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Encouraging sustainable urban regeneration in Scotland: learning from Europe

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ENCOURAGING SUSTAINABLE URBAN REGENERATION IN SCOTLAND: LEARNING FROM EUROPE

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Abstract

Urban regeneration policy in Scotland has evolved to a considerable extent in recent decades. Broadly, there has been a shift away from the property-led approach of the 1980s towards an approach that is more 'holistic' in orientation, integrating economic, social and environmental aspects. However, it is clear that there is a need for improvement in the effectiveness of urban policy in Scotland in order to address the severe and continuing nature of urban decline. In this respect, practice in France and the Netherlands, countries that face similar problems, offers some lessons for policy improvement. However the implications point to the need for radical change in the institutional framework for regeneration in Scotland.

1. Introduction

Urban regeneration policy is a contested concept. For instance, it may be defined as the activity of government in urban areas (Blackman, 1995), or the management of urban change (Pacione, 1997a), or more specifically as the process of reversing economic, social and physical decline in towns and cities where market forces alone are inadequate to address such issues. There is, however, a degree of consensus on the aim of such policy, which is to address the problem of urban decline (Atkinson and Moon, 1994). In terms of underlying factors, both structural factors linked to socio-economic change and local contextual factors contribute to the experience of urban decline, with the result of local concentrations of poverty and multiple disadvantage. Social symptoms of this process include crime and racial conflict, and social exclusion, and economic symptoms include de-industrialisation, manufacturing decline, increasing unemployment and welfare dependency, and decay of infrastructure (Pacione, 1997a). Furthermore, the resulting presence of concentrations of disadvantage can easily become self-sustaining as part of a 'vicious spiral' of decline.

Explicit policy for urban regeneration emerged in the UK in the 1960s largely as a means of positive discrimination on an area basis, though the social orientation of policy was later replaced by the perceived need to secure favourable conditions for enterprise creation and economic growth. In the 1990s, there has been an emphasis on the use of competition, the need for a more strategic and inclusive approach to regeneration, and the need to prevent social exclusion. Nevertheless, the process of urban decline has persisted, (Edwards, 1997), possibly in part because of the lack of clear definition of policy aims (Turok and Hopkins, 1997), and lack of policy coherence (Pacione, 1997b). Moreover, the property-led approach to regeneration of the 1980s would seem to have sometimes increased social and economic polarisation (Edwards, 1997; Atkinson and Moon, 1994). Overall, UK urban policy seems to have failed to address the main aspects of urban decline; for instance, Burton (1998) suggests that "urban policy measures employed over the last 22 years have not been especially effective in meeting their own stated goals or in delivering clear benefits to those at whom they have been directed" (p. 433).

However, there have been major differences in approaches to urban policy within the UK; for instance the emphasis on quality of bids within the Single Regeneration Budget mechanism in England in the mid-1990s may be compared with the emphasis on need as a central criterion within the Scottish Urban Programme and the Priority Partnership Area initiative. As indicated below, contextual factors such as the history of corporatism within Scottish public policy may partly explain this difference in approach, though it may also be suggested that the high level of innovation in Scottish urban regeneration policy has also been a factor in this context (Lawless, 1989).

This paper considers the experience of urban regeneration policy in Europe with a view to enhancing the effectiveness of the distinctive approach to policy that has been developed in

Scotland. It is structured as follows. First, the contextual nature of urban change in Scotland is considered, followed by the policy response. Specific instances of experience in Europe are then considered by using the cases of the Netherlands and France, since they are the EU countries which, together with the UK, have advanced furthest in developing explicitly urban policy responses to urban decline. The implications for policy and practice in Scotland will then be assessed, and broad conclusions reached.

