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SHAPING THE CASE FOR A NATIONAL PLANNING FRAMEWORK IN SCOTLAND

Spatial Planning on the European Agenda

The contemporary interest in spatial planning in European public policy thinking and practice represents a powerful force for critical reflection in individual nation states. Here, the considerable diversity in spatial planning systems within Europe provides an important subject for investigation. There are a number of explanations for the existing differences in the established systems, including given factors such as historical and socio-cultural conditions; physical and land use characteristics; constitutional, legal and administrative frameworks; the levels of economic and urban development; and ideological and political structures (Newman & Thornley, 1996). Indeed, it is the very cultural diversity that differentiates the European Union from other global economic zones (European Commission, 1999). This, nonetheless, represents a challenging context for spatial development policies to remain sensitive to this variety.

In terms of understanding the diversity, Newman & Thornley (1996) trace the lineage of the current arrangements in terms of familial similarities and dissimilarities. They identify broad groupings around Napoleonic, British, Scandinavian, Germanic, and East European traditions (Newman & Thornley, 1996). In particular, they draw attention to common or distinctive legislative and administrative contexts in practice. Thus, for example the legislative framework in Southern Europe tends to be much less consolidated than that prevailing in Northern European nation states. Important differences also exist at the local level with respect to how 'binding' the local plan is in decision making processes. Here, the 'discretionary' nature of the land use planning system in the UK (Booth, 2002) may be contrasted with the relatively more prescriptive approach in Germany. The implications are that particular cultural planning traditions are informed by history, socio-economic conditions, legislative and administrative experience and expertise, and practice over time. Yet, parallel developments focused attentions on the attempts to Europeanise or harmonise policy practices across European space (Bugdahn, 2005; Radaelli, 2000). Following Rose (1991), it is clearly important to take account of such differences when seeking to draw comparative lessons, and in examining the potential for harmonisation.

It is helpful to note some particular themes that serve to exemplify the different approaches to spatial planning across Europe. First, there are the differing relationships between national and local level planning. This is further

mediated through the differential tiers of government, and the power relations which inform strategic and individual land use planning decisions. The Europeanisation of planning thinking, however, has encouraged an interest in better understanding the operation of individual planning systems (Jensen & Richardson, 2001). Although spatial planning is not currently the formal responsibility of the European Community, the spatial planning aspect of the European territory, particularly in terms of balanced and sustainable development (European Commission, 1999), and the influence over national land use policies is increasingly regarded important.

The interest in spatial planning in Europe became more marked in the late 1980s. This may be associated with the increasing maturity of the European Community, and a related awareness that greater understanding of pan-European land use planning practice would benefit the Community at large. This line of thinking led, for example, to the publication of a compendium of spatial planning systems and policies in the European Union (Commission of the European Communities, 1997); various study and research programmes; and the adoption of the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) in 1999 (Faludi & Waterhout, 2002; Shaw & Sykes, 2005; European Commission, 1999). Together, these initiatives sought to provide a portfolio of understanding and practice relating to spatiality, connectivity, and quality in public policy making. At the level of the nation state, the overall effect has been to set in train a rethinking of planning theory and practice. This paper considers the particular way in which spatial planning thinking and practice is evolving in Scotland as part of a search for a new land use planning culture.

A UK Perspective on Spatial Planning

It is important to note, however, that the concept of spatial planning is contested. Clearly, this can be explained in part by the diversity of land use planning traditions and practices in Europe discussed above (see, for example, Faludi, 2002). In the UK, spatial planning is described in terms of an ongoing and enduring process of managing change. Moreover, this dynamic and future-oriented activity is increasingly secured by a range of public, quasi-public, and private actors. The principal objective of spatial planning is held to be that of achieving sustainable development (Planning Officers' Society, 2004). Importantly, the contemporary period of critical reflection

is leading to a process of reconfiguration of the relatively more traditional state activity of land use planning.

