

Building global cities

2 Cities nowadays are connected to each other as points of intersection in a networked world: they are
dynamically driving globalisation. (...)

4 But while communications technology may have turned the world into a global village, what we see
unfolding today is an explosion of megacities, each with several million inhabitants, dense centers
and sprawling outskirts. In 1950, there were 83 cities with over a million people; by 2000, there
6 were over 400. Today, “megacities” of over 10 million are legion – London, Tokyo, Seoul, Mexico
City, Mumbai, Sao Paulo, New York, Lagos etc... (...)

8 Environmentally, there is no ideal urban model to aim for. Policies often have to be tailor-made to
suit different circumstances. But there are similar pressures to watch for. Concentrated cities may
10 deliver benefits such as lower energy consumption and water savings as activities and people are
grouped together. But they also bring congestion, pollution, discomfort and ill-health. Sprawl, on
12 the other hand, lengthens journey times, increases petrol consumption and also eats into the
countryside, damaging biodiversity. (...)

14 For inspiration, one could also look at the many programmes in operation in OECD urban areas to
improve transport as part of a drive to make urban living healthier and more environmentally
16 friendly. There is London’s road congestion charge (which New York is thinking of adopting) and
Paris’s bicycle-for-all service called *Vélib’* for instance, as well as various “clean car” initiatives in Los
18 Angeles and Tokyo. Fuel costs and public health demands mean such initiatives will surely multiply.
(...)

20 In some respects, our generation is at an experimental stage, testing new (sometimes risky) ideas for
the benefit of their heirs. Take for instance the BedZED project near London. Short for Beddington
22 Zero Energy Development, this “carbon neutral” housing project, launched in 1993 with its solar
panels, south-facing terraces, air chimneys and bio-energy, has been lived in since 2002.