

Lloyd, Michael Gregory

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## Coherent regional planning for a Scottish Parliament: where is Scotland's Watford Gap

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**COHERENT REGIONAL PLANNING FOR A SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT:  
WHERE IS SCOTLAND'S WATFORDGAP?**

**M G Lloyd  
School of Town and Regional Planning  
University of Dundee  
Dundee DD1 4HT  
Tel. (01382) 345240  
Fax. (01382) 204234**

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## Introduction

While the creation of the Scottish Parliament will enable a strong democratic expression of interest in the future of Scotland, it is likely to be accompanied by a raising of expectations concerning the state of the economy, the effectiveness of its service delivery and the maintenance and enhancement of its environmental quality. The relevant vested interests will be territorial and sectoral in character, reflecting past experience and future expectations, and will likely be given added impetus in anticipation of the perceived potential of the Scottish Parliament. This brings with it the attendant need for effective and equitable mediation between competing interests, particularly in the short to medium term. Consequently, appropriate policy agendas for action have to be devised and implemented, and there is the concomitant danger of failed expectations on the part of the electorate, which could be damaging to the legitimisation of the new institution (Nye, 1997).

Attention must be paid here to the ways in which the Scottish Parliament addresses the geographical variations within Scotland. Peat and Boyle (1999) assert that the Scottish economy is in reality a series of distinctive regional economies within the same geopolitical division. Key indicators of relative economic performance - wealth per capita, unemployment - reveal the diversity of the Scottish economic experience. Beyond that economic agenda, there is the political dimension, reflected in the voting returns for the Parliament, the broad divisions in Scotland (east/west; north/south; highland/lowland; urban/rural; city/city region) and the emergence of coalitions such as the Orkney Movement. The emergence of spatial alliances could be important in this context. Spatial alliances may emerge because of the relative under-performance of local urban economies and the resulting mix of economic, social, physical and environmental exclusion. Decline manifests itself in increasing levels of poverty, crime and racial conflict, and economic symptoms include de-industrialisation, manufacturing decline and increasing unemployment and welfare dependency (Pacione, 1997). Moreover, these symptoms often reinforce each other, with the result that the incidence of social disadvantage or exclusion becomes increasingly concentrated. However, the causes of such decline are more contested and difficult to determine. While structural factors linked to broad social and economic change and the globalisation of economic activity contribute significantly to the local incidence of decline, local factors such as the operation of local governance in responding to the broader restructuring of the state and the market may also be significant in this context. Local responses have included the introduction of partnerships in seeking to promote economic growth and development within localities, community regeneration and physical refurbishment. In particular, public-private partnership approaches and mechanisms are frequently employed to addressing aspects of urban decline. Spatial alliances can engage in policy entrepreneurship with the outcome that there is slippage in the implementation of the principles of partnership. This is particularly the case where there are large numbers of bodies engaged in economic regeneration - the networks of Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Scottish Homes, European Structural Funds Partnerships and the Health Boards - and at the local level local authorities provide the administrative structures for land use and development and business groups operate often in partnerships as coalitions of interests or spatial alliances. The creation of such alliances is informed by the idea of policy entrepreneurship whereby existing agencies engage in policy innovation through recombining resources in such a way as to reposition themselves to address the new challenges (Lewis, 1988).

Enhanced institutional capacity for governance, planning and public administration could help to address these matters by setting a basis for consensus and a framework for consistent policy implementation (Amin and Thrift, 1995; Healey, 1997). In particular, there is a role for spatial planning, which may be described as "a social practice through which those concerned with the qualities of places and the spatial organisation of urban regions collaborate to produce strategies, policies and plans to help guide specific decisions in order to regulate and invest in development activity" (Healey, 1997, 21). It is significant that a principal focus for a spatial planning process is that of attaining balance within a national or regional economy in terms of social, economic and environmental development and change (Alden, 1996). The potential of enhanced institutional capacity is important in establishing the structural capacity and the cultural means of securing effective and accountable decision making at a time of change. In the earlier debates leading up to the referendum on the Scottish Parliament, the potential of seeking out solutions to the future agendas of the post devolution administration was acknowledged. It was suggested, for example, that "devolution undoubtedly does provide opportunities for influencing the Scottish economy, possibly significantly, [though] the scale and even direction of effects depends on the particular contribution of policies pursued by the Scottish Parliament and

the reactions of the Scottish people to them" (McGregor, Stevens, Swales and Yin, 1997, 208). This suggests that attention needs to be paid to the institutional capacity of the Scottish Parliament in devising appropriate economic, social and environmental strategies and policies to improve the efficiency of its regional and local economies, whilst taking account of likely resource restrictions and the expectations of the Scottish people. However, it is suggested that such improvements can be made by the enhancement of institutional capacity in relation to aspects such as spatial planning, for instance at the regional level. This could constitute a process of institutional innovation which, as Motte (1997) indicates in the context of spatial planning, can occur where new spatial planning systems are applied, where such systems are applied in a different way from in the past, or where new mechanisms, processes or organisations are created to allow planning systems to work more efficiently.

