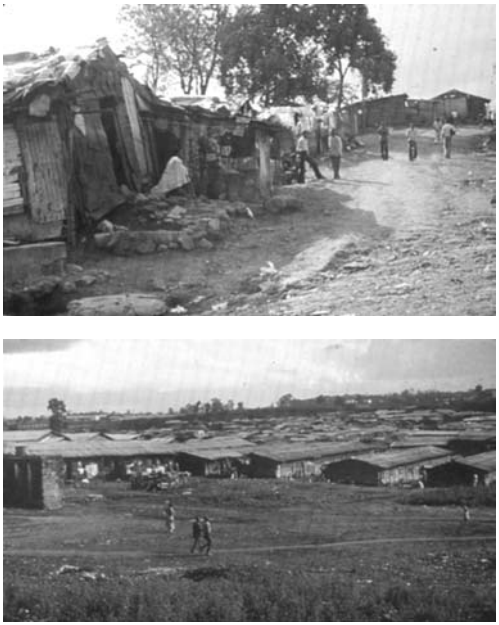

Figure 6.23 Slums in Nairobi

advantageous positions. In Third World cities this fact of urban life is visibly apparent. The poor occupy areas euphemistically called 'spontaneous development', slums of temporary, make-shift housing without services or sanitation. The poorest of the poor are often consigned to unstable land, that is, to areas liable to flash flooding and erosion (Figure 6.23).

A NEW SYMBOLISM FOR THE SUSTAINABLE CITY

How far should the sustainable city of the future jettison these anachronisms from the past? Or how far is it possible to do so? Sustainable development has for its philosophical and intellectual foundation three basic values: equity, citizen participation and good husbandry. The sustainable city is one that nurtures both man and the environment: its function as far as man is concerned is one of enabling. This process of enabling is predicated on the notion of democracy, some would suggest a highly participatory democracy. The city should give form to these basic values: a new symbolism is necessary to give expression to the new sustainable city structures. The sustainable city is not one that consigns the poor to cardboard box cultures, a homeless underclass occupying the space beneath the viaduct. The sustainable city does not emphasize private affluence and the policing technologies which maintain the relative peace in enclaves of privilege.

It would be unwise to reject all that originated with the birth of city life in ancient times. A fortunate result of many religious preoccupations, including Chinese geomancy, has often been a harmonious setting for urban development, a by-product of the great care taken with the siting of towns and buildings or the organization of landscapes. This heritage should not be lost in any restructuring of the principles of city planning and design. Many of the ideas originating from groups representing the richer hues of the green movement have overtones of, almost, a religious fervour. These more extreme green ideas extol the virtues of living within the laws of nature and attuned to the greater unity of the planet which is personified as an Earth Mother or all-encompassing being. Without going quite to these lengths it is clear that a respect for nature is something we can and must learn from the earlier periods of man's evolution. An important quality of the nurturing city would be the conservation and development of natural multi-functional landscapes within its boundaries, as outlined in Chapter 5.

Equally important would be the conservation of the building stock: the 'throwaway society' of Toffler has no place in the sustainable city. Conservation and a 'make-do-and-mend' process will inform urban development policies. The conservation movement, however, is more than simply being concerned with the conservation of energy: it represents a philosophy of life which relates people to their traditional roots, to those great urban traditions going back 5000 years.

The skyline of the fully developed sustainable city may be similar in form to the pre-twentieth century city, pierced only by the towers which remain as a memory of former state, municipal, commercial or religious power centres. Most new additions to the sustainable city will be limited in height to three or four storeys built in a regional architecture using regional materials and probably learning much from local traditions of building. The city spaces, its streets, squares and parks, will be pedestrian-centred and designed for a walking pace: transport, being predominantly public, will thread its way carefully through the pedestrian and cycle-dominated network of city pathways. This may sound utopian, and at one level it is, but this city form follows logically from the adoption of a philosophy which accepts sustainability as both necessary and desirable.

CITY METAPHORS

According to Lynch (1981) there are three main metaphors which attempt to explain city form. The magical metaphor for the earliest ceremonial centres of religious ritual attempted, as already discussed, to link the city to the cosmos and the environment. The other normative metaphors are the analogy of the machine and the analogy of the organism. The city, like the house, was seen by some modernist architects as 'a machine for living in'. In contrast, many planners following Geddes (1949) and Mumford (1938, 1946a, 1961) described the city as organic in an extension of ecological analysis. These main normative theories have generated a series of model city structures, concepts such as: the central city; the star-shaped city; the linear city; the grid-iron city; polynucleated cities; and the dispersed city. From these basic concepts of city form additional hybrid concepts have been developed such as the figure-of-eight structure used by Ling for Runcorn New Town (Figure 6.24).

The concept of the city as a machine is quite different from conceptualizing it as a microcosm of the universe, as a perfect unity modelled on the universe. The idea of the city as a machine is not purely a twentieth-century phenomenon – its roots lie much deeper. During the twentieth century, however, the idea was developed and

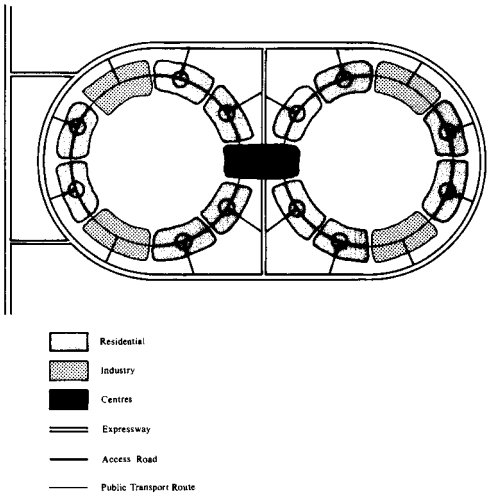

Figure 6.24 Runcorn, structure diagram