2. Urban change in Scotland

In the late 1990s, Scotland is experiencing economic growth and stability, with slowly falling average rates of unemployment, though this masks severe and persistent inequalities within Scotland. Changes in the economy as a whole are significant in this respect, particularly in terms of the decline of manufacturing employment. For instance, in Glasgow between 1981 and 1991, employment in the chemicals sector declined by 67.4%, and employment in the engineering sector declined by 45.4% (Pacione, 1997a, p. 20). There has been a parallel growth in new, knowledge-based service industries, with employment in non-market services in Glasgow increasing by 11.1% between 1981 and 1991 (Pacione, 1997a, p. 20), but this has brought an increased proportion of part-time or temporary employment (Scottish Homes, 1997). Moreover, there is an increasing division between those living in good and poor quality housing in Scotland, with the result that in 1996 25% of Scottish houses were found to suffer from dampness and/or condensation (Scottish Office, 1998, p. 3). Together, such factors have led to the persistence of concentrations of multiple disadvantage in many urban areas, and in Glasgow poverty was found to exhibit a high degree of spatial and temporal consistency within specific parts of the conurbation from 1981-91 (Pacione, 1997a). These factors are linked to the concept of social exclusion, which refers to the process whereby a combination of mutually reinforcing circumstances prevent individuals and communities from effectively participating in economic growth.

The nature of demographic change is also critical in this respect; while the Scottish population is expected to fall by 80,000 between 1996 and the year 2013, the predicted pattern of population change is very uneven. Essentially, some major urban areas are expected to lose population; for instance, Glasgow is expected to fall by 10% and Dundee by 9%. This represents a major migration from urban to rural areas (Carrell, 1998), and it implies a loss of demand within many urban areas. Moreover, younger, economically active residents are more likely to move, compounding problems of increasing concentrations of social disadvantage.

The problem of urban decline in Scotland is therefore linked to factors such as the reduction of economic activity and employment opportunities in the older urban cores, as well as the parallel process of urban decentralisation whereby absolute population levels within many cities are declining (Lawless, 1989). The processes of globalisation of production and finance are important in this respect since they intensify de-industrialisation and compound the need for restructuring of local economies (Pacione, 1997a). Consequently, many cities have entered a 'cycle of decline' whereby economic decline prompts decentralisation of the population, which leads to a reduction in the quality of the 'image' of the city, which prompts further economic decline and disinvestment (McCarthy, 1999). While economic and political action at the national and local levels can modify the effects of such global factors, urban regeneration policy in Scotland, as in the UK as a whole, has not effectively addressed the causes of urban decline, though it has ameliorated some of the symptoms of urban decline such as environmental decay (Atkinson and Moon, 1994).

3. Urban Regeneration in Scotland

Urban regeneration policy in Scotland has reflected an increasing emphasis on the need to harness market forces and private sector funding (Turok, 1987; Pacione, 1989), as in the rest of the UK. However, there have also been distinctive characteristics to such policy in Scotland, including a leading role for local authorities, consensus between national and local government agencies, an emphasis on strategy and, perhaps to a lesser extent, on addressing local needs and involving local communities. These characteristics have arisen partly as a result of contextual factors such as the relatively small number of areas that suffer from urban decline, which have allowed a relatively high degree of policy co-ordination compared to other parts of the UK (Keating and Boyle, 1986). The small size of the country has also enabled the formation of an effective network of links between central and local government and private agencies, which has facilitated policy co-ordination (Hayton, 1996; Constitution Unit, 1996). Moreover, the delegation of administrative functions to the Scottish Office has allowed a degree of policy independence (Lee, 1995), and, partly because of its relatively small size, the Scottish Office has avoided major problems of departmentalism. Partly as a consequence, policy formulation and implementation has been closely integrated within Scottish urban policy (Boyle, 1988). The presence of Scottish regional councils enhanced

