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Planning for growth in Scottish city-regions: ‘neoliberal spatial governance’?

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Abstract

The PhD is driven by a need to analyse what Scottish planning has come to represent in practice. It does this through a focus on how Scottish planning reform (Planning etc. Scotland Act, 2006) has been used to respond to the key public policy issues of achieving ‘sustainable growth’ and particularly planning for housing in growth-pressured city-regions.

In England, Allmendinger’s (2016) recent critical consideration of the current state of planning despondently sees ‘neoliberal spatial governance’ where planning is focussed on ‘facilitating growth,’ through ‘post political’ process and driven by ‘narrow sectional interests’. This thesis analyses the extent to which such critique is a relevant way of understanding Scottish planning and how planning has come to be criticised from some perspectives as a tool for rolling out growth, while for others planning is still perceived as a drag on growth.

It does this by analysing planning practice in two city regions – Aberdeen and Edinburgh - which have faced pressures for growth, particularly housing growth. Both have used the reformed Scottish planning system to deal with these pressures. In Aberdeen, it reveals why an ambitious growth agenda easily emerged, where planning actors utilised the reformed Scottish planning system to advocate an ‘ambitious strategy’. In Edinburgh, it reveals why, despite utilising the same planning system, a more complex and conflictual relationship around planning and housing growth has remained in place, as the city-region struggled to realise a spatial strategy that adapts to existing local political tensions. In each case the role of global and local structuring economic conditions are foregrounded.

This qualitative comparative case study analyses the operation of Scottish planning in the period (2007-2016) in two growth-pressured Scottish city-regions. It involves 48 interviews conducted in the period 2013-2015 with public sector officers, councillors, developer interests and community and special interest groups and the analysis of documents associated with planning strategies. It has been conducted by a planner who has worked ‘in the field’ in the public and private sectors in both cases.

It applies a broadly Gramscian analysis, utilising a Strategic Relational Approach, where planning actors pursue differing agendas and attempt to address wider and

competing public policy concerns while operating within evolving structural conditions. It demonstrates the ways in which planning is a means by which particular interests can formalise their ambitions for growth but can equally be used to constrain and defer decisions around growth. However, both cases reveal planning as a form of 'neoliberal spatial governance' where the contradictions of current state-market relations mean Scottish planning is unlikely to meet its complex objective of delivering 'sustainable economic growth'.

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Glossary and acronyms

AFFORDABLE HOUSING: Housing reserved for those for whom it would be impossible or inappropriate to pay full market price for housing in a particular area. This may be low cost owner occupation, co-ownership or rent from a Registered Social Landlord (RSL).

ALLOCATED SITE: An area of land which has been approved in principle by the planning authority for a certain type of future development e.g. housing.

APPEAL/LOCAL REVIEW: The process by which an applicant may challenge the decision of the planning authority on their application, a refusal of permission, condition attached to a permission or the lack of a decision. Refer to our separate information sheet on Appeals and Local Reviews for more information. (See also **NON-DETERMINATION/DEEMED REFUSAL**)

APPLICANT: A person, business or organisation making a planning application. There is no requirement that they own the land affected by the application as long as they notify the owner. (See also **AGENT**)

BROWNFIELD SITE: A site which has previously been developed or used for some purpose which has ceased.

CIRCULAR: A document produced by the Scottish Government containing guidance on the policy implications of legislative or procedural change.

COMMUNITY COUNCIL: A local body with a statutory right to be consulted on local issues and a duty to reflect the views of the local community to the local authority on various issues, including planning.

COMMUNITY PLANNING: A process, delivered through Community Planning Partnerships, aimed at helping public agencies to work together with the local community to plan and deliver better services, with community engagement as a key aim. Community planning is, however, separate from the land-use planning system, and how it is implemented generally depends of the local authority.

CONSERVATION AREA: An area designated by the planning authority as being of special architectural or historic interest, the character of which it wishes to protect and

enhance. Refer to our separate information sheet Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas for more information.

CALL IN (AND NOTIFICATION): Scottish Ministers have the power to intervene and call in any planning application for their own determination. This power is rarely used, although sometimes a proposal raises issues of such importance that call in is reasonable. To monitor the progress of such cases, Ministers issue a direction to planning authorities requesting notification if they are considering granting permission. Planning permission may not be granted until this notification has taken place.

COMPULSORY PURCHASE ORDER: Notice issued by the government or a local authority to acquire land or buildings for public interest purposes. This may include property to enable private development to achieve a priority aim of the Development Plan.

DEPARTURE (from the Development Plan): A planning application considered not to be in accordance with a Development Plan but which, due to exceptional circumstances, the planning authority intends to approve. Significant departures must be notified to Scottish Ministers. All national developments and major developments which are significantly contrary to a Development Plan must also be subject to a pre-determination hearing.

DEVELOPMENT: The carrying out of building, mining, engineering or other operations in, on, over or under the land or the making of any material change of use in the use of any buildings or land (as defined by the planning acts). Development so defined requires planning permission. (See also PERMITTED DEVELOPMENT)

DEVELOPMENT PLAN: A generic term for the Structure Plan and/or Local Plan, or Strategic Development Plan and/or Local Development Plan, which apply to a planning authority area. Refer to our separate information sheet Development Plans for more information. Any planning application should be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

DEVELOPMENT PLAN SCHEME: A document required to be published annually by every planning authority, outlining their timetable for preparing and reviewing their Development Plan; and also a participation statement outlining when, how and with whom, consultation will take place.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA): EIA is required for certain developments and is the process of gathering information to ensure environmental effects are taken into consideration. The assessments are reported in an Environmental Statement which must be submitted alongside the planning application to inform the decision.

EUROPEAN SITES: Nature conservation sites (e.g. Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)) which are designated under the European Habitat or Birds Directives as Special Protection Areas (SPAs) or Special Areas for Conservation (SACs). Development affecting such sites is subject to special controls and may be called in by Scottish Ministers.

GREEN BELT: An area designated in a Development Plan where there is strong presumption against development, with the aim of protecting landscape settings, promoting bio-diversity and providing open space for recreation, encouraging regeneration within the urban area and directing urban growth to appropriate locations. According to Scottish Planning Policy (2014, 49) “where the planning authority considers it appropriate, the development plan may designate a green belt around a city or town to support the spatial strategy by: directing development to the most appropriate locations and supporting regeneration; protecting and enhancing the character, landscape setting and identity of the settlement; and protecting and providing access to open space.

GREENFIELD SITE: Land which has not been developed, in either urban or rural areas.

HIERARCHY OF DEVELOPMENT: As of 2009, planning proposals are divided into 3 categories: National, Major and local. National developments are set out in the National Planning Framework. For information on major (e.g. 50 houses or more) and local developments, refer to our separate information sheet on Development Management) and see Scottish Government Planning Circular 5/2009 Hierarchy of Developments. Note - National and major proposals require pre-application consultation.

INFRASTRUCTURE: Utility services (roads, sewers, and supplies of gas, water, electricity) or social/community services (schools, community halls, health centres etc.) which are needed to allow a development to take place.

LANDFILL/LANDRAISE: Methods of disposing of waste below or above ground level, nowadays subject to stringent measures to contain leachate and methane, but which was not always the case.

LEGAL CHALLENGE: Apart from applicants' right of appeal, the law provides for legal challenge of some planning decisions by any affected party; but only on the basis that there was an error in law and procedure, not on the planning merits of the decision itself. The best outcome is that a decision may be quashed and sent back to the decision maker (who may end up making the same decision). Such proceedings, by way of statutory challenge or by judicial review, may only be heard in the Court of Session and are extremely expensive if unsuccessful.

LISTED BUILDING: A building designated by Historic Scotland on behalf of Scottish Ministers for its special architectural or historic interest and accorded special protection.

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (LDP): Part of the Development Plan - a statutory document required to be prepared (as of 2009), after full public consultation, by all planning authorities in Scotland to replace existing Local Plans (see below). The LDP is the basis for making planning decisions in a given area. It must contain a spatial strategy and a vision statement, planning policies and maps. In the four city-regions, the LDP will be supplemented with a Strategic Development Plan; elsewhere the Development Plan will comprise only the Local Development Plan.

LOCAL PLAN: Part of the Development Plan - a statutory document prepared after full public consultation - containing maps, and planning policies which are the main basis for assessing planning applications. As of 2009, planning authorities are required to replace Local Plans with Local Development Plans (see above).

LOCAL REVIEW: see entry for APPEAL.

MASTERPLAN: A document, usually comprising a schematic plan, 3-dimensional images, and text, which illustrates and explains how it is intended to develop a site.

MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS: Matters in addition to the Development Plan which a planning authority is required to take into account when making a planning decision. Material 5 considerations in planning must be factors relating to the use and development of land and not to the personal circumstances of individual applicants, for instance.

MEDIATION: A process involving a neutral, independent, trained facilitator who aims to assist parties with differences to communicate effectively to resolve their differences. Mediation is not a statutory part of the Scottish planning system.

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS: Designated in the National Planning Framework, these are the Scottish Government's priority projects for the development of Scotland. For more information, see Scottish Government Circular 4/2009 (Development Management Procedures) & Circular 5/2009 (Hierarchy of Developments).

NATIONAL PLANNING FRAMEWORK (NPF): The Scottish Government's strategy for the long-term development of Scotland's towns, cities and countryside. It sets out a vision for Scotland's development for the next 20 to 25 years and designates developments of national importance (National Developments – see above). Development Plans must have regard to the content of the NPF.

NATIONAL PARK: An area of land or sea - usually an extensive area - identified as being of the very highest value to the nation for its scenery and wildlife, and often for its cultural heritage value. Scotland has two National Parks – Loch Lomond and The Trossachs and the Cairngorms. Both have their own planning services.

NATIONAL SCENIC AREA (NSA): Areas of land designated by the Scottish Government and considered of national significance to Scotland due to their outstanding scenic interest; and which must be conserved as part of the country's natural heritage.

NON-DETERMINATION / DEEMED REFUSAL: If a planning application remains undetermined after either two or four months (depending on the type of application), the applicant can demand that a decision be made, by appealing to Scottish Ministers or to the Local Review Body. The appeal or review is into the non determination of the application which is considered as if deemed to have been refused.

OPEN SPACE: Areas of greenspace or water within and on the edges of settlements, including allotments, trees, woodland, paths; and civic space consisting of squares, market places and other paved or hard landscaped areas with a civic function.

PERMITTED DEVELOPMENT: Certain classes of development which do not require express planning permission through an application to the planning authority, because permission is automatically granted, as set out in The Town and Country

Planning (General Permitted Development) (Scotland) Order 1992.(Note: this document is reviewed and amended as required on an on-going basis.)

PLANNING ADVICE NOTES (PANs): Documents produced by the Scottish Government providing advice on good practice and other relevant planning information.

PLANNING AGREEMENTS: Legal Agreements made under Section 75 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997, and regulating the future use of the land. Such agreements are registered in the Land Register and legally binding on future owners of the land. Where the agreement is not intended to tie future owners, other simpler forms of agreement may be used under other statutes.

PLANNING APPLICATION: An application to a planning authority seeking planning permission for development. Refer to our separate information Sheet: Development Management.

PLANNING BRIEF/DEVELOPMENT BRIEF: A document which sets out the planning authority's requirements and guidelines for the development of a site. These may be prepared as supplementary guidance.

PLANNING GAIN: Aspects of a development proposal required for the development to go ahead (including financial contributions to public services), secured by the local authority to mitigate the impact of the development on the local community.

PLANNING PERMISSION: Formal permission granted by a planning authority or Scottish Ministers for development of land or buildings.

PLANNING POLICIES: Contained in Development Plans or in supplementary planning guidance, these set out criteria against which planning applications are determined.

PRE-APPLICATION CONSULTATION (PAC): Public events required to be held by prospective applicants prior to submission of applications for national developments and major developments, to enable local communities to be better informed about significant development proposals in their area. Prospective applicants must notify community councils (and other parties as agreed with the planning authority) and hold a minimum of one public event (to be advertised 7 days in advance in a local newspaper) at which members of the public can make comments. (Note – there is no

requirement that views of those consulted are taken on board.) See Scottish Government Circular 4/2009 (Development Management Procedures).

PRE-DETERMINATION HEARING: National applications or major applications significantly contrary to the Development Plan must go to a Pre-Determination Hearing if one is requested. This must take place before a committee of the council and be determined by the full council, and enables those who made representations to have the opportunity to be heard.

PROCESSING AGREEMENT: A non-compulsory agreement, following the advice of Scottish Government Circular 4/2009 (Development Management Procedures), between the applicant for a national development or major development and the planning authority to ensure smooth processing of an application, or related group of applications.

SCOTTISH PLANNING POLICY (SPP): A documents stating Scottish Government policy on nationally important land use and other planning matters.

SINGLE OUTCOME AGREEMENT (SOA): An agreement between the Scottish Government and each of Scotland's 32 local authorities, setting out strategic priority issues based on the Government's 15 National Outcomes. SOAs aim to improve partnership working and allow maximum freedom for funding decisions to be taken at a local level. Planning issues such as affordable housing and community engagement are among topics covered by SOAs, although content varies according to local priorities. Since 2009-10, SOAs have been developed with the full involvement of Community Planning Partnerships, with each statutory partner (of the CCP) signing the SOA. (See also COMMUNITY PLANNING)

SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST (SSSI): A site identified by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) as requiring special protection because of its flora, fauna, geological or physiographical features under the Wildlife and Countryside Acts. SNH must be consulted by a planning authority where a planning application may affect an SSSI.

STATUTORY CONSULTEE: A generic term for an organisation with expertise and statutory responsibility on certain subject matters, to be consulted by planning authorities if an application may affect the interests of that organisation e.g. Historic Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage, Transport Scotland. 8

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (SEA): The requirement to undertake and publish environmental assessment of plans, programmes or strategies at a strategic level.

STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN (SDP): Part of the Development Plan – a statutory document prepared after full public consultation. SDPs apply to the 4 city-regions (Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow and their surrounding areas) and cover several local authority areas. SDPs are required to be prepared jointly by planning authorities acting as Strategic Development Planning Authorities (SDPAs) as of 2009 to replace existing structure plans (see below). SDPs will set parameters for Local Development Plans; contain Vision Statements and Spatial Strategies; and will consider how land use proposals for neighbouring areas will impact on the SDP area. Refer to our separate information sheet Development Plans for further information.

STRUCTURE PLAN: Part of the Development Plan - a statutory document prepared after full public consultation containing strategic policies which can cover several local authority areas. As of 2009 all planning authorities are required to replace these with Strategic Development Plans in the four city regions; elsewhere Local Development Plans only are required. (See also LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN and STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN)

SUPPLEMENTARY GUIDANCE: Documents used by planning authorities to provide additional detailed guidance on certain topics, policies or proposals which are set out in Development Plans.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (as defined by the Brundtland Commission 1987 for the United Nations). The Planning etc. (Scotland) Act 2006 requires Development Plans and the National Planning Framework to be prepared with the objective of achieving sustainable development.

USE CLASSES ORDER (UCO): The Statutory Instrument termed The Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) (Scotland) Order 1997 which sets out various classes of use for the purpose of clarifying when a change of use requires planning permission.

WINDFALL SITES: Development sites which are not identified through forward planning processes but become available for various ad hoc reasons. Allowance for a certain level of windfall sites is usually made by planning authorities when calculating the forward supply of development land for which Development Plans will make provision.

Glossary Sources: Planning Aid Scotland (2009) and Scottish Planning Policy (2014)

Aberdeen City Region LPA	Used in in-text interviewee identification to refer to one of the two local planning authorities in the Aberdeen city-region
ACC	Aberdeen City Council
ACLDP 2012	Aberdeen City Local Development Plan 2012
ACS	Aberdeen City and Shire
ACS SDPA	Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Planning Authority
ACS SDPA 2009	Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Planning Authority Structure Plan 2009
ACSEF	Aberdeen City and Shire Economic Future (public-private-partnership)
ALDP 2012	Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2012
AWPR	Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route - bypass around city due to open 2018
CE LDP2	City of Edinburgh Local Development Plan 2 (referred to as LDP 2016)
EBF	Edinburgh Business Forum
EDF	Edinburgh Development Forum (public private partnership)
EDI	Edinburgh council arms-length development company
EDSP	European Spatial Development Perspective
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EIBG	Edinburgh International Business Gateway
GES	Government Economic Strategy
GFC	Global Financial Crisis
HFS	Homes for Scotland - Housebuilder representative in Scotland
HNDA	Housing Need and Demand Assessment
LDP	Local Development Plan
LPA	Local Planning Authority
NESDA	North East of Scotland Development Agency
NESJPAC	North East Scotland Joint Advisory Planning Committee

NEST 2002	North East Scotland Together. The Aberdeen City and Aberdeen Shire Joint Strategic Planning Committee
NESTRANS	North East Scotland Transport Partnership
NIMBY	'Not In My Backyard' (anti-development sentiment)
NPF	National Planning Framework
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
SDA	Scottish Development Agency (precursor to Scottish Enterprise)
SDP	Strategic Development Plan
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
SEG	Scottish Enterprise Grampian
SESplan	South East Scotland Strategic Development Plan Authority
SESplan 2013	South East Scotland Development Planning Authority Strategic Development Plan 2013
SNP	Scottish National Party
SPR	Scottish Planning Reform
SSCI	Scottish Sustainable Communities Initiative
SUSTRANS	South East Scotland Regional Transport Partnership
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation
WEPF	West Edinburgh Planning Framework

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Author's declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, that this is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.”

Printed name

Signature

CHAPTER 1 – Introduction

Introduction

This PhD is driven by a need to understand what Scottish planning represents in practice. It does this through an analysis of the way that planning has been utilised in growth-pressured Scottish city-regions. Taking up an important debate in contemporary planning studies, it analyses the extent to which planning, as it is practiced in Scotland, has undergone ‘neoliberalisation’. It particularly analyses the extent to which planning represents what Allmendinger and Haughton (2012a; 2012b) have, in an English context, termed planning as ‘neoliberal spatial governance’. I want to understand what planning as ‘neoliberal spatial governance’ might mean in terms of democratically planning for growth and the extent to which the aligned critique of planning as ‘post-political’ (McClymont, 2011; Allmendinger, 2011, 2016) is relevant and useful in understanding contemporary Scottish planning.

Understanding the role of strategic spatial planning in practice

The Scottish Government’s explicit aim, as stated in Scottish Planning Policy 2014 is for planning to contribute to “increasing sustainable economic growth” (Scottish Government 2014 b, 24). This in itself is a complex objective, fraught with differing interpretations of what ‘sustainable economic growth’ actually means and whether it can be achieved within the confines of Scotland’s current political-economic conditions. Like other governments, the Scottish Government is attempting to create the basis for what it deems to be an internationally competitive economy (Scottish Government, 2011, 2015). The ultimate aim of such strategies is to raise the standard of living for citizens, but the agenda that drives this and the means to achieve it are questionable. In comparison, the UK Government has since 2010 pursued a more blatant approach to growth. In England, planning has again come ‘under attack’ (Lord & Tewdwr-Jones, 2012) as it is seen to be holding back, rather than aiding economic recovery. In Scotland, whilst subject to similar processes of neoliberalism, and operating in the same global conditions, planning still appears to have the support of government in terms of its potential contribution to ‘sustainable economic growth’.

Planning reform, rolled out via the Planning etc. (Scotland) Act 2006, strengthened a Scottish tradition of city-regional planning in Scotland's four key cities: Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh, and Glasgow. The introduction of a new National Planning Framework was a justification for removing 'structure plans' in other areas. But in the four cities, a bolstered three tier: national; city-regional; and local approach reflected a view that strategic spatial planning and city-regions, as a concept in practice, were important to national economic success.

This qualitative research provides a comparative case study of planning in Scotland which focuses on the city-regional tier and its local outcomes. In doing so, it offers a unique analysis of the Scottish approach to a type of 'strategic spatial planning' in practice. It focuses primarily on the years 2006-2016, and the research period ends in 2016 just as Scotland again set about reforming its planning system. The thesis analyses the way in which strategies around growth have been imposed, formed, and resisted in Aberdeen and Edinburgh. These are two successful regional economies where there have been particular pressures for development. More specifically, it focuses on the interrelation of housing as a key component of economic growth. This is a key public policy concern: how to deal with regional housing pressures in places where there is a high demand for people to live and work, but where there are also complex infrastructural issues as well as traditional local resistance towards housing growth to deal with as well. The research is focused on the perspective of planning actors, in a range of positions and representing a range of interests, who find themselves at the heart of operating the Scottish planning system. In providing a practice-focused case-study it makes a timely contribution to understanding what this system has come to represent.

Variegated neoliberalism and capturing a period in Scottish planning

In the period from 2006-2016, through the unresolved Global Financial Crisis and at a time of significant flux in terms of Scottish nationhood and constitutional questions, Scotland's political-economic structures were reshaped quite profoundly. In this period, a major reform of Scotland's planning system was rolled out and, especially since 2008, planning has been expected to do more to boost economic growth. Concurrently, continued devolution has provided the Scottish Government with more powers. Under SNP administration, planning has taken on a significant role as a

signifier of national aspirations as well as a traditional means for resolving land-use based public policy concerns.

As an important lever in spatially-based Scottish public policy, planning is often seen as a 'drag on growth' by some business interests. This narrative has been pushed by development interests in particular. Yet at the same time planning is seen as a means by which 'the state' 'pushes growth' upon communities. The current study captures the implementation of Scottish planning reform (2006-2016). This comes just as the Government, capital, and other interests, again, seeks to forge an elusive 'fit for purpose' planning system through the Planning (Scotland) Bill, 2017. This research analyses whether such a system, delivering 'sustainable economic growth', could ever be possible.

More specifically, this study analyses the extent to which the critique of planning as neoliberal spatial governance - implying a move from a system that once operated in the 'public interest' to one that facilitates growth and supports narrow interests (Allmendinger, 2016) - applies in Scotland. It analyses how regional housing crisis could exist when 'neoliberal' planning has apparently been structured to channel market forces and create the conditions necessary for economic growth and housing growth across the country. Indeed, in Aberdeen a pro-growth agenda has emerged, while in Edinburgh a more problematic politics around growth has remained. Yet in each case, regardless of local politics, turning plans into actual development remains a process fraught with complexity. This thesis questions the possibility of achieving sustainable economic growth and resolving housing crisis without far more radical structural reforms than have been seen in Scotland. Understanding planning in practice in each case reveals much about what Scottish planning represents and will provide a useful contribution to debates surrounding existing neoliberalism and particularly neoliberal planning.

A study of planning practice and theory: the intended contribution

In the thesis, planning processes are studied from the perspective of key planning actors in the Aberdeen and Edinburgh regions as they have attempted to plan and deliver sustainable growth within a context of possibly neoliberal political-economic institutions and practices. It places this within Scotland's traditional neo-corporatist

approach to governance and its perceived leaning towards a social-democratic ideology.

This study intends to add to debates on the possibility of 'sustainable economic growth' and specific debates around the provision of housing and infrastructure through a market-led system. Planning's role will be understood within a context of wider city-region economic growth strategies. The study utilizes a range of critical theories to deepen our understanding of planning theory in practice. The idea that sectional interests could have 'captured' planning will be rigorously analyzed from a variety of perspectives and understandings. For example, the thesis asks if a 'growth agenda' formed by powerful sectional interests that actually responded to a housing crisis should really be considered a malevolent force? Should such growth and strategy be resisted? If so, who by, and why? In responding to this critique in a Scottish context, the thesis provides new evidence through which important debates in planning can be applied and developed.

This study of the implementation of Scottish Planning Reform (2006-16) allows broader understandings of 'spatial planning' as a planning concept in practice. Spatial planning as an integrative and inclusive and strategic-action focused form of planning was blended with Scotland's traditional regulatory approach to land-use planning. The aligned critique of 'spatial planning' in the UK as post-political neoliberal governance, by Allmendinger and Haughton (2012) considered the spatial planning approach as doomed to fail for two reasons. The first was that a 'plan-led' approach merely postponed conflict. This was because housing allocations still had to be allocated into local plans and, following this, actual planning permissions still had to be granted through what was still a discretionary and legalistic system. The second was that the system was not flexible enough or commanding of sufficient political support to adapt to the structural impact of the global financial crisis. In comparing Aberdeen, as an area where a growth agenda was seemingly simple to formulate politically, to Edinburgh where an approach to dealing with growth imperatives proved nearly impossible to agree without central government intervention, this study offers new insights into what 'post-political neoliberal governance' implies and what Scottish planning represents as a system. It follows the planning process as it is carried out through the three tiers of development planning process and how growth strategies are translated into allocations 'on the ground'.

Conceptually, this thesis helps to establish a characterization of planning in Scotland. It takes neoliberalism as a political project that has become a structuring condition; one that exists but that still requires rigorous contextual analysis. This is required in order to reveal if ‘neoliberalism’ is conditioning planning processes and outcomes in a way that favours the objectives of certain powerful actors at the expense of wider societal needs and interests. In doing this, it responds to calls for more studies of ‘actually existing’ neoliberalism in terms of the way it differs as an ideological project in different contexts and places (Brenner and Theodore, 2002). Specifically, it responds to calls for more fine-grained case studies of contemporary planning in practice (Valler et al. 2013).

Research questions

This key aim of this thesis is to understand what Scottish planning represents in practice by analysing the way the planning system has been utilised to deal with growth pressures in Scottish city regions. It does this by asking three key research questions:

1. To what extent is planning driven by narrow sectional interests?
2. How is planning used to deal with the politics of growth in growth-pressured locations?
3. What factors explain the main variances and commonalities in the way Aberdeen and Edinburgh have dealt with growth pressures?

Thesis structure

The following chapter places the Scottish planning system into its structural context of state-market relations, framing planning as a state structure used to resolve spatially-based governance concerns. Scottish place-based policy, and planning specifically, have all been the subject of recent research (Peel and Lloyd, 2006; Inch, 2017). These generally high-level studies are critically analysed in order to establish a deep understanding of how Scottish planning – post 2006 –has been considered in the literature. This chapter develops the concept of the Third Way strategic spatial planning approach in the UK, seeking to establish its relevance to Scotland today. It places planning within a wider political-economic structure of neoliberalism that acts as a pervasive ideology in the UK and Scotland, while seeking to define a possible

Scottish difference. It then goes on to establish the importance of place competitiveness and of the city-region scale within such literature. By doing so, the second chapter sets out the important drivers of Scottish planning reform as an institution of capitalism and of state-market relations and its potential shift towards neoliberal spatial governance.

Chapter 3 explores the theoretical understandings of strategic spatial planning including its theoretical roots in communicative-inspired frameworks for planning that influenced planning reforms such as the Planning etc. (Scotland) Act 2006. It sets out the literature on neoliberalism, post-politics, and depoliticisation and why this is important when studying planning in practice. It then critically analyses the planning-specific literature that views planning as a form of neoliberal spatial governance with traits that depoliticise the true objectives and means of planning as market-led growth. It assesses the potential relevance of this and its application to Scotland. Through this, it then develops a theoretical framework based on critical theories which analyse urban governance. To determine the relevance of this critique and why a single planning system has dramatically different outcomes depending on place, it frames this within a Gramscian understanding of city politics in action. This places planning actors as agents operating strategically within broader structural conditions, where planning strategies take the form of 'hegemonies'. The analysis enables an understanding of what Scottish planning represents and the extent of the critique of planning as 'post-political', particularly in growth-pressured contexts.

Chapter four presents the methodology and methods that guided the research. It presents the comparative case study research design and explains its value in studies of planning practice. It identifies a theoretical framework, drawn from chapters 2 and 3, to understand planning in practice. Broadly, this situates planning actors as agents who are conditioned by and, in turn work to recondition, structural forces. The planning strategies that emerge do so through the interaction of these actors within structural powers of the state and the market. In this chapter I summarise the research design and the specific methods used in the data collection process. I also reflect on the ethical considerations that arose in the research process, particularly the issue of returning to research a case study site in which I was formerly employed as a planner. Finally, I explain how I analysed the data which is presented in chapters 5 to 8.

Chapter five introduces the case study contexts for Aberdeen and Edinburgh. It presents existing research on each city-region which is relevant to understanding the way that the reformed Scottish planning system was to be used as a means of resolving key spatially-based historically situated tensions that existed in each context.

The data and its initial analysis are presented in chapters 6, 7 and 8:

- Chapter 6: ‘Rolling out growth? Understanding the importance of context, and putting Scotland’s planning system in its place.’
- Chapter 7: ‘The crucial ‘Where’ of growth: Political strategy and the location of development.’
- Chapter 8: ‘Whose plan? Do ‘narrow, sectional interests’ dominate planning?’

Chapter 6 deals with the process of planning for growth in the Aberdeen city-region and the Edinburgh city-region. It first problematizes the idea of ‘growth agendas’ as a term, particularly in a context of a localised ‘housing crisis’ in each case study. The remainder of the section deals with the process of planning and why, in each case, the same state structure - Scotland’s planning system - was operated by planning actors to arrive at very different ends. It presents four important elements for understanding how growth strategies were formulated: the meaning of ‘planning for growth’; the technical rationales for planning strategies; the importance of new governance arrangements in each case; and the importance of Scottish planning reform. This chapter critically analyses the rationales used, the means by which each strategy was formulated, and how the politics of growth was managed through Scottish planning reform.

Chapter 7 builds on the previous chapter by analysing the point where planning strategies ‘hit the ground’; that is, in the allocation of development from the strategic plan level down to the local plan and site level. As such, it assesses what action-focused strategic spatial planning means in practice. This chapter focuses first on the Aberdeen city-region, questioning whether a shift towards major urban extensions in the City’s greenbelt really demonstrates an ambitious, deliverable, change in planning strategy. Relatedly, the chapter explores whether the spatial strategy in the Aberdeen Housing Market Area may in fact represent the ‘deferral’ of politics to a future point

in time, ‘displacing’ or shifting politics of growth to other groups (including planners) and ‘transferring’ the politics of growth away from communities and representative processes into less democratic ‘fuzzy’ concepts and processes (Allmendinger and Haughton 2015). It then considers the experience in Edinburgh, where the City has faced conditions which may transfer more readily to other UK cities: a significant brownfield area which the Council does not control but wishes to see developed, and a greenbelt that developers control and are eager to build upon but where communities have been resisting development. Each case provides a level of insight that brings to light the political strategies that are operated to manage growth, the limitations of neoliberal planning which emerge, and the complexity of identifying ‘winners and losers’ and the ‘good and bad’ in planning strategies as they manifest on the ground.

Chapter 8, the final data chapter, focuses on contrasting approaches to growth in Aberdeen and Edinburgh, exploring the extent to which the relative power of business interests explains the differences in each case. This chapter builds on chapter 6, by considering the planning system in a wider sense than that of ‘development plan processes’, and chapter 7, by moving beyond the point where development plan strategies ‘hit the ground’. It investigates planning as ‘spatial governance’ through the formal and informal structures that planning operates within. The chapter explores both the role of private-public partnership and business interests in each city and focuses specifically on housebuilding interests as a special interest group in each case. In doing so, it establishes the extent to which ‘planning is dominated by narrow sectional interests’: a charge set by Allmendinger (2016) as demonstrating the shift away from planning in the public interest and traditional conceptions of the public good.

Chapter 9 concludes the thesis. It first revisits the research questions, then draws together the key findings that have emerged through the analytical framework and presents the central arguments of the thesis. Following this, it discusses the contribution of the thesis to academic and other knowledge before providing potential avenues for further research from the themes it has highlighted.

CHAPTER 2: Planning, growth, and the economy: a review of the literature

Introduction

The preceding introduction has set out the key aim of this thesis: that is, demonstrating what Scottish planning represents in practice by analysing the way the planning system has been utilised to deal with growth pressures in Scottish city regions. This chapter critically reviews the literature that helps us to understand what drove Scottish planning reform (SPR) in the mid-2000s. It largely focuses on the context of reform in this period but provides necessary background, in terms of the historical evolution of the planning system, and reflects on more recent events as well. This chapter uncovers the drivers of such aims through the use of Lloyd's (2011) conception of three narratives driving SPR and then organises the study of Scotland's planning system under three themes of 'efficiency, integration, and inclusivity' (Inch 2017).

For Lloyd (2011, 13), 'principle narratives' help us understand planning in Scotland today. Firstly, at a political-economic level, 'neoliberalism' as the dominant economic paradigm framed what was and was not possible through planning and the primacy of economic growth as an objective of the planning system. Secondly, partly as a consequence of neoliberalism there was a subsequent realignment of 'state-market-civil relations' in contested institutional forms. In Scotland this realignment consisted most markedly of 'devolution of government, the promotion of governance and joint working, regionalism and an attendant modernisation of the public sector' (ibid). Thirdly, the idea of spatial planning was for Lloyd (ibid) "a potent force for change in re-crafting thinking and practices in land use planning." These forged the spirit and purpose of a statutory land-use planning system in a modern society and economy (Lloyd, 2011, 12).

The chapter focuses largely on the UK and Scottish context, borrowing from Allmendinger's (2016) conception of spatial planning as 'a new ethos' of the time which the planning community used to suppose a fix for complex economic and societal divisions and contradictions. Doing this provides the foundation for the subsequent chapter 3 which focuses on the theoretical drivers and means of understanding SPR and the extent to which it represents a 'new politics' of growth promotion at the expense of the public interest (Allmendinger, 2016).

While it addresses the academic conceptions of spatial planning as an ethos, it does this through focusing on the public policy problems that spatial planning was supposed to deal with: that is, helping provide enough housing and infrastructure in the places where economic growth is strongest. The second section of this chapter focuses on SPR as a specific hybrid of spatial planning in dealing with these driving forces and public policy concerns. The forging of a spatial planning influenced system is important in understanding what SPR was supposed to be achieving, with what means, and for which particular interests and purposes.

In understanding these drivers and systematic outcomes, it helps towards developing a framework that can be deployed to analyse two very different case studies that reveal what contemporary planning in Scotland represents in practice. The chapter maintains a constant attention to problematizing the concrete contradictions of neoliberal planning while examining its extent and form in Scotland. It does this with a view towards understanding how 'growth focused neoliberal spatial governance' (Allmendinger, 2016) could still result in the old-fashioned political problems of building housing and infrastructure in the economically successful places where they are needed most.

A short history of UK and Scottish Planning

The stance taken in this thesis is that a high-level SPR is a regulatory fix applied to help ensure the functioning of capitalism (Prior, 2005), this responds to changing political economic conditions and imperatives. But this 'regulatory fix' has to be placed into the specific context of the public policy concerns that SPR was to deal with in the first place. The focus for this thesis is on planning as a means of dealing with the politics that surrounds the provision and location of housing and

infrastructure in growth-pressured places. As the thesis has shown already, SPR is not only another 'fix', but one which is dealing with a persistent and wicked public policy problem. It is therefore important to understand not only the evolution of planning in the UK and Scotland but why specifically planning has since its inception appeared to be unable to deal with a key public policy concern. This provides a sense of perspective to the argument that planning in liberal-capitalist democracies such as Scotland, might represent a form of 'growth-focused 'post-political' neoliberal spatial governance' (Allmendinger, 2016).

The following section shows that Scottish planning has been adapted to various structural factors and its regulatory function has remained quite stable in form but has changed significantly in function. It demonstrates a continuous reforming of planning which largely derives from its use as a tool, like any other public policy, which is to regulate the contradictions of capitalism. The extent of such intervention produces tensions that have been addressed cyclically. According to Ward (2004), the story at a UK level is basically one of a more interventionist left-wing and a less interventionist right-wing but where policies and attitudes have tended to arise from structural circumstances and have flowed from one government to another with a traceable lineage between each. As this chapter demonstrates later, even after devolution and the establishment of a pro-independence SNP Government, that similarity and traceable lineage remains and so do the issues planning is tasked with. This is because planning, as a 'fix' for capitalism, can only ever reflect the settled social-relations and conditions of any particular context at any one point in time.

Planning before the Planning Act 1947

What we now consider to be urban planning grew out of various housing and public health acts and bye-laws of the mid to late 19th and early 20th centuries. These were largely aimed at improving living conditions in urban areas, reflecting evidence that unsanitary conditions and the poor health of a large portion of the working population bore economic costs. At a time of social revolution elsewhere in Europe, there were also fears that such conditions could lead to serious social disorder. By the early 20th century there was also an emerging sense of a need to protect the environment, to check the sprawling growth of the cities and towns and generally improve the aesthetics and amenity of urban development (Hall, 1988). Britain had been

comparatively lagging in economic terms since the late 19th century. There was a need to deal with a persistent housing crisis, to build national infrastructure on par with Britain's rising economic competitors, and to boost Britain's industries particularly in the declining industrial northern regions (Hall and Tewdwr Jones, 2010). So, the idea of a statutory town and country planning emerged to deal specifically with economic competitiveness, housing shortages and conditions, and environmental concerns. This can be seen as having a clear economic imperative in terms of national and regional competitiveness, but also a democratic imperative as an agitating working class pressured government action on wider urban policy matters while an emerging middle class pressured for improved urban environments and often the protection of the countryside.

Post War 'Consensus'

After World War Two, Keynesian macro-economic management successfully challenged the laissez-faire basis of the prolonged recession of the 1930s that had enhanced geographical and social inequalities and damaged national economic competitiveness. The planning system finally created in 1947 nationalised private development rights and created a betterment tax that compensated landowners and then retained the uplift in land value of newly allocated development land for the public purse. Planning was part of the new Welfare State. It was to be used to grow the economy and rebuild Britain, tackling poverty through guiding public investment in housing and infrastructure while controlling the worst effects of development. West Central Scotland, as one of the most problematic parts of the UK, was selected for strong state intervention in the form of the Glasgow and Clyde Valley Regional Plan (1946).

In 1951 the Conservatives were elected and moved towards a mixed market economic approach, rolling back some of the state's infringement on private wealth and land rights. They abandoned the betterment tax. Since then the issue of how to capture the land value gain accrued through planning permission (and help fund public infrastructure and high quality place making) is one that has never been fully resolved despite numerous reforms. Cullingworth and Nadin (2006) consider this the fundamental change that has affected planning and its outcomes since 1947. This means by which this issue can be resolved, and put to address the issue of housing for

economic growth, is something which SPR and planning in the present day continues to wrestle with.

This particular issue aside, in the period from the mid 1950's through to the mid 1970's the planning system was part of a mixed market welfare state that enjoyed sustained economic growth. The 1950's social and political consensus was for better housing, employment and social security. The Conservatives, broadly like Labour, were committed to meeting housing needs by large public housing development schemes, often through private sector builders, and through direct private development and ownership as well. The pragmatism of this policy (McKay and Cox 1979) fitted with what became a more explicit Conservative pursuance of the property owning democracy ideal (Pinto-Duschinsky 1970). The UK is not unique in Europe in terms of this approach to mass home ownership, however the politics of housing growth have undoubtedly been shaped by the power of property owners and their use of the planning system to defend their property rights and value. There are few who would argue against growth per-se, but housing demand outstripping housing supply in areas that are growing does undoubtedly produce many perceived 'winners' as well as 'losers'. This is an issue which shapes the current political context in this thesis.

The Labour governments of the 1960s pursued a more positive role for land use and economic planning. It continued with the approach of a mixed economy based upon the popular pursuit of private affluence through both public sector provision and a property-owning democracy. It aimed to positively plan with developers, marrying profitable development with good planning (Ward, 2004). Private and public sector housing development levels remained high, and inner-city redevelopment and new town developments continued to pull a large proportion of the population out of substandard housing conditions. Allmendinger (2016) demonstrates how during this 'high point' of strong state planning, the private sector was far more involved in the provision of housing and infrastructure than had been expected. It is important to remember that planning at its high-point was still effectively about governance (Allmendinger, 2011) in terms of bringing the public and private sectors together to deliver publicly driven priorities. However, planning was more regulatory and less about positive powers of state control that had been envisaged (Allmendinger, 2016). Plan making and plan-delivery were considered slower and less effective than had

been expected and lacking public inclusion. The eventual quality and social consequences of its planning were increasingly brought into question (Prior, 2005).

In 1968 UK planning reform implemented in the UK and Scotland attempted to address these issues with a requirement for community consultation and a two-tier system of structure and local plans followed. In Scotland this was eventually operated through a broader re-arrangement with two-tier regional and local municipalities in 1974. Prior (2005) considers this period as the planning system's first modernization: The Corporate Agenda. It was designed to speed up planning, making it more effective through aligning instrumental rational approaches to strategic planning with regional economics (Healey, 1996), work with the private sector more effectively, and at the same time allow for more public influence.

Claims that planning was bureaucratic and undemocratic often came from the right and from property owning, middle-class interests, but from the left it was judged to have become socially and environmentally regressive and too easily captured by special interests with greenbelt policy in particular at fault (Hall et al 1973). Rather than a 'golden age' for planning, Ward (2004) considers this period one of a 'fragile consensus' where it failed to capture widespread public support and the expert-driven planning community failed to develop a clear basis and potential for the diverse interests in planning. In many ways with broad albeit fragile consensus politics played out en-masse through expert-driven argument about planning a public good, this if anything represented a 'post-political' period in planning.

This fragile consensus and basis for planning would leave planning open to attack. The real economic story of the period was one where Britain's economy grew but was lagging its competitor economies. The oil price shock of 1973 triggered a destabilising of the world economy and the collapse of Keynesian economic systems worldwide. For Britain the effects of this were amplified by deeper existing structural problems that land use planning and economic planning had been tasked with dealing with. In a position of global weakness, the Labour government of 1974-79 has already begun to move away from Keynesianism and towards monetarism as a global ideological shift away from tax and spend policies, predicated on growing economies and populations, began to take hold. Planning's 1970's 'malaise' (Allmendinger, 2001) meant it was particularly susceptible to the emergence of a Thatcher's radical

right-wing government. Scotland as an economically weak and heavily industrialised part of the UK was especially vulnerable to the impacts of Thatcherism.

Neoliberalism and Entrepreneurial Planning

As a reaction to global economic restructuring and the crisis of Keynesian economics, the period of 1979-90 of Thatcherism is synonymous with the reinterpretation of liberal economics and a move towards a residual welfare state including a downgrading of planning. Prior (2005) considers this to be planning's second modernisation: the Market Agenda.

National and regional economic planning and strategic planning was practically abandoned and replaced by area-based initiatives. Planning was seen to be slow and bureaucratic and planners were seen as part of a regulatory state holding back enterprise and as a system that was unresponsive to pluralistic social concerns there was little public support to defend the original 'public benefit' purpose of planning (Allmendinger, 2016). According to Harvey (1989) urban governance moved firmly away from public sector induced welfare provision towards locally-based growth facilitation and inter-urban competition. Planning took on an entrepreneurial approach where the public sector de-risked development through investment and light-touch regulation allowing the private sector a more influential role in, and a greater accrual of the profits from, development.

The planning systems across the UK were, according to (Thornley, 1991) 'affected in tangible ways'. It was modified (General Development changes), bypassed (Urban Development Corporations) and periodically downgraded (development plans) whilst local government suffered cutbacks and more power was vested in central government and its quasi-public agencies to provide consistency to business interests. This made co-ordination around public issues more difficult. The market was increasingly being tasked with the provision of public goods. However, despite this, the system itself remained largely intact (Davies, 1998), and Cullingworth and Nadin (2006, 28) question whether anything changed significantly. For Hall (1988) the attack on planning was mainly rhetorical. For Prior (2005) the system of the separation of development plans and discretionary planning approval remained intact. Allmendinger (2011) considers that this continued separation of plan and approval today still makes planning in the UK and Scotland incompatible with Europeanised

concepts of strategic spatial planning which assume a strong state and a strong plan with little room for political intervention after plans are adopted. However, Healey (1997) cautions against overemphasising the similarity of the container (planning system design) at the expense of the contents (organisation of society and economy and planning practice). Planning might look the same but SPR was required because new means were required to deal with long-running issues.

