quarter or neighbourhood may not be essential for some social relationships, but it is, along with the main paths people use and centres they visit, an essential mental construct. The neighbourhood: '... is no longer the space within which people know each other because they live next door, but a space which is commonly defined and given a name, and within which people find it relatively easy to band together when things get dangerous' (Lynch, 1981). Among such threats is; pollution; the destruction of local environmental quality by proposals for road improvements; together with the ramifications of climate change.

A basic consideration in city design is the question of political control. Since citizen participation is a key concept in the pursuit of sustainable development, the question arises as to the precise areas of management which might properly be placed under community control. Accepting the concept of 'subsidiarity' – that is, taking appropriate decisions at the lowest practicable level or tier of government – raises two important questions. Which service provision should be delegated to the very local or community level of government, and how much power should be vested in those authorities? The power of communities to say 'no' to all developments would lead to stagnation and not necessarily to sustainable development. The city government has been the main actor in the field of urban infrastructure development since the earliest civilizations. To some extent that power was weakened during the last half of the twentieth century. The importance of the city is being overshadowed by the growing might of the state. This was in evidence particularly in Britain during the last decades of the twentieth century, when policies seemed to be designed to strip power from local government. The ability to develop a sustainable infrastructure, including the transportation network, must be returned to the city.

REGIONAL STRUCTURES

Clearly, ideas about sustainable urban form are located both conceptually and theoretically within the field of regional planning. The main concern of regional planning is the development of a network of sustainable metropolitan areas, cities, towns and villages. It is also concerned with the development of the rural areas – not only as places where people live and work but also as places which provide the urban population with food, water and areas for leisure. In addition, the rural areas surrounding the towns and cities provide environmental services in the form of pollution control and are important for maintaining the nation's biodiversity which contributes to the well-being of the global ecological system.

Sustainable transport, in addition to having a powerful influence on urban form and city design, is also a vital strategic element in the regional pattern of development: 'In principle, it is obvious that urban form will affect patterns of transport, which in turn will affect fuel consumption and emissions. By the same token, the viability and patronage of public transport facilities, and also consumption and emissions, will be affected by urban form. Such form may also affect rates of conversion of land from rural to urban uses, and by extension, the loss of habitats for flora and fauna' (Breheny and Rookwood, 1993). The foundation for a sustainable urban transport system is the regional administrative and political structure which

underpins the implementation of policy. This point, however, raises fundamental questions about regions and regionalism. There are divergent views about the nature of regions and the effectiveness or even the need for regional planning. It may now be appropriate to return again to, and to review regional planning in the light of the current debate about sustainable development. This is particularly true in Britain after a number of years of government which eschewed all notions seeking an equitable distribution of resources throughout the country: political dogma has dismissed intervention in the market for the social objective of regional balance. To some extent this question is being addressed obliquely with current suggestions about the re-deployment of some government departments into the regions, but little is being done to reduce or stem the flow of population to the south-east.

REGIONAL CLASSIFICATION

Before discussing regional structures for sustainable development, some clear idea about the nature of regions is a fundamental requirement. Indeed, is there such a phenomenon as a region, or is it merely a mental construct? (Glasson, 1978). At one level any idea, method of classification or definition is a mental construct. Of great relevance for regional planning is the degree to which a region has homogeneity in both human and ecological terms. Relevant, too, is the degree to which the homogeneity is a sound basis for political and administrative purposes. Since the main purpose of such a polity is sustainable development, it is clear that the region should have meaning for the group of people who occupy the area within their boundary: the regional boundary should, therefore, be the mental construct of the region held by its constituent members.

There are two main methods of regional classification (Glasson, 1978). The first main type is the 'formal region', the other being the 'functional region'. The earliest definitions of the region were based mainly on the physical characteristics of the landscape, early geographers believing that the survival of man was dependent upon his adaptation to the environment. Later developments in the ideas about the definition of the formal region included an analysis of economic activities. Economic activities such as the types of industry or agriculture were used as criteria for regional classification. A classic amongst such systems of regional classification is the work of Dudley Stamp in Britain (Figure 4.1) (Stamp and Beaver, 1933).

Geographers such as Herbertson (1905), Unstead (1916, 1935) and Vidal de la Blanche (1931) – using criteria such as topography, climate, vegetation and population – divide the world, continents and countries into natural regions. All such approaches have as a philosophical basis the idea of environmental determinism, the physical features of the planet and its climate determining, to some extent, the pattern of settlement and to some degree the functions of those settlements. The extent of man's occupation of the planet today, particularly in the economically advanced countries of the West, gives the impression that anything is possible. The limit to settlement, apparently, is not nature but man's will.

Opposing man and nature in this way is artificial – man and the natural world are one. The present climatic crisis, problems of pollution and the rate of finite resource depletion are a result of this schism which