transport at city region scale facilitates the implementation of continental innovations such as regional, annual and family ticketing of public transport, and the coordination of the timetable for different transport modes. These are some of the features that make the use of public transport in some German cities a pleasure. Proposals such as these would, or course, involve a radical re-think of bus deregulation and rail privatization, with greater emphasis being given to public service rather than private gain in the transport sector.

THE SIZE OF THE CITY REGION

A debate on regional government often returns to the question of the correct size for a city region. There is no one correct size for a city region is the short answer to this question. The idea of the city region has many similarities with the Hellenic city-state. The literature on city size dates back to the fifth century BC when Plato proposed that a 'good city' should have a population of 5040 landowners or citizens. This number was to be maintained by emigration – that is, by the founding of colonies, and also through the laws of inheritance. Plato failed to explain why this particular number was ideal but presumably, for him and his fellow citizens it had symbolic meaning (Plato, republished 1975). Aristotle was far more circumspect when discussing city size. He said: '. . . ten people would not make a city, and with a hundred thousand it is a city no longer'. His idea was that the city should be big enough and self-sufficient enough for its citizens to lead a good political life. It should, however, not be too big for citizens to lose personal touch with each other so that offices of state could be allocated according to merit and to men known to the citizens (Aristotle, republished 1981). The model for the city region, the polis, Hellenic Athens, may have had about 40 000 citizens with a total population, including slaves, of about 250 000. Many other Hellenic city-states of the time were, of course, much smaller than Athens.

The discussion about city size has changed considerably since the times of Plato and Aristotle. The political system in Athens at the time of Athenian dominance of the Aegean was a participatory democracy. All free citizens in Athens were involved in major decisions concerned with governing the state and also in the election of office bearers. Our system of government is quite different. It is a representative democracy, that is, the citizens elect representatives who in turn take decisions on behalf of the electorate (Pateman, 1970). This fundamental difference between the modern democratic system and that of Hellenic Athens, to some extent, reflects the greater complexity of governing the larger cities of today.

Writers and planners deliberating about ideal city size tended to increase this size as the twentieth century developed. Howard, at the end of the nineteenth century, was suggesting satellite cities of 32 000 and a central or core city of 58 000 people. The planned sizes of new towns built after the Second World War were increased progressively from 50 000 to 250 000. While arguments about the ideal size of cities have occupied the minds of some scholars, cities – particularly in the developing world – have grown at a very rapid rate, so that cities having a multi-million population are now common. Mexico city is an exemplar of the city that will become common as this century

develops: it has a population of about 25 million people with its sprawling suburbs enveloped in a pall of pollution.

Lynch (1981) sums up the position on city size concisely: 'Unfortunately, the evidence that there is a general optimum city size is weak indeed'. It is not the aim here to dispute this view, although the philosophy of sustainable development may add a new dimension to the discussion. The aim of these paragraphs is to discuss the nature of the political and administrative unit best able to manage the environment and to deliver sustainable development: subsumed within this general goal is an interest in the type of authority best able to organize, for example, transport. The city region appears to be the structure most appropriate for the delivery of some aspects of sustained and sustainable development. The size of the city region to some extent is irrelevant. The flexible proposition suggested by Aristotle to determine city size may well be appropriate today for the city region: it should be big enough and self-sufficient enough for the citizens to lead an active political life. Aristotle's upper limit for the city of 100 000, however, would appear to be at the lower end of the scale of population size for a city region in a complex modern democracy (Senior, 1965). More important than crude size is the population's sense of belonging to the place and to a particular polity, so that meaning is derived from citizenship. The other important aspect of Aristotle's prescription for the 'good city' – face-to-face contact or the knowledge of fellow citizens – would be a feature of political life in the neighbourhoods or quarters through the work of agencies such as community or parish councils.

THE REGIONAL PROVINCE

Regionalism has many meanings (Glasson, 1978). It is used in this book to mean an intermediate level of government and administration between the city region and the state. The prime reason for this additional government structure is to make planning for sustainable development more effective by devolving power and decision-making closer to the population. Being larger in population terms than the city region, such provinces provide a stronger counterbalance to central authority. One key to effective regional management of environmental resources lies in legitimising actions and decisions through the election of the governing body. Non-elected bodies and quangos such as Regional Economic Councils, Regional Advisory Commissions or even bodies such as the East Midlands Regional Assembly are no real substitute for an elected regional government. Regional boards, commissions or assemblies are capable of fine work (see for example, the *Revised Regional Planning Guidance for the East Midlands to 2021*). Nevertheless, they lack the political will and muscle to implement sustainable development with all its ramifications (Government Office for the East Midlands, 2003).

Like the city region, it is difficult to determine an optimum size for a regional province. Cultural identity is more significant than size in determining boundaries. Now that there are elected assemblies for Scotland, Wales and a suspended one for Northern Ireland, there is a strong case for regional provincial assemblies in England, which is so necessary for an effective national programme of sustainable development. The Fabian