There are various reasons for the survival of planning at this time, despite the undoubted attack on planning. The UK Government had to reconsider the benefits of regionalism and structure planning as it looked to Europe for regional funds to support economic development. This was particularly pertinent in Scotland where the Scottish Development Agency, and Strathclyde Regional Council organized successfully to attract such funding. The emergence of the environmental agenda would eventually lead to the planning system's key role in delivering the emerging idea of 'sustainable development'. The inconsistencies of the entrepreneurial era also hint at the difficulty in balancing the different rationales and forces for planning and this is very important in terms of the need for SPR in the 2000's. In the 1980s as planning was residualised, there were concerns from business and developers who called for stability and certainty rather than experimentation in the planning system, business was not anti-planning in the way many in right had imagined (Allmendinger, 2016). Crucially, local politics was also a factor as the anti-regulation side of Conservatism eventually had to give way to the traditional property-owning and amenity protecting vote in the urban peripheries and countryside where there were backlashes against planning deregulation. SPR was an attempt to deal with the contradictions of capitalism which planning must keep in check.

However regardless of the actual regulatory changes or not, changes in the form of public utility privatisation, public service funding cuts and privatisation, local government restructuring and centralisation, the growth of the service sector, and the financialisation of the UK economy were very real. Scotland was particularly affected by the economic impacts of neoliberal Thatcherism despite the Scottish Office's and the regional government's substantial attempts to retain the legitimacy of the system through a more responsive interventionist approach. On top of this, the popular Right to Buy policy essentially ensured there was little option other than the 'property owning democracy' and public housing was residualised to the poorest in society. It is

worth remembering that around 50% of the Scottish population lived in public housing in the mid-1970s and Right to Buy in the 1980's and 1990's was as popular a policy in Scotland as it was elsewhere in the UK (Devine, 1999).

As public sector housebuilding had declined severely, the private sector was tasked with meeting the UK's housing supply and demand – a task it has never managed to fulfil before or since. House prices boomed (and eventually busted) accordingly. The quest for small government, and the abolition of regional government in Scotland in 1996 looked like it would make planning for housing and infrastructure an even more difficult task. Politically, the end of any alternative to the 'property owning democracy' shifted the politics of housing as a component of economic growth towards one of housing as a store of personal wealth which needed to be protected from both planners and developers. SPR had to deal with this legacy and attempt a new political approach that would form a consensus around the benefits of new housing in communities.

It is important to remember that the 1980's and 1990's were then not just notable for the ideological attack on planning but for the fundamental changes to the way the UK is owned and organised. Also of major importance is not only the imposition of market-based neoliberalism as an ideology but also the increasing calls for 'sustainable development' in response to environmental agendas and local anti-development agendas. The period in Scotland was also notable for the growing support for an end to Conservative London domination which New Labour would eventually form towards a Third Way approach to planning and a new devolution settlement for Scotland.

Planning for Sustainable Development and the emergence of spatial planning

Planning reform under New Labour was delivered in Scotland through a process of devolution, voted for by referendum in 1997 and delivered in 1999. Planning was reformed in this time across the UK without overt anti-planning rhetoric but as a key way of achieving 'sustainable development'. Sustainable Development was intended to respond to capitalism's essential requirement for continued economic growth but tempered with achieving this in more socially inclusive and environmentally sustainable ways. "Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own

needs” (Bruntland Commission, 1992). In the UK, Labour combined this with approaches which accepted the New Right’s economic imperatives of market-based neoliberal economic policy, blended with a residualised left-wing notion of social justice and inclusivity.

Planning reforms under New Labour from 2002 to 2008 intended to facilitate economic growth and a competitive national economy and at the same time allow for greater and more meaningful public participation (Peel and Lloyd, 2006). This meant that planning was to become a way of joining up the spatial elements of various public and private and quasi-public organisations, while bringing business, communities and particular interest groups on board and into the functioning of the planning system. Prior terms this It is this period which this chapter focuses upon as it was then that Scottish Planning was reformed with a view to resolving the long-running public policy concerns of delivering growth and housing in the places that needed them most. This period brought in a stakeholder approach to planning with a rephrasing of growth itself and the function of planning that of ‘sustainable development’. Prior (2005) considers this to be planning’s third modernisation, terming this blend of a positive planning focused on ‘sustainable’ growth, reorienting but not abandoning neoliberalism (Tewdwr-Jones and Allmendinger, 2000), as the ‘Stakeholder Agenda’.

This historical context has provided a traceable lineage of planning in a UK and Scottish context up to the point at which SPR was implemented. It borrowed from Prior’s framing of planning as a means of regulating capitalism with the system since 1947 going through three phases of modernisation. It did this by reframing this as a period of Post-War ‘Consensus’, which was in-fact a fragile period which resulted in the Corporate Agenda reforms of the late 1960s; an Entrepreneurial Planning era in which planning was downgraded and market-focused through neoliberalism, and a ‘Stakeholder Agenda’ which worked with neoliberalism towards an aim of planning for Sustainable Development. By way of doing this, it has introduced the key narratives which Lloyd (2011) established as driving SPR: shifting political-economic ideologies towards neoliberalism and market based approaches; changing state-market relations towards multi-sectoral governance, in response to international and national imperatives; and the move for planning away from strong-state regulatory planning towards a spatial planning approach that attempted to deal with the demise

of the welfare-state, emerging fragmentation of the state, the acceptance of pluralistic agendas and the move away from rational expert-driven regulatory planning. It is also clear that planning reform, across the UK, has constantly responded to fluctuating economic conditions and changing political ideologies. Policy makers have constantly been attempting to design systems that are ‘fit for purpose’, and that are ‘efficient, integrative, and inclusive’ (Inch 2017). Also apparent is the continuous debate around generating growth, addressing housing needs, funding public infrastructure and the politics of gaining consensus around the distributional impacts of this. The remainder of this section of this chapter now focuses in more depth on Lloyd’s (2011) narratives briefly covering neoliberalism, before further exploring state-market restructuring in the form of governance, devolution, and the drive for globally competitive city-regions. It then discusses the UK interpretation of spatial planning in the specific context of planning responding to concerns over economic growth, the location of housing, and provision of infrastructure.

SPR’s political-economic context: Neoliberalism and neoliberal planning

The previous section introduced the idea of the neoliberalisation of planning undergoing neoliberalism where the market was to deliver housing and infrastructure. It discussed how under Thatcherism, the system largely survived but the context in which planning was put to work changed greatly. The ‘neoliberal settlement’ between the state and capital can be explained through an understanding of neoliberalism not really as a working ideology but more a series of political economic practices. Neoliberalism is described by Harvey (2005, 2) as:

“In the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices.”

Neoliberalism intensifies the dominance of capital and it elevates capitalism beyond a mode of production into an ethic, political imperative and cultural logic (Thompson, 23, 2005). For Harvey what is also important is that neoliberalism is a project that

addresses the perceived failings of the post-war social-democratic settlement by restoring class power to economic elites. Elites can be thought of as multinational corporations, financial capital, and dominant land and resource owners (Harvey, 2005). For Harvey neoliberalism is a class project to rearrange the state (the neoliberal state) in the favour of these powerful groups.

Scottish planning reform is presented in this thesis as the latest in a series of responses to the long running economic requirement for planning in capitalist societies. The modernised Scottish planning system introduced through reform was hailed in by the Scottish Executive in 2006 as the most comprehensive reform of planning since its creation in 1947. However, the preceding section has demonstrated that caution must be applied to any claims that institutional structures such as planning could significantly change without a pre-requisite overarching change to the type of capitalist system in any context.

Neoliberal planning may appear at first to be something of an oxymoron (Beaeten, 2014) and to understand it requires a deeper understanding of the role of planning as an institution of the state which is required to regulate capitalism. According to Marxist analysis, accumulation of profit is the basic organising principle of economic life (Harvey, 1990). This process of accumulation gives rise to contradictory forces. These result in crisis, depression and ultimately the destruction of capital. Capitalism requires property rights because it needs rules of land ownership in order to control access to land and its commodification (Prior, 2005). Planning plays an important role in governing the operation of land markets. Capitalism is not simply determined by independent laws of economics but is socially constructed, so capitalism can be conceptualised essentially as an overarching system of governance (Scott, 2011). This means that planning can be thought of as essentially a sub-system of governance within this.

“Capitalism is an indirect system of governance based on a complex and continually evolving political bargain in which private actors are empowered by a political authority to own and control the use of property for private gain subject to a set of laws and regulations (Scott, 6, n.d).”

Scott's definition of capitalism is a useful starting point for considering the purpose of planning and thus the drivers of planning reform. While it might not seem immediately apparent, planning is required by neoliberal political economic systems. Foglesong (1986) identifies two particular long-running contradictions of capitalism that require addressing through planning as state intervention.

1. While allowing for a growing economy, planning must respond to negative externality effects such as pollution. While at a higher-level, capitalism still has not resolved its inherent contradictory tendency towards the exhaustion of resources.
2. While allowing for a capitalist influence on urban affairs, planning must balance this by allowing a level of control of urban space by other interests through a form of democracy. It is through this contradiction that planning deals with the distributional impacts of society and the inherent politics of growth.

Unchecked growth produces social, environmental and economic consequences that might undo capitalism, so state intervention is required which involves both curbing private property rights and democratizing the capitalist process. The first is the ultimate contradiction of capitalism and is that which the 'sustainable development' agenda emerges from. The second is the capitalist-democracy contradiction which is played out through the politics of planning for growth.

Planning in this sense maintains the conditions of capitalism which in urban space is inherently self-disorganising where effects of one action cause losses to other parts of the system (Dear and Scott, 1981). There are numerous collective factors that require a state influenced approach, for example directing and funding large scale infrastructure investment improves national productivity and intervening in the housing and health of the population maintains the productivity of the labour force. It is also understandable that regardless of the rhetoric of different governments' agendas, abandoning control over land use is not in the interest of any capitalist state (Lovering, 2010). In the contemporary neoliberal context, there is still a requirement to regulate conflicting land uses and a requirement for planning to provide democratic

spatial expressions of future public policy interventions in order for these regimes to retain legitimacy (Sager, 2012, Gunder, 2016).

In this thesis, capitalism is taken as an organizing principle of society, and neoliberalism is understood as a dominant theory of how to organize society in a particular way; a way that favours economic elites. There is an issue with the term elites, however, in that it conjures up ideas of a '1 percent' and from that point neoliberalism might make less sense on the ground in the case studies that are presented. In this thesis, neoliberalism is the political-economic ideology that is important in shaping government policy including planning reform. As an elite project and a class project this has consequences in each case study. This means that planning is used to support market and capitalist-interests (such as the development sector), and importantly to support property ownership (and thus wealthy property owners). So, planning is reshaped towards the needs of already powerful interests. These are interests that continue to work within the planning system with varying degrees of power. But importantly, these interests have never consistently worked in tandem and neoliberalism adds further complexity to this. As this thesis will explore, this gives rise to the issue of developers versus affluent powerful communities in and around the greenbelt where each mobilizes power to serve their own competing agendas around growth. It also gives rise to the more visceral cases where less powerful communities and interests are subjected to the effects of growth while gaining less because the purpose of growth is focused away from redistribution of wealth and welfare state era conceptions of the public good towards powerful sectional interests. However, while an important ideological driver of Scottish planning reform, neoliberalism is not a complete working theory, it is an ideology and its inconsistencies and contradictions are demonstrated in the way planning is played out in these case studies.

Changing state-market relations

Governance

This chapter has already established that capitalism, as the system of organising a

society and making decisions, could be considered as the highest level of governance. So effectively planning can be seen as a sub-system of governance within capitalism; a specific institution that operates to help capitalism function. This section focuses on how planning operates as a form of governance and how it has changed in recent decades. This specifically sets the scene for understanding why spatial planning came to be seen as necessary to join-up spatially based aspects of wider governance in Scotland.

Operating within the UK and Scottish political economic system, planning is widely seen as having evolved from a top down vertical approach where public policy was conducted predominantly by tiers of government upon the public towards a more polycentric, multilateral arrangement where the boundaries between the public, private and third sectors are more blurred. While such conceptions in reality overplay the simplicity of the means by which planning had been operated prior to the 1980's (Allmendinger, 2011), the general trend still represents a situation where there has undoubtedly been a shift; one commonly described as the shift from 'government to governance' (Jessop, 2013).

Systems of government are seen as becoming outmoded by technological, economic and social transformations (Rhodes, 1997). They still exist, but 'government' represents the formal institutions operating at the national level such as the executive, legislature and courts (Heywood, 2000). In the space planning generally operates in, governance more accurately describes the need for more flexible, plural arrangements involving public and private actors and institutions. The concept of urban governance is described by Hendriks (2014, 3) as "the more or less institutionalized working arrangements that shape productive and corrective capacities in dealing with urban-steering issues involving multiple governmental and nongovernmental actors."

There are multiple types of governance. Adams and Tiesdell (2013) describe three broadly accepted types as "hierarchies", "markets", and 'networks". Planning operates in a way that contains attributes of all three simultaneously, but with some modes operating more obviously at certain stages of the planning and development processes than others. Governance in its various forms offers a way of understanding the changing role for planning with that of state-social relations. Understanding this helps provide a sense of how planning is both controlled and often misunderstood as a system. This comes from misconceptions of the power of planning and frustration

around the seeming inability to quickly transform planning strategies into development; frustrations which have led to planning, at various points, being perceived as 'not delivering' and not 'fit-for purpose'.

The period of post-war consensus planning was broadly a hierarchical form of governance. Today's planning system in Scotland remains very hierarchical despite outward attempts at increasing local control, because central governments tend to have centralizing tendencies as they seek to meet their objectives in a disciplined manner. It is difficult for central government to relinquish control and maintain national political agendas at the same time. Thatcherism attempted to introduce governance through markets, meaning the private sector would be more directly involved in the provision of public goods. For planning, this meant a disjointed arrangement of state-private-public relations. The turn to planning as sustainable development in the 1990's represented a period when planning was reformed with a need to 'join-up the operations of the state' (Rhodes, 1997) through spatially based governance and in response to public policy concerns; this produced the need to study governance as operating through networks.

The trend of government to governance is described by Jessop (2013, 16) as the process involving denationalization which is the territorial dispersion of the state's activities; and de-statization which redraws the public-private divide on whatever territorial scale(s) the state acts. Functions performed by states (on any scale) have been transferred entirely or partially to other (parastatal, non-governmental, private or commercial) actors, institutions or regimes. This increases the importance of varied forms and levels of state and non-state partnership and blurs the division between these spheres recognising increased interdependency, divisions of knowledge and the need for reflexivity and coordination (Jessop, 2013). Jessop (ibid) stresses that the strengthening of the informal sector and private enterprise through governance does not need to entail the loss of overall government power. This is because governance can enhance the state's capacity to project influence and secure objectives by mobilizing, knowledge and power resources from influential non-governmental partners or stakeholders.

SPR can be seen as a pragmatic means by which fragmented governance can be integrated on land-use based issues of public policy concern. However, governance and that fragmentation has to be understood as both an effect of structural forces and

an ideological process in itself. Basic conceptions of SPR dealing with fragmentation thus need to be considered as both a project of state-reterritorialization which serves certain actors and institutions, and also as being driven by an ideology that decides the best way to organise society in the first place.

The attempt at a move away from regulatory planning towards spatial planning takes a large element of its conceptual basis from ideas around the rise of governance and state re-territorialisation. SPR reformed these into regulated practices. Planning has been rescaled in Scotland and other countries in a way that tries to find the appropriate scale at which to pursue certain economic, social and environmental goals. For Haughton et al. (2010, 45) this means that “planning is a site of socio-political struggle, where its regulatory and institutional structures are contested and reworked in ways that are revealing of wider societal and ideological debates about the role of the state in relation to markets and civil society.” Understanding the operation of the planning system can reveal much about socio-political struggles in Scotland and the location of power in spatial governance and since the 1980s governance in Scotland can be understood to have been subjected to increasing neoliberal tendencies.

The current study analyses governance hierarchies, markets, and importantly networks. These networks are interactions between those who conduct governance, and understanding how these works is important to understanding how planning is operated and to whose benefit in Scotland. This is necessary to demonstrate the relevance of the critique that planning has essentially become a form of neoliberal spatial governance (Allmendinger 2016). Studying networks can reveal the relationships within representative democracies and the potential for progressive outcomes, as well as regressive subversion by dominant interests and a significant literature exists to support the importance of this (Harvey, 1989, Rhodes, 1997, Hajer and Wagenaar, 2003, Sørensen and Torfing, 2005, Klijn and Skelcher, 2007).

Therefore, in understanding who governs and by what means and for what purposes, this helps reveal the degree to which neoliberalism as a driving ideology exists in the Scottish context. Doing this tells us about neoliberal governance as it is practiced through SPR, after all there is a lot about planning that might not be compatible with notions of neoliberalism, such as the drive for participatory democracy and for

environmentalism as key components of planning systems across Europe (Sager, 2014).

Globally competitive cities and regions

The character of contemporary economies is driven by the internationalization of capital. Gordon and Buck (2005, 9) term this the “intensively competitive, post-fordist, internationalized context.” They consider economic competitiveness, social cohesion and responsive governance as a ‘New Conventional Wisdom’ which governments try to generate at the city-region level to ensure the economic success of nations. Aligned to this is the idea of a ‘global race’ where cities and regions compete across the globe and within national territories for capital and for people.

City-regions are seen to have increasingly important roles in developing and attracting ‘talent’ (Florida, 2002) and as sources of innovation where producers locate, or cluster, to draw upon a deep pool of ‘human capital’ (Glaeser et al., 2001). Planning at the local and city-regional scale has become seen as important in ensuring the conditions for competitive places and nations. This is linked to ideas around governance in that planning can be used to build institutional capacities of actors across the public, private, and other sectors by working together to respond to imperatives of globalisation with a place-focus.

Devolution, responds to the New Conventional Wisdom, but in the centralised UK context can also be seen as a traditional territorial project. UK devolution, when introduced by New Labour, was heralded by its proponents as:

“modernisation of territorial government, whereby the uneven and differentiated administrative devolution that had unfolded across the UK's landscape since the late Victorian era would be injected with new democratic credentials and an enhanced policy relevance befitting the era of globalisation and the multilevel government of the European Union” (Danson et al., 2012, 1).

Pragmatically, one benefit of devolution was to increase the effectiveness of government in Scotland. SPR is intrinsically part of Scottish devolution, with

planning one of the key institutions that would be used to achieve a more competitive Scotland through a reformed national system which would deliver Scotland's Economic Strategy. This thinking around city-region and national competitiveness identified Scotland's four city-regions as a key importance (Waite et al, 2013). Therefore, there was devolution to the national level and a less clear devolution to the city-region level in order to boost growth. This created inherent spatial tensions. But perhaps more importantly it assumed the links between devolution at multiple scales and growth as an outcome of this.

Waite et al (2013) interrogate the concept of devolution focusing on the evidence behind its effectiveness, on the devolution of power down to the city-region level, and the coherence that lies behind its rapid roll out in a UK context. They consider that in the UK devolution has become the answer to a range of complex issues, particularly dealing with economic growth. Importantly they point to evidence that cities might not drive growth in the ways public policy makers now imagine it does (see Schmuecker, et al. 2012; Pike et al 2012). Waite et al (2013) posit that there is no coherent framework for devolution between the UK government, devolved administrations and local government and call for studies to further understand how devolution works and to develop that framework they call for an understanding of how policy tools cohere at different spatial scales. Scotland, as a small and relatively isolated country, with Glasgow as its one sizeable metropolitan region (Goodstadt, 2007), demonstrates the application of devolution at different spatial scales, and one where the overall doctrine of international place-based competition was unquestioned. This thesis responds to calls for understanding devolution in practice, but specifically focuses on the role of the planning system within this and the scalar tensions that this reveals.

Place based competitiveness has been described as a dangerous obsession (Krugman, 1994) or 'virulent obsession' (Hay, 2012). What is important for this thesis is that the shift from government to governance heightens the opportunities for capture by narrow interests and the creation of poorly conceived public policy through responses to any such New Conventional Wisdom. As has been discussed, place-based

competitiveness is a key component of neoliberal economic development ideology. Sager (2014) usefully points out the complexity of assuming environmentalism and inclusivity are part of – or can be made part of – a neoliberal planning agenda. Planners have wrestled with the clear difficulty in achieving the dual roles of competitiveness and sustainable development (Haughton et al., 2008).

This thesis considers planning as a state strategy that can be used ultimately to support the logic of the competitive city-region. Jonas (2013, 284) argues that the form of city-regionalism in whatever multitude of forms it takes globally cannot be “separated from struggles around the collective provision of social and physical infrastructure. Jonas (2013) points out that the success of city regional strategy often relates to the capacity to mobilise class interests, political coalitions and state capacities around for example finance and investment to particular city regions.

Boland (2014) considers the synthesis between neoliberal place-based strategies for economic competitiveness and spatial planning, and analyses the way competitiveness appears to play a role in developing ‘common sense’ economic strategy. For Boland this manifests itself in “prioritisation of economic growth’, ‘privileging of competitiveness’, ‘marketisation of planning’, and ‘speeding up of planning decisions’” (Boland 2014, 773). Such priorities have a clear relevance to the explicit requirements that drove SPR in its quest for a ‘fit for purpose’ system that would drive ‘sustainable economic growth’.

So, there is an important spatial and scalar dimension which is key to understanding how state-market roles have been reformed through an increase in the intensity of shifts from government to governance. This thesis considers SPR as a state strategy which was used to ensure that Scotland, as an emerging devolved nation, was to adhere to the competitive places and nations agenda which can be thought of as forming part of a New Conventional Wisdom (Gordon and Buck, 2005). After successive phase of restricting, the ‘state’ is now a more complex formation of interests that it might have been in the post-war consensus era. Understanding governance in operation is important because it help to respond to Jonas (2013) in a

call for studies of the formation and operation of the state in struggles around the collective provision of social and physical infrastructure across city-regions.

Spatial planning as an ethos

The Third Way and spatial planning

The Third Way is a political ideology of pragmatism that follows a belief in the merits of a free-market economy, while aiming to use this to work towards social justice and equality of opportunity and outcomes. It is closely associated with the New Labour era. Across the UK, this ideological pragmatism put the public and private sectors to work together in order to resolve public policy issues including the provision of housing and infrastructure in city-regions where growth was expected to emerge from most intensely in future. These were often the places where housing growth had been difficult not only to physically deliver through market approaches but had been difficult and divisive in political terms as organised property-owning interests resisted development in their own localities (Allmendinger, 2016).

Many would dispute the very idea that 'Third Way' is feasible, as it attempts to resolve various tensions, not only in relation to planning (Painter, 2005). For example, some view the 'anti socialisation' (Gough, 2002) aspects of neoliberalism to be impossible to keep in check in the long run (Peck and Tickell, 2002). While apparently shorn of ideology, "what matters is what works" pragmatism, as proclaimed in the 'New' Labour Party manifesto of 1997, the 'Third Way' ideology which shaped UK planning reform is "explicitly normative" (Clifford and Tewdwr-Jones, 2013, 49). Associated with the work of sociologist Anthony Giddens it emphasises citizenship, democratic renewal and social inclusion alongside a continuance of the importance of economy and efficiency (Newman, 2005). It can be framed as adapting left-wing politics to the 'realities' of rapid globalisation (Giddens, 1999) and the competitive city-regions agenda but yet it does not recognise or intentionally dismisses the way that these are constructed neoliberal projects. The 'Third Way', then, is political ideology which captures the spirit of New Labour public sector modernisation in the UK, broadly in the period from 1997-2010 and captures the spirit of SPR.

For Allmendinger, New Labour's ambitious policy themes were reconciliatory and potentially conflicting: climate change and economic growth; environmental protection and more and faster housebuilding. These emanated from the underlying Third Way ideology which politically attempted to manage the long-held and more conflictual Treasury pressure for a far greater business-led deregulation of planning. Considering the Third Way is important, in the sense that it allows us to think about the spirit of the times; government assumptions that assumed the tensions and ideological challenges facing planning reform, could be overcome. Having set out an understanding of the Third Way the following section continues a critical survey of the changing planning landscape in Scotland.

UK spatial planning as an ethos of planning practice

Planning can be thought of as 'the means by which society makes hard decisions affecting public resource allocation, and our personal wealth and quality of life' (Deegan, 2002), where interests are not just sectoral ('business' vs a 'community') but where ideologies such as public participatory 'inclusivity' are reconciled with 'efficiency' in private property rights and the broader 'public interest' (McAuslan, 1980).

As previously mentioned, spatial planning represented a shift from regulatory land-use planning. Regulatory planning had been downgraded through neoliberal reforms of the 1980s as it was seen as a threat to growth and also had failed to respond to broader economic and societal changes. In the 1990s the scope for planning began to take on various elements of new agendas such as environmentalism and the need to tackle public policy issues at the more than local level. So at this time planning had emerged from the worst of the neoliberal attack but had entered a dangerous phase of mission-creep in response to multi-sided attempts at honing a better planning system. The period of the early 2000s is when discourses around spatial planning began to influence UK planning reform. For Allmendinger and Haughton (2010)¹ spatial planning in the UK represented a new guise for planning where planning could be seen to work with the market but respond to wider interests.

¹ Spatial planning, devolution, and new planning spaces

Spatial planning represented a new ethos for planning in the UK (Allmendinger (2016) and was one of the three narratives used to develop SPR (Lloyd, 2011), presenting an apparent transition away from old fashioned ideas around planning regulating growth through traditional land-use plans towards one of long term spatial visions; providing the spatial dimension to improved integration across a range of sectoral plans and activity; supporting balanced approaches to sustainable development and improving engagement with stakeholders and the public (Allmendinger and Haughton 2010, 803).

For Tewdwr-Jones (2012, 9) spatial planning is “partly a regulatory process, partly a strategic assessment, partly a governing framework, and partly a futures project.” It is an espousal, at least, of the form and the way that contemporary planning practice in Scotland and most other European countries intend planning to be practiced in contemporary plural societies. Ideally, according to Adams and Tiesdell (2013) the practices of spatial planning can be considered as providing, scalar, sectoral and agency *integration*; process and product *inclusivity*; and importantly *action-orientated* implementation. It is caught up in New Labour ideas around the Third Way and the Modernisation of public services. It was within this political context that spatial planning emerged as a potential fix for land-use based governance issues. Specifically, in the UK spatial planning would emerge as a means with which planning could overcome the contradictions of Third Way attempts to deal with an acceptance of neoliberalism.

Scottish planning reform in the 2000s was part of New Labour’s ‘modernisation’ of government. Understanding what a shift to a ‘modernised’ and ‘spatial’ approach was supposed to be reacting to and for what purposes is important. ‘Modernisation’, in the way it was used by New Labour in Scotland and the UK, is a performative term (Millward, 2005, 69) associated with raising the quality of services through a central focus on increased central regulation backed up with inspection and assessment; with an emphasis on customer consultation, involvement and participation; increased resources; and centrally set targets that are to be achieved through partnership approaches’. Importantly, modernisation for SPR was something of a bargain. Planning departments, before SPR had even been fully implemented, were receiving and due to receive greater resources but with the proviso that they would help to deliver more development on the ground, particularly in places where the

fundamentals for growth were strongest. Along New Public Management lines, the performance of planners was to be under greater scrutiny as they delivered SPR. In this sense New Labour modernisation and Third Way policy, while adopting neoliberal ideology, was nuanced and was in Scotland at least, was not a purely growth-focused demotion of planning.

While spatial planning was presented by its proponents, within government and policy circles, as a means of providing integration of the land use based elements of governance, even more ambitiously offering a route to sustainable development, and doing this through inclusive means, it was tasked with dealing with the specific public policy issues: that of ensuring economic growth and competitiveness. More specifically it was intended to ensure houses and infrastructure were built in the places where economic growth was strongest, where adversarial regulatory planning had been seen to be holding back development and where housing affordability was becoming an increasing public policy concern. Allmendinger (2011) usefully put the rise of spatial planning as a solution to this within the context of the Barker reviews (2004, 2006) which considered the issue of housing land supply first and then housing land supply and planning's role in this specifically. In this context, spatial planning became a way for planning to work with the market rather than against it, this was not a time of unequivocal support of planning. Going back to Adams and Tiesdell's (2013) definition, the importance of 'action' is obviously clear if housing affordability was going to be tackled. Action was required to resolve housing land supply issues within which planning was implicated.

Strategic action was required to deal with housing for growth. Considering the best European examples of strategic spatial planning in terms of responding to the need for housing and transforming places sustainably, Oosterlynck, et al. (2010) arrived at a four-track approach. They point out that 'Strategic' means accepting budgetary and human limitations but not necessarily simply picking winners. They understood strategic spatial planning as re-imagining the future of particular places, structural transformation, social innovation, and action orientation, through a four-track approach:

- The first track focuses on designing alternative futures and aims for structural socio-spatial transformation.

- The second track is concerned with addressing problems in the short term and working towards a desired future by taking specific action in the here and now (action orientation)
- The third track is about involving all actors relevant in either giving substance to spatial quality and/or sustainable spatial development and land use in particular places, or providing institutional, material, or ideological support to strategic planning process (action orientation and social innovation)
- The fourth track is about empowering socially disadvantaged groups and non-conventional actors to participate in strategic planning processes, a goal described as ‘social innovation’. (Oosterlynck, et al. 2010, 5)

Collating research on the actioned oriented examples of spatial planning responding strategically to the same public policy priorities as the UK faced, Peter Hall (2013) looked to Northern European countries for answers to five key challenges still to be tackled. He argued that there remained five basic challenges for UK planning that called for new approaches, new powers and new investment mechanisms:

‘Rebalancing our urban economies so as to create the potential for good jobs and new sources of work for everyone; building new homes in enough quantity, to meet demand, in the right places and to good standards; linking people and places through integrated land-use and transport planning; living with finite resources and the impacts of climate change ; and fixing the broken machinery so as to bring public and private agencies together in the process of development and redevelopment’ (2013, 4-5).

Clearly, strategic spatial planning with an action focus would have had to have overcome structural constraints including the financing of development, deal with the issue of land value taxation in Scotland, joining up the actions of key public agencies and private actors and lining up investment strategies. To achieve the ideals of strategic spatial planning, it would have to do this while empowering socially disadvantaged groups and crucially through an approach that did not simply go with the market but was government-led market shaping. This would mean resolving

immediate needs such as housing supply in places where the market would not have gone most immediately, such as brownfield locations in areas where the wider housing market had growth fundamentals. The results would need to be well-designed communities, linked by sustainable means of transport to and within city-regions. SPR would need to have involved quite radical planning reform in order to achieve such outcomes on a strategic site basis and thus resolved wider regional issues around sustainability and housing affordability.

Introducing the critique of spatial planning

Before moving on to discuss how spatial planning was interpreted through SPR, and then how it was to be operated strategically to deliver on particular issues, it is important to highlight some broad critiques that have surrounded spatial planning in the UK context. Having set out the history and evolution of UK and Scottish planning it is quite obvious that there is much about ‘spatial planning’ that is not entirely new. Lloyd and Peel (2007) and Allmendinger (2011) argue that planning has always been about joining up and has always been relational in a way, through (regulatory land-use) planning there have been attempts to integrate decision making around land-use based public policy issues and come to agreements on this, weighing up multiple perspectives. Writing at the time of the apparent rise of spatial planning Lloyd and Peel (2007) called SPR ‘neo-traditional’ in this sense.

Healey (2003) considered strategic spatial planning to be a project to work towards in the UK and even at the time of planning reforms across the UK, considered the wider governance landscape as unsuited to the more socially inclusive aims of the project. Allmendinger and Houghton (2010) importantly pointed out that its proponents, who suggested that spatial planning could be used to strategically resolve concerns around key public policy concerns through working with the market in inclusive, integrative process ignored the continued regulatory nature of UK planning. Rather than working with the market and communities, the formal design of planning – that design which has remained largely intact since 1947 – still offered the ability for planning to be used to resist development and an arena for disagreement and deadlock. This is due to the clear separation between plan and permission which SPR made no attempt to dissolve.

What was first studied as signs of a revival of a strategic perspective to plan making (Healey et al., 1997), moved towards improving spatial practice (Albrechts, 2004) before academics such as Albrechts and Healey actually began to question its achievements, such as the lack of episodes of ‘real strategic’ planning particularly in the UK (Healey, 2009). In a UK context, various authors have reflected with disappointment on the lack of tangible evidence that spatial planning has taken root in the mind-set of planners in England (Inch, 2010). According to Morphet (2011) this is backed up by a comparison of planning arrangements in the devolved nations including Scotland. So it is clear that even from its early proponents spatial planning and strategic spatial planning was always more of a project to aim towards than something that had or could be achieved through reforms like SPR. However, also emerging through this critique and more concerning are reflections that the idea of spatial planning has been subsumed by alternative agendas that result in disappointing outcomes (Tewdwr-Jones et al., 2010; Morphet, 2011) and ones where private and narrow sectional interests are further empowered by apparent moves towards more inclusive approaches (Haughton et al., 2010, Allmendinger and Haughton, 2010, Inch, 2010).

There is a strong literature that has emerged over the last 15 years which questions not just the institutional design of UK planning, but also the malevolent nature of the spatial planning project as it was adopted by policy makers in the UK. Whilst sounding like a common sense, the intention of integration: “to join up economic, social, and environmental policy contentions, and address conflict over the qualities of places and the impacts of development proposals Tewdwr-Jones, 2012)” actually raises issues about the size of the task. As Stead and Meijers (2009) point out these objectives very closely resemble the ‘fuzzy concept’ of sustainable development which itself has been put to work to suit agendas which will never address capitalism’s contradictions.

This critical literature considers spatial planning to represent the neoliberalisation of planning through growth focussed, business driven agendas that infiltrate formal and informal new governance arrangements at different spatial scales, such as ‘soft spaces’ (Allmendinger and Haughton, 2010, Allmendinger and Haughton, 2012a, Allmendinger and Haughton, 2007). This has engendered attempts to de-politicise planning and, borrowing from the post-political critique elsewhere in political

science, results in UK spatial planning as a post-political activity (Allmendinger and Haughton, 2012b, Deas, 2012). This critical interpretation is studied in depth in the next chapter which discusses the politics of SPR in greater depth.

A Scottish interpretation of spatial planning – Scottish Planning Reform in the 2000s

While planning was not ‘under attack’ in Scotland in the 1990s, there was a strong sense that planning was not meeting the needs of business, communities, or even various strands of government. The Scottish Executive, at the time of planning reform, responded to calls from a broad range of interests and the White Paper ‘Modernising the planning system’ (Scottish Executive, 2005) and the subsequent Planning etc. (Scotland) Act 2006 (OPSI, 2006) aimed to make the system ‘fit for purpose’. According to Peel and Lloyd (2007), “Two principal objectives underpinned the specific modernisation of what they still termed ‘land use planning’ in Scotland. First, it sought to secure greater efficiency and improved effectiveness in the processes and outcomes of the system. Second, it sought to make the system more transparent and attractive to facilitate greater civil engagement and participation” (Peel and Lloyd, 2007, 398). This attempted to provide a fix that balanced, amongst other things, the need for a faster and more flexible planning to meet economic needs and more engagement and influence for an increasingly pluralistic society and range of interests.

Making Scottish planning reform?

Scotland had its own planning system and had legislative powers before devolution. The Scottish Office had long played a key role in a more interventionist approach to public policy Lloyd and Edgar (1998), with a history of strong Cabinet Ministers and heads of the Scottish civil service. This allowed a distinct Scottish identity of strategic economic management of the economy, regional government in the 1970’s and 1980s, with a long-held focus on the integration of economy and land use matters (ibid). Paterson described this as the Scottish form of ‘managed corporatism’. However, by the early 1990s Scotland’s regional government had been removed and it would take devolution in the late 1990’s before this would be replaced by a bolstered layer of elected government based in Edinburgh rather than London.

While demonstrating a unique identity, the reality of policy making in Scotland was that there was little time to develop broader legislation in the crowded Westminster schedule dealing with Scottish matters. Also, the UK Government, naturally held a stronger sway over the formation of Scotland-only legislation. From 1999, the Scottish Parliament and an enhanced civil service provided the time and resources to develop new legislation and this meant that an even more distinct Scottish approach to public policy was possible. Coalition politics, a result of mixed-member proportional representation system created for Holyrood, combined with the new devolved and existing powers thus enabled a more distinct Scottish approach to planning. This evolved from a distinct Scottish planning but one that overall largely retained its regulatory roots (Lloyd and Peel, 2007) and still one, in comparison to others in the UK with 'similarities outweighing technical differences' (Clifford and Tewdwr-Jones, 2013).

In Scotland planning reform appeared a more careful process and involved a large degree of urban policy research which took place in the late 1990's and early 2000's. Legislation around related issues such as landownership, long held up by Westminster's machinations was being developed by Holyrood at the time. The new scale of policy making allowed for a more accessible format of policy making. As SPR's research phase came to the point of implementation, Vigar (2009) considered the importance of the scale of policy making in the 'governance village' of Scotland's new polity. He highlighted the potential positive effects this had through its 'open door' approaches as well as the potential negative effects of clientelism and connotations of old-fashioned corporatism. Meanwhile, at this time, Scotland's existing planning community of public and private sector planners similarly began to enjoy the benefits of the devolved policy-making arena. It was in this context that policy makers and planners attempted to develop a more 'inclusive' planning system; who was included and with what effect is considered later in this section, dealing with Scotland's neo-corporatist approach to policy making, and such an interpretation of inclusivity forms a major part of this thesis.

Finding a purpose for planning

The explicit purpose of planning, as set out in the Modernising Planning (2005) paper, and carried through to the present day, was for planning to help the Scottish Government deliver its key aim: achieving ‘sustainable economic growth’. This thesis considers what this vague purpose could mean in practice. The term ‘sustainable economic growth’ can be thought of as the emptiest of signifiers, tellingly so and perhaps symptomatic of a new, conflict-averse and depoliticised, nature of the reformed Scottish planning system. Through the White Paper Modernising the Planning System (Scottish Executive, 2005), it was clear that planning reform was attempting to deliver contradictory objectives. It was to strengthen community involvement and reflect local views, enable quicker investment decisions and speed up the time taken to make decisions (Scottish Executive, 2005). It was to respond to the frustrations of developers who saw planning as too slow and cumbersome but also the many local communities and communities of interest who saw planning as undemocratic and loaded in the favour of developers. The Modernising Planning paper was developed and legally enacted as the Planning etc. (Scotland) Act 2006 and eventually fully rolled out into both development planning and development management regulations by 2009.

‘Delivering sustainable economic growth’ allowed policy makers and politicians to evade clarity on the specific nature of the relationship between economic, environmental, and social interests, instead it simply restated their competing interests (Rowan Robinson, 2003). However, for Peel and Lloyd (2007), this might have been expected, and it is this very balancing upon which planning has always rested, whether it was to be termed land-use planning or spatial planning. While the lack of a clear and specific purpose for SPR was an often-cited critique, and is one which continued to raise debate as planning went through its subsequent reform in 2016, it is actually the case that Modernising Planning (2005) contained four purposes to be achieved by SPR:

“To secure a planning system that has the following purposes at its heart:
enables the planning, promotion and management of development to secure

good places to live; is fast, inclusive and transparent; building trust between communities and developers; takes a long-term strategic overview seeking to secure sustainable development as well as control local detail; and serves a national purpose, as well as helping local communities to shape their own future at a local level.”

Achieving these purposes was, of course, never going to be easy. There is never likely to be a planning system that can be specifically designed to do achieve such broad purposes. What SPR in its vagueness allowed though was a reformed system that could offer to be all things to all people. What this thesis helps to reveal is how SPR was possibly not radical enough to achieve any of these purposes even in isolation.

An efficient planning system?

‘Spatial planning’ can be thought of as largely an ethos which took hold within planning academia, policy-making, and amongst some but crucially not the majority of planning professionals. In England spatial planning as a positive ‘pro-planning’ process was essentially a brief moment (Allmendinger, 2016). The important point is that those making planning reform were not celebrating a new planning, even in Scotland. Just like in England, SPR’s ‘Spatial planning’ was, even at its height, an ethos driven from within planning circles to prove its worth under the ever-present threat of further diminishing status via business-led reform. The role of those promoting planning was to ingrain an ethos within SPR that planning could be integrative but could also be streamlined and made more efficient. The task for such promoters was to maintain a clear statutory purpose for planning, increase the resources available to allow planners to ‘get on with their jobs’, and to accept and work with the view that planning had become too complex throughout the 1990s and early 2000’s.

In Scotland Lloyd and Peel (2007) provide a good sense of this period by reminding us of the underlying and overt importance of efficiency as a purpose of SPR. For Lloyd and Peel (2007, 399), the planning system had accumulated a range of policies to address an expanding range of societal ills and dilemmas at large, some of which extended beyond land use policy limits. So SPR was not to be about adding more weight and expectation to the land use planning system. A spatial planning approach, in Scotland at least, was in many ways about streamlining, defining a purpose for

planning as ‘sustainable economic growth’, and use that to respond to public policy concerns such as the need to build more and better quality housing. To planners perhaps as much as developers and communities, the idea of streamlining was to be welcomed. These are important points to grasp: that ‘efficiency’ should not simply be associated with neoliberal agendas; and that all planners should not be associated with building and defending a new type of spatial planning. It is precisely this nuance and complexity that this thesis uncovers as SPR was put into action.

Efficiency can be seen in the new structure of development plans. The Scottish National Planning Framework (NPF) in its first iteration in 2004 was a non-statutory, and succinct document. It is also important to remember that outside the four city-regions, structure planning (sitting between local and national) was removed. A new ‘all in one’ Scottish Planning Policy at only 55 pages replaced 21 different SPP’s and some National Guidance papers². While being stripped down in many respects, the Scottish system was to be and remains ‘plan-led’ in that decisions conform to the development plan. Development plan-making processes, which were widely agreed to be taking too long prepare, were narrowed down and a stricter time limit of three years for formation and five years for use of the plan was imposed. A less legalistic development plan inquiry process, with fewer opportunities to challenge the final stages of the plan, as well as virtually no opportunity to challenge the final decision of the Government appointed Reporter was set up. The counterbalance to this was supposed to be a more inclusive and participatory early stage of the plan-making process. The aim of front-loading was to ‘iron-out’ issues early with less necessity for drawn out plan-making processes and less scope for deviating from the plan at the permission granting stage. In this sense SPR in plan-making terms took on elements of a spatial approach but could really be seen as placing quite a crude efficiency and speed over inclusivity.

² Interestingly this rationalising was met without a similar outcry and campaigns (from the Conservative national press) that accompanied a similar move in England with the NPPF in 2011. In England, the Daily Telegraph launched a campaign to protect the nation’s green-belts from UK Coalition Government’s Localism planning reforms of 2010.

An integrative planning system?

In Scotland, the plan making (development planning) aspect of planning reform had been set in motion through the new national tier NPF (2004); slimmed down Scottish Planning Policy (2008) and the emergence of new city-region Strategic Development Plans (in the four city-regions) and Local Development Plans in all 32 Local Authorities. Through devolution, the creation of four new Strategic Development Planning Authorities and the existing use of 32 unitary local government authorities, the infrastructure for Scotland's approach to a 'spatial turn' was in place. This could be an integrative, multi-scalar, planning that could respond to the need for faster growth and development and seemingly without the conflict and time that was associated with traditional land-use planning which was perceived to have become weighed down by its own regulatory complexity.

In 2008, when development control morphed into development management through The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedures) (Scotland) Regulations 2008, planning reform finally began to be implemented through plan making and permission decision making. Scotland, like England, maintained the traditional British separation of plan-making and the granting of planning permission in its 'modernised' spatial planning system. This separation was something Allmendinger (2011) highlighted as key to understanding why the UK's hybrid approach could never offer a conflict free path to growth. In Scotland, as a way of dealing with this, the development control function was renamed 'development management'. With development plans at the national and regional level apparently set to be more positive about growth, planning officers and councillors were expected to take on board 'culture change' by taking a more positive approach to decision making with decisions guided by a very clear direction that cascaded from well evidenced and succinct plans.

Spatial scales and the impact on spatial policy in Scotland

The form that devolution takes shapes the relationship between rescaling, spatial planning and the ultimate scope of policy (Haughton et al. 2010). In Scotland spatial planning is associated with differing geographies of power from supra-national structures and the Europeanisation of planning (Nadin, 2007, Tewdwr-Jones, 2012); the forging a national planning identity and a key national policy lever (Lloyd and

Purves, 2009) (Colomb et al., 2014); and an ongoing idea presented by successive Scottish governments that it offers a decentralisation of power to local areas. One question emerging from a consideration of geography and rescaling is whether it can be all these things at once.