In the UK, the contemporary thinking about land use planning is clearly influenced by the re-drawing of boundaries and enlargement of the European space. Moreover, this sensitivity to boundaries, scale, and spatiality is more evident in Scotland as a direct consequence of devolution in 1999. The creation of the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Executive facilitated a greater concern with the appropriateness and effectiveness of the prevailing arrangements for land use planning in Scotland. In effect, devolution created the opportunity for a more critical appreciation of the specific nature of Scotland's spatial economy, its environment, and its territorial management. Thus, Ascherson (2002), for example, asserted that Scotland is seeking both to rediscover its traditions, and to adapt them in order to be better prepared for a more prosperous future. Indeed, Scotland, as a relatively small North Sea nation, is reasserting its sense of European identity, as it engages with the world directly as independent nation state as opposed to through the priorities of Great Britain (Ascherson, 2002). Independence, authority and uniqueness are thus being asserted with gusto across the piece. In the context of this paper, particular attention has been given, for example, to introducing a national spatial plan, and proposing organising land use planning around city regions. Following Allmendinger (2003), for example, this clearly reflects a new interest with appropriate scales of intervention.

Critically, then, the reappraisal of the land use planning system in Scotland has taken account of European thinking and policy practice. Here, the relative peripheral location of Scotland in Europe, and its urban-rural balance, provided a particular set of challenges (Scottish Executive, 2004). This centres on an appreciation of the importance of connectivity across space, and the quality of design in individual places. There is thus an acknowledgement that place and space matter in the formulation and implementation of public policy with respect to the regulation and development of land. It is further informed by political priorities to secure greater social and territorial cohesion, environmental justice, and more effective governance in European space, and to guide European regional policy after 2006.

Land Use Planning in Scotland: Traditional Influences

Land use planning in Scotland is a statutory function and a largely public sector activity. It consists of a set of regulatory controls in order to manage land use and development in the wider public interest (Rydin, 2003). Significantly, there is wide administrative discretion given

to local planning authorities in the making of individual decisions. Moreover, the associated judicial process provides relatively limited powers of intervention or redress in such matters (Cullingworth & Nadin, 2002). Significantly, the traditional locus of the land use planning system has been the local. Here, there are three principal pillars of the local land use planning system: development plans, development control, and enforcement (Scottish Executive, 2002a). Development plans provide the basis for consistent decision making, and in their preparation local planning authorities take account of national priorities, specific local characteristics, and the views of local constituencies of interest. Development control is the regulatory mechanism by which development proposals are assessed against the development plan. Enforcement, then, seeks to 'police' the statutory objectives of the local land use planning process.

Traditionally, then, land use planning in Scotland has principally been a local concern. It is implemented at a local level by a local planning authority, and taking into account local concerns and considerations. This serves an important purpose in that planning matters are located within local communities and therefore seek to satisfy local democratic expectations. Importantly, public participation has been embedded in the process since the 1960s (McAuslan, 1980). It has been argued, however, that the focus on local land use planning agendas has not provided a sufficiently strategic framework in terms of integrating the diverse range of local developments, enabling an efficient provision of supporting infrastructure, and serving the national interest in land use and development (HMSO, 1972). Indeed, this may be described as a strategic vacuum in traditional land use planning practice.

The lack of a strategic dimension in Scottish land use planning practice was explicitly recognised in the early 1970s. In the 1970s, the Select Committee on Land Resource Use in Scotland studied the (then) anticipated social, economic and environmental consequences of change for the management of land resources in Scotland (HMSO, 1972). It identified the lack of strategic thinking and prioritisation in local land use planning practice. The Select Committee asserted that a relatively more strategic planning approach would foster a range of benefits including greater certainty and consistency at the national, regional, and local levels. To this end, it proposed the introduction of a national strategic plan which would provide the institutional policy context to local land use planning and provide an opportunity for the integration of local arrangements (HMSO, 1972). At the time, however, this innovation was perceived as too radical, although, with hindsight, it is clear that such thinking resonated with the thinking in certain parts of mainland Europe.