This paper considers the appropriateness of those arrangements and procedures for spatial planning that provide a framework for accommodating interests associated with development at national, regional and local levels of decision making within Scotland.

### **Current arrangements for spatial planning in Scotland**

Systems for spatial planning comprise "the legal and administrative procedures and institutional arrangements for guiding the location of investment in development projects and for regulating the way land is used and developed" (Healey, 1997, 13). Specifically, the Scottish system for spatial planning comprises: the preparation of development plans that set out the community interest in land use and development; development control as the means of regulating land development; the application of central government guidance to establish planning priorities and best practice; and procedures for public participation to provide a democratic basis to planning processes. Over the last fifty years, the spatial planning system in Scotland would seem to have achieved both a high quality of environment and the effective resolution of many conflicts over land use and development (Cullingworth, 1994). In practice, the structure of this system is similar to that in England and Wales, though it may be argued that the institutional culture of Scottish spatial planning has differed as a consequence of particular administrative and institutional features (Rowan-Robinson, 1997).

The Scottish institutional arrangements reflect a structure and culture of strategic planning that has informed spatial planning practice in Scotland in several ways. For instance, the Scottish Office provides a strong strategic steer through the publication of National Planning Policy Guidelines (NPPGs) which provide an ongoing overview of planning priorities for selected land use issues, including: onshore developments associated with North Sea oil and gas; skiing; agriculture; and out of town retailing centres (Lloyd and Rowan-Robinson, 1992). NPPGs build on a well established tradition of strategic practice in the Scottish planning system, a feature acknowledged by informed commentators throughout the 1970s and 1980s (Nuffield Foundation, 1986). The NPPGs have retained and strengthened the institutional relationships associated with strategic planning in Scotland and evidence suggests that there is now a clearer distinction between individual instruments, although there remains some practical confusion over the appropriate balance between prescription and advice (Raemakers, Prior and Boyack, 1994). Specifically, NPPGs provide statements of government policy on nationally important land use and other planning matters, supported where appropriate by a locational framework (SOEnD, 1994). The NPPGs provide the top tier of strategic guidance with structure and local plans being formulated, reviewed and implemented within this context. Against this context, it has been argued that the structure and culture of strategic planning in Scotland gave "a sounder foundation for the preparation and implementation of development plans" than was present in many other contexts (Hayton, 1996, 78). In this respect, the strategic (or co-operative) approach to spatial planning and governance in Scotland can be linked to a broadly corporatist culture that has encouraged an acceptance of the need for integrated action to address Scotland's specific needs and circumstances (McCrone, 1992). This cultural environment created a consensus on the need for intervention through spatial planning and economic development, for instance by means of the creation of regional development agencies. At the local level, local authorities in Scotland provide the administrative structure for structure and local plans. Such plans set out the community's interest in land use and development, and processes of development control regulate land and property development in conformity with the development plans. It may be argued that the particular structure of Scottish local government in the 1970s facilitated the strategic approach to spatial planning. This structure comprised a two tier arrangement of regional and district councils. Within this structure, regional authorities

were responsible for strategic functions that included structure planning, provision of infrastructure, social work and industrial development. Conversely, District councils took responsibility for local planning, development control and housing. Hence the two tiers, with their different responsibilities, complemented one another, and, notwithstanding some conflicts of interest, they enabled a strategic approach to planning, development and infrastructure provision (Rowan-Robinson, 1997).