Scotland's first National Planning Framework (2004) represented an attempt to integrate the European Spatial Development Perspective into Scottish land use policy, but reflected decades long calls within planning circles for some form of a national plan for Scotland (Goodstadt, 2007). In response to relative declining global status of the EU economies in the 1990's there were EU agendas for enhanced competitiveness and synergistic policy-making. This was to take on a subsidiary focus with EU urban programs to be filtered through the national level to the city-region level. The purpose was to support cities and while related to structural funding, was to a greater degree formed through 'softer principles' that were intended to pull together authorities, bodies, and the public and private sectors in order to tackle the key issues of urban deprivation and competitiveness through synergistic governance arrangements (Chorianopoulos, 2010). So, the drive for competitive city-regions and appropriate governance regimes to ensure competitiveness was strongly influenced by the European Spatial Development Perspective, but the ESDP itself reflected a broader view that leading global and European nations and city-regions had already been practicing this, the intention was to roll this out as standard across the EU.

The city-region concept is treated somewhat confusingly in Scottish government policy. However, in terms of a spatial planning policy framework on paper, there is a clear line of responsibility from the national planning framework (NPF) to strategic development plans (SDPs) and finally local plans (LDPs). Together these provide a clear spatial expression of government policy and Scotland's four city-regions are seen to be of key importance to the economic growth of the nation. The planning system in general, at all levels, is expected to deliver the Government's Economic Strategy, the aim of which is to meet the Government's overall purpose of 'sustainable economic growth'. Scottish Planning Policy sets out how all planning authorities should meet this in policy terms. The NPF is linked to the Scottish Government's Infrastructure Investment Plan and sets out a national spatial strategy with specific allocations that are of national importance. Below this Strategic Development Plans (SDP) for the four main urban areas adhere to the NPF and

attempt to provide the spatial policy provision for national infrastructure planning at the city-regional level. SDP's also set, among other things, the housing targets and broad spatial policy for local development plans. LDPs that are further downstream, and it is in LDPs that the vast majority of land allocations and policy requirements are finally set at a local level. Waite et al. (2013) describe this as a 'clear line of sight' from the national level to the level. Far more importantly they question whether there is funding to put in place infrastructure and thus deliver and so to move beyond 'notional planning'. This thesis analyses why this cascade of plans and apparently integration of policies did not deliver on growth objectives in each case study area. It also analyses the way in which the key points of tension – the actual allocation of development in LDPs and the subsequent granting of planning permission through Development Management processes would act as outlets for the inevitable politics of growth.

At first the NPF was non-statutory, not explicitly economy-focused, and hardly action focused in its first instance in 2004 (Goodstadt, 2007), but it was always likely to grow in specificity and become a useful tool with which to dictate Scottish spatial governance. The today NPF possibly looks 'relational' as it attempts to place Scotland within the European Spatial Development Perspective; Scotland's cities and regions are shorn of traditional boundaries and their relation to regions beyond sea and border are made clear. However, since 2004 the NPF has more effectively become the spatial expression of the Scottish Government's Economic Strategy. According to Goodstadt (2007) the NPF initially arose from the abolition of the large and powerful regional councils which had conducted structure planning to various degrees of effectiveness throughout from 1974-1996.

Looking to wider contexts is useful at this point. Strategic spatial planning in the English context can be seen as representing a struggle in the identity of planning between planning as narrow, regulatory, localised focus on property rights and as a strategic place shaping mechanism (Healey, 2007, Shaw and Lord, 2009, Tewdwr-Jones, 2012). The spatial approach to strategic planning in Scotland has been most obviously encapsulated through Scotland's first National Planning Framework 2004 (NPF). This was developed with the intention of ensuring a more strategic approach to planning ('Scottish Executive (2001): A Review of Strategic Planning') and as a response to the European Spatial Development Perspective (EDSP). It considered the

implications of Scotland's geographical position in Europe and the opportunities and challenges that represent, in the context of devolved government, European enlargement, and the global economy (Purves, 2006, 111). Importantly, it contains specific 'national developments' that sit on top of a three-tiered hierarchy (national, major, local) within the reformed Scottish planning system. The NPF, now in its third version (the NPF3, 2014), has grown increasingly prescriptive, programmed, and integral to the land use aspects of wider government policy, specifically the Scottish Government's Economic Strategy (Lloyd, 2011). Finally, developing the sense that the NPF reflected a sense of separate Scottish national identity within a wider Europe (Vigar, 2010), the NPF and spatial planning can be seen as an attempt by a devolved government using place shaping as one of a limited range of tools in an increasingly fragmented political union (Colomb et al., 2014).

At the geographical level, the NPF represents a filling in of the national scale but – in tune with spatial planning thinking – directs a city-regional scale of governance that was to be filled-in by Scotland's Strategic Development Planning arrangements (Vigar, 2009). Vigar (2009) analysed this regional 'filling in of governance' in the mid-2000s, at the stage where Scottish planning reform was expected to go about joining up spatial governance. The aim for strategic spatial planning was to see Scotland deliver public policy objectives, such as boosting housing delivery, and economic growth. Planning reform, and strategic development plans, specifically, were aimed at addressing concerns that the key agencies of the public sector, local authorities, and the private sector were not operating in a joined-up fashion.

Spatial and economic strategy in Scotland, focused on cities as the "drivers of Scotland's economy", this was established in the Cities Review (Scottish Executive, 2002) and rolled out in the first National Planning Framework. The importance of cities and regions is still clear: "The size and scale of Scotland's cities drives the agglomeration of business and creates a dynamic environment for knowledge sharing and innovation" and cities and their regions are asked "to work together as functional economic areas" to maximise their contribution (Scottish Government, 2015, 67). The National Planning Framework as the spatial expression of the Government Economic Strategy goes further, stating that "Cities are the main driver of our economy – notably the performance of Aberdeen and Edinburgh exceeds what may be expected from their population size" (Scottish Government, 2014a, 6). Accordingly, the various

strategies are directed at ensuring these urban areas maximise their potential and utilise all available resources to ensure their economic success and that of the nation.

Vigar (2009) focused on the ‘hard infrastructure’ of legislative and system changes and increases in resourcing and responsibility, comparing this with the ‘soft infrastructure’ that SPR invoked through culture change and the breaking down of ‘silo mentalities’ through new forms and networks of governance. Researching the scope for a successful integrative spatial planning, Vigar (ibid) pointed to the rescaling of planning and its hard-infrastructure changes as offering some strong foundations upon which new softer mechanisms could work. For the new Scottish City-Region SDPAs, the Glasgow City Region historically and contemporarily demonstrated the clear benefits that up-to date, collaboratively prepared, plans could offer. As a long-held example of many of the benefits of a strategic place-making role through identifying investment priorities and focusing attention on specific areas and issues (Wannop, 1996; Goodsadt, 2007), Glasgow was supposed to offer Edinburgh in particular some of the lessons that could be learned on building such ‘soft infrastructure’ or ‘institutional capacities (Healey, 2006). For Vigar (2009) the potential for Scottish planning lay in this hard and soft mix but it would take planning and planners assuming power to act, to present convincingly evidenced and actionable plans to stakeholders for instances of strategic planning success to become the norm across Scotland. It is this rescaling of government which SPR responded to, and it is in the NPF and SDPs and LDPs where the spatial expression of power in Scottish planning is played out and explored in this thesis.

Making integration work

Integration can be thought of as part of the vertical and horizontal integration is useful in conceptualising the operation of governance networks. Scotland had re-calibrated a vertically integrated system of plans which provided a ‘clear line of sight’ (Waite et al. 2013) from the national scale down to the local. The “hard infrastructure”, the laws, rules and formal responsibilities of the UK land-use planning system, has been changed. However, less tangible was the horizontal requirement for agencies to join up land-use implications of their policies, such as spending plans and investment strategies, working with planning departments and private and other actors (Vigar, 2009). This would require soft-infrastructure change which is would be more difficult

to achieve because it is determined by local practices and path-dependent factors (Lloyd and Peel, 2005). Vigar (2009) points out that this is culture change, the informal rules and practices.

Salet and Woltjer (2009) consider two key elements of responding to land-use issues in the Randstad region: the extension of capacities for control at the regional level of scale (legal and financial instruments) and, second, an approach which highlights the importance of creating strategic network capacity and enlarging coordinative and communicative intelligence:

“the answer to addressing the challenges of development planning at the city-regional level is not primarily to enlarge the steering powers of regional planning per se, but to broaden its strategic network capacity through enlarging the coordinative and communicative intelligence of the intermediate regional planning bodies (Salet and Woltjer 2009, 235)

The second approach was found to be a completely different type of policy making where coalitions of interests from the public sector and the private sector transformed economic claims into demands for a spatial strategy. In this Dutch regional context, where the ‘hard infrastructure’ is more likely to be in place than in Scotland, action in terms of strategic spatial planning still requires coalition building. So, it is important not to under-estimate the more nuanced softer element of strategic spatial planning when translating such ideas to Scotland. This was a key element that ‘culture change’ was supposed to address. However, still in comparison to the Randstad example, it could still be said that planning actors in Scotland set out to resolve public policy concerns armed with new plans, with a new remit to build coalitions but they did not necessarily have any new key delivery agencies, new borrowing powers, or new land management powers to put the gains of any new coalition building into action.

So, it is important to consider the more critical conceptions of culture change. This can broadly be seen as a requirement to say ‘yes’ to development, or at least to demonstrate a willingness to be ‘open for business’ (Inch, 2013, 2017). However, ‘making planning deliver’ by joining up actors and agendas is a major, if not the major, part of culture change. Culture change can be thought of as encompassing the efficiency, integrative, and inclusivity elements of SPR. Before moving on to the section dealing with efficiency, it is worth reflecting on the action orientation and

project focus for SPR. In terms of an action focus, SPR was to: provide new plans which set out visions (apparently drawn and balanced competing interests); identify problems with short and long term and actions to address them; integrated processes between actors to achieve actions with a strong focus on enhancing institutional capacities of actors; and finally empower non-conventional actors to participate through inclusive planning processes. Considering this, SPR ostensibly fits with Oosterlynk et al (2010) and Adams and Watkins (2014) who point on the action orientation of spatial planning. It is through this action, or lack of action, that planning becomes strategy and it is this that allows an assessment of what a planning system represents in practice.

Researching in the mid 2000's, Vigar, (2009) noted warm praise from RTPI Scotland (RTPI Scotland, 2006) which effused that "Scotland is now ahead of England, Wales and Northern Ireland in national spatial strategy development and working towards what Holland and other countries have achieved". This refers to planning programs in the Netherlands that throughout the 1960s to 1990's used national and regional planning to respond to the need for reconstruction and the resolution of housing shortages with a focus strengthening the national economy and doing this in a way which accounted for resource and land scarcity.

While recognising the importance of hard infrastructure reforms and the increasing importance attached to action plans integrated into development plans, Vigar (2009) noted continuing concerns around the possibility for implementation at the outset of SPR. Even at the point of implementation there were clear concerns from actors involved in the SPR that the system had, in neither a 'hard' or 'soft' sense been designed to respond to the specific requirements to build more housing and infrastructure in the places that needed it most.

The Scottish Government set a clear action-orientation which SPR was to help deliver. Firm Foundations (Scottish Executive, 2007) set a clear challenge for the public and private sectors to increase the rate, range and quality of house building in Scotland. This came at time of escalating house prices and included a specific target for all sectors to work towards a total supply target of 35,000 houses per year. However, Firm Foundations with its call for building more houses and better places and in locations where there is demand, to a specific target, using tiers of national and regional plans and focusing on local delivery was still largely issue focused. There

was an expectation that SPR would deliver the means by which this could be achieved on the ground.

At a strategic action level, the Scottish Government began to collate an evidence base with which planners could work. Just one example was ‘Delivering Better Places in Scotland’ (Adams, Tiesdell, Weeks, 2011, 2) which was aimed at ‘helping different stakeholders identify good practice and improve their understanding of related issues in delivering better places’. As part of a wider process, the Scottish Executive had set up Architecture and Design Scotland which promoted the ‘Designing Places’ agenda. Action orientation was clearly about bringing in collaborative multi-sectoral understandings to deliver on the objectives of SPR.

Action in strategic spatial planning was to consist of multi-sectoral working building, it encouraged coalition building and this soft-infrastructure was more fluid and when fused with a more action-oriented planning system perhaps meant that the hard - changes that international examples often presented were possible to briefly ignore. Planning actors did not necessarily have any new key delivery agencies, new borrowing powers, new land management powers to flex. Achieving the aims of SPR without this would be the real test of a strategic spatial planning approach in Scotland.

An inclusive planning system?

As previously noted SPR’s objective was to promote growth in ways that were ‘sustainable’ in ecological terms but also, in a more nuanced sense, ‘socially sustainable’. Social sustainability and inclusivity often conjures up ideas of steering development to regenerate deprived areas. Through SPR regeneration would continue to be required to be justified through inclusive approaches – with the powers of government and the private sectors continuing to be put to work in opportunity areas where land values and social capital were identified as being below their potential. However, inclusivity in SPR needs to be understood in a wider sense. It was not explicitly about regeneration or appealing to socially disadvantaged groups – as is often the case with spatial planning literature.

In terms of the sense that planning was failing, the expression revealed within Modernising Planning (Scottish Executive, 2005) was that most communities were in fact apathetic and wary about planning. Communities were never really expressed in any particular sense. This meant that one of the key pursuits determining the ‘public

interest' in planning (McCauslan, 1980; Lloyd and Peel, 2007) through 'public participation' was from outset a vague objective. This was to be expected because SPR was part of evasive Third Way approach to resolving contentious social issues; class and the distribution of power were not to be addressed at the outset.

More specifically SPR was implicitly seeking to appeal to middle class communities who had in many cases been successful in adversarial uses of the planning system. Overcoming this was an important part of delivering a more efficient planning system one which could be action-oriented. Imagining more inclusion could do this neglects a complicated issue that SPR was were dealing with: that of gaining community buy-in and influence for strategies of development in growth-pressured areas where there was likely to be an aversion to development.

SPR addressed the thorny issue of 'Third Party Rights of Appeal' itself a key signifier of the property-democracy contradiction. Only applicants can appeal a decision made by a planning authority. This means that those affected by planning applications that are granted, even applications that were not part of the agreed development plan, have no right to appeal except where they can move outside the planning system into the wider legal system and prove procedural errors. There was some political support for a TPRA as SPR evolved, however policy makers who had long feared the impact on the 'efficiency' of the system worked to arrive at a compromise that could weigh up 'efficiency' and 'inclusion'. That compromise contained: more 'effective' early engagement in the development planning process by local authorities and potential developers; Local Councillors gaining control over many planning appeals of local significance, rather than sending all planning appeals to Government reporters; and applicants (usually developers) having to demonstrate at the planning application stage that they had consulted communities and taken on board their concerns.

However, at the same time the planning system was being developed become more responsive to the developer needs of 'efficiency' in terms of speedier plan making and decision making on permissions. Crucially, developers had been brought closer to the actual operation of the system through statutory requirements to consult and self-report on community consultation; they were given more scope to make representations (as were communities and individuals) at planning committees; the trend of outsourcing planning functions (such as action-oriented elements including the planning of strategic growth areas) to the private sector would continue through

SPR; the trend to private sector involvement in spatial strategy shaping through collaborative working groups would be encouraged; importantly, applicants (developers) would be paying more for their use of the planning service with a move towards fees meeting the costs of the planning process. This thesis provides an understanding of ‘inclusivity’ in the Scottish planning system and the means by which vaguely defined ‘communities’ and developers were both brought closer to its operation.

Neo-corporatism and stakeholder planning

This chapter has discussed the increasing domination of neoliberalism as a political-economic ideology. However, it has set out the importance of understanding neoliberalism as a contradictory ideology (with implications for planning) and it has been clear that neoliberalism is contingent on the context in which it is implemented. Scotland’s political-economic context is an unusual one to discern. This is a result of Scotland’s increasingly devolved status and powers and as a country its continuously evolving nationhood. Lloyd and Edgar (1998, 197) point out the links between corporatism and consensual politics. While corporatism was largely rejected elsewhere in the UK, it remained in many ways in Scotland in the form of a “tradition of bargaining and negotiation between interested parties and groups - in effect a negotiated order of policy networks.”

In Scotland it is often accepted that legacy of post-war corporatism – the control of the state through large interest groups such as business trade unions and state interests –is still pervasive (Keating, 2010). As a form of governance, corporatism or neo-corporatism is still not likely to serve a pluralistic society, and challenge business focused planning, even though neo-corporatism is often associated with social democratic political systems. In implementing SPR Scotland’s context can be seen to contain strong traits of both neo-corporatism and neoliberalism.

McCrone (1992) considered that corporatism could be defined flexibly and practiced as whatever could be defined as the national interest in Scotland’ (McCrone, 1992). This means that is still susceptible to neoliberal ideology if it is that ideology which has set the tone for the national interest. Inch (2017) considers the social democratic rhetoric of the SNP’s Scotland as arguably deepening neoliberalism where the SNP governments in power since 2007 have pursued national competitiveness as the key

policy agenda. What these arguments point towards is the need for a contextual and critical understanding of neoliberalism before the critical perspective of spatial planning as 'neoliberal governance' is likely to yield significant insights in a Scottish context.

Is 'stakeholder planning' a more appropriate term?

Regulationsit perspectives, such as that set out by Prior (2005), consider planning reforms to be institutional 'fixes' destined to come unstuck from their regimes of accumulation as capitalism, inevitably, re-enters various states of crisis.

Understanding this can explain the rationale for what Prior (2005) termed the 'stakeholder agenda' of the mid 2000's that took place in England and influenced the development of SPR. The 'stakeholder' agenda was amongst other things, an acceptance of neoliberalism but a recognition that the 'market' agenda had created a backlash from communities looking for 'more planning' to protect their interests and particular interest such as environmentalism; and, importantly a recognition that business interests crave stability and certainty as much as a desire for 'less intervention.' This thesis analyses the rise of stakeholder planning and, very importantly, who gets to count as a stakeholder and on what terms in Scottish planning. It considers whether 'stakeholder' planning is a far more realistic conception of the ethos driving Scottish planning reform, than the more idealistic 'spatial planning' that dominated academic literature in the period of planning reform. This stakeholder agenda often pertained to an increased role for less powerful groups but was essentially a compromise which favoured a strong regulatory legal apparatus and an increased role for business as one stakeholder along with communities of interest and traditional conceptions of place-based communities. Drawing from this, this thesis supports the idea of SPR as a compromised hybrid of differing ideas and priorities that, as with previous forms of planning, is tasked with regulating capitalism and its contradictions. What emerged in the UK was not a radical reimagining of planning but stakeholder planning. This was a form of planning that responded to the real and ideological limitations of government in the globalization-driven demise of the post-war consensus. It was an attempt to address the failings of the strong government and expert planner approach. Stakeholder agenda was a compromise and

one which crucially brought together powerful business and property owning interests to act as equal partners alongside planning authorities and less powerful interests.

Conclusion

Where does this leave strategic spatial planning in Scotland?

Moving towards a conclusion of this chapter, it is worth reflecting that Peel and Lloyd considered that “attempts to reconfigure the planning system and its attendant processes cannot be considered in isolation from a more fundamental understanding of the emerging spatial planning ethos” (2007, 396). However, from their perspective, what emerged in Scotland was ultimately ‘neo traditional’ in terms of its institutional policy design and SPR would be reliant on some kind of change in the ethos of planning culture of planning if it was to reflect the ‘explicit pluralistic environment in the context of modernisation’. This complex ethos or culture was the ideological challenge that planning in Scotland would have to address. What actually emerged from ‘culture change’ was, for Inch (2017, 2) part of a neoliberal shift which for the last 40 years has seen urban governance move towards: “commitments to market mechanisms, the fostering of entrepreneurial values and city-regional competitiveness as ‘planks’ of a ‘new common sense’”. However, even for those sceptical of an emergence of spatial planning, there is still a need to study what does exist, particularly in terms of planning at the city-regional level (Allmendinger and Haughton, 2013) and there is still a need to understand how planning, in whatever form, deals with continuing place-based societal complexities, contradictions, and tensions that have never been resolved (Inch, 2014).

This critical review of the literature and review of the Scottish planning policies which emerged through SPR, has demonstrated several key points in relation to the possibility that planning could provide an efficient, integrative, and inclusive route to ‘sustainable economic growth’. Understanding complex drivers of SPR as neoliberal ideology, changing state-market relations, and the related emergence of an ethos of spatial planning provides a foundation to frame the means by which SPR was put to work to both drive growth and to respond to growth pressures in city-regions. It focuses on housing growth because this is both a key component of growth and is a public policy concern where the politics of growth are mediated through the planning system. This focus is a useful way of understanding what planning has come to

represent and particularly to respond to the charge that planning has become a means by which growth is rolled out and is depoliticised.

This thesis values the contribution made regarding the neo-liberalisation of planning and wider state-social relations but will argue through discussion of the empirical data that this is context dependent. The literature has demonstrated this to a degree, with Scottish neoliberalism emerging with a Scottish neo-corporatism in terms of planning. However, such theories have yet to be tested in actual case studies of Scottish planning practice – a gap that this thesis addresses. One overbearing question is how ‘housing crisis’ could exist in a planning system that has been centred around ‘rolling-out’ growth.

Moreover, this thesis, by providing a historical understanding of the evolution of Scottish planning, interrogates assumptions that ‘governance’ – in terms of public-private approaches to urban development – represents something new. Relatedly, it questions whether without radical reform, the ‘integrative’ agenda of SPR could ever be achievable.

The literature also emphasises the importance of the rescaling of the state in response to imperatives of globalisation and the requirement for competitive nations and city regions. SPR responded to this through a hierarchical reorganisation of the planning system that drew upon emerging ideas around spatial planning. What is missing from the literature is sufficient understanding of what happens in practice when spatial planning moves towards strategic action. Data chapters 6-8 will demonstrate how Scotland’s hybrid neo-traditional planning system, which attempted to fuse regulatory land use with emerging new ideas, was put to work to resolve the issue of planning in growth pressured city regions.

Finally, this analysis of the literature has recognised the importance of stakeholder planning in the Scottish context, which, influenced by notions of more ‘inclusive’ approaches to spatial strategy making, was perfectly poised for capture by development interests. However, the enduring tensions and adversarial design of SPR meant that growth-focused agendas were not always going to be easy to roll out in all growth pressured contexts. This thesis attempts to unpick why Aberdeen has been so successful in mobilising a business interest agenda that fits basic ideas around

neoliberalism, whilst Edinburgh appears to have been unsuccessful in reaching any sort of consensus around growth in its city-region.

Having established the conceptual foundations of SPR, the next chapter provides a stronger theoretical discussion around the potential for planning to have moved towards a depoliticised approach to spatial governance, possibly captured by ‘narrow sectional interests’ (Allmendinger, 2016).

CHAPTER 3: Conceptualising Scottish planning in practice

Introduction

The last chapter provided an analysis of the current landscape of Scottish planning, and what underlies this in terms of the drivers of its current configuration. This chapter now provides a deeper engagement with some of the themes and particularly the theories that have been used to make sense of the way that planning is operated in the UK and Scotland. From this, a theoretical framework is developed which is used to analyse the processes of planning practice in this thesis.

This chapter is structured in three main sections. The first section considers the emergence of communicative-theory, which inspired the framework of Collaborative Planning. Such theories and frameworks are seen as providing the theoretical underpinnings to the UK and Scottish planning systems which were reformed in the 2000's as part of the Third-Way, 'stakeholder agenda', which attempted to invoke inclusive strategic spatial planning approaches into practice. The impact of such theory on practice has been criticised from a perspective that such theory, in practice, opened up planning to the domination of powerful interests and furthered neoliberalism.

Section two opens up the theoretical roots of the consideration of contemporary governance arrangements as 'post-political'. It analyses the post-foundational critique of spatial planning, critically evaluating its relevance to the UK and Scotland, and linking this to wider understandings of the depoliticisation of public affairs.

Following this, it provides critical interpretations of the importance of neoliberalisation to understanding theories and processes such as communicative planning, post-political critiques and broader depoliticisation. Through this it develops an understanding of theories of depoliticisation which can be used in the thesis and also provides a contribution to what is a wider debate in social theory. More specifically, it demonstrates the use of Philip Allmendinger's (2016) recent conceptualisation of planning as 'post-political neoliberal spatial governance'.

This leads towards section 3, which pulls together these debates and presents an analytical framework to help understand structure and agency in planning practice. It sets out how the thesis draws upon neo-Marxist Gramscian analysis, using Maarten Hajer's (Hajer, 1989) three-dimensional analysis of the urban political process and incorporating Bob Jessop's Strategic Relational Analysis (Jessop, 2001) to help elucidate the drivers and outcomes of planning practice.

Section 1: The emergence 'and dominance' of collaborative planning

Chapter 2 introduced the theory of communicative planning. Communicative planning in practice is a normative framework that, working within neoliberal contexts, aims to establish the conditions for gaining greater citizen influence on planning processes (Healey, 1997). It is strongly influenced by the development of spatial planning approaches in the UK and is seen to have influenced UK and Scottish planning via Third Way planning reforms in the mid-2000s (Clifford and Tewdwr-Jones, 2013).

The social theory underlying collaborative planning

Having gone directly to the issue surrounding collaborative governance, it is worth stepping back to further understand the framework of Collaborative Planning Theory. Drawing on Habermas and the structuration work of Giddens, Collaborative Planning calls for a move away from positivist, expert driven, 'rational' conceptions of planning and a shift towards shared relational understandings of urban issues and processes to tackle them. Patsy Healey's 'Collaborative Planning' (Healey, 1997) arose "from the need to bring together a social theory about the space and time of the dynamics of urban and regional change with a policy theory about the governance of those dynamics". (Healey, 2006, xiii). Healey describes planning as "a governance activity occurring in complex and dynamic institutional environments shaped by wider economic, social and environmental forces that structure, but do not determine specific interactions" (Healey, 2003, 104). Within this understanding, governance is "the processes by which societies, and social groups, manage their collective affairs" (Healey, 2003, 104). Effectively, CPT attempts to use social theory to find a workable solution to the pressures faced by marginalised communities and perspectives in the face of neoliberal contexts and does this through a focus on bottom-up collaborative governance.

Healey's definition of planning reveals Collaborative Planning's perspective on agency; this draws heavily on Giddens' Structuration theory (1984) that developed out of neo-Marxism, but with ideas drawn from phenomenology and cultural anthropology. While rooted in Giddens' early neo-Marxist work on structure and agency, CPT is accused by its detractors of (like Giddens) moving towards an overly 'agency' focused understanding of social structures.

Communicative Theory

Communicative planning theory, from which Collaborative Planning Theory (CPT) partly derives, is associated with theorists Forester, Innes, Hoch and Baum (Innes, 1995). Communicative theory draws on critical theory particularly Habermasian (Habermas, 1981) discourse ethics and the "concept of Communicative Rationality as a normative principle with which to evaluate and challenge the qualities of interactive practices" (Healey, 2003, 106)

Habermas' discourse ethics is taken as a useful "critical evaluation for assessing the qualities of interactive processes" for the CPT model (Healey, 2003,106). Habermas' (1981) claim is that there is a 'communicative rationality' rooted inextricably in the nature of human language, which is itself orientated towards reasoned interchange between people. The potential, according to Inglis and Thorpe (2012), lies in the possibility of language being not a form of power and domination (as suggested by theorists such as Foucault) but as the means through which people can engage in reasoned ways with each other and reach rational consensus on issues. Habermas (1981) suggested the concept of the 'ideal speech situation', where 'communicative rationality' is fulfilling its potential. CPT aims to engender such ideal speech situations through deliberative processes where the better, rather than the more power-laden, argument wins.

Healey considers CPT as forming ways of analysing the micro-dynamics of planning strategy making. Through this, ways of thinking of social action can be developed, but the theory and the 'projects' deriving from it contain a practical purpose which matters for public policy and can be put to use pragmatically (Healey, 2012).

Although the work of Habermas is important, Healey (2012) clarifies the important of US pragmatists such as John Dewey on communicative planning theory. Bernstein (Bernstein, 1983) in particular is highlighted. He focused "on ways of accommodating

the multiple and conflicting arguments and claims manifest in the realm of public debate of issues of collective concern” (Healey, 2012, 341). This critical pragmatism and how to understand and improve planning practice is borne out particularly in John Forester’s work on ‘Planning in the Face of Power’ (1989) which forms “a critical theory of planning, that helps us to understand what planners do as attention-shaping, communicative action rather than instrumental action, as means to specific ends” (Forester, 1989, 138)

Turning theory into practice, according to Healey (2012), requires both attention to micro-practice and appreciation of the structuring forces which can be shaped by agency. Such interplay also needs to be rooted in context. It is deeply infused with practice and experiences, inspiring new practice possibilities which enabled it to challenge elite technocracy and “the preoccupation with individualist economic gain as the path to general societal well-being” (Healey, 2012, 346).

Collaborative Planning in Practice?

According to critics of collaborative planning, the ideas of communicative theory and the practical collaborative planning framework it inspired occupy a hegemonic position in planning theory (Purcell, 2009). It appears to have provided the theoretical foundation to UK planning reform which attempted to take on a ‘spatial planning’ ethos infused with collaborative planning (Clifford and Tewdwr Jones, 2013). This position in such critical literature is that collaborative planning is inconsistent, and in its application is ineffective in the dealing with power relations (Flyvbjerg, 1998).

Healey (2003) herself has pointed out that collaborative planning was a framework, not a theory, and that it should be used to gauge genuine from disingenuous collaborative governance. According to Davoudi (2012), a proponent of CPT, there has never been a claim that UK planning ever shifted epistemologically. So, CPT is a work in progress and planning practice remains stubbornly dominated by positivism and technical hierarchy.

However, planning reforms in the UK purported to take on elements that can be seen as inspired by CPT. SPR with its moves towards inclusivity discussed in chapter 2 takes on elements of this, not only in terms of the discourse around new collaborative governance arrangements. It can be argued that SPR co-opted elements of this. With a view that the Scottish planning system could overcome contradictions, concurrently

more business and community-interest facing, faster and more efficient, with spaces for power-neutralised deliberation over planning strategies. Data chapters 6-8 and chapter 9 assess this with a view to realising a more effective planning system that would respond to growth pressures in a less conflictual planning process.

Data chapters 6-8 and the conclusion in chapter 9 also discuss the actual evidence for and impacts of CPT inspired reform with a specific focus on CPT inspired routes towards conflict-free planning processes. In analysing planning in practice, the thesis takes up the debate over establishing genuine collaborative planning practice. It considers the debate around the impact of CPT on contemporary planning. It does this through an analysis of Scottish planning in practice where the need for a more effective planning system that would respond to growth pressures in a less conflictual manner is clearly demonstrated in SPR.

Collaborative Governance and Collaborative Planning Theory (CPT)

Governance, as discussed in chapter 2, usually signifies changing meanings of government and processes and methods of governing society (Rhodes, 1997). The operation of the planning system can be thought of as taking place within a wider system of ‘collaborative governance’ (Healey, 2003, 104). Ansell and Gash (2008, 544) define collaborative governance as:

An arrangement where one or more public agencies directly engage non-state stakeholders in a collective decision-making process that is formal, consensus-oriented, and deliberative and that aims to make or implement public policy or manage programs or assets.

Collaborative planning approaches emphasised the importance of building institutional capacities in local places (Healey, 1997) by developing governance networks – drawn from marginalised as well as more traditionally powerful realms within planning practice – to work collaboratively in order to respond to structuring forces that impacted upon local places. Citing studies by Cowell and Murdoch (1999) and Counsell and Haughton (2003), Allmendinger (2011) considers that there are clear tensions between national and local interests which can arise when this ‘networked’ governance, in local places, clashes with traditional hierarchical approaches to government which remain central to the operation of planning systems in the UK. These scalar and hierarchical institutional tensions are the sort played out

in the implementation of planning reform and will be examined to determine their importance in this thesis.

The shift to governance more generally can be linked with neoliberalism. CPT attempts to use collaborative governance as one means of responding to the collapse of the Keynesian welfare state by challenging market-driven ideologies which marginalise less powerful perspectives and actors in urban political processes. However, collaborative governance in many ways provided the perfect conditions within which neoliberalism could thrive. While this relates to the emergence of the 'stakeholder agenda' in planning, it can be used in considering public policy making more generally. According to Ives (2015), the general concept of governance in practice creates a competitive, market-style, policy making arena which empowers the already powerful and crucially treats the powerful as equal partners with others at the outset of any new governance arrangement.

If this was to be fused with neo-traditional planning 'stakeholder planning' system (not an idealised spatial planning ethos), in a neoliberal political-economic context, then this could create the conditions for the rapid roll out of a growth agenda. However, if the already powerful were to include already well organised anti-development interests, such as NIMBY interests, then this could create the conditions for conflict or stasis.

The critique of communicative planning theory and collaborative planning

Critics argue that communicative planning and its attempts to counter power through processes where Habermas' 'force of the better argument' emerge are actually impossible when implemented in practice. This is because unequal distributions of power means that such scenarios will always systematically favour some over others: "Communicative action tends in the long term to reinforce the current status quo because it seeks to resolve conflict, eliminate exclusion, and neutralize power relations, rather than embracing them as the very terrain of social mobilization" (Purcell, 2009, 155).

According to Mike Purcell (2009), communicative planning might often achieve agreement but is extremely effective at legitimating decisions, rather than arriving at these 'through the power of the better argument'. For Purcell, communicative processes are generally thought to be more inclusive, fairer, and more democratic than

what has gone before in planning but collaborative planning is ‘too conservative, reinforcing present relations, which means it cannot be used for its intended purpose of social mobilization (Purcell, 2009, 155). This means, “Resisting neoliberalization requires movements that can actually deliver a fully express ‘radical and transformative’ politics” (ibid).

On a detailed basis he points to the problem of ‘stakeholder’ processes (discussed in chapter 2) and the acceptance from communicative planning theorists that, in the words of some of communicative theory’s main proponents, Innes and Booher (2004,14), “stakeholders enter the process to serve their interests. They give up nothing they have outside the process unless it benefits them.” For Purcell, this makes collaborative planning processes a very useful forum for business interests, guaranteeing that the hegemonic position of capital cannot be challenged. In a similar way the ‘stakeholder’ concept, from this critical perspective, is seen to have replaced public consultation and this ensures that business interests can now be treated in a way as citizens, rather than as special interest with a particularly powerful position. This can be linked to neoliberal governance. While this thesis does not suppose that the power of government actually diminishes through governance, the purpose of government does become altered:

Governments become one actor among many, thereby abandoning their reformist liberal role of imposing limits on the capital-holding class, and of representing the general interest, notably as the advocate of equal opportunity. Governance and neoliberalism can be seen as two sides of the same coin: they both contribute to placing power squarely in the hands of those with capital. (Ives, 2015, 6).

The link between governance and forms of collaborative governance and communicative theory inspired planning processes through ‘stakeholder’ approaches to planning has clear significance for understanding what Scottish planning represents.

Section 2: Post-politics, depoliticisation and analysing planning

Introduction to section 2

Having set out communicative-inspired collaborative planning and its critiques, this section of the chapter now considers ideas around contemporary governance

arrangements as ‘post-political’ and the recent application of this to analysing contemporary spatial planning. It then provides an analysis of the links between neoliberalism and broader depoliticisation which has long had strong relevance to planning practice. Having developed this, the main focus of the chapter then explores Allmendinger’s (2016,1) perspective on English planning where the system is seen as having shifted from ‘regulating and balancing change in the public interest to one of neoliberal spatial governance facilitating development and economic growth for narrow sectional interests.’ It demonstrates how this perspective can help to make sense of contemporary Scottish planning and its response to public policy concerns around housing and economic growth. Section 3 then provides a critical consideration of these debates. It sets out a framework that will be deployed in order to assess the impacts of a potential shift towards a collaborative governance; the possibility that planning in Scotland represents ‘neoliberal spatial governance’; and the reasons why in these structuring conditions SPR has provided two case studies with very different political processes and outcomes in terms of planning for growth.

Post-foundational theory and post-politics

In recent years, planning theorists (Metzger, et al. 2015; Allmendinger, 2016) have added a post-foundational political theory inspired understanding of depoliticisation continuing critiques of Habermas-inspired collaborative planning theory which were outlined above by Purcell (2009). This has been used to understand the current condition of planning within different capitalist liberal-democratic contexts and particularly the UK. It is linked especially to the emergence of a spatial planning approach which is seen as deriving from Third Way political ideologies.

This section discusses apparent attempts to remove politics from the public sphere in planning processes. To do this, it is firstly important to clarify that the perspective taken in this thesis is that planning is still, as ever, political. Wildavsky’s (1973: 132) claim that ‘planning is politics’ still rings true. Yet at the same time politics itself has possibly changed to something far less democratic than standard conceptions. In terms of the shift towards a de-democratising or post-political consideration of modern-day governance in general, political theorists such as Rancière (1999), Mouffe (2005), and Žižek (1999) can be seen as representing a post-foundational theory of politics. The term post-foundational comes from the rejection of two

dominant perspectives: Marxism's distilling of political disagreement to class struggle; and the foundational belief that a rational power-free consensus is possible - that of deliberative theorists such as Habermas' communicative action and Rawls' pragmatism. It is one of many critical reactions to the idea that a 'centre' in politics and a Third Way is possible.

According to Metzger et al. (2015), planning studies are well placed and have a respectable history of grappling with the democratic challenges and contests that are present at the frontier between legitimate democratic decision-making, public political engagement, and the domain of technical expertise. This tradition lends itself well to further understanding of territorial management and organisation, in the context of neoliberalisation and shifts from government to governance. Research that is critical of such shifts, Lacloue-Labarthe and Nancy (1997) and Swyngedouw (2005), consider the informal nature of governance networks to have created serious problems for democracy, representation, accountability and transparency. This creates facades of politics through technocratic management. In contrast to this 'proper' political space, which is defined by Oosterlynck and Swyngedouw (2010, 1580) as:

One that recognises the constitutive split of the people, antagonistic positionalities and the articulation of incommensurable demands. It is a space which permits their expression on the basis of the unconditional presumption of equality of each and every one qua speaking beings.

The terms 'post-politics, post-political, post-democracy' are highly contested. Wilson and Swyngedouw (2014, 6) broadly consider these together to be:

A situation in which the political- understood as a space of contestation and agnostic engagement – is increasingly colonised by politics – understood as technocratic mechanisms and consensual procedures that operate within an unquestioned framework of representative democracy, free market economics, and cosmopolitan liberalism.

This is a useful clarification (or interpretation) that these three terms ('post-politics, post-political, post-democracy') can be combined to provide some uniformity as concepts of the same situation. It can be seen as a form of politics: "it is not intended as 'after/beyond politics' or 'end of politics', but as a form of 'politics by other means' (Tesfahuney and Ek, 2015, 180). Taking 'post-politics' as the shorthand, this

form of politics describes a way of managing politics – a process - rather than a stand-alone analytical tool. This thesis interprets ‘post-politics’ as understood in the planning literature as a perspective of a situation with a theoretical basis in post-foundational theory. Planning can be seen as being conducted in post-political times. There is a concern that in post-political situations “issues are *displaced* from arenas of public debate and decision-making into closed networks of elite representatives and technical experts” (Metzger et al., 2015, 3) (emphasis in original). Democratic deficits emerge through self-selecting groups of influential stakeholders who decide upon the issues at hand and how to resolve them. This short-circuiting of the democratic process (Metzger, 2011) then “further disables public discussion and interrogation of issues” (Metzger et al., 2015, 3). Such a consideration is useful when analyzing the case studies in this thesis where in Aberdeen it might be that politics was displaced whereas in Edinburgh the politics of growth appeared to be far more obvious. This can be useful in understanding both the means by which broad growth agendas emerged and the specific means by which the related politics of housing growth were dealt with through the planning system. To be clear thought, the focus on housing growth does not mean a focus on the interests of developers versus middle class home owners and the way in which the planning system was used to placate this. This is part of the study, but there is a broader focus on the continuing class politics of growth strategies and the way in which under ‘third way’, ‘spatial planning’ infused approaches, planning might become presented as a system in which ‘everybody wins’. This means that apparently deliberative approaches to democracy are perhaps fixed from the start, or at least power is never neutralised, and thus issues that might create open conflict are denied space.

Mouffe (2009, 552) considers that “it is the lack of political channels for challenging the hegemony of the neoliberal model of globalisation” which are where post-political discourses and calls for more radical politics are increasingly emerging from. Metzger et al. (2015, 3) consider “the alternative to managerial governance practice is politics.” Planning in Scotland might be seen to operate within this broader hegemony of neoliberal globalisation within a shift towards a focus on growth through managerial governance. This is often operated with a façade of public influence through ‘collaborative’ arrangements and process. The next sections discuss the apparent foreclosure of political moments in planning practice. These are perceived as

developing through attempts, and pretences, to implement more inclusive planning practices in increasingly neoliberal political-economic arrangements and conditions.

The recent use of post-politics in planning and urban studies

For Metzger et al. (2015) the left's reaction to the emergence of New Right (neoliberalised) planning largely through communicative inspired theory sowed the seeds for the seemingly benign but eventually problematic shift to consensus seeking planning practice that they today criticise as 'post-political' spatial planning.

For Metzger et al. (2015) the coincidence of CPT with the rise of Third Way politics of management with its apparent diminution of ideology public policy, saw a replacement of conflict-ridden concepts such as the 'the state', the 'market', and 'growth' with 'partnership'. This redefined the public interest justification for planning as "the facilitation of primarily economic growth, supposedly to the benefit of all" Metzger et al. (2015, 6).

Important questions that planning deals with, such as climate change and the limits to growth, equity, and social justice appear to have already been settled elsewhere by reason of a 'common interest' that manipulates these into terms and concepts (e.g. 'new sustainable communities' and 'smart growth') which fail to accept their inherent political nature. This appeal to a common interest is one that Metzger et al (2015, 7) consider "nobody in their right mind could possibly disagree with."

By its nature planning requires a decision to be taken on multiple perspectives and narrowing this down to a singular one. It creates a form of para-politics in terms of creating a single plan or strategy affecting every person in one place. Rancière refers to this as the 'democratic scandal': "there will never be, under the name of politics, a single principle of community that legitimates the actions of those who govern on the basis of laws inherent in the coming together of human communities" (Rancière, 2006, 297).

To deal with this and operationalise post-politics in a planning setting, Metzger et al (2015) follow Samuel Chambers (2011) in considering Rancière's call as not that of pure politics eclipsing the police order but as a relational reading of political difference. Plan making from a post-foundational perspective can still be done but only with the realisation that the 'we' of any plan is always exclusionary and so will always be disrupted on occasions. This chimes with the broader critique of inclusive

collaborative planning and it does not reject planning interventions but calls for acceptance of the lack of foundation for such strategies.

Planners are asked to recognise and operationalize ‘ungovernability’ as a way of avoiding the search for the ultimate consensus-generating plan. Instead of feigned deliberative process, the political potential of spatial planning in particular, it has been said, is in its strategic dimensions of opening up, visioning and imagining different spatial alternatives (Oosterlynck et al., 2010).

There may be participation in planning processes, and this may be increasing through processes required through Scottish planning reform, but major considerations such as neoliberal economic competitiveness agendas will be taken as an established given that planning must legitimise (Boland, 2014, Rydin, 2014), and actual input is more likely to be pre-defined, and rationalised to minimise the emergence of politics (Brand and Gaffikin, 2007, Allmendinger and Haughton, 2012a).

However, what is entirely new about this perspective is debatable. For example, in a Marxist perspective of the British planning system in the 1980’s, Reade (1987) does not refer to post-politics, simply considering planning to suffer a “fundamental epistemological fallacy” in the way it attempts to overcome its political nature. Reade (1987) does not refer to the acceptance of a truly political process and ‘agonism’ as a planning outcome, but then it is unclear exactly how useful such a concept is to planning in the real world where decisions have to be taken on where development goes and who should benefit.

The specifics of planning as post-politics and identifying limitations

Haughton and Allmendinger are two of the most widely published academics writing, together and separately, on what they consider to be the post-political strategies in UK (English) planning systems (e.g. 2010, 2012b). In their most recent work they use the term ‘post-political’ within a “broader analytical sense to include the range of strategies of political displacement and depoliticisation within a particular time, place and sector (Haughton and Allmendinger, 2015).”