such integration, since they brought together urban and rural areas and combined responsibilities for land use planning and provision of major services, though the abolition of these councils in 1996 seems to have brought about a 'strategic deficit' in policy terms. Moreover, the Scottish Development Agency (SDA) applied a relatively interventionist approach (Boyle, 1988), though more recent policy initiatives have demonstrated a convergence with practice elsewhere in the UK (Ayriss, 1997). Specific urban policy elements in Scotland have been dominated by the Urban Programme, which has been the main source of funding for urban regeneration since 1969, with eligible areas defined as those falling within the most deprived 10% of Census Enumeration Districts. Grants were made for capital and revenue funding for approved regeneration projects (Scottish Office, 1993), and local authorities made a preliminary sifting of applications. However, the Scottish Urban Programme was criticised for its project-based emphasis and lack of strategic direction (Keating and Boyle, 1986; Taylor, 1988), and the Scottish Urban Programme therefore seemed to be marginal or even tokenistic in effect (Turok and Hopkins, 1997). In addition, the SDA was created in 1975, and its first main task was to take responsibility for the Glasgow Eastern Area Renewal (GEAR) scheme for the regeneration of a large part of inner Glasgow (Keating and Boyle, 1986; Lawless, 1989). However, the SDA's overall approach to regeneration evolved substantially; in particular, after 1978 it prioritised economic intervention in areas faced with manufacturing plant closures (Boyle, 1988), after 1981 it concentrated on small 'area projects' which attracted 60% of its targetable funding, and after 1985 it emphasised the role of the private sector in business development (Boyle, 1990).

The 'New Life for Urban Scotland' policy document (Scottish Office, 1988) aimed to increase co-ordination of relevant public sector agencies to bring about the more effective use of existing funding. It also proposed a shift in emphasis in urban policy from inner areas to peripheral housing estates since the latter displayed persistent problems such as unemployment, poor housing and a lack of industrial and commercial activity. In addition, it encouraged inter-agency partnerships, small business formation, self employment and private sector involvement in order to address the criticisms of the project-led approach within urban policy (Scottish Office, 1988; Pacione, 1989). This led to the establishment in 1988 of four 'Urban Partnerships', which applied a 'holistic', multi-sectoral approach that integrated social, economic and environmental improvements (McGregor *et al*, 1995), and an increased role for local communities (Bailey *et al*, 1995). The Urban Partnerships were also expected to make more effective use of existing funding and to lever more private sector investment. Urban Partnerships were designated in Castlemilk (Glasgow), Ferguslie Park (Paisley), Wester Hailes (Edinburgh) and Whitfield (Dundee), where peripheral, public sector housing estates had been cheaply built with the result of their early obsolescence (McCrone, 1991), and levels of social disadvantage in these areas were extremely high. They were led by the Scottish Office, but they also involved a range of other agencies. Improvement programmes were phased over a ten-year period to allow a strategic approach (Bailey *et al*, 1995), and the Urban Partnerships brought about improvements in housing condition and tenure diversification (COI, 1995). However, social and economic regeneration was more problematic (Gaster, Smart and Stewart, 1995; O'Toole, Snape and Stewart, 1995; McGregor *et al*, 1995), and the Urban Partnerships were criticised for failing to progress economic development objectives (Turok and Hopkins, 1997) and for failing to give due regard to the city-wide strategic context (Hall, 1997).

The government's review of the Urban Programme in 1991-92 recommended a more strategic focus with more local co-ordination and integration of projects (Scottish Office, 1993), and the 'Programme for Partnership' initiative extended the comprehensive, co-ordinated, strategic, inter-agency model demonstrated in the Urban Partnership areas by the designation of so-called 'Priority Partnership Areas' (PPAs) (Scottish Office, 1995a). The Scottish Office announced the designation of twelve PPAs in November 1996, and the PPAs sought to ensure explicit links with city-wide urban regeneration strategies and encouraged the development of local partnerships. Selection of areas was competitive and applications had to meet criteria that included quality of proposals as well as demonstration of local need (Scottish Office, 1995). More recently, there has been a recognition of the need for policy to address the issue of social exclusion, which is brought about by the conjunction of poverty and factors such as poor housing, since many aspects of disadvantage tend to be concentrated together, disproportionately affecting groups such as older people, ethnic minorities and young people. Consequently, the introduction of Social Inclusion Partnerships (SIPs) in 1996 was intended to tackle these problems in a more integrated manner so as to actively prevent the formation of social exclusion.