In practice, there is a strategic deficit in the institutional arrangements for Scottish land use planning practice. While this is not a new problem, it is now emerging within a different policy and institutional context, particularly in terms of the pressure for greater processes of integration within an European institutional context (Henig, 1997). For example, in 1972 a Select Committee on Land Resource Use in Scotland concluded that "it is important to know whether there exist clear and explicit strategies for the countryside in general and rural land uses in particular; whether they are mutually consistent and by what machinery they are achieved over the whole or part of Scotland. If there seems to be a lack of such an explicit strategy, the question will arise whether policies designed for particular ends, whether primarily concerned with land use or not, are sufficiently co-ordinated in both their formation and their execution, and have sufficient regard for the resource base itself. Thirdly there is the question whether sufficient regard is paid to monitoring and evaluating existing policies and land use trends, as a basis for informed policy making in the future. Lastly, there should be borne in mind the adequacy of information on existing uses and trends, including those factors intrinsic to the land itself, such as capability to support existing uses, and man-made features such as land tenure and the size of management units" (HMSO, 1972, 3). Measures were subsequently put into place to address the issues identified by the Select Committee in the 1970s and indeed, resulted in a more assertive strategic planning process.

However, there has been a more recent erosion of the arrangements for strategic planning in Scotland. Consequently, a strategic planning deficit exists which represents a fundamental challenge for the Scottish Parliament, and a failure to address it will severely limit the potential of the spatial planning system. Perhaps the most important factor to be considered in this respect is that of local government reorganisation. Specifically, the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1994 introduced a streamlined, single tier, market-oriented, enabling system of local governance (Paddison, 1997) which eroded the strategic element of spatial planning in Scotland. This reorganisation involved the fragmentation of the established strategic regional authorities into thirty-two unitary Councils, which inevitably destabilised the strategic perspectives of metropolitan regions, the relationships with their rural hinterlands and the dynamics of local housing and labour markets. Moreover, strategic arrangements for regional planning are to be diluted further as a result of the transfer of water and sewerage responsibilities from the Councils to three new centralised Public Water Authorities. These changes will erode the ability of local authorities to secure the strategic management of change and to provide services for land and property development. While the old regions were the focus for the allocation of infrastructure, the new arrangements are based on very much larger geographical areas. Moreover, when combined with resource restrictions for the provision of water and sewerage, the strategic management of development becomes a more difficult process.

Local government reorganisation has also involved new arrangements for structure planning in Scotland. In some instances, established structure plan areas have been broken up and reformed into new Structure Plan Areas. This has constituted a major disruption to existing regional strategies for land use and development (Hayton, 1994; 1995). The result of these new arrangements suggest for instance that new structure plan areas will have to be made more compatible with local housing and labour market areas. The principal effect of all these changes has been that the focus of spatial planning has become more localised and site specific, and this may be seen broadly as a consequence of the effects of the liberal market ideology associated with Thatcherism on the scope, focus and operation of spatial planning and the development control system (Thornley, 1993). Moreover, it is important to note that the realignment of spatial planning controls with the interests of the private property development sector has continued in the post-Thatcher period (Allmendinger and Tewdwr-Jones, 1997). The outcome of this realignment may be exemplified by the focus of recent planning legislation, in terms of the emergence of a plan-led system that has formalised the procedures of the planning process (McGregor and Ross, 1996; Hull and Vigar, 1998). Together, the above factors constitute a compelling argument that the strategic elements of the Scottish spatial planning system need to be strengthened under the Scottish Parliament. In particular, the spatial planning system will need to address the deficit with respect to a

relative lack of common sense, trust and discretion (Kitchen, 1996); an absence of a consistent strategic vision for the town and regional planning system (Diamond, 1979; Bruton and Nicholson, 1985); a general inability to facilitate and ensure the co-ordination of infrastructure with the implementation of planning policy priorities, evident in the ongoing debate about the appropriateness of the arrangements for securing supporting infrastructure to the land development process (Ennis, 1996); and a continuing inability to facilitate the consistent integration of statutory town and regional planning with other planning bodies and policy (Bellini, 1996).

Moreover, spatial planning in Scotland will need to address the processes and outcomes associated with globalisation and international competitiveness, with a marked concentration of economic and corporate power (The Group of Lisbon, 1995). These factors have transformed the nature of global industrial capitalism and have created a degree of financial and industrial mobility that can bypass the regulatory frameworks based on the nation state. It is clear, however, that nation states will be more responsive to the needs of international competitive capitalism into the millennium, which will raise a number of issues for their localised impacts on planning and economic development (Cox, 1995). Associated with this global agenda are the localised effects of economic, corporate and industrial restructuring together with the associated social and demographic consequences of those economic changes (Neill, Fitzsimmons and Murtagh, 1995, 231). There are also associated environmental challenges, including resource exploitation, conflicts and the sustainable development agenda (Selman, 1995). Against this agenda, questions have been asked about the ability of existing land use planning arrangements to absorb and carry forward wider environmental issues in the face of pressing economic imperatives (Davoudi, Hull and Healey, 1996).