Allmendinger and Haughton (2012, 89) cite the use of a post-political perspective as offering understanding of:

“What is within the remit of planning, who engages with the system, and under what terms. Central to this is whether the planning system can deal with fundamental challenges or essentially legitimates hegemonic strategies and projects, a concern which also finds expression in work on the role of ‘policy imaginations’ (Raco 2005), ‘doctrines’ (Alexander and Faludi 1996; Coop and Thomas 2007) and ‘hegemonies’ (e.g. Hajer 1989) in planning.”

They present evidence of many of the symptoms of post-politics that are presented in this thesis: the presentation of growth as unproblematic; blurring of accountability and legitimacy; participatory strategies blurring dissensus; the use of non-challengeable terminology; presenting political issues as technical and under the remit of professionals; and, the use of techniques to create positive but prescribed opportunities for public engagement.

However, it is not exactly clear how much the work of post-foundational political theory has really been required. It is fair to say that this has been interpreted consistently as not meaning ‘the end of politics’ and post political in terms of a new type of negative politics. This may be a result of this particular work utilising a high-level application. Allmendinger (2011) in particular has focused his post-political critique on high, national, level planning reforms and structures at the UK level.

It should also be re-emphasized that post-democracy/post-political/post-politics is not a debate confined to planning. A recent series work edited by Colin Hay (2014), presents de-politicisation from a political science perspective, and interestingly only pays limited attention to post-foundational theory. In that volume, Jessop (2014, 208) dismisses post-foundational theory for its “crypto-normativity that treats one form of politics as genuine and others as inauthentic”. There may be a benefit of complementing a political-economic take on depoliticisation with more nuanced micro-political analysis, for example analysis utilising governmentality to the superficiality of a ‘retreating’ state (Foster et al., 2014). This mixture of a macro and micro approach they refer to is already well established in planning studies. As a theoretical tool, Loepfe and Van Wezemael (2015) call for micro-political analysis to at least supplement post-foundational based post-political perspectives on planning practice.

Jessop (2014) takes issue with the lack of temporal understanding of the issues that surround depoliticisation. Similarly, Paddison (2009) calls for greater historical context surrounding the apparent de-politicisation of urban politics that appears to be missing in the planning-based literature. From this perspective, in the early 20th century, urban politics in the UK was traditionally based around a politics of distribution and redistribution: the Left and the Right. With the onset of socialist policy agendas (themselves the outcome of class struggle), the Fordist post-war consensus political ‘heyday’ could, according to Paddison be considered a period of consensus politics. However, he does not describe this as post-political it seems because it was a period where urban politics was split along partisan lines. After this, in the 1980s, class politics did not disappear of course, but have become more blurred, so there is a requirement for micro-analysis to make sense of this in contemporary urban studies. From these critiques arrives a more useful way of deploying post-politics and depoliticisation to planning practice.

The benefit of bringing in a broader understanding of depoliticisation

Planning studies are conducted at a point where democratic decision-making, public political engagement, and technical expertise meet (March, 2012, Metzger et al., 2015). It is well placed for understanding territorial management and organisation, in the context of neoliberalisation and the operation of modes of governance. Post-politics provides a way of thinking about how these shifts have in many cases not delivered greater public influence in the planning system despite a pretence that they would. It also helps bring to light the way fundamental questions that are apparent in planning appear to have been settled elsewhere in planning processes with conflict replaced with apparent consensus. Post-politics offers new insight and conceptions of the existing problems created by these shifts but in the case of actual planning practice it is best combined with existing theoretical analytical tools that help reveal the micro-political.

Depoliticisation and neoliberalism

It follows the argument that post-politics and broader depoliticisation is useful to consider as a process and that it is used as means of implementing neoliberal approaches to governance. However, first it is important to consider what depoliticisation actually is. Planning, portrayed as a rational activity in the post-war

era, and a market-led activity since the 1980's, explicitly attempts to depoliticise matters of public debate. While critical of depoliticisation and seeing it as a very real phenomenon, Hay (2007) reminds us that depoliticisation is not new and not something politicians are particularly shy about advocating. Since the 1990's, politicians in the UK have openly argued that through depoliticising policies such as interest rate setting, determining minimum wages and this handing over to technical expertise has been relatively uncontroversial with the electorate and supported by various think tanks and governmental and non-governmental bodies (Hay, 2007, 92). Depoliticisation is thus linked to conceptions of good governance.

As well as governance, depoliticisation is linked to the roll out of deeper hegemonic projects of globalisation and neoliberalism. First, depoliticisation is not about a smaller state necessarily. After all the so-called 'size of the UK state' which can crudely measured as government spending as a proportion of GDP) has grown (and recently plateaued) in the last 40 years of neoliberalism (Hay, 2007, 144). Yet neoliberalism implies a capital supporting role for the state, and so is a reformation not a retreat. Ideologically there is no sense that capital wishes to actually take on every responsibility of the government, rather it is about overall state control. This can be seen in Scottish planning where the private sector is increasingly involved but there is little appetite from landowners or developers to fund development upfront. Every liberal-democratic capitalist economy has come to accept financial market imperatives where the government is seen to be responsible for keeping down inflation and keeping down public debt ratios (Mosley, 2003) and the reward for this is 'confidence of the markets'. For Hay (2007, 98) this is neoliberalism as a 'governing economic paradigm'. But the UK has gone further and has enthusiastically taken up the ideology of neoliberalism in a 'normative sense'. This filters through to every institution of capitalism, including planning. It is in this ideological hegemony that processes like globalisation become interpreted as requiring neoliberal solutions such as the need to avoid capital flight, for the privatisation of public industry, and driven by Public Choice Theories, for the public sector to accept 'political and bureaucratic overload' and instead be run on private-sector style New Public Management lines (Hay, 2007).

Depoliticization and neoliberalism as a conceptual lens for studying Scottish planning

I have argued in this chapter that post-foundational based critiques of communicative theory inspired planning practice are useful for considering what planning has come to represent in Scotland following planning reform, but it has analytical limitations. The consideration of planning as post-political offers a basic lens with which Allmendinger, in his recent work (2016, 154) calls “the depoliticization of planning through post-political strategies”. This lens can be considered as one of depoliticisation in this thesis, as much as it is ‘post-political’.

For Allmendinger (2016, 156), building on work published with Graham Haughton (Haughton and Allmendinger, 2015), processes of depoliticisation can be thought of as occurring in the following three ways: *Deferring* the political to another point in time e.g. through vague sustainability objectives or assumptions of achieving consensus at some point with a partnership; *Displacing* the political to other less accountable technological arenas – this can include political to apparently neutral private sector expert consultants who identify problems and issues. *Dispersing* the political – this is fragmenting and diluting politics from an immediately physically affected community into fuzzy communities of interest that may not map onto experiences ‘on the ground’ and which lack democratic legitimacy. These will now be discussed in greater detail in the following section.

One of the main strategies of depoliticization has been *managerialism and technocracy*. This is not entirely new but Allmendinger argues there has been an increase from the 2000s onwards through spatial planning. This can be seen in the increase in the technical production of non-political expert advice which is apparently neutral. Examples include the use of Environmental Impact Assessments and Retail Impact Assessments and unquestionable Economic Impact Assessments, usually delivered via the private sector. An accompanying shift has been performance indicators on planning authorities through techniques of New Public Management that limit flexibility and debate on planning matters. ‘Culture change’ in Scottish planning and its focus on speedy delivery of plans and applications, rather than the substance of planning, can be considered within New Public Management thinking. Similarly, the increasing complexity of managerial technocracy in planning, planning authorities have argued, necessitates larger fees to cover costs. Culture change is utilised here to

justify such fee increases through something of a deal where planning authorities can charge these fees on the condition of faster turnaround (and implicitly a more pro-development outlook) on applications.

The second tactic involves *consensus* and *fuzzy concepts*. For example, the idea is presented that growth is a good thing and it is up to any detractors to prove otherwise. This is an appeal to universal themes. Allmendinger draws from post-foundational theory where words do not count, they lose their performative meaning (Zizek, 1994). Purcell (2009) draws attention to this too. Examples include concepts such as ‘smart growth’ replacing ‘growth’ and ‘sustainable development’ replacing ‘development’.

The third tool is the *hyper-pluralization of policymaking structures*. This idea borrows from Raco’s conception of planning as post-political (Raco, 2014). This is a very critical consideration of the government to governance shift where accountability is blurred by a post-political incorporation of a diverse range of actors into the delivery and management of planning. This fragments power, confuses conceptions of decision-making, and fits with the shift of decision-making powers into a wide range of bodies and regulatory agencies working at a variety of scales.

Allmendinger (2016) considers the way in which planning is subjected to neoliberalism. Neoliberalism does not spell the end for planning for the reasons set out in this and the previous chapter – that neoliberalism requires the state to organize in the interests of ‘capital’. However, this does not mean organizing in the interests of individual capitalists. This means planning outcomes will not always favour developers, but they will generally favour the development industry.

The issues of ‘growth’ and the normativity that surrounds it in terms of a perception that this might be a new thing or even a bad thing that planning has to now deal with is important to clarify. Allmendinger (2016) considers that growth and development are not features exclusive to neoliberal planning. After all societies need homes and jobs and these have to be located somewhere. The problem is the shift in the gains from growth. In the post-war era governments pursued a pro-development agenda and planning was a useful part of this. In the post-war period there was a general assumption that the welfare gains of social democratic planning (Cooke, 1983, 87) meant that there was a commonality of interests. These interests were, however, represented and mediated through corporatist approaches that involved government,

business, and unions, but little else in the way of a broader representation. It could be argued that post-war planning was at least carried out with progressive and redistributive ideals (Allmendinger, 2016, 36). The points made by Paddison (2009) on the post-war settlement as a time of consensus planning are relevant here. Allmendinger considers that in the post-war era (particularly after the introduction of stronger consultation requirements in 1968 via the Skeffington Report) the politics of planning was both antagonistic and representative: communities were consulted by the councils and councils then made decisions. Such processes were not necessarily inclusive, but the objectives of planning were recognizably carried out with a different conception of the public interest and debated and argued over. The acceptance of the many errors of post-war planning, and acceptance of the legitimacy of wider, and hard-fought, pluralistic concerns, as well as the awkward attachment of environmentalism's concurrent rise of neoliberalism has meant planners take on a more cynical role which attempted to depoliticize the complicated politics of growth. In developing his conceptual framework for the analysis of planning, Allmendinger (2016) considers that planning has been reoriented towards growth at the expense of other objectives and is conducted in a way that aims to ensure growth is achieved. An example would be affordable housing which is clearly defined as an issue but where the government (and so tax payers) would not countenance a radical house-building programme directly. Instead 'the market' has been tasked with dealing with the issue. This is where the three tactics of depoliticization (a term he uses interchangeably with post politics) are useful. So, in this sense, neoliberal planning works for powerful sectional interests and not necessarily the 'public interest'. In this thesis I make links between Scotland's neo-corporatist approaches to public policy (chapter 2), to the rise of stakeholder planning, and the emergence of a neoliberal approach to planning which pertains to public involvement but perhaps depoliticises important matters of public concern.

Allmendinger (2016) considers neoliberalization of planning has occurred variably but with three constants that makes sense of this:

1. The *ethos* of an era of neoliberal spatial governance such as spatial planning for 'sustainable economic growth' gives purpose and helps fix contradictions of neoliberalism. The purpose of planning has moved towards pretence of mediating spatial policy in the public interest when the real purpose is a

system “rigged to promote growth” (2016, 18). Spatial planning is an ethos partially carried into Scottish planning.

2. *Space and scales* created and abolished in the search for market supportive and facilitative planning (e.g. emergence of Regional Spatial Strategies, temporary delivery bodies and agencies). These can take the form of ‘informal, fuzzy, soft spaces’ in processes of neoliberal experimentation. The scalar reformation of Scottish planning in part reflects this but is neo-traditional in form. The collaborative spaces of Scottish plan-making reflect such a perspective.
3. Governance and a *new politics* of planning where the public is seemingly more involved yet strategies require speed and certainty. Planners therefore try to reconcile pro-growth agendas in the public interest but are ‘manufacturing consent for growth’ through techniques of depoliticisation. In Scotland there is evidence of post-politics and depoliticisation formally and informally including via ‘culture change.’

A clear objection to this, and one that the framework will be used to analyse, is the problem that following the post-war era of social democratic development, we have arrived, via the Thatcherite era, to a politics based on the ‘property owning democracy’. In this sense, planning in the UK is continually accused by business interests of both holding back development (particularly house building), and at the same time seen by property owning interests, often in middle-class areas, to be a threat to the value and amenity of communities because it promotes growth. Planning had long divided homeowners and renters for example, it divides the young and old, city dwellers and those on the urban fringes but this has become increasingly pronounced in the context of the politics of housing affordability concerns (Allmendinger, 2016, 210). This is important in the context of this thesis and it is where I will test the possibility that planning can be a means of depoliticizing and orienting towards growth while at the same time being captured by organized anti-development groups as well as pro-development groups. This is where the property-democracy contradiction of capitalism, which was highlighted in the previous chapter, is important. Essentially, how could we have a housing crisis in a post-political or depoliticised system that is geared towards growth? And so, if it is not ‘planning’ as a system that is causing this, then what is? Chapter 2 made clear that the sense that

planning needs to deliver more houses in the places where they are needed most has been a concern since the creation of a statutory planning system in 1947. The thesis problematises both the meaning of ‘sustainable economic growth’ and the conception of ‘growth agendas’ themselves. It does this with a focus on because the need for housing, planning’s role in dealing with that need, and the politics that surround the location of housing are well established ‘wicked issues’ where understanding the political purpose of a planning system becomes possible.

Chapter 2 set out a consideration of ‘the state’ as a social relation, but there is still an ‘ideal state’ in terms of a configuration. According to Harvey (2006, 145) “The role of the state, including planning, under neoliberalism is “to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to (market) practices”. Harvey also refers to this as a creating a ‘good business climate’ (2006, 25). To use this in the framework as Allmendinger (2016) intends, neoliberalism needs to be considered as an ideological project that is now shaping governance in Scotland. Planning has been a subject of neoliberalism (subjected to) and used to address the inherent tensions of neoliberalism (object of). Planning is still required because cities and hinterlands are too important to the economy to be left to the free market (Gough 2002). This is apparent in the ‘competitive cities’ agenda, which the Scottish Government has taken up in Scotland since the early 2000s as outlined in chapter 2.

The ‘tensions in neoliberal changes to planning’, as a subject and object played out in state-market relations, are understood through the two main neoliberal attitudes to the role of government: as both representing a need for a hands-off ‘laissez faire’ role and as a role in ‘managing markets’. Allmendinger (2016) provides examples of the ways in which planning has been used to ensure the correct conditions are in place for capital while at the same time minimizing interference in the regulation of capital. This was apparent in the 1980s for example when enterprise zones actually managed the market in certain areas (e.g. Inverclyde) while taking planning to a certain extent out of the control of local authorities. The concept of the subject and object of planning, and the contradictory objectives placed on planning, helps us understand constant change in the planning system under neoliberalism. This supports arguments that rejects view of a linear progression towards an ever more ‘perfect’ neoliberal state.

Understanding the workings of neoliberalism in time and place through planning

Allmendinger's framework has a temporal understanding of neoliberalism in terms of the periods of neoliberalisation. Table 5.2 (Allmendinger, 2016) considers characteristics of planning and its change from 'regulatory planning' towards 'neoliberal spatial governance'. This is analysed through the thirteen dimensions which are worth setting out in full: 'scale and hierarchy' with a move towards flexible relational scales overlaid onto top-down hierarchies of planning and government; 'space' through new public policy spaces as flexible and temporary; 'inputs' from state-led to privatised; 'purpose' from mediated public interest to growth focussed; mechanisms through a shift from durable strategies and plans towards ephemeral plans; 'role of plans' away from land use strategies towards multitudes of plans and strategies; 'role of state in development' from direct to indirect; 'ethos' away from protection and separation towards heterodox strategies that challenge orthodoxy; 'relationship to market' from market supportive to market driven; 'relationship between plans' from balanced growth to competition between places; 'governance' from simplicity to multiplicity; 'accountability' from limited democracy to non-representative forms and often project-specific representation; 'role of professionals' from expert driven closed discourses to active (often flawed) discourses. These dimensions and its actual application to the English context provide a framework for analysing and comparing the extent of the shift of Scottish planning from regulatory planning to neoliberal spatial planning.

Finally, putting this into a detailed applied framework, Allmendinger's (2016, table 5.3) 'Periodizing English planning as a form of neoliberal spatial governance' is based on a 'tripartite distinction'. This presents neoliberalism as an overarching *philosophy* within which *paradigms* (such as 1979-91- 'Pro-business, deregulatory approach') that result in *moments and policies* from small scale guidance to wholesale planning reform. According to Allmendinger, *paradigms* provide underlying assumptions and organizing principles that allow policy actors to interpret situations within common frames, defining problems to be solved and the methods to solve them through the third level of *policies* and then *outcomes*. Policies are developed by policy actors in response to particular issues and are constructed and debated within the limits established by paradigms and philosophies.

This thesis applies periodizations of neoliberalism to Allmendinger's framework of *temporal paradigms* of planning. It specifically focuses on the periods of 'Spatial Planning' in the 2002-2006 era in England and its transition to 'Economic-led Delivery' in 2006-2010 as key to understanding the development of the 'modernised' planning system in Scotland, and it also raises an understanding SPR through a comparison with England.

Planning has always had to arrive at an imagined public-interest. The public-interest has evolved as political ideologies have evolved. For Allmendinger (2016), this raises the possibility that post-politics has long been a part of planning in the UK, where an absence of conflict was supposed. What is clear is that planning is inherently depoliticising. This thesis follows the lines of this argument. Chapter 2 has already set out how SPR in Scotland is neo-traditional in form and crucially still separates plan and permission. This means conflict was never going to be designed out of the system. However, in design and practice it has also been shaped by the spatial planning ethos and underlying it are neoliberal drivers and state-restructuring that responds to particular ideologies around national and local competitiveness. Collaborative governance in particular has been incorporated into a stakeholder approach to planning which crucially in Scotland exists within what chapter 2 described as a neo-corporatist context.

The following section of this chapter provides a critical consideration of these debates. It sets out a framework that will be deployed in order to assess the impacts of a potential shift towards a collaborative governance; the possibility that planning in Scotland represents 'neoliberal spatial governance'; and the reasons why SPR has provided two case studies with very different political processes and outcomes in terms of planning for growth.

Section 3: Micro-political analysis: planning, new institutionalism and strategic relational analysis

According to Allmendinger and Haughton (2012a), spatial planning offered an appeal to a wide range of interests through a reshaping of planning practice offering to press for progressive changes with an emphasis on participation, taking on board concerns around social justice and environment, while at the same time offering to resolve

many of these concerns through market-led development and growth. The post-political perspective sees this as a condition which accepts neoliberal capitalism while assuming that conflict over the contradictions of capitalism which planning deals with can be managed through processes such as planning.

This thesis analyses the extent of this by utilizing both the basic macro-meso scale framework provided by Allmendinger (2016) and by applying broad conceptions of planning as a form of depoliticisation (Hay, 2007). It focuses on the potential for an attempted *displacement, deferral, and diffusing* of politics which implies that planning is focused on rolling out growth and has lost its ideal of a wider public interest. It does this in order to recognize the extent of the post-political critique in Scottish planning.

Having set out the use of the post-political perspective and identified the value of considering broader depoliticisation as a strategy employed in neoliberal times, there is a need to unpick what is going on in the two case studies, as actors make planning strategies. Accordingly, this thesis uses micro-political analytical to understand the operation of actors within governance networks as they strategically operate.

What is clear from this chapter and the preceding chapter 2 is a need to understand why, if growth-focused neoliberal strategies actually dominate, there remains a housing crisis and a sense that planning is being used to stifle development. Indeed, planning reform is back on the agenda because of this. Concurrently, in Aberdeen and Edinburgh, the Scottish planning system has been used in very different ways; in one case rolling-out a growth strategy and in another failing to resolve differences about the scale of growth and where, in particular, houses should be built. To understand these differing situations, a neo-Gramscian approach to the political process is a useful way of unpicking each case study and what this says about wider Scottish planning. The work of Hajer (1989), referred to by Allmendinger and Haughton (2012a) at the beginning of this subsection, considers the formation of hegemony in planning. This analyses the means by which ideologies (such as neoliberal capitalism), institutions (such as planning systems) and strategy (conducted by planning actors) come together to form hegemonies in the forms of development strategies. In this thesis we can consider these as a ‘pro-growth’ strategy in one case and the continuation of ‘growth-averse’ strategy in the other.

A Gramscian approach to analysing urban politics: Hajer's Three Dimensions of the Political Process and Jessop's Strategic Relational Analysis

So far, Scottish planning reform has been framed as a neoliberal state strategy at the national scale. This study analyses what this means and the extent to which such a charge holds in terms of planning in practice. Through a broadly neo-Gramscian approach, to the creation of hegemony, this thesis utilises at a high-level Jessop's Strategic-Relational Approach (SRA) to state theory and at a micro (actors) level takes elements of the SRA approach to understand the strategic conduct of actors in particular space-time, historically situated, contexts. I apply this within Hajer's (1989) broader, neo-Gramscian, 'Three Dimensions of the Political Process', which frames the overall conduct of urban politics from three interlinking perspectives.

Jessop's Strategic Relational Approach

Jessop's SRA views capitalism as a social relation and the state as a condensation of social relations (Poulantzas, 1975 [1968]); this high-level state theory was opened up in chapter 2 through the discussion of the Prior's (2005) regulationist perspective of planning reform. Planning is considered in this thesis, and this analytical framework, as a state institution used by competing and aligning interests to pursue particular objectives. According to Jessop (2008) this means that the state is not a 'thing' (doing this or that) or a 'subject' (the state used by a particular class to do something). The state is a social relation, a relationship of forces among classes and class fractions, including the multiple interests and organisations considered in this thesis. The state is the terrain upon which planning politics is played out and planning politics reshapes the state in that process. Class/social relations are not just reflected in this material condensation - the state also helps constitute them. Analysing planning as a complex state action can be understood through the process of dialectics where these forces come together.

An SRA framing provides a strong understanding of the 'state' as being constituted by planning actors. This is particularly useful in studying planning as spatial governance that is carried out by a network of actors where capital (business) interests are given a strong priority but are, of course, not the only force involved. SRA considers the complexity of contemporary state strategies. Below the 'state level', at a micro, agent-focused level, the separation of structure and agency at any time is

treated as impossible in SRA as they are constantly mutually constituted. Agents change structures through moments of strategic selectivity. Through SRA structure and agency are understood as purely analytical categories that do not exist in reality. From this perspective, in the real world structures are only constituted by their impacts on agents and agency only takes place within a structured context; they are co-constituted and relational. Valler, Tait, and Marshall (2013) see SRA as particularly useful to understanding the actions of business in planning processes which is important in this thesis, particularly in Aberdeen. “The SRA seeks to understand the recursive nature of this relationship; that particular structures, in a variety of ways, privilege some forms of agency, while agents reflect on the nature of the structures confronting them in selecting their courses of action” Valler et al. (2013, p.151).

In an interview with Ramon Centeno (2012), Colin Hay considers the use of SRA as moving away from abstracted re-descriptions, often found in political analysis, and towards explanation. According to Hay, SRA is about:

‘identifying mechanisms of causation and about isolating, in a way, the necessary and sufficient conditions of a specific outcome rather than another. So, whilst it might not always generate good explanation, it is perhaps clearer about the difference between explanation and description than many alternative positions [...] in order to explain (rather than describe) why this happened rather than that we need to know quite a lot about the ideas actors hold and how they come to hold them; for, in the end, they act the way they do because they hold the ideas they do’

The points Hay raises are particularly suited to the broader three-dimensional approach used by Hajer (1989). Before coming to this though it is worth remembering that these cases studies are examples of urban and regional politics in action and so existing theories on the treatment of power, such as Foucault’s Governmentality, can be used to enhance understanding of the actions of actors in each process and complex outcome of discursive processes. While there is long running debate on the broadly neo-Marxist basis of Jessop and its compatibility with Foucault’s apparent dismissal of structure, Jessop himself does not see them as incompatible (Jessop, 2001). More recent work continues to question this incompatibility (Biebricher, 2013, Valler et al., 2013). Flyvbjerg’s study of planning and democracy in practice in

Aalborg (Flyvbjerg, 1998) revealed hidden power in state action and the complex network of power relations using a Foucauldian approach. This will be used in understanding state strategies such as Aberdeen's move to an ambitious growth strategy or more micro political processes such as the conduct of specific actors in planning processes. Valler et al. (2013) explicitly suggest that Foucauldian (and other) conceptions of power provide a background against which the strategic consideration of power might be considered via the SRA approach.

Aberdeen's case study, in particular, reveals traits which may be opened up further by borrowing from understandings of urban regime theory. Edinburgh demonstrates that power is not necessarily in the hands of business at all times and that regimes differ depending on place. There are other important lobbies, such as organized private property owners, to consider in urban politics like Edinburgh's. SRA can be used alongside existing theories on urban politics to build a picture of what is going on at the local level and allow this learning to be transferred to other contexts.

Hajer's Three Dimensions of the political process

As previously noted, Hajer takes a neo-Marxist, specifically Gramscian, approach in order to understand hegemonic projects in planning. He specifically takes this approach which has usually been applied to higher level studies and applies it at the local level of urban politics. This considers the structural force of economics as essential to understanding development in planning politics. However, because politics always has to be conducted, different political outcomes emerge in the form of hegemonic projects. Using the 'duality of structure' developed first by Giddens (1979, 1984), and critical realism of Bhaskar (1979), Hajer claims that the economic position of actors constitutes an extremely important resource which they can draw upon. At the same time, planning processes are located in a capitalist system of domination with distinct rules and practices structured in time and space which greatly reduce the possibilities of some groups to change or exercise power while favouring the potential for others. However, following Gramsci, politics is conducted and the structures which Marxist analysis talks about do not automatically result in the reproduction of specific patterns of domination in every place; rather there are dramatic differences across places and across time. To understand why, there must be an examination in each specific historically layered case. So, usefully for this thesis, it

offers a means to understand why city politics, although deeply influenced by economic structures, differs between places and within places across time and it does this through a wide encompassing approach to city politics.

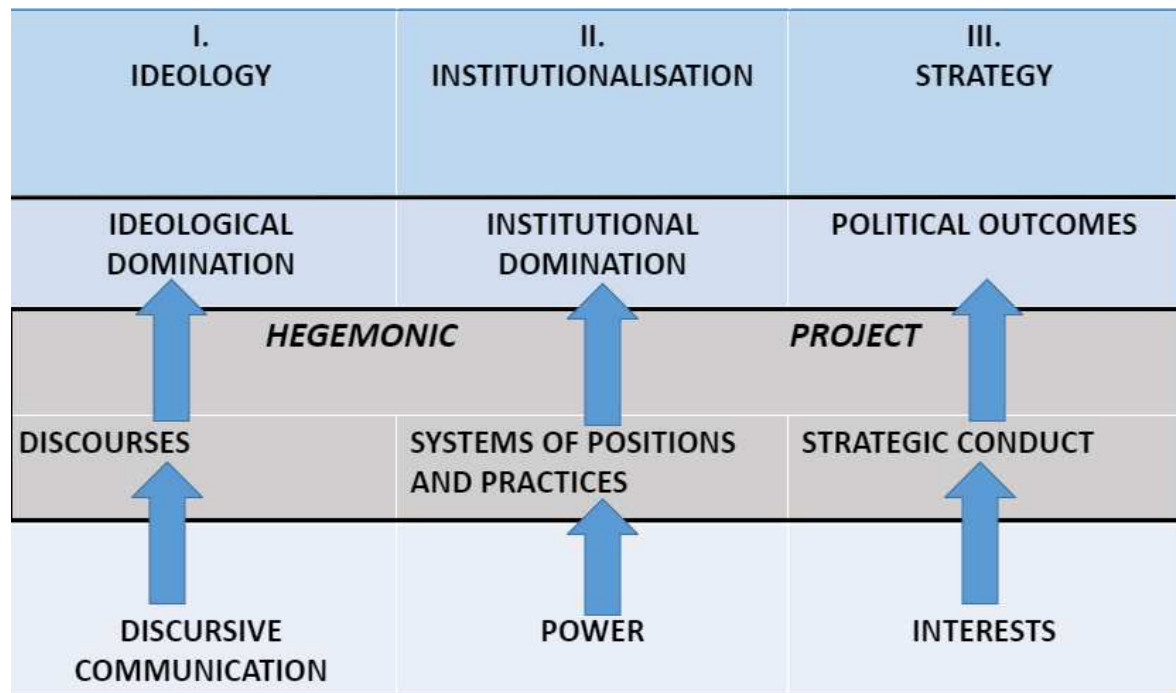


Fig. Hajer (1989) The Three Dimensions of the Political Process

Writing in the context of entrenching Thatcherite neoliberalism in the 1980s, Hajer was interested in understanding urban change through more integrated analytical approaches. To do this he identified a need to analyse the broader existing political projects occurring in any given place at a specific point in time. In his case he focused on urban change in Oxford, through the ‘consensus period’ of planning and into the ‘Thatcherite era’. The questions Hajer wanted to answer were very similar to those that this thesis attempts to respond to:

Who is running the City, how is power organised, what kind of ideologies can be deduced, what kind of values do they represent, how are these values organised into an administrative culture, how does the project relate to different societal forces, how do actors act strategically inside and outside the dominant project, in what kind of historic conjuncture do they operate? (Hajer, 1989, 2)

What this allows is for a meso- and micro-political relational understanding of the means by which macro-level structuring forces are played out in the cases of

Aberdeen and Edinburgh by providing a framework that focuses on the working of politics through processes. While Giddens' (1984) early work on the duality of structure (the way in which structures shape and are shaped through co-constitutional process by actors) came to dominate social theoretical understandings of public policy, I take another Gramscian, Bob Jessop's, subsequent strategic relational understanding of structuration and put it to work in this thesis.

The result is still a very close fit with Hajer's framework which is essentially a three-part system, a 'three-dimensional model of the political process' which brings together ideology (ideas, norms, and values), institutionalisation (rules, resources, and patterns of organisation) and strategies (agency) as its three central elements, understanding these as not operating separately but constantly working in relation to each other. The multiple perspectives of planning actors, exercising different degrees of power, can be understood as operating simultaneously in each case study, where they are operating in historically constituted contexts. The interrelation of these three dimensions creates a given planning strategy in a given context, which Hajer refers to as 'hegemonic projects.'

Discourses are the ideological part of the hegemonic project in urban planning, and are perceived as an essential vehicle to bring change about. Hajer considers the 'concept of development' to operationalise a given discourse in planning. The idea with discourses is that actors interpret the world according to often according to often implicit interpretive frames which open up some possibilities for development but exclude others. Through this, actors think and act accordingly, and until a rupture comes along certain political problems become side-lined or are not even conceived of.

Institutionalisation analyses how certain alliances and groups come to dominate through organisation. It focuses on the internal characteristics of the planning system as an institution of capitalism, which structure social relations through rules and resources. Understanding institutions in operation demonstrates, through borrowing from Schattschneider (1960), how the planning system 'organises some groups into politics and others out'. Hajer does focus on rules in operation and how the planning system is remade through formal and informal means, and his understanding leans towards a neo-Marxist interpretation of Weber's bureaucratic institutions rather than the sociological institutionalism that is associated with more recent social theory. This

is not necessarily a problem for the purposes of this thesis with its focus on the interpretation and operation of the Scottish planning system. This is because Hajer is influenced by Bhaskar's (1979) concept of 'positions' (duties, functions, tasks etc.) which are occupied and 'practices' (the activities as they are conducted). For the purposes of this thesis, I consider this to provide enough scope for understanding the social construction of institutions and, within Hajer's framework, the context dependency of institutions within specific historical periods and spaces and places.

Strategies are the means by which actors act strategically in the context of the ideological and institutional realms. It is this dimension which brings the structuration to the fore, and Hajer argues for an analysis of politics as a clash of strategic conduct based on actors' discursive perceptions of their interests which are developed discursively and informed and (and then further) ideologies. To understand the capability of actors in transforming their interests into action, some more attention to power and the shaping of interests in the first place is first required.

Hajer's understanding of power as influenced by Lukes' three-dimensional view of power (1974) draws attention to the importance of overt behaviour, the concept of non-decisions which keep things out of the political arena, and also latent conflicts which considers how peoples' conceptions of their own interests are shaped by the interests of more powerful actors and forces. However, Hajer relies on the Gramscian approaches further developed by Giddens (1979) to avoid the separation of power and structure (which Lukes does not) and to understand social action from the way in which actors draw on structures in pursuing certain goals. Action and structure are interrelated, and power is a feature of the duality of structure. So, power is related to the society as well as the will of specific actors which means that the central concept is 'action' – that is where 'all the leads must come together' (Hajer, 1989, p16).

This means that through Giddens' approach to structures and action are important. Structures are sets of rules and resources which bind time and space in 'social systems. Systems are visible patterns of social structures. 'Structuration' of society focuses on 'social practices' which emerge on the basis of structures. Because structures are sets of resources and rules, this means the mechanical character of structures can be broken down and a more fluid idea of their form and operation emerges: this is because structure is not a barrier to action, but is involved in its own production (Giddens, 1979). Giddens uses power to "refer to interactions where

transformative capacity is harnessed to get actors' attempts to get others to comply with their wants. Power in this relational sense, concerns the capability of actors to secure outcomes where the realisation of these outcomes depends on the agency of others" (Giddens, 1979, p.93).

This is the point at which I move from Hajer's use of Giddens and utilise, Jessop's Strategic Relational Approach (1990, 2001) to agent action discussed above. This builds on what Jessop (1990) calls Giddens' 'innovative' approach to the way that institutions (such as planning in action) are operated and continually remade through structuration. It uses Giddens' application of time and space and the connection of institutions in action to power and domination. But Jessop focuses less on the 'existential situation of individuals' (agency focused) and more on 'the effectivity of structures of domination' (but not necessarily structure focused). This approach was developed after Hajer's use of the three dimensions in 1989 and I consider it to be a useful tweak which still works within Hajer's framework. Indeed, the SRA is described by Jessop (2001, p.1222) as 'just another specific case of structure agency dualism' but it avoids the 'duality of structure and agency' by examining structure in relation to action and action in relation to structure at all times rather than bracketing them even briefly as Giddens' method entails.

Conclusion

Theoretical framework in relation to planning theory

This chapter has provided the theoretical underpinning to debates introduced in chapter 2 around the emergence of what I have termed a neo-traditional-stakeholder approach to planning in Scotland. It responds to a well-established debate around collaborative planning theory (CPT), which focuses on its underlying roots in Habermasian communicative action and interpretations of its practice-based pragmatism. Specifically, there is a perspective that sees such planning theory as having been dominant in the UK ethos of spatial planning, with an argument that such ideas proved attractive to pro-planning forces saving planning from further residual reform in a Third Way political-economic context. I have been clear in chapter 2 and 3 that this ethos has been one of the drivers of SPR. Importantly, there is an argument that the 'inclusive' processes and collaborative governance arrangements, intended to

challenge the incorporation of neoliberal ideologies into planning, in fact provided a perfect foil for dominant interests to co-opt 'inclusive' planning agendas. It argued that there is merit in such critiques and their deployment to the Scottish context, in particular to 'stakeholder' interpretations and collaborative governance arrangements in each case study. However, both chapters 2 and 3 have been clear that the practice-focus of CPT and its interpretations into forms such as SPR still require consideration through a long-term perspective. In this thesis, there will be cognisance of the undoubtedly exclusionary history of planning practice in the past, with a view to establishing if CPT's variety of critiques offer a route to a better planning alternative.

Accordingly, section two departed from the long running critique of communicative theory with the aim of determining the use of a critique of CPT based on post-foundational theoretical interpretations of planning. It considers planning and wider neoliberal governance as demonstrating a post-political era for planning. It has been used to supplement existing critiques that demonstrate the malevolent means by which Third Way, stakeholder, planning is manipulated by powerful interests in practice. This is useful in re-drawing attention to the tendency for contemporary planning practice to depoliticize issues of public concern, and its propensity to engineer a pretence of public influence while denying debate over irresolvable contradictions of neoliberal capitalism. However, the chapter has questioned what is new about this perspective, just how useful it is as a theoretical analytical tool, and the scope for it to help towards better forms of planning practice. Through debating this, the thesis takes a cue from this perspective; a framework set out by Phil Allmendinger (2016) to evaluate planning systems at a high-level will be used to analyse the inherent depoliticising (rather than necessarily post-political) nature of planning in Scotland. This will have a particular focus on the extent and form of 'neoliberal spatial governance' in the Scottish planning context. This will tackle the key public policy concern of this thesis: why a growth-focused, market-led planning system that has undoubtedly been opened up to more pro-development interests appears to be both failing to deliver growth in the Aberdeen case, and even failing to deliver an ambitious growth strategy in the Edinburgh case. This will tell us about the bigger issues of 'planning for growth' and responding to the undoubted need for more and better housing in growth pressured places. The chapter has provided the basis for analysis in chapters 6-8 and discussion in Chapter 9. In these, an assessment of why

planning theory and practice appear to be going around in circles debating wicked, seemingly irresolvable, public policy issues regardless of planning reforms and, of course, the application of new theories.

Allmendinger's framework provides very specific, high-level, tools to determine the extent of the depoliticization of important debates around the politics of growth in Scotland, and the extent of the capture of planning by narrow sectional interests. However, to understand the urban political in the fine grain of process, a Gramscian approach to the creation of hegemony is applied. This helps to demonstrate the emergence and translation of ideologies (including the drivers of SPR) and the application of SPR as an institution, by strategic actors into actual planning strategies in each context. To do this, it uses Maarten Hajer's Three-Dimensional view of the urban political process (1989), supplementing this with Bob Jessop's Strategic Relational Approach to the structure-agency dualism (1982, 1990, 2001). This is to understand why, while each case interprets similar issues and structures, the outcomes, in terms of growth strategies, have been so different. Doing this will help to determine the differences between the cases, what this tells us about Allmendinger's (2016) critique of English planning, and the extent to which it applies in Scotland. It offers a useful tool with which to gauge how powerful interests organise themselves in planning, with a view to understanding what this tells us about classic planning debates in the contemporary context. Methodologically it will do this by answering a specific call from Valler et al. (2013) for more case studies on planning in action, particularly those that might use SRA. This is required because "there is simply no substitute for detailed, fine-grained interrogation of policy development sensitive to the dynamic and cross-cutting agendas of diverse societal interests (Valler, 2013, 158)." Accordingly, having set out the drivers of SPR and the use of theory in analysing urban politics in action, the next chapter deals with the methodological approach to this research.

CHAPTER 4: Methodology

Introduction

The key aim of this thesis is to understand what Scottish planning represents in practice by analysing the way the planning system has been utilised to deal with growth pressures in Scottish city regions. This study analyses the extent to which the critique of planning as neoliberal spatial governance - implying a move from a system that once operated in the 'public interest' to one that facilitates growth and supports narrow interests - applies in Scotland. More specifically, it responds to a public policy problem in the UK, namely the supply of new homes, which in those parts of the country with strong local labour markets is insufficient to keep pace with demand. This thesis refers specifically to regional housing crises, recognising that housing affordability issues affect different parts of the country in different ways.

This study analyses how such a situation could exist when planning has apparently been structured to channel market forces and has possibly been geared towards growth, with only a pretence of democracy. Indeed, in Aberdeen a pro-growth agenda has emerged, while in Edinburgh a more problematic politics around growth have remained regardless of the same reformed Scottish planning system operating in each place. Yet in each case, regardless of the local politics of growth and the operation of governance networks in planning, turning plans into actual development remains a process fraught with complexity. Understanding planning in practice in each case and rooted in the local context offers the potential to reveal much about what Scottish planning represents as well as providing a useful contribution to debates surrounding the apparent depoliticisation and neoliberalisation of planning.

The thesis tackles three key research questions:

1. To what extent is planning driven by narrow sectional interests?
2. How is planning used to deal with the politics of growth in growth-pressured locations?

3. What factors explain the main variances and commonalities in the way Aberdeen and Edinburgh have dealt with growth pressures?

This chapter is divided into three sections. Firstly, it describes the use of case studies as a research strategy and my selection of comparative cases. The second section outlines in detail the way in which the research was conducted, including reflections on sampling strategy and the ethics of conducting research in a context where I previously worked professionally. In the final section I describe the data analysis process.

Case studies and comparative case study research

The need for a case study

The two case study sites have been selected because they appear to present two very different pictures of Scottish planning in practice. Aberdeen demonstrates signs that SPR was useful in depoliticising the politics around housing growth. In contrast, Edinburgh demonstrates signs that planning remains as political as ever, even in the early development planning (plan-making) stages of an apparently ‘spatial turn’ in Scottish planning which was supposed to reduce conflict in the planning process.

Recently there have been calls for more fine grained analyses of planning in practice in order to understand the influence of different forces in planning processes and their outcomes. According to Valler et al. (2013, 158), in terms of research on specific interests and their influence on planning, “there is simply no substitute for detailed, fine-grained interrogation of policy development sensitive to the dynamic and cross-cutting agendas of diverse societal interests.” In this recent work they pointed out that this is hardly a new call. For example, Blowers (1980) states:

Broad generalisations about the role of interests in land and their relationship to the organisation of the state and a capitalist economy are unlikely to provide insight into the process of urban development. Such insight must be sought by

the use of detailed empirical evidence gathered at the local level (Blowers, 1980, 120).

That work by Andrew Blowers (1980) helped inform this thesis methodologically but also theoretically. Written by a former chair of planning in an English county council planning committee, it presents a case study based analysis of power in planning. It is analysed through the institutional and structural determinants of the planning process. Blower's work is presented according to three "broad concepts of planning, politics, and power" (Blowers, 1980, xi). From that approach, themes of 'conflict and uncertainty; incrementalism; consensus and continuity; and interaction and the concentration and dispersal of power' emerged. What this illustrates is the fundamental value of a case study approach to what are essentially enduring concerns and questions in planning studies: locating power in planning, and "illuminating the political realities of policy-making in planning" (Blowers, 1980, ix).

Blowers' (1980) work is highlighted here not just because of the enduring questions, and the continued need for detailed case studies to understand planning, but also because of its use of theory to provide grounding and make sense of processes rather than this occurring the other way around. This thesis focuses on the case study detail first and foremost and uses this to critically understand not just the power and politics in planning but also the relevance and value of waves of theoretical interpretations and applications in planning – including the charge that planning is now 'post-political'. Chapter 9, the conclusion, discusses the way in which despite these waves of theoretical interpretation, and more importantly waves of planning reform, the issue of building the quality and scale of development in the places where it is needed most and the enduring search for the 'public interest' remain apparently timeless and irresolvable issues.

Case studies in social science

This is a qualitative research strategy employing a comparative case study research design. Stake (1995, xi) considers a case study to be "the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important

circumstances”. Obviously, this thesis compares two cases but each case is still “tightly bounded” (Bryman, 2012, 68). The value of a comparative case study in the context of this research is in testing the idea that the planning system might be a structure utilised to depoliticise growth. The two cases represent very different outcomes yet apply the same state structure, and so the importance of context and institutions are clearly apparent. Yin (2009) considers comparative qualitative studies particularly useful for understanding the circumstances in which theories hold or not.

First, as set out in Chapter 1, it is important to emphasise that the case selection was initially driven by my own experience in planning practice which spanned the period in which planning reform was rolled out in Scotland. This included 16 months in private sector consultancy planning in the Edinburgh region (2007-2008). This was followed by 32 months working in Aberdeenshire Council, mainly working on the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan (2008-2011), and finally, a 13-month period working in South East England on the Wealden Local Development Framework (2011-2012).