Nonetheless, the advocacy for a national strategic perspective in traditional local land use planning practice led to the introduction of strategic planning policy guidance for selected development issues which were held to be of national importance (Lloyd & Peel, forthcoming, a). Whilst



acknowledging there was a case for a national strategic overview, such policy guidance was, nevertheless, not comprehensive. Strategic guidelines were produced by government, and focused on specific land use sectors, including out of town retailing developments, agricultural land, skiing, and coastal planning. Some of the strategic guidelines set out a locational framework for the use and development of defined activities, but in terms of national strategic planning, however, these arrangements provided only a partial framework. Nonetheless, the innovative nature of this intervention through strategic guidance was recognised as enhancing the effectiveness of the traditional local land use planning system (Lloyd, 1994). In retrospect, this initial approach may be seen as representing a primitive step towards what we understand today as spatial thinking and practice.

Following devolution in 1999, the changing economic, development, and infrastructure circumstances had to be reconciled with the expectations of a modern and efficient public sector in a new nation region. This triggered a fresh look at the case for providing a national spatial planning framework to guide Scotland's future development in Europe, and influence European regional policy. The importance of the political priority for modernisation in the public sector at large cannot be over-estimated. This particular political agenda of reform seeks primarily to achieve efficiency gains across the public sector. Particular issues of importance which have emerged include addressing the size of the public sector itself; the need to achieve more productive relationships with the private sector; the case for more joined up set of arrangements for delivering policy through a range of government and non-governmental organisations; the promotion of public-private sector partnerships; and even the dispersal and relocation of the public sector (Lloyd & Peel, forthcoming, b).

The modernisation agenda asserts the significance of policies being 'strategic, outcome-focused, joined up (if necessary), inclusive, flexible, innovative and robust' (Strategic Policy Making Team, 1999, para 1.1). This makes a clear case for strategic policy making in all aspects of government and public sector activity. Moreover, in reflecting contemporary political ideas, the modernisation of the public sector is not simply about the reform of government structures and relations alone. There is also a strong commitment to change aspects of contemporary social and economic engagement in the processes of national, regional, and local governance. Hence, measures to re-invigorate local and regional democracy are integral to the modernisation agenda. This is of immediate concern to land use planning. An important point, then, is that the spirit and purpose of land use planning in Scotland is being reconfigured to reflect domestic, modernisation and engagement agendas, together with European dynamics for change (Peel & Lloyd, 2005).

Making the Case for National Planning in Scotland

The next step in the moves towards introducing a national planning framework in Scotland involved a consultation exercise which considered the appropriateness of prevailing strategic land use planning arrangements (Scottish Executive, 2001a). This involved consultation, research, and political debate, together with a series of regional seminars across Scotland so as to identify the breadth of issues considered appropriate for inclusion in any national spatial framework (Lloyd & Peel, 2004). The central question posed by the Scottish Executive was whether some form of national overview document should be prepared. The responses to this question in the consultation paper were unequivocal. Of the 130 responses, some 80% supported the idea, whilst only 4% expressed clear opposition to the idea of a national planning document (Geoff Peart Consulting, 2002a). Significantly, the support was strongest amongst local planning authorities and the business community.

An analysis of the detailed consultation responses reveals a sophisticated appreciation of the reciprocity to be involved in a national planning exercise in the contemporary age. Thus, the Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan & Transportation Committee, for example, asserted "The need for some form of national framework is accepted. It is difficult from the text [of the consultation paper] to judge whether the proposals will suffice. The need is to produce a document somewhere between a vision and a framework. It should seek to reposition planning back at the heart of an integrated government agenda. It should not be prescriptive - more a setting of context. It is more important, however, that any national planning arrangement achieves both status and integration with the main implementing agencies" (Geoff Peart Consulting, 2002b, 18). Here, then, a national overview document was perceived as providing top-down guidance and bottom-up integration of local land use planning practice.

This complementarity was also recognised by other respondents. The Scottish Environment Protection Agency, for example, which is a national non-departmental regulatory body observed that the national overview document should offer a "spatial representation" (Geoff Peart Consulting, 2002b, 20) of existing strategic national policy guidance in order to address what is perceived as "a national planning vacuum" (ibid). Further, the development sector recognised the importance of assertive national leadership for local land use planning practice. Thus, the Scottish Housebuilders Association, for example, agreed that there was "a need for a spatial perspective and context statement to be provided by Government with a view to informing and guiding the preparation of plans at the local level" (ibid). The significance of this is confirmed by the Scottish Housebuilders Association arguing that such an overview document would provide greater certainty for private sector investment by being both "explicit and binding on planning authorities" (ibid).