There has therefore been a significant evolution in urban regeneration policy in Scotland, which has incorporated a shift from the physical, property development-led approaches of the 1980s, towards a 'holistic' approach that attempts to weave together social, economic and environmental aspects of regeneration. However, severe problems remain, compounded by

factors such as institutional fragmentation as well as a financial climate which makes it difficult for local authorities to operate in an innovative manner. Consequently, there is a need to adapt policy further to increase its effectiveness.

4. Urban Regeneration in the Netherlands

The experience of the Netherlands is significant in this context because the country shares with the UK the following characteristics: a relatively small and densely-populated land area; a comparable structure of central and local government; a parliamentary democracy within a monarchy; a similar level of economic development; a complex and relatively comprehensive welfare state; a similar experience of problems of urban decline; and a growing concern about the share of national resources devoted to 'welfare' and public expenditure. However, there are also major contextual differences between aspects of administrative culture in the Netherlands and that in the UK.

In fact, the nature of the Netherlands as a decentralised, unitary state underpins the approach of the country to urban regeneration. Significantly, the Dutch tradition of the "politics of accommodation" (Lijphart, 1968; p. 103) allows both control by higher tiers of government and a high degree of freedom for lower-tier municipalities (Needham and van de Ven, 1995). For instance, in terms of setting the land-use planning framework within which urban regeneration policy operates, there is a high level of negotiation between all the levels, and the municipalities enjoy a large degree of autonomy since the central government is content to set the broad framework within which the municipalities must work (Needham and van de Ven, 1995). Moreover, the national planning policy framework in the Netherlands has been significant in the evolution of urban regeneration policy. This national framework in the 1970s by involved the designation of so-called 'growth centres' within which new development was to be concentrated (Needham *et al*, 1993). However, after 1985, the government's 'compact city' policy expressed the need for development to be concentrated in existing urban centres. This shift in policy occurred partly because of contextual factors such as economic recession, lack of overall growth, restrictions on available finance, and the perception of increasing social problems and decreasing environmental quality within cities. In addition, the need for sustainable urban development was increasingly recognised, and it was assumed that this could be achieved by encouraging the consolidation of urban centres by means of mixed-use schemes (Needham *et al*, 1993). The shift in emphasis for urban regeneration was formalised in 1985 by the Town and Village Renewal Act.

The distinctive role of municipalities is also important in this context (Needham and van der ven, 1995). For instance, they play a role as the provider of most land for development, by acquiring much of the land considered suitable for development, parcelling it into convenient plots, providing the necessary servicing, and then offering it to developers. They can therefore exert substantial control over the details of development, since their public powers of control may be combined with private powers arising from land ownership (Needham *et al*, 1993). Nevertheless, in terms of developments judged a priority for urban regeneration, subsidisation is frequently necessary, and subsidies are made available from central government for social housing or other development considered to be in the national interest (Needham *et al*, 1993). Such subsidies may be additional to the urban renewal fund, which was formed by the amalgamation of previously-separate funds as a result of the 1985 Town and Village Renewal Act .

In the 1990s, however, increasing financial restrictions have led to a greater reliance by municipalities on the private sector for implementation funding. One result has been a greater emphasis on public-private partnership development schemes to meet aims for urban regeneration, which has involved a more powerful role in the development process for building developers as well as institutional investors (Kohnstamm, 1993). Such partnership schemes have been intended to harness the expertise of the municipalities and the market knowledge and acceptance of risk of the private sector, and they have allowed schemes to proceed which would not have otherwise been viable (Kohnstamm, 1993). In addition, central government took a leading role in the designation of 'key projects' or 'exemplary redevelopment schemes', which were intended to act as models for arrangements elsewhere. This mechanism, incorporated into the 1990 Fourth Report for Planning Extra, involved enhanced government subsidies with the penalty of withdrawal of funds if agreement between the parties failed (Kohnstamm, 1993). Large subsidies for development were justified by the assumption that development was in the national interest, since the cities selected were those which the 1989 Fourth National Report on Physical Planning designated as 'urban intersections', namely cities of international, national or regional significance. 'Key projects' were therefore allocated to Maastricht, Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Den Haag and Groningen (Needham *et al*, 1993).