My experience in Edinburgh involved working for developers who were often frustrated by what they perceived to be Edinburgh’s anti-development attitude. In Aberdeenshire, I worked in close collaboration with Aberdeen City Council and also took in a secondment to the Strategic Development Plan Authority team. In my role in Aberdeenshire I was pursuing the Council’s implementation of the city-region Structure Plan’s (2009) growth agenda. This was a somewhat experimental approach to planning reform, as one of the first councils to develop a Local Development Plan under the reformed Scottish planning system. In the South East of England, I was in an ostensibly similar planning policy role. However, the politics of growth were entirely different to the Aberdeen city-region, with the political will of the Council being to minimise housing requirement figures in the first instance then to push any growth requirement to locations where protest could be minimised. This usually meant allocating housing development in less well off (but not necessarily more sustainable) locations, in the name of ‘regeneration’. In England, this came within a wider context where ‘the spatial turn’ in planning, and planning itself, were under attack as the Coalition Government (2010-2015) rolled out the contradictory ‘Localism’ approach to planning. It was through these three

experiences that I questioned the respective importance of roles of formal planning systems and the importance of context, the less formal institutions at work, and broadly the location of power in planning. Through this I developed the idea of a case study approach to analyse Scottish planning practice.

Yin's work on qualitative methodologies is famous for its categorisation of case study types (Yin, 2009). The Aberdeen case might initially be described as a 'critical case', one that demonstrates a better understanding of the circumstances in which theories around the depoliticisation of planning and wider critiques of the 'spatial turn' in planning hold. Here a city-region appears to have radically altered the politics of growth and has done this through the first implementation of the modernised planning system. Importantly, the case has been selected as 'revelatory' or, more simply, the best available. It can be considered as such given that the planning authorities in this city-region were the first to fully implement Scottish planning reform. However, the Edinburgh case might then be described as a 'unique case' in that it has become identified as particularly problematic compared to other regional planning contexts in Scotland, and planning and growth remained highly politicised from the outset. According to Bryman (2012), case studies can involve a combination of Yin's (2009) types, particularly when carrying out comparative research. In fact, what each case reveals is possibly the futility of such generalizing types. Aberdeen represents elements of a 'unique case' in terms of the power of its business lobby, and Edinburgh represents elements of a 'critical case' in that the traditionally fraught local politics of growth in the UK continues. In Flyvbjerg's (1998) famous study of the working of power in planning in Aalborg he reflects not just on the value of context specific case research to planning studies, but also in the way that any description of a case study at the outset changes as the research evolves.

These case studies offer much scope for wider learning on the theme of planning for growth and the formation of growth agendas. However, it is clear that the importance of context remains a central component of the research strategy. Schram supports the idea that social science is best equipped to offer "contextualized knowledge appropriate to particular settings and focused on specific problems" (2012, 24). He does not consider any form of social science to

be appropriate for the building of non-contextualised theories. However, the difficulty of broad theoretical generalising through social science does not negate the lessons that can be learned by analysing context specific cases of planning reform and the practice of urban governance.

Research Methods

The research process

The thesis has been carried out through an iterative approach. First, as described above, my own experiences in planning practice informed the case selection. From that point, over the following five years, the work progressed through a series of key stages. First, I carried out what could be viewed as a pilot study in 2013 through my MRes dissertation, which focused on eleven councillors' experiences of planning reform within the Aberdeen region (O'Sullivan, 2013). That study focused on their conceptions of a changing role for councillors. A small portion of the 2013 data was directly applicable to the PhD. I returned to the 2013 data and this helped inform further research required for the PhD. Some interviewees were contacted again and interviewed again for the PhD research.

Following this, in 2013-14 I worked as a researcher in a five-person team on the Review of Strategic Development Plans (Kevin Murray Associates & University of Glasgow, 2014). Through this process it became clearer to me how the SDP process had been implemented since reform in authorities other than in Aberdeen. It was also clear that the Edinburgh region faced significant political challenges in agreeing on the scale and location of growth. The report was predominately technical in nature: it was careful to avoid details on these specific political problems, and I was not involved in the research for the Edinburgh element, which in any case was only just one small part of a wide ranging report. However, it was clear that despite implementing plans for growth in compliance with the same planning system, there were some major similarities in terms of the context of growth pressures but major differences in process and outcomes in the two cases and that this would benefit from further research.

In 2014 and 2015, I also undertook a review of the theoretical literature with a focus on the underlying theories seen to be influencing planning practice and the critiques of these – such as the debate around the extent of the ‘spatial planning’ turn in the UK and Scotland. This took place alongside a more specific literature review on placing planning within a wider understanding of globalisation, competitive cities and public policy issues and government literature related to understanding the drivers of SPR. This provided a strong grounding and greater focus for the data gathering stage that followed. The main part of the data gathering stage was the primary research interview process. In total 36 interviews were carried out in 2015/16. This added to the 11 interviews conducted in 2013.³ The research process moved into the analysis and writing phase in early 2016 and so, as stated earlier, the research does not focus on the current review of Scottish planning. However, there are references to the review where it is required to add to the thesis research and discussion.

Before and after the interview stage of the research, a continuous iterative process of secondary data gathering of official central government, local government, press, and corporate and special interest literature was gathered and analysed. This secondary data analysis helped inform each interview and then helped make better sense of the interview data when it came to the analysis stage. Secondary data research and analysis has been carried out continually since research began on the PhD in 2013.

Research Methods: Documentary Analysis

The thesis has involved documentary analysis of key Scottish government and associated official documents. For example, advisory literature on planning reform for planning actors such as councillors (Improvement Service, 2011) and reviews of the performance of planning through reform (Audit Scotland, 2011) were analysed. The documentary research covered the pre-implementation period (up to 2006) such as Modernising Planning White Paper (Scottish Executive, 2005). However, the focus was predominantly on documentary analysis of the post-implementation phase (2006 to present) of the roll out and implementation of planning reform. These documents

³ Further detail on this can be found in appendix 1

included: iterations of Scottish Planning Policy (2008, 2014); Government literature around planning and housing (e.g. Firm Foundations, 2007) and planning and cities (The Review of Scotland's Cities, 2002, and the subsequent Scotland's Agenda for Cities, 2016); letters from the Chief Planner on changes to developer contributions (2011), letters from Ministers on development plan adoption (2016); as well as more obvious reports such as the Review of Strategic Development Plans referred to above (2014); Government Economic Strategies (2007, 2011, 2015) and the respective National Planning Frameworks (2004, 2009, 2014). Such material was analysed at various points in time to detect changes in Government approaches to planning and the effect of changing government administrations and reactions to economic circumstances such as the global financial crisis.

In addition, each case study's approved development plans and their evidence bases were reviewed at various points. The evidence base includes material supporting the plans throughout their stages of development, including Examination material which each planning authority presented and which developers used to support their own positions. Additionally, the documentary analysis focused on government reporters' assessments of plans at examinations; special interest representations made during planning processes; documents arising from public private partnerships with interests in planning (such as Aberdeen City and Shire Economic Future); planning authority committee meeting minutes; informal developer marketing material and their press releases; and, media coverage of key moments in the formation of the development plans, particularly the regional papers the Press and Journal in Aberdeen and the Edinburgh Evening News in Edinburgh. In the Aberdeen case in particular, media coverage was analysed with a perspective that local media can itself form an important local institution in driving growth agendas (Molotch, 1976).

In doing this I sought to move beyond descriptions of the literature and instead scrutinise the political objectives that lay within, for example, the planning 'modernisation' discourse and the discourse surrounding Aberdeen's 'ambitious' growth strategy. Competing discourses provided material that, when interpreted within this frame, helped reveal the complex relations involved in the formulation of development strategies in each region and how they responded to the Government's agenda for planning reform.

How governments, the development industry, communities, and particular interest groups responded to overarching drivers such as the need for growth, the issues around affordable housing, and how they framed these issues, helped reveal the systematic and local factors involved in the development of growth strategies in each region. The continual and iterative process helped focus what was by far the prime research method: that of the interviews, which took place in a contained time period.

Research Methods: Interviews

As set out in appendix 1, 36 qualitative semi structured interviews took place for the PhD research. This supplemented 11 interviews conducted for a related MRes dissertation. While secondary data analysis was useful in providing context, in terms of identifying factors driving planning reform and its implementation, the interviews formed the basis of the thesis, by providing original empirical research which brought new understanding to the field. The secondary data was iterative because it helped frame the interviews through pre-research, corroboration, and subsequent analysis.

Sampling and recruitment

In terms of within-case participant sampling, the sample frame could be described as what Patton (2002) has termed ‘intensity sampling’, which strongly represents a phenomenon of interest. It also has traits of ‘critical case sampling’ in which the phenomenon is demonstrated ‘dramatically’. This is an approach which is valuable in evaluative research because it draws attention to processes and features (Ritchie et al., 2003). There were some obvious planning actors to be interviewed: council planners; politicians; central government planners; developer interest groups; planning consultancies; community councils; civic and environmental groups; and, single issue action groups, such as the ‘Save Union Terrace Gardens’ campaign in Aberdeen which had been involved in a high-profile debate with city planners and development interests.

To me, these were ‘obvious’ because of the prior knowledge that my experience brought to the research regarding the key actors and their importance in the cases, particularly in the Aberdeen’s case. I focused my sample on an issue basis. The

first key issue was that of the politics of housing growth in each case. It was from this issue that wider substantive arguments about what Scottish planning represents could be drawn. Because of the time and resource limitations inherent in the PhD process, I feel that this 'issue first, broader implications later' was a pragmatic approach which would arrive at a thesis that tackled a key public policy concern. A far broader approach might have lacked specificity and so a targeted sample was appropriate. This meant that I had to focus on actors who I knew would have had influence or could lend insightful perspectives on this key issue. I did enter the data collection with 5 years of planning practitioner experience with which to make these judgements. I also had a lifetime of experience in terms of growing up in the North East of Scotland and spending over three years of my adult life studying and working in Edinburgh. However, this practitioner perspective and personal experience does perhaps mean that the breadth of sampling that a researcher without both practical experience and experience of the 'terrain' might have taken in each case was lost. So, the sample inevitably reflected my understanding of each situation and this is because I consider there is an impossibility in 'bracketing' one's previous experience as a researcher - something that I return to later in this chapter. Finally, while I did arrive at the research with a clear idea of who the key actors were and the nodes in which they operated, I was still fully open to and actively sought direction from such contacts on other actors, where they operated and how I might contact them.

Interviewees were initially recruited from my own existing network of contacts. However, in order to fulfil the aim of the research, the breadth of participants targeted obviously went beyond this. Snowball sampling was used to broaden the sample and gain multiple perspectives on the key themes of the research. Ritchie et al. (2003, 94) point out the benefits of this approach in generating participation. The strategy moved beyond the 'intensity sample' approach but kept the focus within the confines of the main research objectives. Given that I had worked in the Aberdeen case and had experience in the Edinburgh one as well, this technique reduced the possibility of any pre-conceived notions I had remaining unchallenged and it helped avoid verification. Verification can be understood as "a tendency to confirm the researcher's preconceived notions, so that the study therefore becomes of doubtful scientific value" (Flyvbjerg, 2001, 81). 'Small number case studies' are

often considered to be particularly prone to verification. However, deep analysis of cases a researcher already knows well can involve multiple perspectives that advance insight (Flyvbjerg, 2001). According to Flyvbjerg (2001), rather than verification, this actually resembles falsification where preconceived notions give way to increasingly complex and advanced understanding of the case. In the Aberdeen case I was attempting to get to the heart of a growth agenda that had emerged in the period before I worked there, therefore while I knew where to start with names and organisations I did have to rely on leads and recommendations that emerged as the research went on. In Edinburgh, I had less of a base of interviewees to begin with and so this process was even more apparent, and I had to rely on the recommendations of participants to a greater extent.

Conducting interviews

The qualitative interview has been described as “an attempt to understand the world from the subjects’ points of view, to unfold the meaning of their experiences, and to uncover their lived world” (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009, 1). The interviews I carried out were generally unstructured using only a broad interview guide with some topics set out. The interviews were varied and the topics tailored according to the specific interviewee’s experiences and background. Some interviews were carried out in more of a semi-structured format. This was required in some situations where the interview was time constrained, or where the interviewee was less used to taking part in research, and rapport and shared understanding were less apparent.

Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011, 112) highlight the importance of “insider status” and “outsider status in interviews. There were only six interviews where there was a genuine ‘insider’ position on my part. In those cases, I was interviewing former colleagues. In most cases I was something of an ‘insider’ in that I had experience of working as a planner in the geographic area that interviewees had experience in or I had received the contact details of interviewees from one of their friends or colleagues. Insider status can initially be essential in gaining access and smoothing the early stages of the research process. However, it is clearly not without

drawbacks which could only be partially mitigated, as I reflect on later in the chapter.

Many of the interviews could be classed as interviews with 'elites'. A large literature exists on elite interviewing and this usually focuses on how to best conduct such interviews (Harvey, 2011). However, there are also critical post-structural perspectives on the very concept of interviewing 'up' or 'down', assumptions around researcher power, assumptions social science often makes about where power lies, and ideas that power can simply be transferred into interview spaces (Smith, 2006). My own experience was conditioned by the fact that I was a former planning practitioner and so I possibly did not recognise 'elites' as such. If anything, this was reversed and I was in a position where I could interview people who would once have been in hierarchical positions of power (such as former line managers) but now with a less hierarchical dynamic as a researcher interested in their experiences. These dynamics changed depending on the interview. For example, in interviews with community councils it was clear that some moments were taken to vent their frustrations to a former planning insider. In such cases I admitted that many shared their feelings about how the system operates. The same sort of dynamic applied to private sector planners, for example, who seemed to enjoy the opportunity to open up, in a non-work environment, about their own positions as planners with experience of working in the public interest and their move to working essentially for private interests.

The 'general public' in this methodology

There were two key areas of change in Aberdeen Bridge of Don and Cults and Bielside. I conducted a joint interview with two community councillors from Cults and Bielside who had been active in their ward for over 20 years, a ward traditionally the most anti-development in the city-region. I attempted numerous times to contact community councils in north Aberdeen but without success.

The key areas of change in Edinburgh were Leith and the west of Edinburgh. In each, I captured the views of the local community councils. I interviewed the

Planning Democracy and more importantly the pressure group Cockburn Association, who have resisted greenbelt development around Edinburgh.

It could be argued that there is an absence of the 'general public' in this thesis. Indeed, one of the main findings, which I understood as I began the study and was confirmed, is that the general public is not as strong a voice in planning as it ought to be. Accordingly, those who perceive they will be affected by planning strategies were focused upon and interviewed. In the Aberdeen case I had particular experience and knowledge of the difficulty in capturing the views of a broader general public, and this is raised in the interviews with planners in Aberdeen. As a Council, with the full weight of the planning authority consultation process behind it, interviewees from the Council reflected on how they find it very difficult to engender any kind of interest in the plan from any community not directly affected by development. My own experience in Aberdeenshire was similar, with plenty of experience of engaging debates at busy meetings with local communities where significant housing is planned, contrasting with empty public events in locations where there is little or no development to be allocated in the Local Development Plan.

In data chapters 6-8, interviewees discuss the location of a New Town in Aberdeenshire through the LDP. On this theme, one senior local authority planner (interview 24) reflected on the lack of public interest in the development of 10,000 houses. She discussed how 'we consult the wrong people, we should be consulting the people who want to buy houses not just the ones who already have them'. This raises a key issue in planning that of discerning the view of the so called 'silent majority'. Who is interested in coming out to discuss and debate a plan for 10,000 houses in a field far from Aberdeen when it is unlikely to affect them? The thesis interrogates the politics that led to that allocation arriving in that specific location and not in other places which might have been more sustainable but also more politically fraught.

From the Aberdeen case I was aware of the specific importance of Council officials, councillors and their evolving relationship with the development industry in the area. It was clear that I would have to focus on this aspect in order to address

the research questions. It was this comparison with the weakness or absence of such a dynamic in Edinburgh which formed a key difference, and so in Edinburgh I focussed attention on discovering why this was the case. To a large extent, the development strategy was formed within these ‘stakeholder’ settings and this justified a relatively strong focus on the professionals involved in planning in each case.

In the data chapters I reflect on a conversation with the head of SES Plan who discusses how despite the interest in the issue of housing in the greenbelt, the SES Plan process still struggled to generate public interest. I attended the full hearing of the Edinburgh Local Development Plan Examination Process, immersing myself in the unresolved matters that the planning system was to deal with. This confirmed that planning remains a system dominated by ‘stakeholders’ but not necessarily by wider public communities. It was the absence of a public voice through both filtering out, an issue I tackle in the data chapters, but also its absence through public ambivalence that has to be acknowledged.

As one researcher, with limited time and financial resources, there was an issue in attempting to capture views of the general public beyond that represented by interest groups and organised groups. What is particularly missing in this respect is a real understanding of why, despite there being an undoubted public concern about housing affordability, particularly in Edinburgh, it is difficult to generate interest in development plan processes from the very people who are most affected by it: that is the large and growing section of the population who would like to own a home but have no chance of owning one within Edinburgh’s city boundary. This is the key concern with the planning system engaging ‘the wrong people’. I think that to do this question justice, this would require a scale of research which this PhD project would not have managed. Instead I cite this lack as an indicator of a planning system which is not ‘inclusive’, and does not respond to the ideal ‘spatial planning’ ethos. I do, however, think it is a priority for further research.

The data collection period was a precisely defined period with a clear end date. At all times when writing the PhD, I was assessing my strengths and weaknesses and the situation regarding the remaining period of funding of my PhD. My lack of

experience in terms of politics, sociology, and social theory and my depth of practice-based experience meant that, in hindsight, I think probably over-compensated for my lack of experience and this shortened the time available for data collection which should have been where my practice experience was deployed most effectively. I also am aware that my professional experience meant that it was perhaps easier to first interview 'insiders' in the process, and this is an issue with subsequent 'snowball' sampling.

In Aberdeen, I interviewed the Save Union Terrace Gardens campaign group but there were difficulties in integrating this within the data chapters. While this was a very revealing interview, and while previous drafts of the PhD fully incorporated this, in the end I had to focus on the detail of the issue of housing growth and the politics that surround it. Similarly, in Leith I gathered similarly useful data on the experience of (to a lesser extent) the more marginalised perspective of a community in the 'brownfield' location. Again, while this made it into the final PhD thesis, there were elements of the public voice which had to be left out simply because while adding richness and depth, what appears in the thesis is sufficient to capture what was going on in regard to the drivers of the Edinburgh spatial strategy. This is also one of the problems with carrying out comparative case study research which is to tell the story of policy formation in action and its outcomes. Each historically situated case study and scenario requires enough background details in order for it to contribute to responding to the key research questions. In practice, this requires a strict approach to data that has been gathered. However, this is not wasted data or time on the interviewees or my own part and in most cases as data informs the findings.

Ethical considerations of an insider perspective

In this section of the chapter I reflect on the ethics of conducting research in case study sites where I was formerly employed. As a researcher, I went back to study a planning process that I was employed to work in for two and a half years, from 2008-2010, in Aberdeenshire Council as a Policy Planner. The Aberdeen element of the research strategy could therefore be considered as a form of 'retrospective participant observation' (Bulmer, 1982), as I was personally involved in the

specific context of the case. In contrast, my employment experience in the planning process in Edinburgh was more peripheral. There I worked as a Graduate Planning Consultant for a shorter period of time with no real integration with Edinburgh city council's policy-making process. Nonetheless, both experiences merit reflection on the positionality of the researcher, which had advantages and potential limitations in terms of the research process as well as ethical implications.

Aside from an obvious advantage in terms of ease of access to participants, having familiarity with the environment to be researched – in a sense taking an 'insider perspective' - increases the potential to achieve rich thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973). These are particularly advantageous where the culture of planning practice in a department and around it is concerned. Such immersive benefits are similar to those offered by participant observation such as the drawing out of cultural factors and hidden activities (Bryman, 2012) and direct "access to the insiders' world of meaning" (Jorgenson, 1989, 15). Such benefits link well to the institutionalist element of Hajer's (1989) framework which concentrates on how the planning system is interpreted by different actors.

An example of the 'insider perspective' enhancing the research arose during an interview with a former lobbyist in the housebuilding industry, who I had encountered professionally during my time working as a planner in Aberdeenshire. The interview dynamic was undoubtedly shaped by the assumption of shared knowledge and a level of trust that came with familiarity, despite the fact that in our previous roles we sat on different 'sides' of the development debate. I felt that the shared past experiences and contextual understandings, coupled with my own present 'neutral' position as an academic, meant there was a useful balance allowing the interviewee to open up while safe in the knowledge that I was sufficiently distanced from current planning practice in Aberdeenshire. Relatedly, I had specific knowledge around the replacement of a cohort of what could be described as 'development-averse' officials with a more pro-development management team, something that would not have been understood by an outsider researcher. In the same interview with the former lobbyist I was therefore able to prompt confirmation that these events had indeed taken place. As will be explored

in chapter 6, I consider that this had significant impact on the development strategy.

This example also services to demonstrate the way in which I conducted the 'retrospective' element of the research. First, to be clear, I do not class this research as an ethnography. Second, a decision was taken at an early stage of the research process that I would not be centring myself within the research. The example above demonstrates how I used my experience for verification of my own understanding rather than pursuing the information directly. Third, I was a junior ranking officer in the case of Aberdeenshire. In this example, I had only come across the story of previous members of staff being 'pushed aside,' as the interviewee put it, through an informal conversation with a senior ranking member of staff in 2010. As a junior member of staff, I was only party to very limited information on management level issues, as is normal in most organisations. Finally, I was only at the Council for two and a half years and so the vast majority of this research process was a genuine historical exploration on my part, albeit with a good sense of where to look.

However, despite these benefits of shared understandings, there are drawbacks of research in this approach and I noticed this in comparison to the research conducted in Edinburgh, and also in the Aberdeen City context. There can be assumptions on behalf of participants of situations which may affect the quality of the research (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009). Taylor (2011) raises issues regarding friendship and relationships which arise from insider research and the expectations of shared perspectives. There is also the possibility that the researcher will inevitably understand situations in a certain way, having been shaped by personal experiences. I ensured that I was mindful of these possibilities throughout the fieldwork, analysis and writing. In interviews, if participants did not provide sufficient detail in particular answers due to assuming that I would know this already, I would prompt them to develop their answers further. However, it became evident at the data analysis stage that my own familiarity with the context meant that I did on occasion miss the opportunity to probe interviewees further. On reflection, this perhaps came from a sense of temporarily slipping back into my previous employee role and hoping not to appear ignorant of 'the facts'.

Discussing the ethics of similar situations, Bulmer considers that because no research is in place at the time of the experience that the research subsequently draws from, this secures many of the benefits of participant observation, the complete immersion in the setting, without the ethical implications that come with covert participant observation, such as the breach of consent of covert observation. However, this is not to say that the technique comes without risks and limitations and I would consider Bulmer's (1982) view quite simplistic.

It is accepted that there are potential difficulties that arise from getting close to the research in this manner. Flyvbjerg discusses the impossibility of bracketing the researcher completely from research settings (Flyvbjerg, 2004). I was aware of this and opened up my own perspectives to challenge through discussion with participants in the research process. An example is where I explicitly corroborated the evidence base and rationales for decisions that were taken by a council with interviewees. Another is where I would provide a media take on an issue or a developer take on an issue and asked the interviewee to provide their own perspective. This openness helped mediate the strength my own researcher perspective and acted as a form of triangulation process.

As previously stated, I did not feel that I had any particular 'insider perspective' in the Edinburgh case. What also became apparent was the extent to which my 'insider status' in the Aberdeenshire context vastly differed from what was actually if anything a strong familiarity with the Aberdeen city context. However, I at least had the experience of years of living and working in the actual places where the research took place, giving me an innate feel for the research. I believe that a researcher without this prior knowledge and familiarity would have been inherently disadvantaged.

Given the small scale of the planning community in Scotland, despite the research context, there was risk that developer interests in particular might have considered me to be part of the Council 'establishment'. My own position and past experience was clearly stated on the participant information that was sent out with interview requests. This was mitigated by clearly conveying the participants' rights and the researcher's role through Glasgow University's ethics process. In Aberdeen, there

had also been a four-year passage of time since I had any involvement in planning there. In addition, I had not been in senior role within the Council, and that provided a further buffer.

Finally, an issue associated with any sort of 'retrospective' fieldwork also meant that some participants memories of details had faded. While my own professional involvement could be seen to shape a certain perspective at the outset through the element of 'retrospective ethnography', such a perspective could also suffer the fallibility of memory on the part of researcher and participant. Despite the recent nature of the processes studied, my own recollections are of course going to be selective, and a deeper analysis of actual events such as interactions, language and gesture associated with true participant observation is impossible to achieve (Brodsky, 1993).

In the case of my research, in the Aberdeen case especially, I was interested in the period of roughly 2004-2008; quite some time ago. At times this affected participants such as public sector planners who were concerned with 'big picture' issues, rather than the detail of past processes. This had to be expected and, in some cases, where a specific detail would have been useful, I instead engaged in a more general discussion after which, slowly, specifics often did arise. There was a positive aspect of this though, it was clear that by discussing recent issues and past issues, participants' present and past experiences blended, and, through reflection, well-grounded conversations took place with a lot of reflection on how ideas in the planning process had come to pass.

Data Analysis

Having expanded upon case study as a research strategy, my selection of comparative cases, and the way in which the research was conducted, this final section of the chapter describes the analysis of the data. In terms of data analysis, the overwhelming majority of time was spent on interview analysis. My interviews had been semi structured, with some much more unstructured. This meant that there were no obvious ways to categorise what had been covered and what was emerging from the data. Because of this, after interviews I would sketch out

thoughts from which initial themes emerged. This was an incremental layering which helped to steer direction and lend deeper understanding of the subsequent stage of the data collection and analysis process. I also used this first stage of data analysis to follow up 'leads' which interviewees had mentioned. In terms of 'leads,' I mean names of people who were mentioned in interviews, off the cuff remarks about previous scenarios and events, the latest issues around development strategies in each case, and references to the places and the networks within which planning strategy was being conducted. These were followed up throughout the data collection period and led to further interviews and online desk-based research. I was researching historically situated, but live, planning strategies that were unfolding throughout the research process. This meant that data collection and analysis were an interlinked process.

While this stage of iterative analysis process was undertaken throughout the data collection period, a point was reached where 'enough' data had been collected and the research process entered into a period of data analysis proper. A decision on 'enough' data was informed by a sense of saturation where similar issues were arising without further deeper explanation; by a more pragmatic requirement to have to call an end to the data collection process for resource and project management reasons; and, where the stage one data analysis demonstrated that a specific focus on the politics surrounding housing growth, rather than the general data on planning in Scotland was apparent, became at first tangible and then viable.

In terms of transcription, I transcribed the majority of the interviews myself and believe there is a lot of merit in the view that this allows an immersion in the detail of the data (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000). However, owing to time constraints, I also used a transcription service which had officially been used and recommended by the University. The interviews I had conducted were 'low risk' and were often covering matters where interviewees had publicly and explicitly stated their views on the issues that were discussed. I sent the lowest risk interviews and others which were generally of lower quality, in terms of richness of data, to the transcription service and transcribed the remaining vast majority myself.

I printed all the transcriptions and conducted a close reading of each of them, sketching out emerging broad themes, as well as writing up working notes on detailed matters. From this I built up a better picture of the themes that were coming through the data. Saldana (2008) suggests that this manual approach allows an immersion that creates a greater sense of control over the project. Having got to the point where I felt confident in terms of knowing the data, I moved towards creating a workable framework this ‘thematic analysis’ which, according to Bryman (2012, 568) is the most common approach to the analysis of data. A general strategy for assisting thematic analysis is the use of a coding framework. This approach is used to “classify and organise data according to key themes, concepts and emergent categories” (Spencer et al. 2003, 262).

At this coding framework stage, I moved from working with paper hard copies to the use of Nvivo qualitative analysis software. I had not previously used software for data analysis. However, with the scale of the data gathered and with a good idea of the themes from the paper copy analysis, I felt Nvivo would allow for a flexibility in arriving at a specific framework. The data was first subjected to ‘indexing’ (or ‘coding’) to identify its content, then ‘charted’ within what became my thematic framework. Following the preliminary coding and charting stages, the categories were collated in more abstract themes that were developed in light of the research questions and reflected the theoretical discussions from the theoretical framing of the study.

Nvivo software allows a pliability in terms of classifying the data and in more basic terms allowed me to keep the themes data organised and in one ‘place’ with backed-up copies should anything have gone wrong. Nvivo allowed me to move around codes and themes continually until they made sense and its search function, which pulled together instances of words or phrases from across the entire data set, was more useful than similar functions on Microsoft Word or Excel. The mix of physical print outs and the virtual-pliable approach offered by Nvivo worked well for me.

I do not describe the research as taking a grounded theory approach (Geertz, 1973) as I already had a clear rationale for the case selection, I had reviewed the evidence

around the cases and I did know broadly what I was looking for in terms of data collection and analysis. However, while I knew the data and the contexts and much of the detail, I still found themes and patterns were unexpectedly emerging and were being broken down further or merged as the data analysis process developed.

Some codes emerged from the research questions directly but the research questions were tweaked as the research progressed given that the approach was on the spectrum between deductive and inductive research. There were obvious codes which reflected a planning practice focus and which would be recognisable to anyone accustomed with planning material. These were as basic as 'economy', 'transport', 'population growth', and when comparing Aberdeen and Edinburgh they helped separate out the key technical issues which each planning strategy was dealing with. Beyond that, more theoretical codes were applied, for example the evidence base on 'population growth' and its interpretation by officers and politicians in each case, led to codes such as 'officers and population growth' and 'case made by councillors'. This moved into codes signifying the strategies at work such as 'conflict,' and 'tactics.' Spatial codes were also necessary, not just the obvious splitting between case studies but in terms of issues such as 'greenbelt' and 'brownfield'. After engaging in cycles of data analysis and numerous reworking of what was a fluid coding framework, I grouped the dozens of themes and sub-themes into three main categories: the case for growth (which encompassed the technical issues each strategy dealt with); the place for growth (which eventually formed into the treatment of the classic issues of greenbelt and brownfield development); and the third main theme brought together the issue of governance networks in each case and helped towards an understanding of the political process of making each strategy. These formed into chapters 6, 7, and 8 respectively. It might appear that each theme gradually moved from concrete issues into the more abstract, however, at all times and in all three themes the theory around post-politics/depoliticisation, and collaborative governance were present. Following the broadly neo-Gramscian approach to framing the research, the data was interpreted through questions around ideology, in terms of the shaping of planning problems to be dealt with, where the ideas emerged from and how they were interpreted in the 'case for growth' in each context, the importance of hegemonic ideas around the 'greenbelt' and the need to remain 'globally

competitive' each have place based underpinnings. The same can be said for the institutions in terms of the planning system, which was made up of numerous codes such as 'local plan' the 'strategic plan', but also the softer elements in terms of 'new governance arrangements' and 'culture change'. Finally, the actors involved and the strategic selectivity with which they operated was apparent throughout the data analysis process with codes such as a grouping specific plan making processes and then sub-grouping with 'officer-action,' 'business-power,' 'home-owner interest' and straightforward actor roles such as 'councillor' eventually forming broader themes. These are demonstrated most obviously in chapter 6 and chapter 9 which focuses on the power of different interests.

Within this chapter I discussed how I considered the social construction of knowledge and evidence in each case, and I analysed the data with an awareness of how the planning system was used by different interests to frame specific narratives around types of growth strategy. Fairclough's (2000) work on Critical Discourse Analysis has shown how, for example, policy discourses associated with the Third Way can be used to legitimise and smooth the path to apparently conflict free governance processes. Jacobs (2006) reviews the use of critical discourse analysis (CDA) in urban policy research and identifies two main reasons for its application: first, research focusing on decision-making processes can be too narrow in its focus on modes of organisation and so misses opportunities to analyse power and conflicts of ideology (Fischer and Forester, 1993, Stone, 1988, Hastings, 1998); and second, for scrutinising language in order to reveal political objectives as well as how policy documents are interpreted by intended audiences. This helps reveal the presentation, the images conveyed as well as actual acts themselves (Fairclough et al., 2004). For Matthews and Satsangi (2007), CDA allows an understanding of the third dimension of power proposed by Lukes (1974) where the powerful prevent conflict arising in the first by shaping desires and responding to them. Hastings (2000, 3) identifies a useful way of separating 'discourse' from 'discourse analysis' as proposed by Van Dijk (1997): 'discourse' is straightforward "language use" whilst 'discourse analysis' is "the study of talk and text in context."

There was not a weighty use of critical discourse analysis in this thesis, and I would not call this a study which fully operates CDA. However, at all times in the data analysis process, I was attuned to the power behind the political formation of knowledge and what gets to count as knowledge in the modern Scottish planning system, and so I drew on the principles of CDA in this respect. The way in which all growth could be seen to contribute to 'sustainable economic growth' is just one basic example, where growth is promoted without consequence in planning discourses. A critical awareness of this helped reveal how both the planning system as a legislative structure and contemporary discourses around political issues were operated in each case by actors with specific agendas.

I say that this thesis borrows from discourse analysis because I agree with the view that language is the medium through which truth and meaning are socially constructed (Berger and Luckmann, 1991, 1966) but meaning itself is never fixed. What this implies is that text and speech cannot really be analysed from such a position without some form of discourse analysis taking place. It was clear to me working as a planning practitioner that ideas took hold and are reinterpreted by actors, and this was something I was looking out for when conducting interviews and analysing them. A brief example of this was the conception of growth as a 'prize' and, as such, something to be won or potentially lost (to other places) if the correct action is not taken. The 'prize of growth' was an idea that I saw emerging in my time as a practitioner and it appeared to have enveloped thinking around economic development when I returned to the field as a researcher. Such an idea fits into more fundamental theories around the cultural political economy that planning operates within.

I consider that in conducting critical social-scientific analysis of contemporary public policy, forms of critical discourse analysis are likely to be inherent in most analytical methods and most likely they were even before such approaches to data analysis were termed 'discourse analysis, or 'critical discourse analysis'. The potential for the depoliticisation of growth; the institutionalisation of forms of knowledge that emerge in planning systems – where for example the informal ideas around 'culture change' crystallise into planning outcomes - calls for the use of an awareness and broad approach 'which puts talk and text into context'.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented the methodology and methods involved in my approach to this research. I first clarified my research objectives and discussed why a comparative case study research design was a way of achieving these objectives. The cases offered a fruitful context within which the formal and informal structures of that planning operate, and the actions they can take to reshape these, can be brought to life and understood. The Aberdeen and Edinburgh cases offer scope for understanding why planning strategies operating the same system in similar conditions can result in vastly different outcomes.

I brought my own experiences as a planning practitioner to the fore in this chapter. This was in order to be clear about the impact that this had on my selection of the cases themselves and how this informed and affected the process of the research. The research took place primarily through interviews supplemented with continual documentary and press analysis over a defined research period and this is clearly the focus of the thesis, however my own past experiences have clearly infused the research process and also the interpretation of data. I confronted not just the benefits but also the ethical dilemmas that retrospective elements of research involve. The chapter ended with detailed reflections on how I undertook the data analysis process.

CHAPTER 5 – Case study context

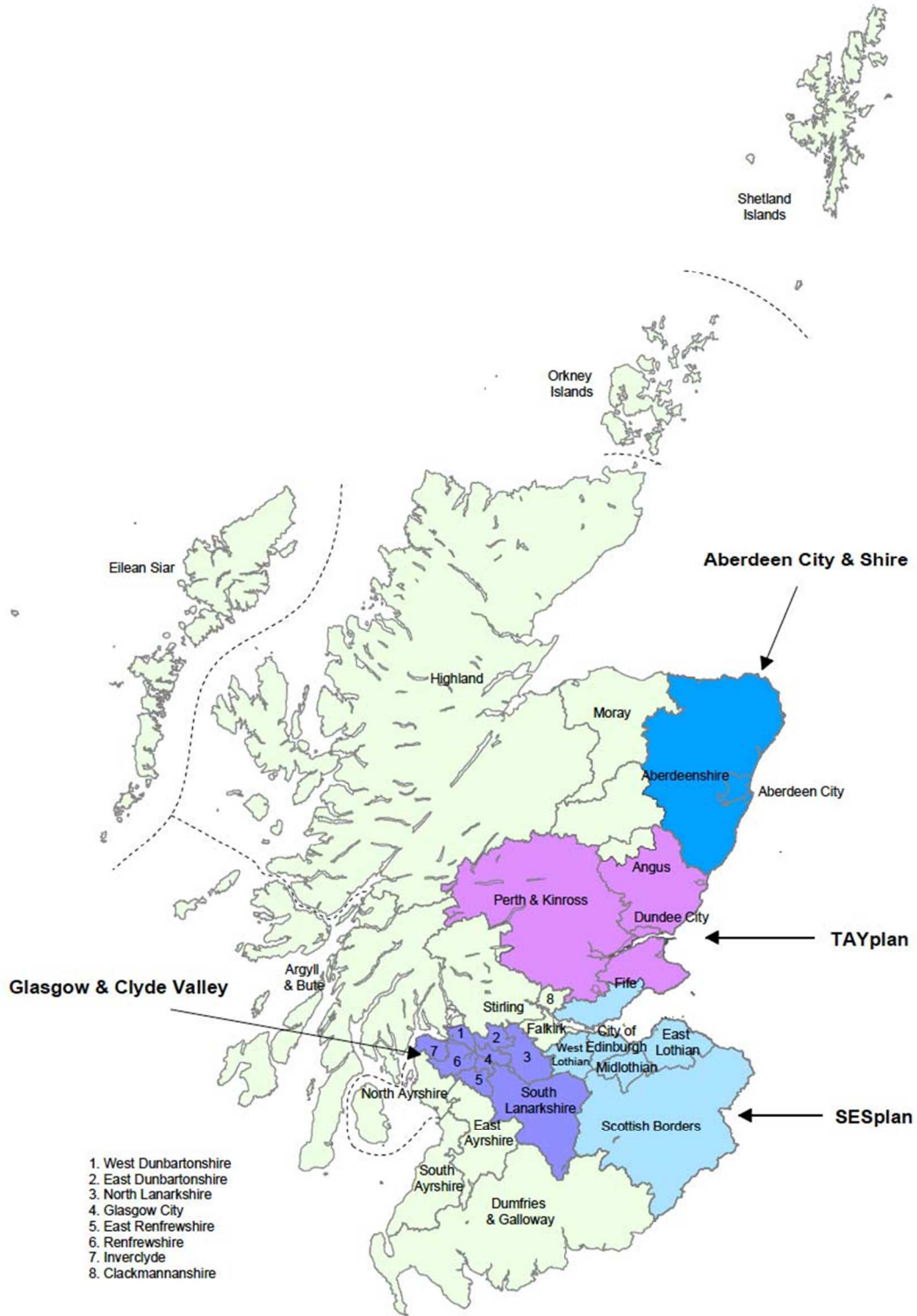
Introduction

The thesis has introduced the two case study sites: Aberdeen and Edinburgh. Previous chapters have explained how they both face similar problems in terms of dealing with housing pressures in an economically successful city-region, yet demonstrated a very different politics around the issues of growth and, in particular, housing growth, thus why these are fruitful case studies for comparison. This chapter marks the beginning of the data section of the PhD. This short chapter provides a more substantial understanding of each case study context, discussing the planning-related issues they have faced in recent decades, issues which strategic spatial planning was intended to address.



Figure 5,1: Map of central-eastern Scotland

Source (Ordnance Survey)



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Figure 5,2: Strategic Development Plan Areas in Scotland

(Source: General Register Office for Scotland)

New Local Authorities

The Local Government (Scotland) etc Act 1994



Figure 5.3: The current Local Authority Areas in Scotland

(Source: The Stationary Office Ltd, Cartography Centre, 10/96)

Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Case Study Context



Figure 5.2: Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Key: Red (built up area) Green (not built up) Light Green (greenbelt or other protection)

Source: Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan (2014)

Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire had a combined population of 492,310 in 2015, which is almost split evenly between each (Aberdeen City Council, 2016). Since the 1970s, the region has been transformed economically and socially by the North Sea oil and gas industry and has become one of the UK's strongest performing economic regions. Its economic fortunes have been tied to the global price of oil, and the regional economy is now locked into a global supply chain focused on Houston and interlinked with cities including London, Dubai, Singapore, and Perth. Aberdeen City and the commuting area of Aberdeenshire experienced rapid growth in the 1970s and 1980s. This growth stabilised, albeit with some dramatic short-term fluctuations, until the mid-2000s when the economy experienced a sustained period of growth which at one point began to be described as 'a second oil boom' (Dickie, 2013). The study period focuses on 2006-2016: a period in which the economy was experiencing significant growth. This ended with a dramatic fall in oil prices from 2014 onwards. The data

captured over this period tells this story as policymakers attempted to deal with the complexity of planning in a volatile economy. The end of the study period briefly captures the immediate impact of a new reality of “lower for longer” oil prices (Kemp and Stephen, 2017), job losses, and serious considerations of a post-oil regional economy arriving sooner than expected.

The spatial pattern and planning problems

Despite its various booms and busts, the economic story of the last forty years has been one of significant growth. In terms of planning responses to this, Hague (2005, 166) considered the strategy around the location of development in the region in the period from the mid-1970s to 2005. He describes this as one of encouraging a “polycentric growth pattern” in residential terms, but one that was City focused and “monocentric” in terms of employment land allocations as employment expanded in and around Aberdeen. The 1997 Grampian Structure Plan and the subsequent 2001 ‘North East Scotland Together’ Structure Plan set out a consistent approach that tamed the expansion on the greenbelt which had occurred since the mid-1970’s in the City and thus pushed housing and commuters out to Aberdeenshire. This attempted to maintain the identity of Aberdeen through a brownfield focus identified as ‘sustainable development’. It did this while responding to a regional Grampian Enterprise strategy focused on global competitiveness, and a political strategy that attempted to deal with community resistance in the face of developer pressure for more development in the greenbelt and in the most popular towns (Hague, 2005).

This contextual understanding is extremely important when considering some of the defining features of Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire. Its economy is unusual in a UK context, not just because of oil and gas. Geographically, it is a remote, definable, and small region and so historically this has lent towards a strong social interconnectivity (Naughtie, 2000). Its business community and social institutions have a history of dealing with the region’s isolation through innovation and collective action and representation (Perren, 2000). Its experience in the 1970s as a growth region in a North Sea network on Europe’s periphery, maintaining global competitiveness, conserving its local environment, and ensuring social cohesion was, according to Hague (2005), one that anticipated the themes and challenges of European spatial planning a generation later.

Institutional factors and the role for planning reform

The county councils of the North East of Scotland had a history of working together on ‘more than local’ issues. Indeed, Tiesdell and Allmendinger (2004, 167) describe the City as “a pioneer of town and country planning with a Town Planning Scheme covering the city and its immediate hinterland being established in 1932”. The creation of Grampian Regional Council in 1975, with five District Councils sitting within the Region, brought together the strategic functions of the region just at a time when this was required to deal with rapid growth. Hague and Jenkins (2005, 224) reflect on this period as “the high point of Scottish corporatism.” The period of regional council in the North East was often marked by political friction between the City (then Aberdeen District) and the Regional Council. This was not only on party lines, with Labour tending to dominate the City and the Conservatives the region (Tiesdell and Allmendinger, 2004), but also on policy lines with the City demanding more autonomy, particularly over economic development issues (Davidson and Fairley, 2000). However, there is no suggestion in the literature that this arrangement was unworkable; Davidson and Fairley (2000) assess it as quite successful in terms of its planning function.

The replacement of two-tier government with single tier government by the UK Conservative Government in 1996 (just at the dawn of New Labour’s devolution agenda) led to a move to more informal joint working on planning between the new Aberdeenshire and a somewhat re-established Aberdeen City Council. In terms of a strategic planning function, and within the context of reduced funding and control over infrastructure, the post-1996 arrangement can be viewed as unsatisfactory and pre-empted the Scottish New Labour-led modernisation and reconsideration of planning as spatial planning.

According to Tiesdell and Allmendinger (2004), to understand the recent spatial planning history of Aberdeen we must understand the importance of three factors: the dramatic impacts of oil; the shifting governance arrangements in the region; and the importance of business interests and how they work. They relate this final point to the influx of multinational companies to the City. When working with existing business interests they describe this as a “powerful coalition of interests that, rather than accepting established procedures of local governance, has been more involved in driving events” (2004, 173). All three factors are still pertinent today and this thesis explores their interaction and their continued impact on planning and its outcomes.