It was clear, then, that there was a convergence of thinking around the potential of a national overview spatial document across the different stakeholders with an interest in planning, together with an acknowledgement of the strategic deficit implicit in local land use planning practice. It was also clear that the European dimension was evident in the individual responses. Reference was made, for example, to the role such a national overview could play with respect to European funding arrangements, and European environmental policies. The intellectual case for a national strategic planning approach, then, was both powerful and timely, and provided the necessary momentum for the next step. This led to the publication of a National Planning Framework in 2004 by the Scottish Executive.

National Planning Framework (Mark 1)

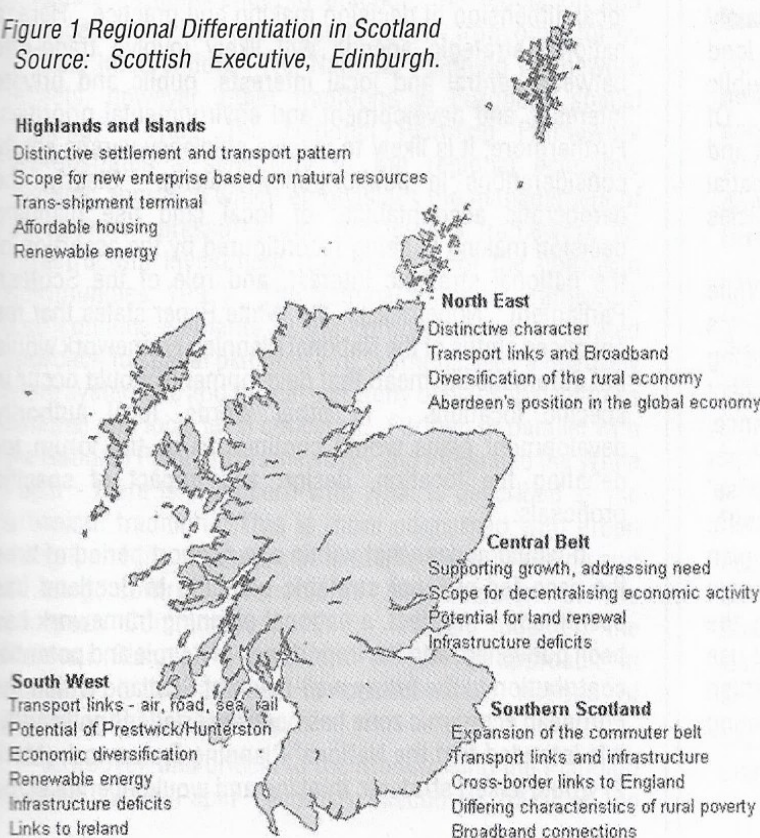
The National Planning Framework (Scottish Executive, 2004) represented an iconic step both in capturing the wider European spatial planning zeitgeist together with an assertion of a distinctively Scottish planning agenda as a devolved nation state. This combination of ideas and issues illustrates a particular sensitivity to the diversity of planning-related matters experienced at the local level in Scotland, whilst responding both to the need to overcome the perceived strategic planning vacuum, and to compete on the European stage. In broad terms, the strategic issues were expressed and organised to reflect the particularities of five geographic sub-national regions. These reflect Scotland's particular topography and spatiality (Figure 1).

The National Planning Framework was informed by on-going consultation and research into different aspects of the land use planning system, together with a study of Scotland's principal cities. The latter was particularly influential, and reinforced the case explicitly to take into account the spatiality of economic change and restructuring, and the desired patterns of potential development in the devolved state (Scottish Executive, 2002b). This was significant because it asserted the need for active territorial management of both urban and rural areas in Scotland, the proactive management of urban-rural relations, together with the recognition that economic development and change takes place in a strategically differential manner. Importantly, this raised searching questions for the necessary infrastructure to support such national strategic development. The move to a national planning approach, therefore, involved both a realism and a pragmatism in its articulation.