The operation of 'key projects', however, should be considered in the context of the culture of

negotiation in the Netherlands, within which pragmatism is highly regarded. Hence, even outside the 'key project' areas, municipalities and developers frequently continued negotiations over development details throughout the process of implementation (Needham *et al.*, 1993). In addition, the 'key projects' applied the government's 'compact city' policy by encouraging urban regeneration schemes which involved integration of land uses, a major break with previous policy (van der Knaap and Pinder, 1992). This approach took account of the structure of the city as a whole, partly as a result of the recognition of the need for more sustainable development (Needham *et al.*, 1993). Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that the compact city approach has been criticised by some observers who have argued that it may concentrate environmental problems in urban areas leading to conflicts between functions such as housing and industry (de Roo, 1998).

More recently, however, there has been a shift in focus of urban regeneration policy in the Netherlands as a result of the Major Cities Memorandum presented to the newly-elected national government of the Netherlands in 1994. This memorandum represented a recognition of the lack of an explicit urban policy that concentrated on the social problems which were becoming increasingly evident in Dutch cities. As a consequence, the Major Cities policy emerged as a means to link the social problems of cities to wider economic opportunities, since the major cities in the Netherlands were regarded as the motors of economic development in the country (van den Berg *et al.*, 1998). The main aim of the policy was to ensure better value from the existing government departments responsible for policy that affected cities - hence co-ordination was a major theme of the policy, which sought to reduce fragmentation, to increase the leadership capacity of local authorities and to bring about a new alliance between the central government and cities. The Major Cities policy is geared to three themes, namely employment and education; safety; and quality of life (van den Berg *et al.*, 1998).

As part of the Major Cities policy in the Netherlands, the government decentralised some powers to local authorities, and it adopted a procedure whereby it invited each major city to present an integrated plan that goes on to form the basis for an agreed contract between local and national governments. Targets for the contract in terms of reductions in unemployment, job creation etc. are agreed as part of this procedure, though local authorities are encouraged to implement their plans free from control by central government (Parkinson, 1998). In fact, because of political pressure to extend the Major Cities policy initiative to smaller cities, 26 cities eventually formed such contracts with the government, though the four largest cities have fewer controls imposed on them by the centre in terms of implementation.

5. Urban Regeneration in France

Like the Netherlands, France shares several features with the UK which imply the potential for a useful transfer of experience in terms of urban policy. For instance, like the UK, France has had a long experience of urban policy, as well as extensive experience of area-based approaches to urban regeneration. Moreover, in terms of an explicit comparison with Scotland, the problems of peripheral estates in the latter show a similarity to the problems of the high-rise estates built on the periphery of French cities.

Several periods of urban regeneration policy may be acknowledged in France. For instance, in the 1960s and early 1970s a large amount of public investment was made in physical infrastructure, communications, higher education and other public uses, and there was also a large extension of social housing on the peripheries of major cities. In the 1980s, however, urban unrest led to a recognition of the scale of social exclusion within large peripheral housing estates, and neighbourhood intervention policies were applied that promoted innovative regeneration schemes within urban neighbourhoods, including for instance housing renovation and environmental improvements. From the late 1980s to the mid-1990s, the 'Contrat de Ville' model was established as a commitment for social and economic development between the state, regional and local governments, with an emphasis on community participation (Sallez, 1989). This initiative initially comprised a pilot programme for thirteen large cities which involved five-year regeneration plans negotiated between the agencies involved, though it was later extended to 214 areas. Thus there was a measure of horizontal and vertical integration of partners, which brought together government departments as well as all the different layers of local government. Typically, a project leader was appointed to manage and implement the contract.

