



FIGURE 6.4
Different control over decision making.

the built environment is distributed across a wide range of private and public entities (Brown, 1982): decision making is 'complex and fractionated' (Scott Brown, 1982, p. 169). As a result, many of the decisions are outside the designer's locus of control. (This situation is graphically represented in Figure 6.4.) For instance, the built environment is affected when the owner of a parcel of land decides to renovate the structure on that parcel. It is also affected when a city official makes the decision to replace ageing light-posts in a residential neighbourhood or to redo the sidewalks in a commercial area. The urban designer can rarely participate directly in this myriad of decisions. Second-order design is appropriate to a situation characterized by distributed decision-making because the design solution is specified at a more abstract level and is, therefore, applicable across a wider range of situations than would be possible if the solution were specified in very concrete terms. To illustrate: where a neighbourhood is identified as historic through various public policy initiatives, property owners and city officials tend to make diverse first-order design decisions that preserve the historic aspects of the neighbourhood (whether this is good or bad in a particular instance is a different question altogether).

Multiple clients

No matter how large the scale of a project, first-order designers usually deal with a single client while urban designers deal with multiple clients (Barnett, 1982a). These multiple clients include the individual decision makers—individual property owners, developers, business interests, politicians—as well as relatively homogenous groups of these decision makers. A second-order approach to design is appropriate for dealing with multiple clients because a range of acceptable solutions is usually specified rather than a single solution: the likelihood of satisfying multiple interests and points of view is increased.

Conclusion

How satisfactory an explanation does the notion of second-order design provide? Does it, as Kreditor (1990a, p. 157) warns, 'disappoint and discourage further discussion'? In the author's opinion, this is far from the case. First, the explanation is sufficient to describe contemporary urban design. It is inclusive in terms of our ability to use this idea to explain the assorted activities and projects for which we use