In terms of content, the National Planning Framework presents a diagnostic of Scotland in 2004, together with a vision for the development of the national space to 2025. This takes account of the specific realities of Scotland's ageing and declining population; the particularities of the specific urban and rural settlement patterns; the differential potentials of Scotland's economy; and the deficits in its various infrastructure. Here, attention was drawn to the challenges facing specific sectors and uses such as transport, energy, waste management, water and drainage, affordable housing and new technology. The guiding ideas for change turn, then, on the importance of securing quality and connectivity to promote Scotland's future development. Moreover, the National Planning Framework is explicit about the need for Scotland to address the issues and implications arising from the enlargement of the European Union, and the significance of taking account of the ESDP. Pragmatically, then, the National Planning Framework provided the potential basis for competing in future EU funding regimes.

The core objectives articulated in the National Planning Framework, then, reflected the contemporary political mantra of increasing Scotland's economic growth and competitiveness; promoting social and environmental justice; and securing sustainable development. This focused attention on the need to protect and enhance the quality of the natural and built environments. Indeed, the importance of designing quality places in order to foster place competitiveness is clearly asserted within a broader articulation of Scotland's position and spatiality in Europe. This, then, explains the pivotal role for Scotland's four city-regions in acting as the dynamo for economic prosperity. Hence, the National Planning Framework sought to inform strategic investment

Figure 1 Regional Differentiation in Scotland
Source: Scottish Executive, Edinburgh.



decisions and local land use development planning on a pan-Scotland basis. Explicitly, then, it was intended that the different sub-national areas would articulate and realise their potential in the context of the wider national interest. Significantly, however, the National Planning Framework (Mark 1) was designed as a non-statutory and non-prescriptive planning policy document. At the time of its publication, it was explicitly popularised as offering a 'light-touch' approach by the Scottish Executive to guide public and private sector investment and development. Subsequently, the role and status of the National Planning Framework has been reasserted.

National Planning Framework (Mark 2)

In tandem with the publication of the first National Planning Framework, the Scottish Executive continued to refine its economic development strategy. This sought to promote sustainable economic growth and explicitly acknowledged the spatiality of on-going economic change and anticipated development patterns. This clearly asserted the case for strategic leadership in promoting greater certainty for private sector investment decisions and public sector infrastructure commitments. This line of reasoning also acknowledged the reciprocal relations between local economic circumstances and land use planning and the national economy. This was further strengthened by parallel developments in the arrangements for the delivery of local public sector services. This involved an explicit attempt to integrate delivery arrangements and clearly posited the need for joint delivery mechanisms and strategic prioritising. It certainly threw into sharp relief the relationship between local land use planning and these relatively more strategic public sector initiatives (Goodstadt & Buchan, 2002). Of necessity, this two-way relationship between national and local demanded a stronger articulation of a strategic spatial framework so as to ensure the integration of public policies and state intervention.

In 2005, the Scottish Executive published its White Paper, *Modernising the Planning System*. This represents the culmination of the Scottish Executive's modernising agenda and brings together a number of ideas with respect to primary and secondary legislation, policy guidance, practical advice, and a change in culture. The White Paper seeks to ensure that the planning system is 'fit for purpose' by placing development plans at the heart of the system; encouraging greater efficiency in development plan preparation and the determination of planning applications; making it easier for people to become involved in the planning process; and asserting the centrality of land use planning in delivering sustainable development (Scottish Executive, 2005). In this context, the National Planning Framework has assumed a more pivotal role.

This may be illustrated by the proposed hierarchy of development which draws clear distinctions between the national and strategic considerations, major schemes; and the regulation of relatively more local and minor proposals. In part, this new graded hierarchy is intended to ensure a better understanding of the land use planning system and to enable decision-making to take place more efficiently at the relevant level. The National Planning Framework is given the responsibility for the strategic development considerations at the apex of the hierarchy (Lloyd & Peel, 2005). Importantly, this will involve a revision of the National Planning Framework in order that it discharge this relatively more high profile responsibility. It is intended, then, that a revised National Planning Framework (Mark 2) will be published in 2008 to cover the period up to 2028.

The revised National Planning Framework will identify inter-regional investment and development choices that have to be made in the national interest. This draws attention to the strategic issues that cut across local authority jurisdictions and seeks to resolve the difficulties of securing national strategic objectives at the local level. The siting of renewable energies, such as the location of wind-farms, or the development of major transport infrastructure, or water and sewerage investments, for example, clearly illustrate the tensions between local and strategic planning.