Overall, the emphasis of the Contrat de Ville was social rather than economic since it was primarily intended to reduce the problems experienced in areas suffering from social disadvantage (Parkinson, 1998). After the Contrat de Ville was established, there followed two further innovations in urban regeneration, namely 'Grands Projets Urbains', similar to British Urban Development Corporations, and 'Zones Franches' which are similar to British

Enterprise Zones (Sallez, 1989). The latest phases of urban regeneration occurred after 1996 when the government introduced the Urban Renewal Pact, which moved towards the use of financial inducements to encourage small businesses to remain in or move into designated areas, which were themselves selected from those areas involved in the Contrats de Ville. A smaller set of these areas were designated as Zones Franches, and these areas qualified for measures including exemption from business taxes for new and existing small businesses, exemption for employers from paying social security payments, and a package of measures to create rental investment and for the relocation of public employment (Parkinson, 1998).

The Contrat de Ville in particular has been suggested as a model for urban regeneration policy in the UK and elsewhere (Quaife, 1987), and some of the ways in which its features could be adapted and transferred are suggested below. However, it is also important to note that the Contrat de Ville has experienced problems and limitations. For instance, it has not effectively involved the private sector since it essentially comprises a partnership of public sector actors and agencies. Moreover, while the Contrat de Ville approach offers the opportunity for close involvement of local communities, this involvement does not extend to deciding which schemes to carry forward for funding, or to aspects of implementation (Parkinson, 1998). In fact the greater levels of accountability in the Contrat de Ville largely stem from the importance of directly elected politicians in the regeneration process - though this does not lead to the involvement of those local people unable to vote, such as recent immigrants. In addition, the scale of resources within the Contrat de Ville may be regarded as insubstantial, and the degree of bureaucracy involved in the negotiating process may therefore be unjustified (Parkinson, 1989). Moreover, the Contrat de Ville initiative is overwhelmingly based on social welfare elements, and would therefore seem to be a lack of concern for economic aspects of regeneration (Parkinson, 1989). It has also been argued that the initiative is not well integrated with other initiatives at the same level, and therefore that it may not offer an unqualified model for good partnership working.

However, it is also important to acknowledge the differences in contextual circumstances that have affected the French experience of urban regeneration. An important factor in this respect is the extremely centralised nature of government, with local government being correspondingly fragmented and weak. In particular, the fragmentation of local government has severely restricted the ability of cities to construct city-wide strategies within which specific urban regeneration initiatives can be situated. In addition, partly as a result of the nature of government in France, the private, voluntary and community sectors play a relatively minor role in regeneration initiatives (Parkinson, 1988).

6. Implications for practice in Scotland

In the UK it must be acknowledged that there have been significant innovations in urban policy since 1997; in particular, as Clarence and Painter (1998) suggest, "A number of important early policy initiatives give credence to the contention that a more collaborative public service discourse is emerging under New Labour. The Government intends that area-based partnerships now a feature of local economic development should become a prototype particularly for tackling the problems of disadvantaged communities" (p. 13).

However, Clarence and Painter (1998) also suggest that the danger remains of too many separate initiatives, with a lack of adequate attention given to the organisational infrastructure which is necessary to sustain more collaborative methods of working. More fundamentally perhaps, as Parkinson (1998) suggests, area-based initiatives contain severe limitations such as their tendency to displace problems between neighbourhoods; to create a long-term dependency culture; to fail to address the problems individuals outside targeted areas; and to fail to tackle the cases of urban decline which lie outside disadvantaged areas. Nevertheless, there seems to be a credible role for area-based approaches within urban regeneration since they can help to compensate for local market failure, can increase community capacity at the local level, can incorporate a strategic element by linking local policy to city-wide regeneration strategies, and can encourage more policy integration at local level (Parkinson, 1998). The issue then is how such approaches can be made more effective, and it is on this point that experience in Europe can perhaps be most useful. In this context there are several implications from the above experience of urban regeneration in the Netherlands and France, as follows.