This is exacerbated by the conflicts and pressures arising from the dynamics of interest group politics (Keech, 1995; Bassett, 1996). Today, however, interest groups are emerging as very complex forms of social or community organisation. Middle class interest groups for example tend to advocate a relatively negative, exclusionary or protectionist pressure on planning procedures are themselves differentiated by different characteristics such as property assets, cultural assets and organisation assets (Savage, Barlow, Dickens and Fielding, 1992). Nonetheless, the emerging power and influence of such interest groups is increasingly evident in the planning arena (Baldassare and Wilson, 1996). Such pressures may prove intolerable or the Scottish Parliament, and this lead to a process of 'demosclerosis' which describes the rise of interest groups in society and the resulting pressure on existing institutions that, combined with the weaknesses in the system of public administration, results in the effective calcification of government itself (Rauch, 1995). Moreover, different groups have expectations which may be inappropriate, as for example with respect to the anticipated delivery of services from their local government; as these expectations are dashed, so a reaction may set in. In addition, equity, generational considerations and gender issues are important (O'Leary, 1996). Agnotti (1993) for example, has demonstrated that, in the context of metropolitan development and planning, the advances achieved by physical planning initiatives are flawed by the failure to achieve and sustain economic equality.

It may be argued that the European tradition of spatial planning is of particular significance to the case for strengthened institutional capacity for spatial planning under the new Scottish Parliament. In this context, spatial planning may be described as "setting frameworks and principles to guide the location of development and physical infrastructure. It consists of a set of governance practices for developing and implementing strategies, plans, policies and projects, and for regulating the location, timing and form of development. These practices are shaped by the dynamics of economic and social change, which give rise to demands for space, location and qualities of places. These dynamics also shape expectations about how demands will be met, and the values accorded to the attributes of places and buildings. The demands are mediated through local political systems and practices and be regional and national government politics and administration. Through these interactions, general economic and social tendencies interrelate with local conditions and concerns to produce distinctive, contingent responses to the dynamics of urban region change" (Healey, 1997, 4). These comments reflect an awareness that spatial planning has shifted its focus from a concern with purely physical and land use matters to a wider concern for social, economic, environmental and political issues. This may be interpreted as "a return of the importance of strategic thinking in planning (Alden, 1996, 10), which links to the adoption of a plan-led approach in the U.K. (Hull and Vigar, 1998), and the broader revival of European ideas of integrated regional policy (Thierstein and Egger, 1998).

## Creating institutional capacity

It is now appropriate to turn to the specific question of how the Scottish Parliament can provide the basis for a strategic planning framework. Diamond (1979) has asserted that strategic planning should be capable of assuming a variety of forms which may be deemed appropriate to prevailing circumstances. More specifically, Bruton and Nicholson (1985) advocate a hierarchical system where a national - regional - local system of spatial planning can enable a dialogue of national interests, regional proprieties and local interests to be mediated so as to allow for contingency and uncertainty in economic, social and environmental change. In addition, the prospect of constitutional reform in Scotland and Wales has prompted calls for a wider debate concerning the future form and scope of strategic and local spatial planning arrangements (Hayton, 1997a). Specifically, Hayton (1997b) has suggested the creation of unitary development plans at the local level as an opportunity to create a more efficient spatial planning framework. However, this article argues that attention should be paid to the structural hierarchy providing a strategic context to local planning. While it accepts the arguments that arrangements for local planning could usefully be the subject of critical review and possible overhaul, it proposes that adequate provision exists for a local dimension to spatial planning. Thus it is argued that attention should now be given to the enhancement of capacity for strategic spatial planning.

In this context, Hayton (1997; 22) has argued that the Scottish Parliament should introduce provisions for a national plan "covering the whole of Scotland which incorporates policies, regardless of their origin, which have national implications". This is not a new idea, since in 1972, for example, the Select Committee on Land Resource Use in Scotland supported the case for the preparation of an indicative national plan for Scotland, within which a regional dimension was to be secured. The Select Committee therefore recommended what was in effect a national structure plan which would embody a national industrial strategy together with a comprehensive and integrated regional planning system with land use zoning and land allocation policies. It stressed "the need to strike a balance between on the one hand, too specific guidelines which produce an over-rigid system in this age of fluctuating population trends, rapidly changing technology and surprising discoveries of natural resources, and on the other hand an insufficiency of national policy guidelines which result in excessively overlapping claims being embodied in development plans and an insufficiency of information being available to entrepreneurs anxious to exploit some new opportunity. Clearly this is a difficult balance to strike to everyone's satisfaction but we are of the opinion that the weight of evidence is that insufficient guidelines have existed in the past and that more emphasis should be given to remedying this in the near future than the Government perceive at present" (HMSO, 1972, 11).