Planning reform and recent development plans studied in this case

In 2008 the Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Strategic Development Plan Authority was formed, replacing the previous Joint Structure Planning Committee with a separate authority and one that was to stand above and apart from the two Local Authority councils. Politically, this is now represented by the Strategic Development Plan Committee and made up of local politicians drawn from each authority. At the same time, the regional transport partnership North East Scotland Transport (NESTRANS) was set up to work alongside the new SDPA and with existing partnerships and agencies in the region such as Scottish Enterprise Grampian. Through planning reform, both authorities were thus engaged in cross-authority arrangements, working alongside a fledgling devolved Scottish Government. This form of governance represented something of a spatial planning collaborative governance arrangement that some planning theorists and academics in the UK hopefully envisaged might become the norm in the mid-2000s.

In 2009, the SDPA adopted the Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan. It was something of a hybrid plan: an ‘old style’ Structure Plan in name, but its form and content represented policy innovation as it achieved the criteria expected of the new City-Region Strategic Development Plans. As well as dealing with a settlement pattern that was increasingly based on car-based commuting, the ACSSP (2009) was set up to deal with a legacy of dated local plans that were based on previous pessimistic growth forecasts. This new plan set high level growth requirements and, according to the plan, established a vision which “sets a clear direction for the future development of the North East towards which the public and private sectors can work to deliver” (Aberdeen City & Shire Structure Plan, 2009, 5).

The population growth objective is described in the plan as being influenced by the selection of a ‘high growth scenario’ (Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan 2009, 17) with a vision to increase the attractiveness of the area as a place to live and to do business. This went above the housing requirement which would meet household formation forecasts, and made population growth an objective in itself. The housing allocations also complied with Scottish Government’s calls, at the time of the plan formation, to see large increases in house building and generous housing allocations through the planning modernisation agenda (Scottish Government, 2007, 2008).

In 2012, Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire became the first and second planning authorities, respectively, in Scotland to introduce Local Development Plans through planning reform. The North East of Scotland effectively became the first City Region in Scotland to have developed and implemented the new range of development plan documents required under the reformed planning system. Because of this, the area has then been at the forefront of dealing with the management of development under the reformed planning system. At the time of the research, development rates had remained high as the authorities adopted their suite of new plans. This was thus a fruitful context in which to analyse the implementation of planning reform: a region where old debates around growth appeared to have somehow been smoothed out with the use of a new planning system, but one where control of the local economy continued to function at the whim of the global price of oil.

Edinburgh and South East Scotland Case Study Context

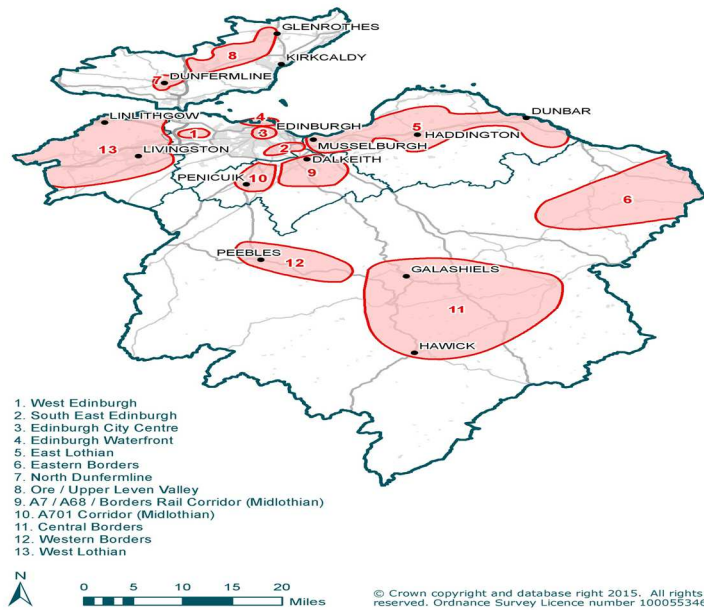


Figure 5,4: SESplan Strategic Development Areas. Source: (SESplan 1, 2014) Ordnance Survey.

Figure 3 - Regional Core

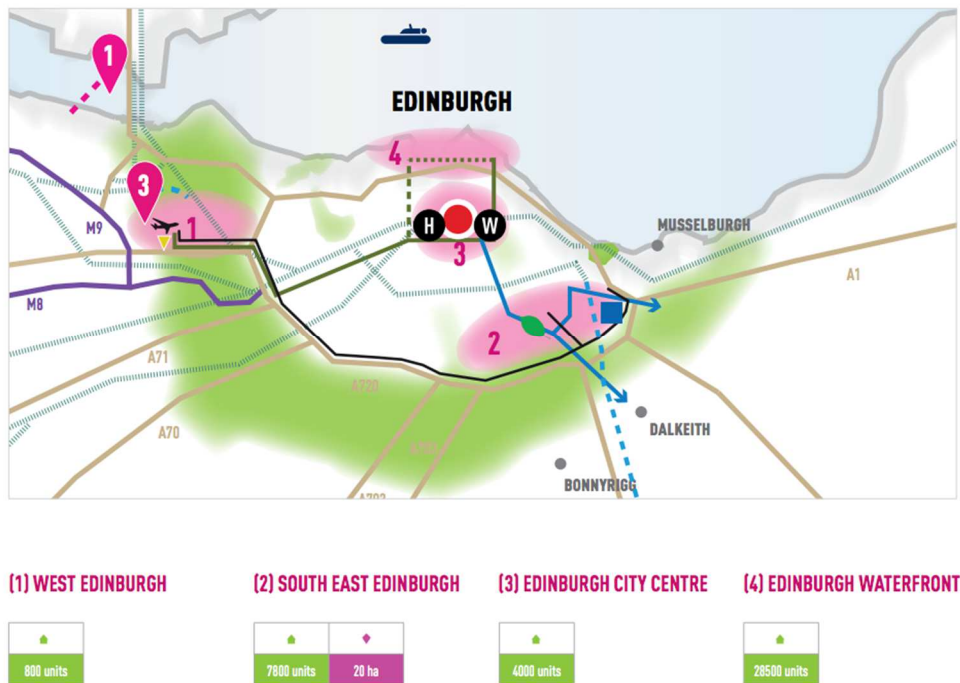


Figure 5,5: SESplan 1 Edinburgh Strategic Development Areas (SESplan 1, 2014)

The SESplan area population is 1,250,886, representing 24% of the Scottish population. The largest % of the population (39.6%) is concentrated in City of Edinburgh, Fife has (22%), West Lothian (14%), Borders (9%), East Lothian (8%), and the smallest is Midlothian (7%) (SESplan, 2015). Accordingly, it is the issue of Edinburgh, the importance of its economy and how to accommodate its growth, particularly housing, that has dominated the spatial planning context in the SESplan region. SESplan was the most complex of the SDPA creations as it brought together Edinburgh and the Lothians – a group of Councils with a long history of political friction - with Fife to the north of Edinburgh and the Borders which (as the name suggests) runs all the way to the English border. The creation of the new SDPA was clearly focused on each authority's relationship with Edinburgh, while the links between the other authorities were more tenuous. Overall, this produced a quite disparate city-region where no real sense of identity was likely to emerge.

The creation of the SDPA was intended to ensure that Edinburgh's growing importance to the national economy was supported by a suitable strategic spatial planning arrangement. Government reviews pointed to Edinburgh as one of the cities which would be driving Scotland's future growth (Scottish Executive, 2002, 2004). Indeed, in the early 2000s the City of Edinburgh provided 20% of Scotland's GDP with 15% of its population (Hague and Jenkins, 2005), and this importance has only grown since. Collaboration through a twin city approach with Glasgow - and the places in between - was to be key to this (Turok and Bailey, 2004). In the mid-2000s Edinburgh's economy had experienced strong sustained growth with employment rates that had not been expected only a decade previously (Vigar, 2009). This improvement resulted from a City's economy which had always been diverse but was dealing with post-industrialism as it evolved into a base of services, particularly financial services, research, and government sectors that had grown with devolution (Hague, 2005b). However, despite this success, the literature of the time demonstrates a sense that Edinburgh was still being held back by the city's political indecision around the extent to which, and in what form, it actually wanted to grow (Docherty and McKiernan, 2008, Vigar, 2009).

The spatial pattern and planning problems

Edinburgh had long dominated the Lothians Regional Council 1975-1996 and the four-way informal Structure Planning arrangements that had followed it (Hague, 2005b). In spatial terms, the result of this domination was a process where Edinburgh was seen to export its

growth to its Lothian neighbours, for local political reasons, while these authorities either resisted growth or accepted housing growth for its 'regeneration' benefits (Hague, 2005b). Since its establishment in 1957, Edinburgh's greenbelt has been a principal part of planning policy with a consistent priority being to maintain the landscape setting of Edinburgh (Hague, 2005b). However, for neighbouring authorities, the sense has been that this Edinburgh priority came at the cost of 'leapfrog development' into their own areas (Hague, 2005).

Development plan preparation was particularly difficult prior to planning reform. Preparation to replace the 1986 structure plan started in 1991 but was only approved in 1997 (Hague, 2005b). That plan was replaced by another in 2004. Tellingly, what appeared to improve plan preparation was a relative rush to get plans adopted before the new SESplan regime took effect (Vigar, 2009).

One of the long-term results of the restrictive spatial planning strategy in Edinburgh has been rising land value prices in the City which has increased the viability of brownfield development opportunities. Edinburgh's approach to employment growth was different, however, with the Council at the forefront of developing significant edge of City high-end employment parks particularly on the city's western boundary (Bramley and Kirk, 2005); land that would previously have been greenbelt. Overall, however, this broad strategy resulted in two major, spatially based, public policy problems: a lack of affordable housing pushed families out of the city, and this in turn led to serious regional traffic congestion particularly in and around the City (Hague and Jenkins, 2005). In the mid 2000's, the result in political terms was not simply friction between neighbouring authorities but also fraught relations between Edinburgh and the regional house-building sector. The situation in Edinburgh demonstrates the classic planning dilemmas that growth and the politics of growth throw up in a UK context.

Institutional factors and the role for planning reform

Prior to planning reform, the institutional capabilities and performance of strategic planning in Edinburgh had been looked upon unfavourably (Bramley and Kirk, 2005), particularly when compared with the neighbouring Glasgow region (Bailey and Turok, 2001, Turok et al., 2004). In 2007, just as the reformed planning system was being implemented, Vigar (2009) conducted an Edinburgh and Glasgow based analysis of the existing and future possibilities

for spatial planning in Scotland. This focused on spatial planning and the integration of policy, land use coordination, and the delivery of infrastructure. It shed light on the problems that planning at the strategic scale had already had in Edinburgh, and what spatial planning – as a nebulous concept – might offer through planning reform.

Edinburgh faced several issues in comparison to Glasgow. It was not a definable metropolitan region with the built infrastructure of a such a region. The politics of Edinburgh domination, described above, had soured relations between authorities. At the outset of the creation of the new SDPAs, there was concern that with the addition of Fife and the Borders this would only worsen. There was a lack of ‘soft’ infrastructure in terms of governance capabilities and this was put down to a previous lack of need for policy coordination in Edinburgh which, unlike the west of Scotland, had been less likely to bid for European structural funds. Such a lack of integrated governance was reflected in the Edinburgh and Lothians Structure Plan team lacking permanent staff and having no executive function. Accordingly, as planning reform and the new SDP arrangements approached there was a rush from all constituent authorities to get their own structure plans approved, pre-empting the bind of the future arrangements (Vigar, 2009).

The creation of an SDPA and a new spatial planning approach offered some hope that the fragmented and frictional arrangement could be improved and that this would help tackle the spatially based public policy problems that Edinburgh and its region faced. However, overall, the Vigar (2009) study demonstrated a healthy scepticism from stakeholders that this would be the case.

The 2004 Edinburgh and Lothians Structure Plan had set out a twenty-year vision that was widely agreed to have avoided important questions around Edinburgh’s future growth. However, in the same year, the City Council worked with a group of experts and stakeholders to produce an informal future scenarios report. This set out how Edinburgh might address the issues such as the lack of affordable housing, congestion, continued areas of deprivation, and maximising its knowledge economy in order to improve competitiveness with continental rival city regions (Docherty and McKiernan, 2008). The future best-case scenario presented an ideal of Edinburgh as the best location for quality of life in Northern Europe, a sustainable competitive city with a greater city population of over one million people (Hague and Jenkins, 2005). This emphatic vision, however, was never formalised into a purposeful plan

and its Edinburgh-centric production and focus only served to reignite political frictions with neighbouring authorities.

The focus for this case study is upon the City of Edinburgh and its implementation of Scottish planning reform with a specific focus on the new SDP arrangements. Accordingly, it is worth setting out some further contextual understanding regarding the politics of growth in the City. Hague and Jenkins (2005) draw attention to the role of the conservation lobby in Edinburgh. This owes to its historic status and status as a UNESCO world heritage site. Indeed, there is a history of over 100 years of organised civic involvement in the politics of development through the influential Cockburn Association. Edinburgh has a history of political indecision and community resistance which thwarted some significant (and destructive) plans for post-war era redevelopment of the City (Hague, 2005a). It has a history of scepticism and aversion to the benefits of industry within the City (Madgin and Rodger, 2013), but also a recent history of significant public sector involvement in and success in post-industrial employment-based developments in and on the edge of the City (Kerr, 2005). This complex relation between capital and the Council is considered by Harding (2000) to have developed in the 1990s towards urban production, via political coalition formation and elite consensus building, but with failed attempts to generate strong public-private sector relations and institutions.

Planning reform and the recent development plans studied in this case

The new approach to national and city-region planning offered a possibility that Edinburgh might resolve the City-based tensions that existed surrounding development and perhaps utilising the visioning approach of SPDs reach some kind of compromise with its neighbouring authorities. The new SDPA arrangement represented a creditable increase in resource for strategic planning compared to the previous arrangements. At the time of the formation of SESplan1, there were twelve councillors on the new SDPA committee, with two representing each of the six constituent authorities. The committee chairperson rotated annually between authorities. The core team for SESplan was made up of one manager, one lead officer, and one planner. A project board, including the heads of planning from the constituent local authorities, managed the project team and had responsibilities including agreeing reports to be presented to members. South East Scotland Regional Transport Partnership (SESTRANS) worked alongside the SDPA on regional transport issues, like in

Aberdeen. Also, a system of secondment between planning authorities to the SDPA was in place. Through this, a new arrangement was put in place whereby through equal representation, Edinburgh could no longer dominate the strategic planning agenda. The intention had been to mirror Glasgow Clyde Valley's consensual approach.

However, unlike Aberdeen, which was at the forefront of planning reform, this is an example of strategic spatial planning failing to take hold. SESplan SDP was approved in 2013, a year late and, crucially, without breaking down its housing allocations to local authority levels. This had to wait for Scottish Government intervention, and an increased housing requirement was eventually approved with specific local authority allocations in a Supplementary Planning Guidance document, a year later, in 2014. The Scottish Government commissioned a review of Strategic Development Plans in 2013 (Kevin Murray Associates & University of Glasgow, 2014). Given the politically delicate nature of the plan-making process at the time, that review took a cautious approach to analysing the SESplan experience. This thesis takes that aspect further, providing an analysis of the politics of growth in this growth-pressured City region. At the Local Development Plan level the case study focuses on Edinburgh's LDP2. This was the first LDP to have to implement the SESplan SDP (2013), as the previous plan implemented the existing Structure Plan 2004 produced under the pre-reform system. After an arduous process, the Edinburgh LDP2 was eventually adopted in 2016. In the thesis, this will be referred to as the Edinburgh LDP (2016). By comparing Edinburgh and Aberdeen, a picture emerges of what planning represents in Scotland and how this compares to the argument that planning in England is 'post-political neoliberal spatial governance'.

CHAPTER 6: Rolling out growth?

Understanding the importance of context and putting Scotland's planning system in its place.

Introduction

This chapter begins to respond to research question one by examining the extent to which spatial planning in Scotland could be described as a 'post-political' process focussed on delivering growth for narrow interests at the expense of the public interest. This is a broad summary of the argument that planning academics (such as Haughton and Allmendinger, 2015) critical of incarnations of the English planning system, from New Labour to the current Conservative government, have made. Planning is seen to have been residualised, and what remains of it appears to have value only if it supports the market and economic growth. In comparison, Scotland's planning system seems to retain the support of government. However, Scotland's current planning system, instigated in 2016, has made it clear that there is still a need to forge a system that is 'fit for purpose'; with a subtext that planning is failing to meet its objective of delivering 'sustainable economic growth'.

As previously discussed in chapters 2-3, Scotland's planning system has diverged significantly from that of England. Yet as a system, by design and in its operation, it still retains a strong resemblance to the English 'spatial planning' system of New Labour (2004-2010), which was criticised as representing a form of 'neoliberal spatial governance' (Allmendinger, 2016). The extent to which the critique of Scottish planning as neoliberal spatial governance, with the implication that this means growth is pursued as a priority and policy is dominated by business interests, is important to understand and is opened up in this chapter.

In chapter 2, Scotland's current political-economic context has been described as broadly similar to that of the rest of the UK. The result of this, according to Law and Mooney (2012),

is a “competitive nationalism, enacting neoliberal policies”. Chapter 2 also discussed some of the difficulties and limitations in branding planning as ‘neoliberal’, particularly in the devolved Scottish context. This is the first of the chapters that analyse the meaning of the term in a Scottish planning context.

Similarly, the critique that planning is not democratic, that the politics of difficult decisions are pushed aside in the name of achieving ‘growth’ for narrow, primarily business, interests, is very complex. This chapter studies two city-regions where a constrained housing land supply has been considered a constraint on growth. These are not the conditions which one would expect as the outcome of a system of decades of pro-growth neoliberal spatial governance. To understand this, this chapter presents and analyses the research findings from Aberdeen and Edinburgh City-Regions to establish the impact of planning. This analyses the way actors operate within the system to deal with major public policy concerns such as growth, housing and the environment. It will reveal the relevance of this critical literature on planning and help towards providing an understanding of contemporary Scottish planning and what it represents as a form of spatial governance in practice.

This chapter deals with the process of planning for growth in the two cases. It first problematizes the idea of ‘growth agendas’ as a term, particularly in a context of ‘housing crisis’ in each case study. It then spends the remainder of the section dealing with the process of planning and why in each case the same state structure - Scotland’s planning system - was operated by planning actors to arrive at very different ends. It does this by focussing on four key factors, that were arrived at through the data coding process discussed in chapter 4 (see p129). These help frame how growth strategies were formulated by developing an understanding of:

- 1) The meaning of ‘planning for growth’;
- 2) The technical rationales for planning strategies;
- 3) The importance of new governance arrangements in terms of planning for growth;
- 4) The importance of Scottish planning reform: the new system and its interpretation.

Understanding growth and the planning system

Are these growth agendas?

In Scotland, the right to develop land was effectively nationalised in 1947. Since then Government has required planning authorities to keep plans up to date and ensure that enough land is allocated to meet housing need and demand (Scottish Government, 2014). In both case studies, development plans had at times failed to do this. Irregularly updated and seemingly ineffective plans were important drivers for the planning reforms of the mid 2000s (Peel and Lloyd, 2006). While centred on democracy and planning, this thesis is undertaken with a specific analysis of the ‘wicked problem’ (Adams, 2011) of planning for housing development, particularly housing in growth pressured areas. Chapter 2 demonstrated that the factors that underlie Scotland’s latest housing crisis are complex; these are explored in this thesis from a planning perspective. In both areas, planning is framed by some as a systematic cause of housing affordability in growth pressured areas, and yet as a state structure it is employed as a solution to this same problem. This section of the chapter is important in setting the scene for the remainder of the thesis because it tackles the idea that ‘growth agendas’ were present or absent in either case. It problematizes the term ‘growth agenda’ and therefore the charge that ‘neoliberal spatial governance’ is about ‘delivering growth.’

In Aberdeen, the region’s ambitious growth strategy was formulated through the Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan (2009). This aimed to achieve a high growth forecast of 10% population growth by 2030 to 480,000 with a longer-term target to grow to 500,000. The figure of 500,000 was picked, without robust evidence it appears, as a tipping point upon which a resilient city-regional economy could thrive in future. This was to be achieved not just via natural population growth but by attracting population through in-migration with the wider objective of “allowing the economy of the area to fulfil its potential” (Structure Plan 2009, 17). However, this was within a context of decades of fluctuating economic growth as well as what business interests and others perceived as decades of planning constraint in the region. For a cross-section of participants, the Aberdeen ‘growth strategy’ was as much about making up for previous forecasting difficulties, politically driven growth restraint, and slow plan-making as it was about a setting out a brave new ambition.

Every current and former planning officer interviewed considered the region's Structure Plan (2009) growth strategy to be one that was attempting to resolve past problems of development plans which had under-estimated growth. One former head of planning considered that the growth strategy was also reflective of a 'pro-growth' stance that had enveloped planning in Scotland but one which was perhaps based upon discourse rather than substantive change. This idea fits with the 'competitive nationalism' of Law and Mooney (2012) where devolved, SNP-governed Scotland now needs to be seen to be 'open for business' and at least as positive about growth as the rest of the UK.

You've got to think about growth. I mean 10 years ago plans were all about constraints, greenbelts. But we rephrase the terminology. Now it's growth. We used to say we will restrict the growth to 5000 houses, now we say we'll grow by 5000 houses. But it's the same thing. This happened over the course of one or two planning cycles across Scotland, everyone realised 'hey hang on we should be planning for growth' and it was as much because we were competing with the neighbours to see growth happen." (Interview 17, Planning Consultant, former Head of Planning, 2015)

A former Green Councillor in Aberdeenshire saw this changing attitude to growth as emanating more recently from a more centralised SNP Government: "We have to 'go for growth', and up here there was this thinking that the population will just appear'. The fact is all other Scottish councils seem to be doing the same" (Interview 5, former Councillor Aberdeenshire, 2013). However, as the Edinburgh case study reveals, if it existed, this pro-growth attitude did not in fact appear to stretch to Scotland's capital city region. At a Scottish level, it appears there had been at least a change in the discourse that surrounded growth, yet Aberdeen and Edinburgh exemplified very different interpretations of this.

Growth and up to date plans

Through planning reform, Scotland's planning authorities have committed themselves to producing faster and more up to date development plans. In the mid-2000s, plans in both regions were to varying degrees out of date. This was viewed as a problem by developers as well as planners and councillors. In the Aberdeen city-region, failing to maintain a regular updated suite of plans opened the risk that a restricted housing land supply in the near future

would put developers in a stronger position of power. This is because the two Councils would face pressure to maintain a supply of effective housing land to meet housing need and so developers would be able to argue for non-allocated land to be developed. The development plan-making process under the pre-2006 system took longer and was more legalistic with drawn-out Public Inquiry into plans. This, combined with the volatile political nature of estimating housing needs in the region, meant that by the time local plans were adopted in both Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City in the mid-2000s, they were partly out of date and having to rely on their 'future phases' of land allocations.

One councillor reflected on the Aberdeenshire Local Plan (2006): "We'd adopted a plan. But it was ridiculous; there was an explicit failure in the development plan because we had to stick to the NEST⁴ (2002) figures and so we were never really leading the debate in our area. We were just following circumstances from the start" (Interview 5, former Councillor Aberdeenshire, 2013). In the City, the Aberdeen Local Plan adopted in 2008 was its first adopted local plan since 1991. An attempt by senior officers to allocate above the pessimistic NEST (2001) Structure Plan requirement led to delays and threats of legal challenge. Sites for these new allocations had been earmarked in the greenbelt but not allocated. These threats came from communities who lived nearby and from developers and land owners promoting land elsewhere in and around the City and who were likely to lose out. According to participants from across the spectrum, a perceived rigid statutory plan-making process, and a lack of political consensus led to a break down in the plan-making process.

By the time the Aberdeen Local Plan (2008) was adopted, a commonly held view had emerged between officers, developers and a new political administration (discussed later in this chapter) that a more ambitious plan was required in the City. This was summed up by a plan manager in the City, "All that work, and we had only eight hundred new houses, which was just nonsense. We always had it in mind that in future we would need to do something a lot different, a lot more radical" (Interview 13. Aberdeen City LPA, 2015).

A development plan manager (Interview 14, ACS SDPA, 2015) reflected on the sustainable and democratic case for the ambitious growth agenda which did emerge:

⁴ North East Scotland Together (2002). The Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire Structure Plan which had been formulated and forecasted in a period of low expected growth rates and which was to cover the period 2001-2016.

We were trying to argue that the vision for growth was the sustainable vision and that it was the ‘no growth’ or ‘growth out of the city’ that was the unsustainable option. And particularly the fact that the councillors and locals were well aware of the constant battles there’d been, the constant appeals about housing land supply and feeling under threat sporadically about the wishes of housebuilders. Well there was a kind of collective desire of ‘well can we sort this so we have control over our destiny’ rather than handing that to the Scottish Government and Reporters in Edinburgh. This was seen to be a more positive position to be in rather than potentially arbitrary decisions being made by others about the growth of the city region.

The situation in Aberdeen reveals the importance of first considering the meaning of an ‘ambitious growth strategy’ in practice within the historical context of planning in any place. The Aberdeen view was that Scotland’s system had moved towards a greater push for growth. So, the region was well placed to comply with, and even pioneer this, in the ‘culture change’ spirit of reform. Edinburgh city-region, however, offers an important counter-perspective to this.

Over the course of recent development plan cycles in the 1990s and 2000s, Edinburgh and its immediate neighbouring authorities have relied on a bargaining process which largely involved the city pushing housing growth outwards (Vigar, 2009). But, by working in a new larger city-region, planning reform was seen to potentially offer a more collaborative way of working towards a spatial vision that could deal with the fraught local politics of growth in the region (Vigar, 2009). Yet the optimism around planning which Vigar (2009) sensed in the mid-2000s clearly did not bear out. This chapter and the next explore why this was the case. SESplan was a new authority applying a new system but dealing with the same fundamentals and the same politics of growth which had simmered without resolution for decades. Developers witnessing what was happening in Aberdeen had hoped the creation of SESplan would mean planning reform might lead a new pro-growth approach; however, this proved far from the case.

SESplan (2013: 2) makes strong statements about growth; it states a vision of creating a “healthier, more sustainable” city region. It describes the region as “the main growth area and the key driver of the Scottish economy. At its heart is Edinburgh, a leading European city

which is the hub of the regional and national economy”. Yet, this vision aside, SESplan was described by the current SDPA Manager (Interview 21: Edinburgh, 2015) as not really a strategy in its own right. Rather it was “a knitting together of existing structure plans which had recently been adopted”. It is important to recognise that the SESplan process (2009-2014)⁵ took place in the midst of the Global Financial Crisis (GFC). To a great extent Aberdeen’s regional economy escaped the GFC, emerging by 2009 relatively unscathed. This is because its economy operates in something of a local bubble, conditioned by fluctuating global oil prices. In SESplan, constituent authorities considered they had sound and up-to-date structure plans in place, with local plans containing generous housing allocations; which in any case the depressed regional housing market appeared unable to deliver. According to the same development plan manager, with these circumstances and the local politics of growth well-known, “local authority officers I was working with were critical about how aspirational the city region’s strategy for the plan could therefore be”.

SESplan contained much of the pro-growth discourse associated with planning reform. Yet, as this thesis discusses, eventually central government had to intervene and forcefully set higher housing growth targets than local authorities had been willing to accept. A ‘knitted together’ plan based on existing circumstances was seemingly not fit for purpose or ambitious enough for the Scottish Government. So, while spatial planning in South East Scotland may not have locally implied a post-political process focused on delivering economic growth, the intervention of central government at least meant that neither was it to be about limiting growth in order to satisfy local political sensitivities.

At this point, what is clear is that the two case studies offer very different contexts for establishing the relevance of the critique that planning represents growth focussed neoliberal spatial governance. The Aberdeen growth agenda should be viewed in a context of past failure to meet growth needs, in part due to the planning system. There was also a sense of taking ownership over the need for growth and thus (symbolically) disempowering the development industry and the Scottish Government. Edinburgh’s approach was not pro-growth. Instead the level of growth needed was disputed and the consequences of this

⁵ This period 2019-2014 includes the time taken to adopt ‘SESplan SDP Supplementary Guidance on Housing Land’ (SESplan SDP, 2014) which supplemented the SESplan SDP(2013). This Supplementary Guidance was imposed by the Scottish Government through the SESplan SDP (2013) Examination which found that housing forecasts and requirements were too low and the allocation of housing was not specific enough. The Supplementary Guidance had to allocate housing specifically to the Local Authority level.

‘deferred’ (Allmendinger, 2016) to subsequent local plan processes. It appeared to be a politically antagonistic process and because of this it was viewed as problematic by central government. They effectively ‘called-in’ the Plan through its Examination and set the required growth rate for the Councils. This demonstrates the way in which the Scottish Government maintained a strong policing influence on city-regional plans.

Understanding the technical rationales for planning strategies.

Population forecasts and the need for growth

This section of the chapter traces the key technical rationales presented by interviewees in explaining Aberdeen’s growth strategy and Edinburgh’s difficulty in gaining a consensus on growth. Strategic development plans in Scotland are required to respond to central government population forecasts as one crucial element in determining the level of housing required in city-regions. In Aberdeen, officers used population forecasts to present a case for growth, whereas in Edinburgh population forecasts and their interpretation were a point of dispute that would set the tone for a highly political planning process.

In Aberdeen, by the mid-2000s, a dispersed settlement pattern of North American style suburbanisation had developed in the region (Hague, 2005; Gelan et al., 2008). Aberdeen is often perceived as a growing city, thanks largely to its reputation as an ‘oil rich’ city. However, officers revealed that fears over the City’s declining population were significant in providing a technical argument that the City needed to radically change and grow. This can be traced back to a series of stark Scottish Government population forecasts in the early 2000’s. Having experienced significant growth from the 1970’s until the mid-1990s, the population of the City actually fell from 219,880 in 1995 to 205,710 in 2004. So, in the late 1990s and early 2000s, Aberdeen’s population was decreasing and an important factor behind this was retention and in-migration of small households and a loss of young families to commutable areas in Aberdeenshire, which was experiencing significant population growth in the period. This was explicitly planned for because the region’s structure plan (NEST, 2001) had been focusing growth on the Aberdeenshire section of the Aberdeen housing market area. New housing in the City was essentially being directed to the City’s relatively few brownfield sites. This was a reaction to local political sensitivities around the greenbelt

and a rigid interpretation of national planning guidance. In 2005, the then Scottish Executive (now the Scottish Government) projected that in the period 2004-2024 the population of Aberdeen was likely to fall by 22% from 205,000 to 160,500 (GROS Scotland, 2005). This came against a national picture of expected population growth and Aberdeen's was the largest projected proportional fall for any local authority in Scotland.

The late 1990s and early 2000's were a period where Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire had been suffering from a downturn in North Sea oil activity. It was still performing relatively well economically; even with this downturn the City's unemployment figures were well below the national average. However, planning officers and politicians who were interviewed considered that in that period there was a sense that with a falling population, and a relative loss of high band council tax payers to the Shire, the City had failed to maximise on the opportunities of North Sea oil in previous decades. By the mid-2000s, as the region's oil economy again recovered, the idea that there was a need to capitalise on oil and gas related growth in the City began to dominate.

One officer described how planners presented a bleak picture to some sceptical Councillors which convinced them of the need to take more growth within the Aberdeen City boundary: "We extrapolated not too far into future where the population of Dundee exceeded Aberdeen and that actually turned out to be quite a persuasive argument, Aberdeen becoming Scotland's fourth city, which you can imagine wasn't particularly attractive to politicians" (Interview 14, ACS-SDPA, 2015). Aberdeen City and Shire do supplement Government population forecasts with their own research. However, in analysing the GROS figures (GROS Scotland, 2005), I found it difficult to find evidence that this 'smaller than Dundee' scenario would have occurred, not least because Dundee's already much lower population was also set to decline. This was one example where officers were effectively building a technical case for significant growth in Aberdeen and trying to bring on-board any remaining sceptical councillors. Officers were demonstrating their influence and presenting this as the professional common-sense case. This is not to argue that refocusing growth on Aberdeen was not a more sustainable option, but the scale of the problem and the type of solution required were views that matched those of the development industry and business interests. This thesis, particularly chapter 8, analyses the way in which that lobby gained power within the governance network of Aberdeen city-region.

Another potential misconception of the last 30 years is that of Aberdeen as the ‘oil rich’ city. While average local salaries have certainly risen well above Scottish averages due to the impact of the oil and gas sector, local public finances of the region did not reflect this. Aberdeen City Council (ACC) had been seriously over-spending from 2005-2008, leaving it in a precarious position. In 2008 it was eventually subject to Scottish Government audit (Accounts Commission, 2008), which severely criticised the Council’s financial management. This meant that well before the impact of the UK’s nationwide public sector austerity there was a local context of severe service cuts, and a Scottish Government imposed restructure of the Council. This was, essentially, a centralised technocratic intervention on the City Council. This sense of crisis in the City contrasted with greater stability in the Shire. This crisis made the need for growth easier to sell to citizens of the City, even those living near the greenbelt.

Aberdeen City Council is often quoted locally as Scotland’s ‘worst funded authority per head’. This is borne out by Scottish Government statistics in terms of ‘Net Revenue Expenditure on Services per Capita’ but does not account for capital spending on infrastructure projects in the city and region (National Statistics, 2016). Councillors interviewed in Aberdeen conveyed this sense that Aberdeen loses out to Scotland in terms of revenue generated by local industry and labour for the Scottish and UK governments compared to revenue eventually received back in spending settlements. This widely-held and discernible perception turned out to be quite useful in galvanizing public and private sector solidarity in the region, by engendering a sense of grievance and thus having to ‘get things done ourselves’.

Planning and public finances were a problem in this sense. Aberdeenshire was seen to be thriving while the City suffered from population loss as families (portrayed as wealthy tax payers) were pushed out to Aberdeenshire because of a lack of new housing in the City. One senior officer presented this as a key argument for developing the city’s greenbelt and one senior councillor presented it as a reason for Aberdeen City Council’s financial problems. However, both rationales could be disputed and this is important in understanding how ideas gain momentum in planning processes. The City’s higher tax band housing stock would have remained constant in this time; it would not have disappeared. Equally, there was a view from some Aberdeenshire Councillors that the very same planning strategy had actually burdened the Shire with high cost infrastructure and services that are required to service communities.

This view has some merit; according to this perspective, Aberdeen was taking the jobs while the infrastructure to serve the labour force, such as new schools, were being paid for by the Shire.

In terms of linking suburbanisation and the city's financial problems, both Audit Scotland Accounts Commission reports (2008 and 2015) make no mention of a loss of population and council tax-base as a factor. In fact, by 2015, after severe restructuring and cuts to services, the Council was considered to have made significant progress in dealing with overspending. Yet in this period no significant change in the region's settlement strategy could feasibly have had time to take effect. Any recovery could not have been a result of the return of, or the growth of, wealthy tax payers.

The issue of tax bases and growth are quite American constructs and are the kind of arguments used to form and defend growth coalitions (Molotch and Logan, 1987). Yet Harding (2000) finds that such a perspective is not as relevant in the centralised fiscal structures of UK local government and suggests they should be used cautiously, even if they provide quite attractive explanations for political behaviour in UK contexts. The Aberdeen study reveals that officers explicitly supported a story of city decline but as a situation that planning could turn around. Many councillors must have been happy to link this to the Council's financial problems and would in turn have treated planning as a potential solution. However, as this was going on, the region's development industry and business lobby were supporting a similar story. What is clear at this stage, and will be analysed in the next chapters, is that while not exactly a 'regime', clearly the urban politics of production were influential and this was directed by what Harding (2000) identifies, in the UK context, as coalition formation and elite-consensus building.

So, by the mid 2000's central and local forecasts projected that the region's population was set to grow, but that the City's might still decline without planning intervention. The local economy was quickly recovering from a less severe localised (oil price-led) recession than had expected in the late 1990s. There was a growing consensus that future growth was needed and particularly that more of it should take place within Aberdeen City. Furthermore, there was growing movement to ambitiously plan for 'high growth' in the region. Officers, the development industry, and pro-growth councillors were developing this idea around an ambitious growth strategy.

In Edinburgh, household forecasting was to have a very different effect and it is worth discussing this here. As per Scottish planning guidance, the South-East Scotland (SESplan) housing supply target was a policy decision based on a technical Housing Need and Demand Assessment (HNDA). SESplan's HNDA took far longer to produce than had been expected, and this delayed the process of the subsequent SESplan SDP and local plans. While there were issues associated with dealing with a new combined authority and a new variation of assessment via HNDA, interviewees described the real problem as one of gaining consensus between authorities first and then ultimately between planners and the development industry:

Edinburgh City Council still effectively had a very, very significant control over the SESplan policy board, over that group. And so when Edinburgh decided that they were not going to zone land in the greenbelt, et cetera, it put the others in a very difficult position. (Interview, 22: Planning Consultant, Edinburgh, 2015)

SESplan chose to adopt a more conservative housing target than household forecasts in their HNDA stated were required. The authority's rationale for interpreting the evidence this way was that based on past completions, and accounting for the impact of the GFC on the local housing market, the figures being suggested by the HNDA were unachievable: "there were strong views that there was already so much land in the system which was not being developed, and councillors were very resistant to anything which was going to suggest putting more land into the system" (Interview 21, SESplan, 2015). Development industry interests took issue with this and essentially called for new housing sites to be allocated along with any dormant sites. That stance reflects a long running debate between developers and authorities over the effectiveness of housing allocations and what to do about land that is 'constrained' by market conditions (Adams, 2011). One interviewee with a history of representing the housebuilding industry reflected on this and the wider issue of how SESplan interpreted the HNDA's population forecasts:

You get planners, politicians and the public saying where's all this growth coming from? That can't possibly be right, no, no, that's not right. On no particular evidence, you know. Why have we just spent nine months producing all this information with them when somebody can just turn round and say, 'oh actually I don't believe that, that's nonsense' (Interview 30: Planning Consultant, Edinburgh/Aberdeen, 2015).

Here the clash between the science and art of planning was clear. From the housebuilder perspective, this was an opportunity to set out the case for far greater housing allocations through a technical process. From the planning authority perspective, the housing target and its location were political decisions and the technical ‘case’ presented by the housebuilding sector was subject to its own inherent bias. The assessment was described as “quasi-scientific” and using a “completely disproportionate amount of time and resources” with the result that “not nearly enough time and effort going into the quality of the places that are eventually created by planning” (Interview 21, SESplan, 2015). The HNDA was interpreted as being only a technical basis from which strategic decisions could be made. Rather than utilising managerialism and technocracy to displace the politics of growth (Allmendinger, 2016), SESplan in a sense presented population forecasts as unashamedly political in nature from the beginning.

Development industry perspectives on HNDAs have been similarly dismissive of the time and resources dedicated towards such assessments. My research confirmed such a perspective. However, the perceived solution to this was more straightforward: to be more generous in housing targets and to direct a greater proportion of allocations not to regeneration areas or complex sites, but to the easiest to develop and highest demand greenbelts locations of Aberdeen and Edinburgh. Such an argument has been reflected in recent work by Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners (2015), which finds that 28% of housing allocations in the SESplan area are in what they define as the ‘weakest market areas’, which are unlikely to be delivered. Planners would frame regeneration as a strategy of intervention required to maximise the public good of development. Developers would take the view that maximising housebuilding completions are a quicker way to resolve regional housing problems.

In Aberdeen, that argument was won by developers but this was only possible because officers agreed with this and presented technical arguments to win over any sceptical councillors and communities. Because the region’s Structure Plan (2009) was something of a hybrid falling between two periods of reform, its HNDA was signed-off in draft form as ‘credible and robust’ by the Scottish Government. The high growth figures it contained were deemed suitable, based on the collaborative work that had gone into it with the expectation that further detail could be dealt with later in subsequent local development plans. The development industry and senior officers were effectively speaking with one voice on the

issue of the consequences of continuing to limit the scale of development in the city boundary, the scale of housing target required and the best place for housing to be allocated. The way in which this unity developed will be explored in this and the next chapters. In Edinburgh, a more conflictual process took place and this is one that is more common in the UK context. There, the planning authority responded to local concerns over the scale of the loss of greenbelt, and the reality of a post-GFC housing delivery that relied on a seemingly broken market model. After eventually agreeing a position, the new combined authority argued that forecasts were only the basis of planning decisions and simply following growth forecasts did not constitute planning. The Scottish Government's verdict put a stronger weight on the requirement to meet housing need and demand and imposed a higher and more spatially specific housing requirement.

Economic cases for growth

The second key technical rationale that needs to be understood from actors' perspectives is the economic factors that drove each spatial strategy. Aberdeen used planning policy as a means to set out to achieve an ambitious growth strategy, while SESplan's vision was less clear. However, as this thesis has established, these two regions have been identified as drivers of Scotland's growth. This section first analyses Aberdeen and its subsequent experience in dealing with fluctuating economic conditions then considers Edinburgh's apparent aversion to an ambitious growth strategy.

Aberdeen's Structure Plan (2009) and the Economic Action Plan (ACSEF, 2008) were clear in their recognition of the maturity of the region's oil industry and the need to prepare for a post-oil economy. The growth strategy was explicitly based on an optimistic 'high growth' forecast with an aim to reach a population of 500,000 by 2035. For the region, this target was described as "critical to securing its future prosperity and realising its potential" (ASDPA, 2013). The 500,000 figure happens to be that which meets Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and European Union Eurostat definition of a 'metropolitan area' in terms of 'functional economic units' (OECD, 2013). Population growth as a strategy was based on the precarious nature of the region's oil-based economy. A bigger population, it was reasoned, would make the area more attractive to international businesses by enabling them to 'anchor' in the region (ACSEF, 2008).

The process of collaborative spatial strategy-making is key to understanding why this strategy took shape. This important aspect is covered further later in this chapter and in chapter 8. The population target appears to have emerged through the region's increasingly closely knit public sector economic development departments and private sectors which were collaborating on regional development strategy making. The region's public-private partnership for economic development set out what it expected future development plans and development management would achieve: "Availability and access to land for expansion is critical in a growing economy as is a pro-development approach to planning with a streamlined, fast, and efficient decision making process" (ACSEF, 2008, 15). Planners actively encouraged this thinking. Interviews revealed that planners had grown weary of battling with the development industry after years of dealing with land supply shortage – which was a consequence of pessimistic strategies of the past. This had led to closer cooperation between planners and the development industry, and planners becoming convinced of the need to be far more generous in terms of land supply. Higher growth suited the professional sectors as well as pro-growth councillors. The remaining task was to convince any sceptical politicians and communities of the benefits of growth.

Painting a picture of the future without change was fundamental. To try and convince people that no change wasn't an option and that's really around the decline of the City and probably the consequential decline of the city-region and that's probably where we were helped by having – how could I put it – an unstable primary job source where you could say 'well if we don't make this an attractive place to locate they'll go somewhere else' and you were putting forward a position where its competing against Stavanger, Calgary, Perth you weren't competing against Glasgow and Edinburgh. We were just getting that different mind-set of 'do we want the jobs here?' and what would be the consequences of not having the jobs here? (Interview 14, ACS-SDPA, 2015)

The public and private sector had forged closer working relationships with the aim of making the region an internationally competitive place to live and work. This ideal fits with the New Conventional Wisdom (Gordon and Buck, 2005) discussed in chapter 2, where cities have become seen as essential to international competitiveness, cohesion, responsive governance and possibly environmental sustainability, and these values mutually reinforce, rather than compete against each other. It also fit the requirements of the Scottish Government for closer collaboration between sectors as well as stronger economic growth in the Aberdeen City-

Region. In the interview above, the planner's perspective was not borne out of some sort of insatiable appetite for growth, rather a real belief that previous attitudes to growth had put the City-Region in a precarious position. The sense of Aberdeen's relational geography also comes through here; as a city locked into the global oil and gas supply chain, rather than a regional Scottish city. This relational perspective is one that is commonly presented in the city-region's planning and economic development documents.

In Edinburgh, SESplan represented a very different reaction to its region's own economic imperatives and these are discussed in the remainder of this section. While SESplan describes the Edinburgh City Region's status as "the main growth area and the key driver of the Scottish economy" (SESplan, 2013), it realistically represented a political compromise between development interests, communities and politicians on an acceptable, tempered, level of growth. Compared to the Aberdeen case, what was absent was a strong and coherent case from business interests on the economic vision for the region.