a) Partnership working

There is a consensus in much of Europe that a partnership approach to urban regeneration is more effective than a reliance on conflictual or confrontational relationships. In this context the French Contrat de Ville model would seem to offer many useful aspects of best practice, notwithstanding its limitations as set out above. Essentially, the Contrat de Ville offers several specific advantages. For instance, it illustrates the effective engagement of local

authorities with national programmes for urban regeneration, since it allows closer collaboration between central and local government which in turn helps to ensure that local regeneration proposals are in line with strategic regeneration frameworks. It may be argued that this has not always occurred in the UK, though the Scottish approach to Priority Partnership Areas and, latterly, Social Inclusion Partnerships, would seem to bring local authorities much more to the forefront of policy. Nevertheless, there is still a need to increase equity within partnership arrangements in Scotland, since many partnerships have in practice involved an extremely unequal share of power between the partners. There is also a need to increase the accountability of partnerships to ensure that their benefits are appropriately targeted. The *Contrat de Ville* seems to offer a means by which such aims can be realised more effectively. It also offers the prospect of more sustainable partnerships, since it involves the incorporation of principles of long-term continuity in regeneration policy and funding. Moreover, the absence of rigid competitive principles would also seem to have many advantages when compared to the rigidly-competitive approach of much of urban policy in Britain, including Scotland, in recent years. This is because the approach of the *Contrat de Ville* avoids an emphasis on competitive bidding for funds which can prove costly and wasteful in terms of resources, as for instance was found in the case of the English Single Regeneration Budget Challenge fund for urban regeneration in the early 1990s, as well as recent initiatives within Scotland. This is because, unlike an 'all or nothing' bidding process, the *Contrat de Ville* involves an initial selection of areas, followed by discussion and negotiation between partners, to determine the best options.

In addition, in the Netherlands also it would seem that greater attention is given to the need for accountability in both policy formulation and implementation (Hoggart, 1997), partly by means of partnership working arising from the seeking of a broad consensus which arises from the administrative and political culture of the Netherlands, as indicated above. This culture of partnership and consensus is significant for instance in terms of the Major Cities policy since this involves close working between the state and municipal authorities, though the level of co-operation with the private sector is not nearly as great (Priemus, Boelhouwer and Kruythoff, 1997). In addition, the national government in the Netherlands is continuing a process of decentralisation of power to the municipalities that was begun in the 1980s (van den Berg *et al*, 1998). While this process of decentralisation would seem to have been motivated primarily by the need to save costs at the centre, it is nevertheless significant that the municipalities of the Netherlands enjoy a relative independence of both policy-making and service delivery when compared to the UK, including Scotland (Fenwick, 1995). Since many of the effects of urban policy in the Netherlands seem to derive from this factor, it implies the need for a modification of the relationship between government and local authorities in Scotland.

b) Community involvement

The approach of the French *Contrat de Ville* also offers the opportunity for more inclusive partnership by means of the closer and more effective involvement of local communities, since community groups have been closely involved in 'Contrat' initiatives in practice (Quaife, 1997). This approach could also be adapted to practice in Scotland for instance by taking into account the need to frame bidding processes according to the needs of local communities. Hence more flexible bidding timescales could allow greater responsiveness as well as more time for consultation prior to bid submission; alternatively, areas could be targeted and asked to put forward projects for consideration at any time, possibly on a locally-competitive basis as in the *Contrat de Ville*. In addition, the range of participants involved in partnerships, particularly in terms of local communities, could be increased by encouraging more formal, longer-term, collaborative arrangements, similar to the *Contrat de Ville* arrangements, rather than the more pragmatic and temporary alliances aimed at leveraging public sector resources that appear to have dominated regeneration initiatives in Scotland in recent years.

Moreover, evidence from the Netherlands suggests there is a greater level of commitment to community involvement in decision-making than is evident in urban regeneration initiatives in Scotland, with communities given more time and resources to become effectively involved in both strategic and operational aspects of regeneration. Again, this suggests the need for modified practice in Scotland, with more emphasis given to the potential role of local communities in the regeneration process.

c) Strategic policy

The need for a strategic approach to urban policy derives from the assumption of the need for a more integrated approach to policy and for a change in perspective towards longer-term approaches. As Carley and Kirk (1998) indicate, this is linked to the concept of sustainable development, an implicit aim of urban regeneration in the late 1990s. The concept of

sustainable development refers to "first, beneficial interaction between economy, environment and social development and second, intergenerational equity" (Carley and Kirk, 1998, p. 3). An important assumption is that poverty and urban dereliction are incompatible with sustainable development. Specifically, a strategic approach to urban policy in this context can allow greater integration by taking an overview to policy in terms of functional aspects and geographical areas, and taking a long-term approach. It is perhaps easier to see the benefits of such an approach by reference to its opposite, namely a short-termist, narrowly-functional, non-integrated approach not unlike the widely-discredited property development-led approach that was followed in the UK during much of the 1980s.