It is intended that the National Planning Framework (Mark 2) will be decided at a national level by the Scottish Executive, and with full political involvement of the Scottish Parliament. Yet, the White Paper does not address the potential difficulties of drawing up such an assertive national strategic spatial plan. The traditional culture of land use planning in Scotland has tended to assert the very local dimension of decision making and practice. Here, a national strategic agenda will likely involve trade-offs between central and local interests, public and private interests, and development and environmental priorities. Furthermore, it is likely to involve efficiency versus equity considerations in public policy making. Clearly, the democratic accountability of local land use planning decision making is being reconfigured by the assertion of the national strategic interest, and role of the Scottish Parliament. Nonetheless, the White Paper states that the enhanced status of the National Planning Framework would not automatically mean that developments would occur in specific locations. In other words, local authority development plans would continue to be the forum for debating the location, design and impact of specific proposals.

It would appear that within a very short period of time the case for national strategic planning in Scotland has been made. In effect, a national planning framework has been published, and the importance of its role and potential contribution to the future well-being of Scotland within the European economic zone has been asserted. Significantly, it is intended that the National Planning Framework (Mark 2) would assert strategic thinking and would operate at the

national political interface. This is clear signal that the legitimisation of the process is intended to fall to the democratically elected representatives at the national level. Inevitably, this will both complement and challenge the traditional local focus of planning theory and practice, and local democracy, in Scotland.

Conclusions

Recent developments in Scottish land use planning theory and practice have a new resonance with the ideas and experiences of other European families. Hence, there is clear evidence of planning being socially reconstructed using the language of spatiality and responding to the re-scaling of Europe. This clearly reflects the importance of articulating land use planning in the light of the more assertive European context and the shifting emphasis of European regional policy. Here, it is clear that there is a stronger commitment to integrating traditional land use planning with economic development and community planning through the National Planning Framework. Here, too, there is a more explicit link with the prioritisation of infrastructure requirements and in addressing a shared agenda with other strategic activities such as transport planning.

The traditional land use planning system in Scotland follows what may be described as a land use management approach (Commission of the European Communities, 1997). In this tradition, land use planning is locally managed within a framework of national strategic policy guidance. Significantly, in practice, the regulation and management of land is a separate activity from other forms of state intervention. The National Planning Framework reflects, however, other traditions in European spatial thinking. Thus, the National Planning Framework demonstrates a sensitivity to the regional economic planning approach which emphasises the management of development pressures and providing a framework for infrastructure investment (Commission of the European Communities, 1997). The National Planning Framework also contains elements of the comprehensive integrated approach to spatial planning which emphasises a relatively more systematic and formal hierarchy of plans that address national and local level concerns. Further, in parallel with the National Planning Framework - and integral to the White Paper - there is a concern with what is described as the urbanism tradition. This is more concerned with urban design, and the regulation of land use through zoning and building control mechanisms (Commission of the European Communities, 1997). Taken together, the National Planning Framework (Mark 2) approach in Scotland is an attempt to operationalise notions of European spatial planning.

Moreover, and critical to the Modernising the Planning System White Paper (Scottish Executive, 2005) is the

emphasis on culture change. This notion lies potentially at the heart of the re-shaping of traditional land use planning in Scotland. The strengthening of the status of the National Planning Framework clearly differentiates between local and strategic planning. This clearly focuses attention on Scotland's place in Europe. Moreover, the interest in spatiality highlights the shared agenda for delivering on sustainable development which requires an integrated approach to development involving a range of actors. This relatively more holistic approach to strategic planning demands a new culture of working. In parallel, there is a strong interest in Scotland in creating quality places (Scottish Executive, 2001). Here the emphasis is on good design, and quality at the scale of the individual development, reflecting the urban design principles of identity and beauty at the local level. Clearly such ideas find a certain resonance in terms of expression and tradition with practices elsewhere in Europe. This would suggest that attitudes, expectations, and practices for spatial and local land use planning in Scotland are being influenced by European experiences.

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