The first thing to clarify is that SESplan is not anti-growth; it clearly promotes economic development as a key objective. This is not unusual: planning authorities and local government have little history of opposing economic growth per se and the idea of creating jobs is still a vote winner. This is why equating growth focused plans with 'neoliberalism' is complex and tenuous. Rather, SESplan struggled with the intrinsically linked issue of housing growth and infrastructure delivery, and it lacked a strategic vision with a clear spatial expression of specific allocations. The following quote encapsulates the classic issue faced when considering Edinburgh's economic future:

These issues have been raised time and time and time again, you know. That balance between conserving what's good about Edinburgh, which we all recognise, and understanding that is, along with Aberdeen, where the action is economically in Scotland, and you have to accommodate...if you're going to deliver the Government's economic strategy, then Edinburgh has to deliver it, in large part. So you have to accommodate the implications of that, and the implications of that are people and movement and housing and employment (Interview 30: planning consultant, Edinburgh)

Development planning in Edinburgh faces the task of nurturing the economy of a medium sized capital city with World Heritage status, four universities, a well-grounded administrative and knowledge economy, and an enviable reputation for its generally high quality of life. Managing this inheritance helps explain why the City has tended to avoid epochal moments that require dramatic planning solutions. Public-private partnership is not as local and integrated as Aberdeen's. Other sections of the chapter and chapter 8 of the thesis will develop this, but it is important to note that on the surface there is less of a boosterist public-private partnership operating like ACSEF (Aberdeen City and Shire Economic Future) has in Aberdeen. Had there been, SESplan and subsequent local development plans would likely have been less conflictual and faster to prepare. SESplan faced a similar issue to Aberdeen, that of effectively housing a growing population and expanding businesses in order to encourage further economic growth. But Edinburgh as a city faces the more complex task of ensuring that this does not 'kill the golden goose', as some participants put it, degrading the urban characteristics that pull businesses to the City in the first place. For many participants, it was this balancing that is the essence of planning strategically; it is not simply anti-growth. The following quotes sum this up:

There's been a failure to appreciate that the wealth of Edinburgh is inextricably bound up with its heritage. You still see people talk about development or heritage? Making money or looking at history? Tourism or business? And, you know, that's completely daft because Edinburgh is attractive to corporations because of its history and the built environment. [...] James Crosbie at HBOS has told me this, his clients they come into the building and into the great hall. They look out the window and they see the new town laid out below them and that's the context for them signing or not signing'. That's the context, our heritage is our wealth (Interview 37: Architect-Urbanist, Scotland, 2016).

The GFC had been expected to severely impact Edinburgh's sizeable financial services sector and this, along with turmoil in the housebuilding industry, dominated the agenda at the time of the formation of SESplan. Partly because of the Scottish bank nationalisations in 2008, the impact of the GFC on Edinburgh's economy was less extreme than had been envisaged. However, at an unusually critical juncture in Edinburgh's historical economic context, SESplan had offered an opportunity to rethink the role for planning in Edinburgh's wider economic strategy. The chosen path of 'stitching together of existing plans' means the City is

now struggling to deal with land use implications of what are now more favourable economic circumstances. The land-use issue that has emerged from it is wrapped up with the way the City deals with the politics of the expansion and intensification of land-use for differing economic purposes as well as housing land. One interviewee, who represents Edinburgh's public-private economic development partnership, described the impact of a rejuvenated financial sector and a burgeoning tech-sector in a City where planning had done little to anticipate or to attempt to deal with such growth. Like in Aberdeen, housing shortages and labour supply were intrinsically linked as economic issues, and so planning was seen as not dealing with 'sustainable economic growth':

We need high grade offices for these people in the city centre, the new tech-companies the staff want to walk and cycle to work, pop out at lunch and meet friends, but you'll always be beaten by serviced apartments, residential or hotels. I've told the councillors we have a real employment issue here, but they don't know how to deal with it. I mean to be fair to them they have a real shortage of housing but that's because of political issues they already know about, the ⁶Reporters have been telling them there isn't enough housing land in their plans (Interview 42, Edinburgh public-private economic development partnership, 2016).

Both case studies point to the difficulty of spatial planning dealing with the complexity of global economies. While talking the language of international competitiveness and projecting a common purpose based on economic growth, each case presented very clear differences of how that might form into a spatial strategy. Aberdeen's strategy of civic boosterism brought planning briefly into an important but confined role of growth facilitation, but this has eventually met the reality of a global oil price crash (discussed later in the chapter). Edinburgh's inability to overcome the local politics of growth has meant it has possibly missed an opportunity for planning to demonstrate what it can achieve in nurturing sustainable liveable city-regional environments.

Keeping City-Regions moving

Transport infrastructure is a key rationale helping to explain why Aberdeen City was considered capable of opening up for growth while in Edinburgh transport was seen as

⁶ Referring to the ongoing Edinburgh Local Development Plan Examination underway at the time

holding back an 'ideal type' of development strategy. As discussed in later chapters, the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route (AWPR), a long-planned bypass around the City costing at least £750m, became integral to selling the idea of an expanding city-region. The argument planners and developers could make to residents was that with the AWPR 'finally agreed' in the mid 2000s they would not have to suffer the congestion that had previously been associated with development in the region. Planning officers I interviewed considered that the AWPR was very important in appeasing anti-development sentiment in Aberdeen which for decades had been dominated by concerns not around 'growth' but around road traffic in the Aberdeen area. The irony is that these public concerns could legitimately be seen as the consequence of previous suburbanised and decanted settlement strategy which previous plans had encouraged.

The process surrounding the evolution of the AWPR as an idea which eventually came to fruition is intrinsically linked to aspects of greenbelt development and wider considerations of political power in the region which are discussed in the next chapters. At this point it is important to note that there was a specific organised resistance to the road route via a group called RoadSense, led by a local academic William Walton, and there was a localised campaign under the guise of 'Aberdeen Greenbelt Alliance'. However, much more powerful was widespread public support for the road (beyond the immediate locality of its construction) and very significant local media, political and business support. The growth strategy was based on lifting a constraint that would open up the region to the rest of the country and reduce commuting times for residents and costs for business:

I think before 2009 it was probably, people in Aberdeen were probably a bit anti-development, but a bit of that was 'we really don't have the infrastructure'. The AWPR made a huge difference to peoples' willingness to accept development. Even I was thinking, shit, if we don't get the AWPR, you know, if William wins his court case, then actually we are going to have to rethink our entire development strategy. So there was a lot hanging on that (Interview 35: former Head of Planning Aberdeen).

The AWPR was a key political and economic struggle which preceded the growth strategy. The region was seen to have finally won something from the UK and Scottish Governments. Technically, the growth strategy was significantly reliant on the AWPR to open up development sites, and politically it was required to appease opposition who feared further

traffic gridlock in the Aberdeen area. Both councils signed up to an agreement to part fund a portion of this Private Finance Initiative funded, Scottish trunk route project. Such contributions are unusual in the Scottish funding context and demonstrates the importance placed by officers, politicians and businesses on the project to the overall economic fortunes of the region.

While in Aberdeen the eventual agreement to a major transport project provided an important rationale for a growth strategy, in Edinburgh the failure of a transport project is important in understanding its approach to growth. The story of the Edinburgh Tram project and planning for growth in Edinburgh are intrinsically linked and encapsulate the politics of growth and the difficulties in delivering major projects through public-private partnership and finance. The only partially completed tram project began operating three years late, £375m over budget, and is now subject to a Public Inquiry which will investigate the project's failures. For this thesis, what is important to understand are the land-use implications that the tram project at one time promised and the constraints that its only-partial realisation now imply.

The tram route was supposed to link Edinburgh airport with the city centre, then run north to Leith and around the docklands before looping back to the west of Edinburgh. This was integral to linking the Leith docks with the City, helping to enable development viability for the most significant brownfield land opportunity in the region where at one point up to 20,000 housing units were being proposed. In the end, the tram only linked the airport to the city and Edinburgh has been left with a tram line rather than a network. More specifically, the waterfront regeneration area has been left without any tram link. What was clear from the research was that the mid to late 2000's was a period when the city was embarking on a new approach to place-making based around more Northern European place-making principles. This had not resolved the housing issue but a big part of it was about improving public transportation which could lead to a more compact sustainable city. However, this was effectively killed off with the emergence of problems with the tram project and the inter-related impact of the GFC on regional property conditions.

There had been strong scepticism about the cost of the tram project in Edinburgh when the idea was being floated. But if it had been developed as planned and improved the viability of the waterfront, such a strategy would likely have been largely palatable to citizens across the City – as has been the experience in other cities like Dublin. The GFC might have killed off

the ideal waterfront masterplan for the Leith and Granton Docks on its own. However, the stunted tram project has definitely decreased the development viability of regeneration in the area and this has meant the need to look for far more development land on greenfield sites on the fringes of the City. In turn, this has significantly increased public aversion to growth from suburban communities in the City and its surrounding authorities. The major land use implication of this has been to alter the terms of the brownfield versus greenfield debate; this is investigated in depth in the next chapter.

Sustainability and growth strategies

The final technical argument that is worth reflecting on is the role that environmental factors played in convincing decision makers about appropriate growth strategies in Aberdeen and in Edinburgh. Development plans in Scotland must demonstrate compliance with environmental legislation including: The Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005; The Conservation (Natural Habitats, & c.) Regulations 1994; and the Climate Change Act (2009). Through the Development Management process, subsequent developments might then have to comply with additional requirements such as the Environmental Impact Assessment (Scotland) Regulations 2010. This legal framework provides the basis against which plans for growth can be assessed for whether they may cause unacceptable harm to the environment. What compliance with legislation also appears to confer is a contribution to ‘sustainable economic growth’; the idea of saying yes to development but not at any cost. This section briefly considers how the environmental aspects of sustainability were considered in each strategy and its importance in quelling the contradictions of continuous growth and minimal environmental impact.

In the Aberdeen city-region, the Structure Plan (2009:1) had only two aims: “To provide a strong framework for investment decisions which help to grow and diversify the regional economy, supported by promoting the need to use resources more efficiently and effectively”; and “to take on the urgent challenges of sustainable development and climate change.” One officer described how allowing for the allocation of up to 72,000 homes by 2030, including potentially up to half of these in the City’s greenbelt, was explained as sustainable because 75% of the growth would be directed to the City or the wider region’s transport corridors. This would meet the area’s housing needs while minimising carbon emissions. The city-region’s unsustainable suburban development pattern which pushed

growth out of Aberdeen (Hague, 2005, Gelan et al., 2008) had been recognised in the Structure Plan (2009). The new strategy, despite its scale of growth, was seen as sustainable and a common-sense approach, as one former senior civil servant reflected:

“It’s quite a simple straightforward thing, A, you’ve got two councils. B, you’ve got radial roots. So it’s a relatively straightforward planning exercise for a city-region of what is it, about 400,000 people or whatever? You know, put around 40,000 around in Aberdeen, that sort of thing. So, in some ways it’s quite a classic example of a city region” (Interview 47: former senior civil servant, 2016).

However, while the strategy involved a proportional increase in development within the growth corridors, it also provided an actual increase in development outside those corridors as well because of the general scale of the plan. There was also a slackening of rural housing development regulations which officers explained had come about because rural councillors had found the previous plan too complicated and restrictive. In this sense, the new more ‘laissez-faire’ approach to growth was being driven by councillors in some cases. A small minority of environmentally-focused councillors argued that the plan could not be described as sustainable. The joint chair of the SDPA committee in the end could not even support the plan when it was voted on by the wider Council. He considered it to be incompatible with the need to address climate change and, in any case, that the scale of growth envisaged would prove unrealistic. However, he did not consider that holding up on those grounds would have been possible and local democracy - the will of the majority - had to take its course:

“Certainly myself and Councillor Johnston, when the plan was adopted at Full Council, were stating very clearly that these forecasts of housing land requirement, and so on, were cloud cuckoo land stuff” (Interview 19: Councillor, 2015) (Aberdeenshire and ACS-SDPA), 2015).

The fact that the joint chairperson could not even support his own SDPA’s Structure Plan, and that this was inconsequential in getting it speedily approved by the Scottish Government, demonstrates that an ‘ambitious’ growth agenda was going to face very little effective opposition in the reformed Scottish planning system.

Swyngedouw considers the concept of ‘sustainable development’ as symptomatic of a framing of environmental issues that contributes to a post-political and post-democratic condition which prevents the possibility of a real politics of the environment (Swyngedouw, 1997). Haughton et al., (2010) call for further analysis of the implementation of such ‘fuzzy

concepts' that prevail within spatial planning agendas. The 'sustainable' plausibility of Aberdeen's fossil fuel based growth strategy, aided by a £750m bypass around the City, is highly questionable. The means by which the growth strategy was couched in 'sustainable' terms, and what this tells us about the democratic nature of planning in Scotland, will be analysed further in chapters 8 and 9.

Edinburgh's interpretation of sustainability is dominated by the debate over how much growth can be accommodated and where it can go, whilst protecting its greenbelt. The simplicity and potential fallacy of equating greenbelt with sustainability was brought up in numerous interviews. The next chapter will discuss in greater detail the arguments that have been framed as Edinburgh has attempted to export ('leapfrogging') its housing need beyond its greenbelt. The Edinburgh greenbelt dilemma is a key planning construct around which the politics of growth have been fought out. The policy debate around greenbelts have been empirically understood at least since its first rigorous UK analysis (Hall, 1973), and the Edinburgh case is a contemporary UK example of the political intransigence of this land-use issue. At this stage, the complexity and differing interpretations are captured in this quote which is worth presenting in length:

Sustainable economic growth, sustainable development, in the SDP it's got both of them, and a clear understanding...I think there's...I mean, we've made sustainable economic growth absolutely central to it. It'll be absolutely central to the second strategic development plan as well and the committee the members. That doesn't necessarily mean we've all got a common interest, you know with what economic growth is, I suppose, but I think they're all signed up for growth. We obviously want to put a big emphasis on sustainable economic growth, because that is the hook, I think, that takes in things like and climate change and the low carbon economy. Which in turn takes you onto things like, well, does the green belt encourage unsustainable travelling patterns? That kind of thing, so sustainable economic growth, I think if you ask people around our committee or the member authorities, they'll say, yes, we all support that, but it wouldn't necessarily mean we've all got exactly the same interpretation (Interview 21, SESplan SDPA, 2015).

This section has briefly set out the ways in which the environment and sustainability were brought together with economic growth in each case. In Aberdeen's case, the

growth strategy was framed as common sense and the CO₂-minimising option, despite contained, but significant, opposition. In Edinburgh, the region struggled more openly, and continues to, with sustainability as a concept that is dominated by concerns over the greenbelt. Chapter 9 compares the way the greenbelt debate has unfolded in each city-region in greater depth. This is important in understanding how planning has been used to deal with the politics of growth in Scotland. Before this, the chapter analyses at a higher level how the Scottish planning system was operated by actors to deal with the pressures for growth in each region.

New Governance arrangements and planning for growth

It has been established that after at least a decade of eruptions of strained political relations between Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City, planning reform and the formation of the new Strategic Development Planning Authority offered an opportunity for a fresh approach to planning in the region. Fraught relations between the housebuilding sector and the Councils in the early to mid-2000s should also be considered in the longer history of a fairly close formal and informal working arrangement in the city-region in terms of wider business-public sector relations. So, the institutional ‘changes’ brought about by the creation of the SDPAs might be seen as quite cosmetic overall. The new authority was really a continuation of Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City having to work together. What is more interesting in the region is that the political attitude to growth changed at the same time. This appeared to emanate from collaborative working between officers, development industry and wider business interests, and this consistent message filtered up to councillors. The governance network in the region had been altered with a pro-growth message emanating. The new SDPA was seen as offering a route to confirming a growth agenda because of planning reform’s emphasis on growth as an objective and collaborative plan-making process. With the issue clearly opened up here, this will be dealt with in greater detail in chapter 8 which specifically focuses on public-private collaboration in the North East and its impact in terms of democratic outcomes. Accordingly, this section focuses to a greater extent on the emergence of the new SESplan authority.

The creation of SESplan was politically disruptive. This is because while Edinburgh and the Lothians had their own difficult history of governing planning, the addition of the Borders,

and Fife brought about an entirely new configuration. In this case, a political disruption led to stasis rather than a new momentum, but the new governance configuration still goes some way to understanding the political problems that surrounded SESplan.

In Aberdeen, a new City Council administration in 2007 confirmed a more pro-development political attitude which had been slowly building. It was already clear that the general mood amongst market actors in the region was shifting in any case. After all, in 2004 the council had already attempted to increase housing allocations in its Local Plan above those of the NEST (2001) structure plan, but this had been blocked by the fact that no new Structure Plan was yet in place. In 2007, with a new Liberal Democrat and SNP coalition in place, the growth agenda largely took on a political form in the City. It was the change in political administration that was important in confirming a growth strategy and an eventual acceptance of the need for a 50/50 sharing of housing allocations between the City and Shire.

By virtue of a new City Council administration, at the new SDPA level the City and Shire now had two Liberal Democrat councillors on the rotating SDPA chairperson position. Whilst ostensibly representing the same political party, the two councillors were described as “very different politically and in every way” (Interview 14, ACS-SDPA, 2015). These differences made confirming the political acceptability of the structure plan difficult at the outset. Officers described how the pro-development City Chair and the pro-environment Shire Chair had difficulty in agreeing to finally sign up to the growth agenda: “We were locked in a room, the two of them were going at it word for word with officers trying to get something that both councils could sign up to. It was hard work at the time but I think in retrospect it was very useful there wasn’t one agenda dominating, there was a balance in there” (Interview 14, ACS-SDPA, 2015).

What is important to understand in the North East was the sense that councillors were signing up to a growth agenda rather than driving it themselves. This is discussed in the next chapter but there was a long process of this emerging amongst some Councillors and then eventually gaining widespread political approval. Finally, it appeared that despite talk of ‘balance’ between development and protectionist interests, the real thrust was towards a very pro-development political agreement. The option of a low-growth or pro-environment plan was not on the agenda.

In the South East of Scotland, the new SPDPA was made up of a core of Edinburgh and the three 'Lothians', which had a long history of disagreeing on where Edinburgh's growth should be accommodated. These were joined by two authorities that had no history of working together. The outcome was an inability to embed a positive working relationship: "There was a lack of trust between authorities and there were the legacy issues, relationships between the member authorities, historically, things just weren't very good" (Interview 21: SESplan SDPA, 2015). The SDPA committee was made up of two councillors from each authority and a decision was made to rotate the chair of the committee annually rather than engaging one chair for the duration of the plan process (as ClydePlan in Glasgow did). The outcome for the new SDPA was a tentative approach to new political working arrangements; SESplan was seen by all participants as something of a bedding-in process and this is a strong reason that it became a "stitching together of existing plans".

In the SESplan governance arrangement, like TayPlan and Aberdeen City and Shire, each individual council must ratify the committee decisions of the SDPA. Ratification for SESplan was aimed at engendering consensus. It replaced a previous arrangement where Edinburgh City Council could use its size to outvote the neighbouring Lothian authorities. This can be compared to Clyde Plan where decisions are delegated to the strategic planning authority. The Glasgow metropolitan area has a history of formal strategic planning stretching as far back as the 1940s through the Glasgow and Clyde Regional Plan. Because of this, there is a long engendered trust, or at least an understanding of its working history, from its constituent authorities. This comparison was explored by Vigar's (2009) study of metropolitan planning in Scotland 2009. Without such a collaborative history, the cautious approach by SESplan for a fairly safe, if rigid, governance arrangement is understandable. In practice, with six authorities in SESplan, however, strategic plan-making became a drawn-out process, and because of this there was inevitably a higher turnover of councillors on the committee than would have occurred had a less consensual but more efficient model been developed.

In terms of officers, the new SDPA was formed of one head officer, a senior officer and two planners. By the time SESplan had been sent to Scottish Ministers in 2013 for approval, SESplan had its third (and current) SDP manager. It was difficult to decipher why there had been such high officer turnover. Public sector planners were unwilling or unable to say, whereas private sector planners had their suspicions that this was a result of SESplan being driven by the needs of politicians. One local authority plan manager described the general

governance of SESplan as a “tortuous political process. What happens there is everyone looks after their own interests and agreement is not easy to reach” (Interview 44: ‘Lothians’ LPA, 2015).

Yet it is difficult to see how a new authority intent on ruling by consensus could have come up with a more authoritative means of decision making. What sets Aberdeen and Edinburgh apart is first the simplicity of working bilaterally in the former compared to working with six authorities in the latter. The new governance structure in SESplan was inherently more complex and, importantly, it involved something of a peace-making process between the core authorities while bringing in Fife and the Borders, which are two very different new authorities with different needs from strategic planning. In terms of explaining attitudes to growth, the ‘stitching together’ of existing plans and the desire to put off the difficult political decisions posed by the city-regions HNDA can partly be explained by planners and politicians getting a feel for strategic planning. Perhaps most important was the lack of sense of urgency for radical change because of the regional impact of the GFC. Most important was the lack of an organised push for growth by businesses and the local housebuilding lobby. Chapter 9 will explore this factor in depth.

A Planning System Designed for growth?

This section will first consider the reformed Scottish planning system (2006-2016) as a state apparatus and the ways in which it was used to pursue growth in Aberdeen, and how in Edinburgh the new system clearly did not serve this purpose. It has been demonstrated that there was a sense that the planning system had previously held back growth in the North East. This has called into question the idea that the growth agenda was something new, but was instead perhaps something that had been suppressed. Chapter 6 has demonstrated that the reformed planning system and ‘culture change’ that surrounded it were in effect tested out in the North East as the two councils became the first to implement the new range of Scottish development plans. The section below focuses to a large extent on the importance of the reformed system to a new attitude to planning in the North East, but compares this with experiences in implementing the same system in the South East.

Through the redesigned planning system, both regions saw the replacement of the Structure Plan Joint Committees by a new set up of more of an arms-length Strategic Development

Plan Authorities. Conferring 'Authority' status offered a greater degree of autonomy, and an increase in staff resources, marking a difference to previous arrangements. In Aberdeen, improved resources and political backing for strategic planning came not only through the system change but also through local circumstances. With the sense that something 'a lot more radical' was coming in terms of the region's attitude to growth, strategic development planning was handed the task of helping this happen. In Edinburgh, the context of 'stitching together existing plans' meant that regardless of the systematic changes political prioritisation of a new approach to planning was not really evident. This was a new set up which offered greater legitimacy for strategic planning, but could be embraced or used cautiously.

First, it is important to clarify that while resources directed to strategic development planning had increased in comparison to those years immediately prior, participants with experience of structure planning under regional councils still considered this to be comparatively a weakly-funded system. What the creation of SDPAs did offer though was a legitimate means by which growth requirements could be set at a city-region scale; this made it a useful forum around which development interests would coalesce. It also placed a greater emphasis on collaboratively approaching the delivery of development strategies and providing a technical assessment of plans. However, as events were to show in each case, neither development plan visions for growth or their actual delivery could be simply agreed upon through strategic planning.

Strategic Development Plans as a means to legitimise growth agendas

In Aberdeen, participants in the research were clear that strategic planning had made pursuing a growth agenda more straightforward than it would have been had the scale of growth been determined at the local level. SDPs were seen as more high-level; demonstrating a broad vision, and less detailed compared to structure plans which had determined the level of development required in major settlements. From a development industry perspective, the previous North East structure plans were not only seen as lacking ambition but also as being overly complicated. This is a fairly typical view from the development industry Scotland-wide, and was one of the reasons that a simplified development plan document approach was called for through planning reform in the mid-2000s. The eventual Structure Plan (2009) was not just welcomed by the development industry for its large scale of allocations but also for its simplicity in form and its clear instructions to planners and developers. Importantly, the

credit for this apparent simplicity was put down to the officers preparing the plan carefully with 'key stakeholders', rather than a new aspect of the system that could be easily replicated elsewhere.

We can go back to the previous Aberdeen structure plans; and you go back and read that plan now, you know, it's opaque, it's difficult to understand what it's trying to achieve, the numbers are confusing and a were source of constant argument in the NEST Structure Plan. Now, if that's your starting point, then the rest is in trouble before you even start and, you know, yet we've got exactly the same problem today in Edinburgh with the SESplan (Interview 30, Planning Consultant, Edinburgh, 2015).

From the development industry perspective, the Structure Plan (2009) had simplified the issue of defining the housing requirement at the outset and setting out where this would be delivered. Yet, SESplan (2013) was seen to be obfuscating the regional growth requirement particularly by its omission of local planning authority growth requirements.

One major consideration at this point though is the very existence of the strategic layer which can be used to defer conflict to another point in time (Allmendinger, 2016), or perhaps more appropriately to justify what might turn out to be controversial decisions when the point of conflict later emerges. As one Plan Manager reflected:

When we do our local plan and someone says 'why did you need this many houses?' we can say because the strategic plan says so. I mean the real answer is more complicated but in terms of what we have to do legally, well then we have to identify 12,000 houses in phase one then that's what we identify (Interview 13: LPA, Aberdeen City, 2015).

This configuration of the system created a route to a growth strategy, but it was not one that could be followed without political and officer will. Another Plan Manager in the North East reflected on the fact that in setting the Structure Plan (2009) growth requirement, it had never been the case that the public would get to pick a 'low growth' scenario:

“We went to communities and well you know if you ask somebody a question ‘you can either have apples, oranges, or pears, then they don't ask for avocados’ but the most important thing with all the community feedback, was that they actually got it. They understood that we needed growth. I understand that the principle we were offering was you can have a really high or a high or a not so high but you can't have a low because we think professionally you need high growth. We were able to persuade people why low was not an option and they did get it. If you go for low you constrain the housing land supply all that's going to happen is prices will go up and up and up. So there is a quid-pro-quo that you have to have more housing land, more supply, to actually address the issues of affordability... Well that's the theory anyway (Interview 12: Local Planning Authority, Aberdeen city-region).

In the interview above, there was a clear admission that the public were not to be offered another scenario through the Structure Plan and that they could be persuaded as to why that was the case. The logic from officers in the Aberdeen city-region case was that they were professionals imparting knowledge upon the public and most councillors. As the Structure Plan (2009) emerged, the process was seen as having involved the public to a greater extent than previous planning processes. Yet in other parts of the interviews conducted, officers conveyed a sense that the public were not hugely interested in the strategic level of planning. The local development industry, in contrast, was well positioned to take up its new position as key stakeholders in the region's collaborative governance arrangements.

In Edinburgh, the strategic plan did not offer an easy route to a growth agenda simply because, although the development industry might have wanted that, there was insufficient organised pressure political to deviate from the precedent set by quite recent structure plans. However, planning officers were clear that with the controversy that has followed - the fraught development of SESplan, and the subsequent Edinburgh LDP – growth-averse communities are now far more aware of the power of strategic planning. While SESplan had been something of a battle between business, the planning authorities and the Scottish Government, communities are now far more aware, so rather than smoothing a path to growth, officers expect subsequent SDPs to offer even greater scope for political conflict.

In Aberdeen, officers were clear that they considered the system to have the potential to take the politics out of planning for growth by ensuring that councillors arrived at the process with a different mind-set to that of local politics:

“We tried to instil a philosophy at the start that you are here to represent the city region and its interests and you need to try and put your political persuasion to one side. Try to leave your ward and council at the door because what you are supposed to be doing in this room is what’s best for the city region” (Interview 14: ACS-SDPA, 2015).

In Aberdeen, Councillors were understandably keen to portray their actions as reflecting their constituents’ views, but a specific conflict-free style of politics was being attempted: “I think the meetings at the SDPA are harmonious apolitical meetings where we don’t have City versus Shire antagonism but we don’t have wider political antagonism either” (Interview: 27, Councillor, ACS SDPA, 2015). What this ‘apolitical’ style actually meant in practice was considered, from the perspective of one councillor, to be a lack of engagement or scrutiny of the growth agenda:

The political climate up here in Aberdeenshire is, I’d say, inherently apolitical anyway. Most of the councillors don’t care too much about things and don’t have any real ideology. The City is a bit different. But all councillors like to have excuses of things like the structure plan. You know, there’s going to be lots of houses they have to go somewhere it’s not my fault it’s the big bad structure plan. It’s nice having someone else to blame. Effectively it was the two chairs who really decided it. I can’t remember any of the strategic plan committees actually making a decision, they just rubber stamped what was put in front of them by officers (Interview 5: Former Councillor Aberdeenshire, 2013).

Whether this is pragmatism in the wider public interest or something more sinister, it was explicitly the case that spatial planning would be used ideally to depoliticize the issue of growth. This councillor here and elsewhere in an interview described a lack of interest from fellow councillors in the strategic planning process specifically. Even for councillors, it was not something they could ‘get their teeth into’. In this sense, planning was not depoliticised by stealth, but by councillors themselves who had failed to politicise it or had been happy to

not engage too deeply. At a regional scale, this echoes Hay's (2007) idea of depoliticisation as a self-enforced constraining strategy by politicians.

In Edinburgh, the experience of councillors was not apolitical. The failure to agree on the scale and location of housing meant something of an embarrassment for officers as the Scottish Government intervened. From one perspective, for councillors there was still a strategy being played to even if it seemingly ends in apparent failure: "One interpretation would be that City of Edinburgh actually wants the Scottish Government to take the decisions, because the elected members in Edinburgh get so much heat from their community councils and indeed MSPs and MPs, that they want the Scottish Government to step in" (Interview 44, 'Lothians' LPA, 2015). Here the actual political strategy of deferral is incited by politicians themselves. The result is a willing shift of the regional and local politics of growth into the technical realm of the Scottish Government.

The remainder of this section will focus on the experiences in the North East of Scotland in terms of moving from gaining acceptance of the growth vision towards deciding the SDP allocations and importantly gaining acceptance of a growth agenda in local development plans where specific land is identified for growth. It is this local scale where Allmendinger and Haughton (2012) considered the politics of growth would eventually manifest in opposition to previously apolitical high-level strategies.

Councillors in the North East agreed that strategic planning was the least understood element of planning and that this explained public indifference toward, acceptance of, or lack of engagement with the strategy. For some, this was seen as presenting an opportunity for pro-growth interests. Interestingly, this councillor thought that the pro-growth local press had deliberately downplayed the implications of the growth agenda:

I felt that it was almost dealt with as a secret and so has the latest plan update. Allocating 72,000 houses. It's pretty scary. They tried to sell it as 36,000 in each area. But really it's an enormous increase in the total population. I think you are talking about increasing the housing stock by a third. That'd be a wonderful Press and Journal headline, but of course they would never print that. (Interview 5: Former Councillor Aberdeenshire, 2013)

One senior officer described the structure plan (2009) as almost being evasive in its format. Its simplicity meant that councillors and communities had little “to get their teeth into.” Aside from the overall high level housing figures, the simplicity also lay in the lack of policy, which was replaced by statements and aims upon which to base local plan policies. “There's only one policy. So there's not...well there was nothing really, and you can't argue with the policy, so there was nothing really for people to object to” (Interview 35: former Head of Planning Aberdeen, 2016). The subsequent local plan policies were based on these vague notions.

However, for the same officer, this was not a demonstration of a plan lacking democratic input and legitimacy; like other officers she was convinced that the extensive work that had gone into ‘stakeholder engagement’ had overcome any argument that the plan was not robust and the process lacked democracy. The term ‘stakeholder’ appeared to be used as a term for professional engagement; there was no doubting that there had been a lot of that. However, public engagement, while more extensive than in the past, had been met with a local ambivalence. In Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire, the eventual Local Development Plans did not create the level of controversy officers had expected: the point when red lines appeared on maps. The housing was allocated in the Structure Plan and it was going to have to go somewhere. Officers reflected that sites were suitably situated to minimise disputes from neighbours. The tactics employed to gain public acceptance of greenbelt development will be discussed further in chapter 8.

There was agreement that the lack of site identification at the strategic stage made getting the headline structure plan figures accepted far easier than it otherwise would have been. There had been at least one senior officer who argued that the actual strategic sites, not corridors, should be identified in the strategic plan. In the end, the argument that broad corridors of growth were sufficient won and this was put down to the City’s aversion to detail at that stage”:

You know, that wouldn't have made it very easy for us as you can imagine. So it was fifty percent of development in the city and we'll worry about where it goes afterwards. So from a city point of view that was easy (Interview 35: former Head of Planning Aberdeen, 2016).

One Councillor explained why it was easy to translate strategic plan figures into local development plan allocations. The Main Issues Report stage of the local plan was the first manifestation of the SDP as a local document. It conveyed a series of 'options' but over the course of the plan-making process there would prove to be very little moving away from the Council's stated preferred option for site allocations:

Now in the LDP you have the Main Issues Report, 'comment early this is your real chance to influence'. But people are only commenting on options so it's all a bit vague and woolly and people don't know if that's something which will really happen. Then suddenly by the time it's actually in the proposed plan you can't really change it. (Interview 5, former Councillor Aberdeenshire, 2013)

This section has demonstrated that the spatial approach to planning in Scotland offered a means by which the politics of growth could be delayed and evaded if the will of officers and councillors was for that to happen. However, even without the political will to do this, growth was not successfully resisted in SESplan because the planning strategy was eventually just centrally ruled upon and controlled. In each case, however, the result was one of a lack of citizen control over planning strategies in local areas. The next and final section puts the state apparatus of a planning system to one side and considers the importance of the 'spirit of planning reform' in Scotland of the mid 2000s, in terms of what that meant then and what it means now.

Culture change and the path to planning reform

The majority of the Planning (Scotland) Act came into force in 2009. However, the Act was preceded by white papers, consultation and guidance which were signalling a shift towards a system that would be "More efficient and responsive to market demands; better able to integrate and spatially organise the strategic priorities of different public services; and more inclusive, better able to respond to the needs and interests of affected communities (Inch, 2013, 06). This section considers the less formal side of planning reform. Planning reform was couched in terms of 'Modernising Planning' (Scottish Executive, 2005) and specifically involving a 'culture change' that would drive a "positive 'can do' mind set and more co-operative joint working" (Scottish Government, 2011).

An extensive study of culture change in Scottish planning, in particular Edinburgh City Council, by Inch (2013) considered this to have become focused on public sector planners' attitudes and ensuring a market friendly approach to development management. My research found that development planners in Aberdeen took on board the culture change agenda, interpreting it as a more collaborative and more growth focused approach to planning. However, in Edinburgh, in terms of SESplan and the Edinburgh LDPs, culture change actually had little impact on development planning.

Because the growth strategy in Aberdeen was forged in the mid-2000s, planners in the North East were producing Scotland's first suite of strategic and local development plans. Officers considered that they were responding to local factors but were also navigating their way through the emerging policy context at a Scottish level.

Two development plan managers in the Aberdeen city-region were very clear that they considered the informal policy shift, through the process of reform, to have been as important as the formal system changes in developing support for the Aberdeen growth strategy. In particular, the Review of Strategic Planning (2002) and the Review of Scotland's Cities (Scottish_Executive, 2002) cemented the place for strategic planning at the city-region level. 'Making Development Plans Deliver' (Scottish Executive, 2004), according to one development plan manager, had signalled a change of direction towards a greater focus on effective engagement of the public as well as business interests:

It became 'look here's what you said, and this is what we've done'. We're still benefitting from the currency of that inclusive transparent approach even now. You know we have not hidden decision making anywhere in the process, we were upfront about growth, and that's been an incredibly positive thing and that came from the 'making development plans deliver' engagement process the increased emphasis that the government thought we should place on public consultation (Interview 12: Local Planning Authority, Aberdeen city-region)

From this perspective, it was an honest approach that had defused the politics of growth. However, planners in the Aberdeen city-region also admitted that there had never really been an option for either a low growth plan, or for a plan that might have prioritised other interests such as social and environmental interests. This chapter reflects upon the way in which other

‘options’ were never really options. In Aberdeen, the view that had come to dominate, was that it was the past focus on the need to prioritise ‘the environment’ aligned with a despondency about the region’s growth potential which had made planning for growth so difficult in the region. The ‘option’ from the Structure Plan (2009) onwards would be ambitious growth. This was a classic example of Allmendinger’s (2016) traits of depoliticisation where a technical rationale for an ambitious scale of growth was married with the language of inclusive ‘option evaluation’ with only one real agenda in mind.

The Aberdeen city-region’s uptake of the informal side of the emerging modernising agenda chimed with the new SNP minority government’s (2007-2011) approach to housing and growth. One of the SNP’s first policy initiatives, the housing discussion paper ‘Firm Foundations’ contained an explicit target to build 35,000 houses across Scotland per year. It was a response to Scotland’s pre-GFC affordable housing problem and set out how planners and developers should respond to this:

For some time past, we have built 25,000 houses a year – significantly less than has been required to moderate growth in house prices. By the middle of the next decade, we want to see that number increase to 35,000 houses a year (Scottish Government, 2007, 3).

An argument from the housebuilding industry at the time was that if Ireland was managing to build 90,000 houses per year, Scotland should be able to manage 35,000. On this point, there was little reflection that despite those build-rates, Irish house prices were still somehow rapidly rising. In Scotland there had been housing targets regionally and locally, but one plan manager believed that this national figure focused minds and demonstrated exactly what central government wanted (Interview 14, ACS SDPA, 2015). The policy shift at a Scottish level squared with the context facing the region at the time:

On the one hand we had this Government strand saying, we need a more radical approach to housing, and to be much more visionary long term strategic. On the other we had data which was showing significant population growth in Aberdeenshire and population decline in the City and we used both constructively as part of the argument for a fairly fundamental change (Interview 14, ACS SDPA, 2015).

Another planning manager considered Firm Foundations to back up his own Council's message and one that was already resonating with the public: "I think the argument about affordable housing was clear and it was becoming more apparent to people that we had a real crisis on our hands, we just weren't building the kind of houses that many people could afford to buy" (Interview 12: Local Planning Authority, Aberdeen city-region).

In Edinburgh, in terms of development planning at least, the research revealed that ideas around culture change and very real problems with affordable housing still were not sufficient to engender a very pro-growth approach, at the very least in terms of development planning. The following chapter will examine, in far greater detail, the differences in how growth was eventually allocated, and the public-private sector relations between Aberdeen and Edinburgh. However, at this stage it is important to discuss some key factors which help explain why culture change appeared to have meant less in the Edinburgh city-region case. One planning authority manager described development industry and planning department relations as "a difficult, difficult relationship" (Interview 21, SESplan, 2015). There had been no germinating collaborative governance network like in Aberdeen. Edinburgh City Council's approach to planning processing agreements for major planning applications has been said to represent a kind of change in sector relations (Peel and Lloyd, 2012). However, my research demonstrated that when it comes to planning for growth and allocating significant growth in the first place, existing political tensions had not been tempered by culture change, they simply resurfaced:

Culture change, it's fundamentally about planning authorities because they are the gate-keepers in this process. It's their plan, it's their process ultimately, you know, so the biggest burden is really on them, I would have thought. And I don't think it has changed a huge amount. There are individuals who get it, there are individual politicians who get it, but collectively, when the government are getting involved in planning in Edinburgh it's a prime case in point. The culture really has not changed at all in Edinburgh, or SESplan, let's call it SESplan; you know, because Edinburgh has a bigger influence on what, you know, the thinking in (Interview 30: Planning Consultant, Edinburgh, 2015).

In this interview, and in others with development industry representatives, there was no suggestion that culture had changed and the very term was seen as having eventually become

quite irrelevant. There was a sense, from developer interests, that Edinburgh City Council had a negative attitude to growth and because of their importance in the region this attitude shaped SESplan's strategy. This was simply a reflection of the politics of growth in the region. While there were references to certain officers having a 'negative' attitude, the stronger sense from a wider range of participants was that officers were under the control of councillors and that councillors were simply reflecting an anti-development attitude in the City. Reflecting on this, one development industry representative considered it as unsurprising that attitudes had not suddenly changed: "They've got some good, competent well-meaning individuals in Edinburgh, but they are just disappearing in a morass of bureaucracy and anti-development culture. NIMBY⁷ politics is not a simple flick of the switch in culture change" (Interview 23: Planning Consultant, Edinburgh, 2016). From his perspective, culture change was a structural issue in Edinburgh and the continuing power of the most organised anti-development segment of the voting population was something planning reform had been unable to change.

In each case, through the Housing Need and Demand Assessment (HNDA), a collaborative process was supposed to inform a final technical exercise that would result in an indisputable housing requirement for each city-region. In Aberdeen this resulted in a situation where the development industry was 'happy with the numbers' as one planner put it and in Edinburgh where the industry was distinctly unhappy with what was a 'difficult difficult process' as another planner put it. The Aberdeen case demonstrates that the final HNDA simply reflected a pre-arranged 'ambitious' growth forecast. In the Edinburgh case it demonstrated that HDNA could equally be used to keep the numbers as low as was politically manageable. This delayed the SDP by a year and resulted in lengthy debate at the subsequent Edinburgh LDP examination. Both cases demonstrate the inherent qualitative process of such technical forecasting and, importantly, the failure of Scottish planning to move away from a 'planning by numbers' approach and towards an approach where planning became focused on strategic action and place-making.

⁷ An acronym for anti-development sentiment: Not In My Backyard

Conclusion

This chapter has dealt with the process of planning for growth in the two cases. It first problematised the idea of ‘growth agendas’ as a term, particularly in a context of a ‘housing crisis’ in each case study. It then analysed the technical cases for approaching growth pressures in different ways in each case from different planning actors’ perspectives. It has dealt with the process of planning and why in each case Scotland’s planning system was used by planning actors to arrive at very different ends.

The purpose of the Scottish planning system has shifted, aided first by the rise of the SNP and their restless approach to demonstrating Scotland’s economic potential, and then its response to the global financial crisis, towards one of a stronger discourse around promoting economic growth. Planning reform prioritised the maintenance of an up-to-date system of development plans, produced more quickly, and crucially a culture change that attempted to reshape public sector planners’ approach towards planning and growth and to treat business and development interests as key stakeholders.

The Aberdeen city-region had suffered the consequences of out of date and poorly forecasted plans and so its apparent ‘growth agenda’ should be treated with a degree of caution. There was a technical need for growth, but the scale of ‘ambition’ was something that was driven by the emergence of a governance network driven by a pro-growth mind-set. This fused perfectly with the Scottish Government’s idea of planning reform at the time.

The Aberdeen case suggested that from the vast majority of the public, there was a lack of concern with growth itself and more of a concern with ensuring that people’s lives would not be impacted negatively by it. Crucially, officers, developers, and councillors thought that the issue of affordable housing had reached a tipping point, where something had to be done. Across the UK, housing is unaffordable to large portions of local populations. Branding strategies that ostensibly attempt to remedy this situation as ‘neoliberal spatial governance’ is quite a limiting way to investigate what is actually going on with planning and housing in growth pressured areas. To understand this there is a need for further analysis as carried out in chapters 7 and 8.

Overall, the Aberdeen case has demonstrated the power planning officers and developer/business interests have when they respond to local conditions and shape an elite consensus around a particular idea of a development strategy. This has been encouraged by Scotland's reformed planning system, which allowed a depoliticised path towards a local growth agenda to be established because local conditions permitted it.

In the South East of Scotland, planning for housing growth in this pressured city-region – a place key to Scotland's economic success – has been as overtly political from the outset. An 'ideal-type' of development strategy for the City based on public transport and regeneration was at one point seen as having the potential to minimise the recurring political conflict that surrounds the issue of the City's greenbelt. The creation of a new strategic planning authority with a new ethos offered an opportunity to deal differently with the inevitable politics of growth that would have arisen from any collaborative strategy. However, the global financial crisis, the hard reality of local politics and the inability of the development sector to penetrate and shape this local politics has led to an openly political planning process which has eventually been dealt with in a centralised strong-government approach. New governance arrangements, intended to provide a consensual approach, had failed to overcome Edinburgh's domination of plan making. However, at the same time, those same arrangements had given greater legitimacy to increasingly growth-sceptic councils bordering Edinburgh. The 'steamroller' approach was not fitting with the idea of collaborative strategic spatial planning. The effect on SESplan was a drawn out and fraught planning process. In the end, there was an attempt to 'defer the political' to a future point in time: the Councils decided not to allocate growth even to the local authority level. There was also an attempt to 'displace the political' to the technical arena of the Scottish Government, after a failed attempt at technically demonstrating why growth should be lower than government and developers stated it should. Yet from the outset, regardless of these strategies, the politics of growth was clear at all times.