Hayton (1997b) suggests that, for the purposes of the Scottish Parliament, the National Plan would have two main roles: first, the spatial expression of the public policy agenda in Scotland; and second, provision of a statement of nationally important land use policies which would be similar in intent to the existing compendium of NPPGs. Again, these ideas have already been rehearsed, since the Select Committee on Land Resource Use in Scotland (HMSO, 1972) noted that "there is a need to prepare an indicative plan for Scotland on a national scale which will show how it is intended to utilise the land for urban, industrial and recreational purposes. To prepare such a policy plan it will be necessary to take into account the views of planning authorities, industrialists, trade unions and many other interested parties. The structure plans of the new regional planning authorities must conform with the national indicative plan" (HMSO, 1972, 13).

Within such a national indicative planning context, there is also a case for increased capacity for regional planning to provide a strategic planning perspective for defined geographical regions. At present, there is a general renaissance of interest in integrated regional policy ideas in Europe (Thierstein and Egger, 1998), which may be linked to broader emerging processes of regionalism (Keating, 1997). More specifically, in Scotland and Wales there is a renewed interest in strategic spatial planning, possibly as a result of impending constitutional changes (Stewart, 1997). In addition, in England and Wales there has been a recent rediscovery of the merits of regional planning, which seeks to provide spatial coherence for economic activity and to establish a strategic context within which local priorities can be identified (Haughton, Rowe and Hunter, 1997). In particular, the adoption of regional planning guidance is seen by many observers as a useful means of establishing a strategic framework within which local authorities can discharge their statutory responsibilities. The process of regional planning guidance is based on both bottom-up and top-down consensus building. Within England and Wales, local authorities form conferences to debate the form of

regional planning guidance required for that area, and, after incorporating representations from key players, advice is submitted to the Secretary of State. Draft guidance is then published, allowing for further deliberation, negotiation and debate, and, finally, the regional planning guidance is produced for implementation by the participating local authorities. While this process has not been problem-free, it has provided a relatively speedy and effective vehicle for strategic planning for different regions experiencing different economic, social and environmental circumstances. Moreover, the process is an open one which provides for the full involvement of all key players (Roberts, 1996).

### **Strategic spatial planning and community planning**

Is there a case for a formal framework of regional planning guidance in Scotland? Such a strategic perspective should allow for the setting of national priorities, an integrated and cross-sectoral approach, and the resolution of conflict between institutions charged with different responsibilities (Roberts, 1996). There is already an interest in this form of regional strategic planning in Scotland. For example, in considering the relationship between the Scottish Parliament and unitary local government, Sinclair (1997) advocates a process of community planning that would provide for community leadership, which is perceived as an essential foundation to effective local governance. In particular, he suggests that "councils should be given a duty of community planning which would extend the concept of the old regional reports and would require all local agencies, such as Local Enterprise Company, Health Boards and the Scottish Homes office to submit their annual plans to their local council" (Sinclair, 1997, 17). Specifically, the community plans would draw together the activities and policies of the various agencies concerned with the social, environmental and economic management of cities and regions in Scotland.

The community plan proposal draws on the experience of earlier regional reports, but, significantly, it also seeks to address the absence of a regional perspective created by the loss of the old regional authorities (Lloyd, 1996). Regional reports were to provide a statement of the policy agendas of the new regional authorities and reflect their corporate approach to prevailing and anticipated economic, social, environmental and land use issues, pressures and circumstances. More importantly, perhaps, they were to be vehicles for assessing the available resources and competing priorities of the regional authorities and thereby providing a strategic context to decision making and investment planning by district councils, private interests and other public sector bodies (McDonald, 1977). The regional reports established a strategic context for land use planning which itself was expected to become more strategic in process and outcome. The Community Planning Working Group (1998) described the aims of community planning as improving the service provided by Councils and their public sector partners to the public through closer, more co-ordinated working; providing a process through which Councils and their public sector partners, in consultation with the voluntary and private sector, and the community, can agree both a strategic vision for the area and the action which each of the partners will take in pursuit of that vision; and helping Councils and their public sector partners collectively to identify the needs and views of individuals and communities and to assess how they can best be delivered and addressed (Community Planning Working Group, 1998).