In this context, there would also seem to be lessons for Scotland from the way in which initiatives for urban regeneration in the Netherlands are closely situated within broader national policy frameworks, including those for land use planning. This would seem to be particularly important in view of the fact of population decentralisation as a major factor affecting urban decline in the central areas of cities in Scotland, a process which, as indicated above, is predicted to continue. The Major Cities policy in the Netherlands seems to provide an example of how this can work since it applies an integrated approach that co-ordinates policy to deal with socio-economic problems as a whole at the metropolitan scale (van den Berg *et al*, 1998). This is of course facilitated by the strategic context set by the national government which is provided for all aspects of urban policy in the Netherlands. In fact, it has been suggested that a national land use and infrastructure plan could be initiated in Scotland, which would allow national priorities to be linked directly to resources (Hayton, 1997). Such a plan would also of course facilitate the stated aim of the UK government to encourage an integrated approach at all levels to the issues of transport and land use development, which could further contribute to more general aims for sustainable development and regeneration. The Dutch application of national environmental policy plans, which integrate national spatial policy plans with national transport and traffic plans, is particularly instructive in this respect (Carley and Kirk, 1998). In addition, urban regeneration policy in Scotland could learn from that in both France and the Netherlands by providing a national strategy for urban regeneration which could allow more effective targeting of areas of need, and could ensure the integration of area-based policies with broader social and economic policy. Such a strategic approach could avoid some of the innate problems of area-based initiatives (Atkinson and Moon, 1994), and could enable a longer-term approach to urban regeneration, avoiding the introduction of temporary, catalytic initiatives which are less likely to achieve sustainable regeneration (Carley and Kirk, 1998).

Similarly, it is significant that the Contrat de Ville is largely geared to welfare aspects of regeneration, and that much of the Major Cities Initiative is geared to mainstream concerns such as employment, education, safety and quality of life. This indicates a recognition of the need for effective urban policy that links to mainstream policy, as opposed to that which is marginalised in both nature and in terms of funding allocation. A more strategic approach at the national level in Scotland, as advocated above, would also allow the opportunity for more effective links to be made between funding for urban regeneration and funding for mainstream services (Chapman, 1998). Moreover, mainstream policies could be 'bent' towards disadvantaged areas, rather than simply adding a relatively small element of assistance as in the case of the Social Inclusion Partnerships. However, these changes imply the need for more flexible approaches and more co-ordination at the local level, which further underlines the need for changes in the relationship between local authorities and central government.

7. Conclusions

Within the UK, and particularly in Scotland given the changing constitutional landscape, there is now an opportunity to improve the policy mechanisms for urban regeneration. The experience of France and the Netherlands, as indicated above, offer some ways in which urban policy can be amended so as to improve its effectiveness in addressing the causes of urban decline and bringing about sustainable regeneration outcomes. However, many of the apparent advantages of approaches to urban policy in these contexts derive not just from the nature of the policy mechanisms applied, but also from the political and administrative context. For instance, the significant role of local authorities in regeneration in the Netherlands seems to be difficult to adapt within Scotland or the UK where local authorities have less power for instance in terms of encouraging appropriate development. It would therefore seem that, in addition to new innovative urban policy mechanisms, effective policy application in Scotland requires more fundamental institutional modifications at the national and local levels. This may seem ambitious, but the creation of new institutional capacity in the form of the new Scottish Parliament suggests that it is possible, and that it could pave the way to a more sustainable, coherent approach to urban regeneration.

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