The Community Planning Working Group, which reported in July 1998, provided Councils and their partners with a broad framework for embarking on the process of community planning, a framework which builds and extends the experience of partnership working in many areas (Community Planning Working Group, 1998). However, it is clear that the detailed community plan for each area will be unique as it evolves to reflect the needs of each specific local community. The Working Group recommended that Councils and their partners should aim to produce their first community plans by the end of September 1999. In addition, it was suggested that a small number of areas should be identified as Pathfinders to allow emerging experience and good practice to be disseminated between authorities. As a result, five Councils - Highland Council, City of Edinburgh Council, Perth and Kinross Council, South Lanarkshire Council and Stirling Council - were invited by the Scottish Office to pilot the initiative and to draw up draft community plans. By May 1999, four draft community plans had been published: the Perth and Kinross plan is due shortly.

Community planning is clearly a very new initiative in Scotland and the first community plans have been prepared by the local authorities and their various partners in an exceptionally short timescale. Despite this, it is possible to identify some emerging characteristics of the community planning process. It is evident from



the Pathfinder plans that a pragmatic approach is being adopted to community planning. In each case the local authority is building upon existing experience of joint working with other agencies, whether it be related to community care planning, as is the case in South Lanarkshire, or structure planning as in Highland. The Community Planning Working Group Report suggests that a core group of partners should be identified, which should as a minimum include the Health Board, Scottish Homes and the Local Enterprise Company. All of the Pathfinders have included these bodies as well as the Police Authority in each case. As a result, the community planning partnerships are dominated by public sector bodies, with little evidence of either private or voluntary sector involvement at this stage. The draft community plans show the similarity of their vision statements. Unlike the earlier regional reports which focused on economic well being, the community plans are concerned with issues of social inclusion, healthy living and sustainability as well as achieving prosperity. Interlinkages between economic, social and environmental factors have been clearly identified. Despite the common goals, it would be expected that the strategies in each area would vary reflecting the particular geographical context. This is evident to some degree, with for example, Edinburgh's emphasis on measures associated with promoting the city as Scotland's capital and Highland's concern with the development of information technologies to overcome problems of peripherality. The process of community planning is still evolving as there are no set procedures in place for the production of community plans unlike the preparation of structure and local plans. Each of the Pathfinder partnerships have taken a slightly different approach to the involvement of the community in the process. Stirling and Edinburgh have included the community representatives on the core community planning group, giving the community influence over the decision making process. All of the Pathfinders have made a commitment to consulting local people, but the extent and methods used have varied considerably, with Stirling and South Lanarkshire making the greatest efforts to ensure that the vision was developed with the community. The short timescale given to the Pathfinders may have influenced the process adopted by the councils and their partners.

## Conclusions

The creation of enhanced institutional capacity for strategic spatial planning can help to realise the full potential of participative and integrative processes involved in land use planning. Indeed, as Healey (1997) indicates, "strategic spatial planning can . . . provide a transparent, fair and legitimate way of recognising and responding to the multiplicity of stakeholders, interests and value conflicts that arise in urban regions" (18). The historical experience of policy innovation in Scotland is significant in this respect, since the earlier deliberations on an appropriate form of planning system provide important insights. In addition, the arrangements for regional planning guidance in England and Wales also provide useful insights in this respect. However, it is suggested that the principal focus should be on the process and not the structure of strategic planning, in order to avoid an unhelpful focus on the creation of bureaucratic levels of national, regional and local intervention. Instead, it is suggested that there is a need to release the potential of the dialogue and participatory aspects of planning, as exemplified by the regional report, regional planning guidance, and the more recent proposal for community planning. Indeed, the driving force of constitutional reform rests on the issue of enhancing the accountability of government to society. This can be achieved in part by the setting-up of new arrangements for representative democratic debate over Scottish domestic policies, though the political, managerial and physical decentralisation of local government activities following reorganisation is also important in this context. Finally, the above suggestions for enhanced capacity for spatial planning are to be considered in the light of a wider agenda for change with respect to spatial planning, in terms of the need to face up to new social, economic and environmental challenges (Blowers, 1997).

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