This section concludes that there was no uniformity about growth brought about by Scotland's spatial planning system, but there was inevitability. The need (and ambition) for growth at levels deemed suitable by the Government could not be resisted. This chapter has dealt with the process of planning for growth as the planning system is operated in the two cases. It is now followed by chapter 7 which considers in more detail what happens when these planning strategies 'hit the ground' and were formulated into Local Development Plan

allocations. In doing this, it assesses the winners and losers from the two planning strategies and moves towards a stronger understanding of where power lies in the planning system, and how powerful planning can ever be in Scotland's current political-economic condition. It also lays the foundation for Chapter 8 which analyses the influence of narrow special interests in each case study.

CHAPTER 7 - 'The crucial 'Where' of growth: Political strategy and the location of development.'

Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the way in which a growth agenda emerged in Aberdeen whereas in Edinburgh the fraught politics of growth remained. It found that each region faced similar economic conditions and similar housing land shortages while working in the framework of the same national planning system. It considered planning reform to have created a system designed to encourage the easing of resistance to growth, which was rolled out alongside a pro-growth 'culture change'. However, important contextual factors in each of the case study sites meant that planning did not imply anything like a purely growth-focused or post-political state structure. Important technical, structural, and cultural differences between each region's own planning 'systems' led to very different outcomes. This is the first of two chapters focusing on two key variances between the regions' approaches to planning: their differing treatment of the issue of greenbelt development; and the different degrees to which the private sector is involved in strategy making in each region. Examining this provides an understanding of what Scottish planning represents, where power lies, and in whose interest the systems operates.

This chapter focuses firstly on the Aberdeen city-region case, questioning whether a shift towards major urban extensions in the City's greenbelt really represents a radical deliverable change in planning strategy. Relatedly, the chapter explores whether the spatial strategy in the Aberdeen Housing Market Area may in fact represent the "deferral, displacing and transferring of the politics of growth" (Allmendinger, 2016). It then considers the experience in Edinburgh, where the City has faced conditions which may transfer more readily to other UK cities: a significant brownfield area which the Council does not control but wishes to see developed, and a greenbelt that developers control and are eager to build upon but where communities have been resisting development. Edinburgh's experience demonstrates the continuing politics of growth even at the early development plan stage of planning and how these become ever more fraught as planning strategies 'hit the ground'.

Building consensus on housing growth in and around Aberdeen

Chapter 6 presented and analysed the technical case for the Aberdeen city-region's growth strategy. It demonstrated first that there were growth fundamentals that required a response from planning authorities. The ambitious growth strategy that emerged, however, demonstrated the power of planning officers, business interests, and newly-willing councillors to shape a consensus around a particular strategy. The chapter also demonstrated how Scotland's planning system was useful in smoothing a path towards a growth strategy but only because local political and less tangible but important 'cultural' conditions in this place permitted this.

In their critique of English spatial planning, Allmendinger and Haughton (2012) suggest that the inevitable politics of growth can be avoided as planning strategies are devised, but when final decisions have to be made on the particular location of development, and when development planning then morphs into the development management stage, then the inevitable politics of growth emerges. This section focuses on these phases and specifically on the way in which Aberdeen managed to seemingly overcome the traditionally fractious issue of locating housing in affluent high-demand areas, specifically in and around the City.

Building consensus with councillors

In Aberdeen, greenbelt development had been transformed from a politically ‘toxic’ issue to one where the argument was accepted that it was required as part of a wider strategy to secure the city and region’s future. In that period the political landscape moved from one where in Aberdeen allocating 1200 greenbelt units in a plan had only just been acceptable and where “all hell broke loose over one 20-unit allocation” (Plan Manager ACC) to one where in 2009 over 20,000 new units were of housing were allocated in the city boundary without much political controversy at all.

The transformation was summed up by a plan manager in the SDPA: “I started in 2001, it’s the first time I’ve seen in print that Homes for Scotland are content with the land supply. We’re in the place we want to be but it’s taken at least 14 years”. The previous chapter described how developers had persuaded council officials of the necessity of this strategy and how a transformation of the politics of greenbelt development had occurred. This section explains and analyses how this occurred with a focus on the major development sites as well as the wider process. It explores why obvious community resistance was not necessarily absent but was subsumed into the development strategy. Understanding this will help inform the debate that surrounds Scotland’s housing crisis, the politics of housing development, and the specific role of greenbelt policies within this.

A technical case was developed by officers who appealed to the sense of proportionality of this strategy to help councillors face up to the location of the growth strategy that they were supportive of. Key to this was a review of the city’s greenbelt:

It was hard work. You had to make really strong arguments making clear that the greenbelt was still important and that even if you develop on the proposed scale you would still maintain around 95% of it. We looked at the city as a whole and something like 45% of the City council area was greenbelt and that would have changed to 41%. So that’s the kind of context we put it in and saying look greenbelt is still really important but it doesn’t mean that we won’t be releasing some for development. Painting a picture of the future without change was also fundamental to that to try and convince people that ‘no change’ just wasn’t an option (Interview 14, ACS SDPA, 2015).

Another planning manager in Aberdeen spoke of how they translated these numbers into a tangible idea of the political strategy they wished councillors to embark upon:

And so we did a couple of workshops with our members where we said, okay, you've got thirty-five thousand new houses, and we gave them little cardboard squares, and said put them on the map, where do you think you're going to put those in the city? So we were already getting their heads round it as we were doing the structure plan. We were selling the message about, well, okay it may sound like a lot of houses in terms of numbers, but actually it's still a tiny proportion of the overall amount of greenbelt that now has to be released. So they had their heads round the idea of growth (Interview 35: former Head of Planning Aberdeen).

Each example makes a straightforward case for growth in the greenbelt in terms of the proportional impact of the strategy. However, as chapter 6 set out, each argument was part of a long and difficult wider political process that officers had been engaged in. So, the above tactics need to be understood within the complexity and context-specificity of the North-East case study, particularly when seeking to learn lessons that might be transferred to other places with their own distinct contexts and planning cultures.

This strategy employed by officers was not fail-safe and officers spoke of having to bring sceptical councillors around to the idea of greenbelt sites. Indeed, the Counteswells site for 3000 houses in the highly prized western greenbelt only just scraped into the Local Development Plan 2012 by a single vote. However, that these councillors could sign up to this agenda was, compared to previous experience in the Aberdeen City Council, still surprising. One officer (Interview 12: Local Planning Authority, Aberdeen city-region) put this down to a change of the political administration of the City in 2007 when the ruling Liberal Democrat/Conservative administration became a Liberal Democrat/SNP coalition. He considered this “new guard of councillor” meant that in terms of greenbelt housing there were “suddenly possibilities” in working with councillors at ACC “who had previously been very reluctant to talk about greenbelt releases”.

In a similar vein, one Aberdeen Labour councillor reflected on the period and considered that all politicians in all parties had in the early 2000s “took fear a bit” from greenbelt-averse

officials and planning convenors, and considered that this had been a problem. From this perspective, the more growth averse officials and councillors had dominated the City council at least. Speaking in 2015, from this Councillor's perspective the change in attitudes that now prevailed across the Council administration, and crucially opposition councillor, was not something that would shift back again. In this sense, the political commitment to the growth strategy had been locked in.

Beyond the 'building of consensus', one interviewee with a background in the housebuilding sector was blunter in terms of how a more growth oriented planning department leadership had emerged in both North-East councils. The lobbying of the Councils in the mid 2000's had actually involved a far more raw assertion of power: the persuading of Chief Executives to replace 'anti-growth' staff: "What happened? Well, certain people were shoved to the side, people of a different mind-set. But you know that had to have political buy in as well" (Interview 30: Planning Consultant, Edinburgh/Aberdeen, 2015). This point was not raised by officers but then it would be unlikely that they would have been comfortable explaining such circumstances. In this light, the critique of collaborative governance (Brand and Gaffikin, 2007) as encouraging neoliberal or at least powerful sectional interests is very relevant. The next section moves on to how 'consensus' was generated with communities in the region.

Building consensus with communities

Chapter 6 demonstrated that the ambitious growth agenda and its household forecasts were arrived at through a technical process but in the context of a political agenda. The vision for the region as a successful thriving one was difficult to take issue with (Purcell, 2009). The arguments around the issues such as affordable housing did become increasingly pertinent as the SDP process moved into LDP allocation stage because house prices in the region were (as officers predicted) continuing to climb.

However, at the earlier SDP stage the actual scale of the growth levels envisaged had been challenged by communities. This challenge was never likely to succeed because this part of the development plan process, strategic forecasting, remained and still remains a technocratic exercise which communities, even sceptical councillors, find difficult, if not impossible, to challenge. One community councillor reflected on their own challenge which had been made consistently since 2007: "I really think our argument is still applicable, even more so with the

oil slump. But the City and the Shire have all been saying ‘yes, this is another slump, but this is a long-term view, an aspiration and therefore we'd like to maintain it’ (Interview 29: Community Council, Aberdeen). This rational technical element of Scottish planning retains the privileged position of policy makers in local and national government.

A common concern even with broadly pro-development communities centred on infrastructure provision. Through the consultation process, officers and developers assuaged communities’ concerns around infrastructure provision by stating that things would be different under the new planning system. Work was going into creating innovative mechanisms by which funds would be pooled between the development industry and the public sector. There was an expectation that, nationally or regionally, a better and more workable model would be arrived at for all development in future. At a minimum, there was an expectation, and reassurances made, that infrastructure funding would be in place for selected major sites. Communities were brought on board via a range of events, by engagement in development framework and masterplan processes, and by broad assurances that short-term ‘pain’ would eventually lead to the community facilities without detrimental impact on existing communities.

To understand why the plans were promoting a move towards an increase in the role of major or ‘strategic’ sites, it is important to recognise the continuing ‘delivery imperative’ (Adams et al. 2016) that drove planning reform (Scottish Executive, 2004). An argument put forward by the development industry was that very large-scale allocations were required in order to deliver infrastructure through economies of scale. In favour of this approach, developers argued that only major sites could deliver enough certainty and land value uplift for major community facilities. As encouraged by the reformed planning system, developers were selling the idea of their plans for the local area directly to community councils. Some developers had been hosting events at the Structure Plan stage in an attempt to win over communities at the earliest possible stage. Such processes were then ratcheted up after the Structure Plan was adopted (2009) and the early stages of the two Local Development Plans began.

The politics of locating housing growth in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire

Politicians and communities had been persuaded of the relativity of the physical impact of the growth strategy. Concerns over infrastructure provision had been soothed by the promise of the delivery of infrastructure which could only be provided because of the scale of growth strategy and the scale of the sites. Most importantly, politicians and communities who remained unconvinced were simply told that they had lost the argument. This section now focuses on the site level: the point where the debate around Aberdeen's growth strategy moved from the conceptual to the concrete.

Housing in Aberdeen's Greenbelt

Two major extensions to Aberdeen City were identified in the Aberdeen LDP. One was at Grandhome in the northern greenbelt, adjacent to the oil boom suburb of Bridge of Don. Bridge of Don is where the majority of Aberdeen's housing had been focused in the 1970's and was built out until the early 1990's when significant greenbelt developments largely stopped. The other was at Counteswells, in the highly sought after greenbelt to the west of Aberdeen near the affluent Victorian suburb of Cults and Bielside. A major urban extension of Bridge of Don had always been likely if the city was to significantly expand, and in many ways its expansion is less surprising than that of Counteswells where the communities, councillors, and officers had resisted pressure from developers for decades through previous plans.

Grandhome, Aberdeen and the Scottish Sustainable Communities Initiative

At Grandhome, a site for 4700 houses, but eventually capable of accommodating over 7000 houses, was allocated in the Aberdeen City LDP (2012). This Greenbelt site, along with a site in the general area of Counteswells had both been 'earmarked' but not allocated for development in the mid-2000s. This was at the point when planners had been frustrated by the requirement to conform to the outmoded but still legally binding structure plan NEST (2001), and by the fact that the City Council at the time was still split on the issue of pro-growth and growth-aversion. The adoption of the Structure Plan (2009) growth strategy meant there was now a legal requirement to find new housing sites through the emerging Local Development Plans in Aberdeen's local authority boundary and so the two sites were obvious places for such development.

Bridge of Don is a suburb which could be described as successful in the sense that demand for housing there is high, but it has a reputation as encompassing much of the blandness of 1970's and 1980's UK planning and design. Its reliance on two bridging points between the suburb and City, and increasing volumes of traffic from the north of the City, has also added to the negative perception around the place. However, in the spirit of planning reform and the messages of Aberdeen's development plan strategy, councillors and nearby communities were primed to expect a more empowered planning process, the delivery of infrastructure with development, and a much improved final design standard through a sustainable urban extension.

Grandhome's selection, after a bidding process as a forerunner for the Scottish Government's Sustainable Communities Initiative (SSCI), helped assure councillors and communities that the future development of the Bridge of Don would atone for many of the mistakes of the past. Pressingly, the provision of government funding for the Third Don Crossing (now built), and the wider AWPR project, meant that planners and developers could point to tangible evidence that solutions to transport issues were now being found. The fact that these 'solutions' only encouraged greater car-dependence was a point with little political purchase in the City and region at the time.

The SSCI came through the Scottish planning reform 'design agenda'. It was set up to "encourage the creation of places, designed and built to last, where a high quality of life can be achieved" (Scottish Government, 2009). Significantly for Grandhome, the site was one of three that were given additional support whereby the Scottish Government paid the 'internationally acclaimed' urban designer Andres Duany and his DPZ practice to lead a series of 'charrettes' on the future neighbourhood. Duany's charrettes are a participation method which fuses ideas of communicative planning with citizen engagement in New Urbanist 'placemaking'. The SSCI can be seen as a symbol of what the Scottish Government considers to embody 'sustainable economic growth'. From a pilot project, it would go on to have a significant effect on conceptions of greenbelt development both in North East and South East Scotland.

MacLeod (2013) has critiqued the Scottish Government's adoption of Duany's new urbanism within the SSCI as a post-political planning strategy. That research focused on councillors' views of another of the three pilot SSCI sites: the Tornagrain new town near the small, but

rapidly growing, city of Inverness. From MacLeod's perspective, a wealthy landowner, the local Highland Council, and the international 'policy guru' Duany, utilized the concept of New Urbanism deployed within the soft spaces of the planning system to bring about the designation of a new town in Scotland. The post-political nature of the apparently participatory planning process is revealed as it works its way to fruition through the semi-formal spaces of the planning system before eventually becoming, in the words of one councillor, a 'fait accompli' that is subject to little opportunity for democratic oversight. The process reveals how 'sustainability' of a standalone new town development is framed within 'smart growth' design principles. Allmendinger (2011) considers 'smart growth' as an example of what Raco (2005) referred to as Third Way interpretation of the grand neoliberal discourse of 'sustainable development'. In a wider sense, it is one account of the nature of spatial planning in Scotland where 'front-loaded' informal consultation processes solidify into formal legally binding plan designations through what were initially informal – depoliticized – forums. Grandhome provides an opportunity to analyse the application of the SSCI in the form of a 'sustainable urban extension'.

Grandhome: The outcomes so far

The proposed design and public consultation process at Grandome represents a significant improvement, on the surface at least, compared to the processes and outcomes that have occurred in the Aberdeen area in recent decades. Planning frameworks, masterplans and now permissions have been approved by the Council and by 2017 initial construction work was underway on site. However, the problem of land value capture had not been resolved nor has it been part of Scottish planning reform. Rather, general ideas and broad suggestions that infrastructure would somehow be provided up-front have largely failed to come to fruition. In terms of actual infrastructure provision on the site, by 2017 site enabling works (drainage and power etc.) had begun and this was because the site was prioritized in 2016 for a Scottish Government Housing Infrastructure Loan covering £7.2m of the £7.9m costs. This fund is, however, a pilot project rather than a failsafe means to resolve the issue of development infrastructure provision in Scotland.

Planning frameworks – masterplans - have been approved by the Council and these were produced at least partly through community consultation. However, despite this, the Bridge of Don Community Council still objected strongly to the final planning application to allow

work to begin. The Community Council did not object to the principle of the development, or the promising masterplans they had supported. Rather, they stated that their concerns over major infrastructure (primarily surrounding roads and the impact on existing schools and locations for new schools) had not been taken on board through any of the engagement they had been involved in. The community council in Bridge of Don made clear that they did not believe their concerns over the development had been considered and acted upon. The Council and developer view so far has been that the immediate impact of the development would have to be accepted until longer-term solutions to community infrastructure and wider regional road improvements are possible.

The Grandhome allocation and its development so far offers an opportunity to gauge what planning represents in practice. Conflict with the local community was delayed first through broad messages about Aberdeen's strategy representing a break from the past. Promises were not explicitly made; rather more vague assurances were given, and so were technically not broken. As a frontrunner in the SSCI, the design of the development and the consultation process won a lot of praise and, if realized, would represent a major improvement in urban design terms when compared to the quality of suburban development in the region in recent decades. However, issues like land value capture, car dependency, and infrastructure provision, have not been resolved. Similarly, while a lot of consultation took place, the local community never supported the application which was approved by the Council.

Finally, before this section moves to understand a community perspective, the question of who to consult and who is affected and by what means is raised here. A planning officer reflected on this:

My own personal view is we do too much consultation with the wrong people and it's all consultation with people that live with next door. Yes, I think they should have views on the design of their area and the facilities and things they need but it's almost the people who are moving in, or who can't afford housing, that you want to be speaking to but we have no way of talking to them when it comes to new development (Interview 26: Senior officer, LPA, Aberdeen city-region).

From this perspective, it cannot really be expected that existing communities will ever fully support development in their own backyards, regardless of the indications of Charrette or other similar processes. But in terms of 'community', the planning system has continued to

focus on ‘people next door’ and rewarding developers who can find new ways of pacifying them in order to smooth a path to the acceptance of growth.

More pertinently, another planning officer reflected on the social justice implications of the suburban development strategy on existing communities. The working-class community of Woodside and Tillydrone had campaigned against the new bridge and the development of a new arterial route (The Third Don Crossing and the Berryden Corridor) through their community. While essential to serve the commuting and leisure needs of residents in Bridge of Don, Grandhome, and other settlements north of Aberdeen, for existing residents in inner-north Aberdeen the crossing and corridor was yet another traffic thoroughfare dissecting and polluting their community. While the growth strategy was not a divisive political issue, Labour had framed the Third Don Crossing as an SNP administration project in local elections in 2012. However, when subsequently elected into a coalition administration in the City, Labour then decided to support the project after all:

Labour were dead set against it and then surprisingly got elected. Now they’re building it and telling everyone we really need it. Because it’s a council housing area they’ve been consulted on just about everything - well plans for more affordable housing, housing improvement, community improvement - and every year the council has come to them and said ‘we’ll deliver this’ ‘what do you want?’, ‘what would make this place better?’ And all we’ve ever done is build a road through it. So it’s not the amount of consultation, it’s the fact that we consult and they can see that not a lot happens. So it’s not surprising when we go there and they say “No one listens to us and all you’ve given us is a road that isn’t even for us and it just makes the place worse (Interview: 15 Senior officer, LPA, Aberdeen city-region).

Focusing on Grandhome reveals the ways in which a growth strategy which encourages more car dependent development, and requires the building of new roads through working-class communities in order to move suburban commuters around the City faster, can be couched in sustainable terms. It also demonstrates how planners and politicians can claim that ‘the community’ has been involved and consulted even without gaining the approval of any particular community, through a ‘more inclusive’ planning system. While Grandhome brings development closer to Aberdeen, and is part of a strategy to deal with housing affordability, the growth strategy ‘when it hits the ground’ has not resolved the contradictions of a market-led planning system. Planning reform has not addressed fundamental concerns around

developer power, the delivery of the ‘public good’ in development, social justice, and the lack of political will to challenge political-economic structures, nor the continued political opportunism that can be made of land use issues in urban areas.

Counteswells: developing the greenbelt in Aberdeen’s affluent suburbs

This section now considers how a community council in one of the City’s most affluent suburbs perceived arguments and arrangements for major development set out in the Aberdeen City LDP 2012. A new site for 3000 homes was allocated in a part of the City that had traditionally been successful in resisting major development. This interview with two community council members took place in 2015. Both had significant experience of involvement in community councils in their area and in other greenbelt communities in the City. They discussed how they had strongly objected to the Structure Plan’s (2009) growth forecasts, but had been unable to influence that process. They had also campaigned against the AWPR years earlier but similarly had decided that they were never going to win the argument that a new bypass was not required for the region. Instead, in each case they had come to what they saw as a pragmatic acceptance that their community would have to accept a greater level of development than in previous years. The Community Council had eventually come to accept an argument from developers and from planners that major site allocation would deliver the necessary infrastructure, would mean that all development could be concentrated in one place, and for the next decade at least there would be minimal sporadic planning applications to deal with. Also, being in a location which in their words, was “relatively hidden away”, it was sufficiently dislocated from the existing community. This would minimise the visual and immediate amenity impact on the existing residents in the area.

The key thing that we’ve been pushing and commenting on is to make sure that there are no more major developments in our area until these ones [*pointing to map*] have come to fruition So there’s going to be some major planned development but there’s still is that ability to resist sporadic applications Yes. Look [*points to map*] they can no longer say there’s nowhere for them to build houses!

The Community Council did not see itself as particularly anti-development; rather they were a mediator between anti-development residents and a pro-development council.

(Interviewee 1)

There will always be the ones who oppose development. We've had that argument, we had it with the AWPR, but you've got to be realistic too in that to promote economic development in Aberdeen and then create the housing that you need to support that there has to be development somewhere. So I think our challenge as a community council is to manage or see that managed.

(Interviewee 2)

yes, make sure that any disadvantages are designed out and that we get some advantages out of it.

The community council did not consider that they had ever been explicitly anti-development. From their perspective, their position had not really changed from previous plans. They had always campaigned for the provision of community infrastructure to come with development. They had in previous years cited the lack of a bypass as a key reason why their community could not take more development. The commencement of the AWPR, however, meant that debates had moved beyond its need and shifted to its impact on 'changing traffic patterns' and 'modal shifts' which had confused that argument. They had lost the argument on the scale of the growth strategy and were now in a position where an 'out of sight, out of mind' approach to locating growth and accepting promises of more upfront infrastructure in future was the best strategy they could deploy.

Elsick new town: dealing with major housing allocations in the Aberdeen commuter belt

The final site analysis in the Aberdeen section of this chapter focuses on the provision of a completely new town through the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan (2012). In the south of Aberdeenshire, the towns of Stonehaven and Portlethen had accommodated significant housing development in previous plans. This was largely housing to accommodate

Aberdeen-based commuters. There was significant developer pressure to continue this and at the same time much of the local population was increasingly resistant towards the scale and nature of development that had taken place more recently.

When the decision was taken to accept the levels of growth required in the Portlethen to Laurenckirk SDA, this was actually made with the idea of a new town somewhere south of Aberdeen in mind. A new town somewhere on the southern boundary of Aberdeen City had long been mooted, but had never made it even to the development planning stage. Through the official 'call for sites' stage of the Aberdeenshire LDP, plans for two new town sites were submitted by separate landowners. One was at Banchory-Leggart (on the Banchory-Devenick site) on the edge of the Aberdeen City boundary. The other was for a new town at a site called at Chapleton of Elsick, a site 10 miles from Aberdeen and, while located just off the main A90 north-south route in the region, relatively isolated in comparison. A report by NESTRANS, the transport partnership for the North East of Scotland, considered the two new town 'options' and 'alternatives': "The alternative option put forward of another new settlement does not really provide an alternative, but rather another of the same. It is felt that a real alternative should have been considered such as expansion of Stonehaven or east of Portlethen enabling use of the railway" (North East Scotland Transport Partnership, 2009). Here, the provision of two 'alternatives' meant that the region was going to get a new town, and existing towns would be spared from what would otherwise have been very significant scales of development.

What occurred at the proposed plan stage of the Aberdeenshire LDP was that councillors made a surprise decision to allocate up to 8000 houses to Elsick in place of either Banchory-Leggart or Portlethen. Politically, the Banchory-Leggart site would have raised far more immediate planning issues for the City and would have required a strong partnership approach between the two authorities. The plan's Main Issues Report had still considered it the more thought-out, deliverable, and sustainable of the two new towns. The selection also surprised officers and even some councillors:

You ended up with ludicrous decisions like Elsick. It was astonishingly idiotic and totally floored the land owner. He couldn't believe his luck. He was shocked. They said it was 'considered' but that decision was made in sort of 10 minutes flat, for no substantive reasons apart from the typical well, the local members thought it will

upset the least number of people (Interview 5, former Councillor Aberdeenshire, 2013).

Coming from a similar view, a planning consultant representing developers with interests in Stonehaven and elsewhere in the North East considered this to have been a depoliticising strategy in which the idea of planning as technical exercise was abandoned in place of the ‘displacement’ of politics:

Yes, we got a big new plan, I’m cynical but I think NIMBYism is just as bad here still. The whole Elsick strategy was all about, you know, we couldn’t build in Stonehaven, Newtonhill, Portlethen where they have the railway stations and services. We couldn’t even build a new town near Aberdeen, so what will we do oh we’ll build something new where nobody can see it at all. All over the region, I think the planners have been very clever in directing those large-scale allocations to areas where there’s less sensitivity (Interview 17: Former head of planning, planning consultant, Aberdeen city-region).

Developers who looked set to lose out on their expected allocations focused on the argument that Elsick would prove undeliverable. The land owner, the Duke of Fife (a distant cousin of Tornagrain’s Earl of Moray), at this stage stepped up efforts to promote the site and ensure its allocation. To do this, they turned to Duany’s DPZ and the planning consultants Turnberry, the exact team which had been working on Tornagrain and Grandhome under the SSCI. A major charrette design process was carried out. The result was a plan for a new community which bore a strong resemblance to the Duany’s conceptions for Grandhome. As a standalone settlement, the ‘sustainability’ of the town lay in an idea of a kind of self-sufficiency, with community gardens, home-working, and local community facilities.

The design appeal of Duany’s work is subjective and can be considered as rooted in a local historical context or as pastiche depending on perspective. What was not subjective was that the strategy was not making best use of public transport or community facilities in the development corridor. Elsick had been selected in preference to another new town site only a few miles from Aberdeen, and over existing towns in Aberdeenshire with existing services and bus and rail links to Aberdeen. In terms of delivery, the idea that it would provide 400 houses per year was a risky approach regardless of how nice the concept looked and how engaging the charrette process had been.

A planning consultant, who had worked for developers with interests in Stonehaven and in Edinburgh's greenbelt, reflected in 2015 upon the deliverability argument which was lost by developers who opposed Elsick:

We've challenged Elsick on the basis of delivery. It's not to say that Elsick's not a good idea. It's not to say that it's not the right thing to do. But it's not going to happen in five years' time. It's not going to happen in ten. And in a way, they're putting all the eggs in one basket. Edinburgh to some extent did it with Leith docks, Aberdeen to some extent are doing it with Grandholm and Elsick. (Interview 22: Planning Consultant, Edinburgh/Aberdeen, 2015).

After the Council had made clear its preference for Elsick and put it forward for 'Proposed Plan' status in 2010, the Provost of the Council commented in the local press:

We've seen the downside of piecemeal development in the past and I think we need to avoid that. I think what we're doing today needs a bit of vision and it needs a bit of courage. I think it would be a bold statement and I think it would take the pressure off other places (Aberdeenshire Council Provost, in Mearns Leader, 2010).

A councillor for the area was similar in framing this not as a decision that would quell public resistance to development in locations like Stonehaven, but as a brave decision by the Council, and something planning reform was supposed to be about: building better places:

We greatly welcome development in my ward, but there are horrendous examples of development not just here but across Scotland. Development could be said to have been better prior to the introduction of planning. Some progress has been made though. The masterplan process for Elsick is a big improvement on what we were seeing in the area (Interview 7: Councillor, Aberdeenshire, interviewed in 2013).

There was a genuine sense of frustration at the quality of the development that the industry had been providing in Aberdeenshire in recent decades. The development industry argument on the Portlethen site was that the investment required for 'big ticket' items like major grade-separated junctions meant that less money had been available for other forms of planning gain. That argument encapsulates much of the debate around the quality of planning

outcomes in Scotland and the UK (Healey, 2010; Adams and Tiesdell, 2013; Hall, 2013). However, there was nothing in Scotland's planning reform which changed the basic function whereby the uplift in land value gained through the granting of permission accrues to the landowner, and the public sector then must claw as much of this back as they can for the public good. This had led to a backlash against development in some towns and this opened the way for concentrating development on major sites which carried fewer political risks.

Elsick offered many advantages. A single landowner, the Duke of Fife, owned the site and when it was allocated in the 'Proposed Plan' the family's development company stepped up work on the proposal. They were offering the Council a lot of what they had been seeking in terms of a better approach to design, to public engagement, a long-term approach to the development of a community, and, importantly, offering a much less combative approach to developer contributions. One officer compared this with the standard approach they were used to in the area: "The difference is that the developer and landowner has a vision for that area and a sense of history. So there's a sense of legacy".

However, there are signs emerging that a strategy which places such a degree of responsibility on the private sector to deliver a key element of the region's housing strategy is risky, regardless of political buy-in or long term landowner vision. A good example of this is the fact that the successful legal challenge in summer 2016 to the SDPA's innovative and statutory Strategic Transport Fund (chapter 6) was made by the lawyers representing not one of the old guard of lobbying housebuilders in the region, but in fact the Elsick Development Company. The goodwill and engagement of the charrette process quickly gave way to a more traditional public sector versus landowner conflict, when the reality of committing to the region's attempt at a funding mechanism to overcome transport infrastructure funding vacuums via a public-private approach became apparent.

Seen in the light of northern European interventionist planning (Hall, 2013), they could be considered failures to deal with the political and structural contradictions that Scottish planning has yet to face up to. Yet when compared locally, the early results of North East Scotland's adoption of a growth approach and new urbanism still represent an improvement on what has gone on in the recent past:

It's interesting because the political dilemma is not about whether such and such a party thinks we should build houses and the other party doesn't, it's much more

about the democratic issue of people generally being anti-development and NIMBY. At the moment development of any kind especially housing is not seen as a vote winner. Even in Aberdeen. So the way they've got around that is a variation of the Elsie model. So if you're going to come up with a way of building that doesn't upset people then make sure you develop where there aren't any people. Don't come to the crossroad, go to the back of beyond. But if you are going down the European route of interventionism you'd say 'right go where there's infrastructure, where there's schools, where there's train stations' (Interview 17, Planning Consultant, former Head of Planning, 2015).

Section conclusion

This section of the chapter focusing on Aberdeen's strategy for allocating the housing requirement of a significantly ambitious growth strategy has demonstrated several key points. Tactics to garner political and public support for the strategy relied on a mix of assurances, a selling of the overall vision in strategic terms, and at times a straightforward shutting down of any questioning of growth forecasts. Structural issues of infrastructure delivery, and ensuring developers built out their allocations timeously, were never resolved by planning reform. As such, regional attempts and assurances had to be made to ensure that the growth strategy could actually be allocated without political turmoil. To a degree, a strategy of 'out of sight, out of mind' was practiced in the Aberdeen Greenbelt and commuter area. This was aided on two key sites by the use of the Scottish Sustainable Communities Initiative, and its processes, design concept, and personalities, which were deployed as part of a 'sustainable development' pitch which helped officers, councillors, and landowner interests roll out growth without questioning its environmental and social impacts.

The (impossible) search for consensus on housing growth in Edinburgh

Chapter 6 described Edinburgh region's experience in implementing planning reform as one of political intransience which focused, amongst other factors, on the extent to which Edinburgh as a city should accommodate its own growth. That political problem, the immediate economic problems resulting from the Global Financial Crisis (GFC), and the natural limits of 'bedding in' to new governance processes and institutions, led the authorities

of SESplan towards a strategy of “stitching together existing plans” (Interview 21 SESplan SDPA, 2015). However, this ‘stitching together’, while a reaction to prevailing conditions, was not what the growing city and region required as a strategy. This section of the chapter considers the physical and political embodiment of these complexities which are centred on the issue of Edinburgh’s spatial strategy for housing.

The remainder of this chapter focuses on key places in Edinburgh where this debate has physically manifested in order to understand what has stopped a compact brownfield first strategy, the kind supported by Scottish Planning Policy, from happening. From this, a nuanced understanding of the politics of planning in contemporary Edinburgh emerges. A general perception of Edinburgh as a city where urban politics is defined by a protectionist outlook dominated by anti-development interests holds only to an extent. Here it is held up to a far more complex reality of a city dealing with growth pressures while facing structural constraints which have not been resolved by planning reform:

There’s been a culture for decades of saying Edinburgh is full up. You know, Edinburgh is constrained - which it is, you know, it's quite a tight city boundary. We can't allocate more land for housing because we don't want to release the green belt, we don't want to release edge of settlement, we want to focus it all on the waterfront, Leith etc., etc. So we're full up, you'll have to go someplace else. Compact city and all that stuff. The problem that that's caused is, of course, it has created far more out movement and in-commuting that really isn't good for the region, you know, more generally, you know in sustainability terms of air quality or congestion and all the rest of it (Interview 30, Housebuilding interest/consultant, Edinburgh and Aberdeen, 2015).

The above statement represents the view widely held by developer interests in regards to Edinburgh’s inability to deal with growth pressures and the politics that surround growth. This perspective was formed through the experience and outcomes of SESplan and the Edinburgh LDP processes. Such experience clearly jars with the ambitions expressed in the Edinburgh 2020 Vision (City of Edinburgh Council, 2003). This section of the chapter will uncover this story from a series of perspectives and is centred on the debates over the development of key brownfield and greenfield sites in the City.

Brownfield/Greenbelt and the persistence of the politics of growth

Before considering the politics of greenbelt development, it is important to understand that for over two decades, Edinburgh's land use strategy for housing has been based on an (as yet unmet) desire to see its docklands and waterfront redeveloped for significant brownfield housing development. Realising this would help the City to deal with its key land-based problems: transport congestion associated with commuting growth, providing housing close to new jobs in the city, and improving the business case for a tram network in the City through developer contributions. Politically, the strategy provided the opportunity to minimise greenbelt development in development-averse constituencies.

The council has supported redeveloping the Leith and Granton docks and industrial sites for a mix of uses including housing since the 1980s. Market-led gentrification around Leith, the relocation of the Scottish Office in the mid-1990s, and eventually a Leith Docks regeneration strategy on land belonging to Forth Ports (Kerr, 2005), provided impetus to plans for significant regeneration of Edinburgh's waterfront. A series of complex land ownerships and differing objectives made land assembly in Leith and Granton difficult Kerr (2005). By the mid-2000s, the major landowner in Leith, Forth Ports, was in the process of selling off land for sporadic apartment developments as demand for housing in the City grew. At the same time, Edinburgh's tram project was approved, with a plan to link the waterfront with the City and west of Edinburgh. By 2008, a masterplan emerged for a mixed-use community encompassing up to 16,000 houses over 20 years on the Leith portion of the waterfront alone, with plans approved for thousands more houses in the Granton area.

These plans were rendered unviable by the Global Financial Crisis which saw land values plummet and the market for inner city apartment building in Edinburgh shrink significantly. Added to this, the failure of the tram project, which was eventually opened with only half the anticipated network (it did not get near Leith), cost double the estimated budget (£375m over budget), and took twice as long to build as planned. The outcome for the City's housing strategy is that the wider waterfront it is expected to provide only 11,000 housing units under the LDP 2016 rather than the 20,000-30,000 that had once been expected. This has caused a problem for Edinburgh as a planning authority because the shortfall of houses must be found elsewhere in the City.

At the Edinburgh LDP examination in 2016, the Council's position was that Edinburgh's waterfront clearly fit the requirements of Scottish Planning Policy and could take a significant portion of the City's housing requirements. Developers argued that the waterfront would not even deliver the reduced volumes that the Council expected it to. The plan included greenfield sites in the greenbelt to account for this and for the fact that the Scottish Government had raised the overall housing requirement for the region. Overall, the LDP examination found that there would be a shortfall of allocations in the City's plan in its early stages compared to the (SESplan) SDP housing requirement. So the plan eventually adopted in November 2016, after various SDP delays, starts out with a clear admission that it will not provide enough housing to meet the SDP requirements. In this sense, the Edinburgh LDP can be viewed as a failure because a smooth (and depoliticised) path towards growth was not established. The following section of the chapter unravels the implications of this for our understanding of Scottish planning.

On the waterfront

In an interview, a former chair of the Planning Committee Edinburgh reflected with regret on the fact that senior officers and councillors never really committed to the idea of pursuing the waterfront development until just before it was hit by the GFC. While the Council talked about the potential of the waterfront and liked the idea, he considered that issues including land assembly, tram links, and working with investors were complicated and crucially not something with sufficient political capital at the time: "The chief executive always thought more about the Council than the City. He was going to have retired by the time it came around and it wasn't really an issue for him" (Interview 43: Former Chair of Planning Committee, Edinburgh). Interestingly, this short-termism is something that is usually associated with the five-year life cycle of the politician; in this case, a politician makes the same point around the cycle of senior officers in the Council.

Another more fundamental point came from a planning consultant who had worked closely with Forth Ports the land owner at the time the masterplan process and planning application were being developed (2005-2008):

It was never viable. I mean, they were trying to get a permission which they were then going to vary the terms of. In other words, the cost of implementing that permission was not achievable. But things were good, pre-crash. You know, it was

like, let's get the permissions and then sort this stuff out later. But just as they were getting their permissions, you know, the bottom fell out of the flat market in Edinburgh like nothing. Just gone. (Interview 23: Planning Consultant, Edinburgh).

The difference in meaning attributed to the planning applications and permissions between developers and planning authorities is clear. From this perspective, the visions, masterplans, and planning permissions are all there to be continually negotiated. Planning authorities, such as Edinburgh, will always be aware that in the discretionary Scottish system, negotiations will continue throughout planning processes. However, it was interesting to hear a developer view that the waterfront permission was never viable in the agreed form in the first place. The concept was fundamentally flawed from the outset.

This was an issue with the discretionary planning system, which is market-led and requires a cushion of viability which is obviously tenuously balanced in a fluctuating market. The quote below, from an urban designer who worked in Edinburgh at the time, sums this up. It also demonstrates the direct effect of the failure of the waterfront strategy: which is that the market gravitates to locations that are easier to develop:

The way we do things is you hand it out to the market then you try to get a strategy out of what comes back in and then you build a plan from there. Looking at Leith you are trying to achieve European masterplanned approach using a Scottish planning system which it just can't do so there's always going to be an impasse which means that by default you have developers coming up on the outside with the all sorts of plans such as the Garden District proposals out there (Interview 34, Urban Designer, Edinburgh 2016).

A planning consultant considered the strategy that was being employed by the council as inherently unfair to renters and aspiring homeowners:

There are some Edinburgh officers who believe that you use the greenbelt boundary as a mechanism to encourage regeneration. Tom⁸ was explicitly saying this at the examination last week. I mean ok that's been done before elsewhere and it has that effect eventually. But it's what happens in the interim? The only reason it stacks up

⁸ Name changed

is because house prices and land values go up so much because of lack of supply that it makes it worthwhile to develop those sites. But in the meantime, your affordability problem has just got a whole lot worse [...] to hear Tom say, you know, “no we still need focussing on the waterfront and it’s all capable of being developed”. I don’t think he believes that, but he knows that’s what his members need him to say (Interview 23: Planning Consultant, Edinburgh, 2016).

Greenbelt restrictions were being used explicitly to raise land prices in the City and enhance the viability of brownfield sites. There are clear winners and losers in such a strategy. Homeowners in Edinburgh see the asset value of their homes increase. As this occurs, many households then have to move beyond Edinburgh only to commute back in to the City, and many renters (and buyers) who remain in the City can only afford to do so by accepting poorer housing conditions and rising prices. The exchange referred to above took place at the Edinburgh Local Development Plan examination hearing (January 2016). From the developer’s perspective, officers have clearly been obeying the directions of the politicians. This was a common perspective in the research: that politicians in Edinburgh set policy and that officers followed, whereas in Aberdeen this dynamic was more complex.

Finally, another planning consultant reflected on the impact on the failure of the waterfront strategy and what this reveals about market-led planning; the wishful thinking of politically derived development strategies in such circumstances; and the current state of Scottish planning:

I don’t think Forth Ports themselves did anything wrong. What they exposed was the naivety and the lack of commercial awareness that most planning authorities have. There’s nothing wrong with these projects, and there’s nothing wrong with having a bit of ambition. But one, you need a vision. Two, you need a realistic vision, and three; you need to be able to think on your feet when it doesn’t happen. And planning in the way it’s run in this country just now is not particularly good at that (Interview 22: Planning Consultant, Edinburgh/Aberdeen, 2016).

Edinburgh’s inability to achieve its spatial strategy has meant that in effect this vision is in limbo, with an idea that communities, developers, and politicians agree is a good one in theory but with no way of making that happens until the market ‘returns’. The City has remained committed to this vision in policy terms through its recently adopted LDP

(2016) and the SDP (2014) that overarches that. However, this has meant that the attention of developers has increasingly turned towards the City's greenbelt. In effect, unlike Aberdeen, the city never achieved a working consensus on its development strategy. Politically, the easiest strategy has been to hope that the waterfront strategy will reduce demand for greenbelt development, or that neighbouring authorities will take significant amounts of Edinburgh's growth. Developers, however, have been put in a stronger position in terms of pressuring the Council for 'market-led growth'

Edinburgh's greenbelt and the persisting politics of locating housing growth

The thing you have to remember with Edinburgh is that the waterfront was for so long at the very heart of their development strategy. And a lot of councillors still don't accept the developer line which is, it's all constrained. It'll happen when it happens, but we're not going to do it now. Now I tend to believe in market forces, which means if it isn't happening, it isn't happening. You can't make people develop (Interview 23: Planning Consultant, Edinburgh 2016).

It was never about Leith versus Greenfield, it was always about both. Particularly when you look at the numbers that came out of the SESplan and the HNDA on this, you know, anybody with half a brain could see that it was about both and finding ways to get both happening. But, politically, that still seems unacceptable to politicians in Edinburgh

(Interview 30: private housebuilding representative/consultant, 2016).

The statements above encapsulate the developer perspective of the drivers and outcomes of Edinburgh's housing development strategy. Councillors' faith in market delivery at the waterfront had led to an outcome that they cannot deal with without facing severe political consequences. The solution is to choose not to face up to this by developing another spatial strategy which stands a better chance of delivery. The second statement refers to the outcome of the SESplan examination process which required the Council to allocate more housing, through its LDP, than it had argued was necessary. The view from these two developer interests was actually commonly held from other perspectives: that Edinburgh would not deal with the political ramifications of developing on its most politically contentious greenbelt

sites, even if councillors knew the probable outcome was to be forced to by the Scottish Government.

This section of the chapter primarily analyses why Edinburgh's Councillors could not agree on where to develop rather than rolling out growth on the greenbelt, as was the case in Aberdeen. The politics of development on Edinburgh's western fringes, as demonstrated in this chapter, is not one of simple 'nimby' versus developer interests, and the rationale for communities opposing development is not as straightforward as being 'anti-development'. Opening up these arguments from a variety of perspectives provides an understanding of the continued politics of housing growth in Scotland and the way in which the planning system is used to deal with this.

Edinburgh's strategy of developing the greenbelt for employment is quite similar to that of Aberdeen's in terms of the way employment development on its edge has often been politically acceptable as long as it is located away from higher value residential areas. In the 1970s to the 1990s in Edinburgh, the Gyle retail and employment development and Edinburgh Park grew alongside post-war public housing expansions to the west of the City. The public sector was heavily involved as a landowner and partner in the Gyle and Edinburgh Park developments, and these locations have played a significant part in Edinburgh's post-industrial economic development strategy. There are two points to be clear about at this point: first, there are obvious basic requirements for employment development in the greenbelt and this is not the same political issue as housing; the second is that in each case, and particularly in Edinburgh's, the public sector has played a significant role in opening up the greenbelt to development for employment.

The previous section demonstrated that the politics of housing are partly a manifestation of structural forces that have prevented the city from realising an ambition to see a market-led strategy in the City's waterfront. The aversion to greenbelt development is partly caught up in the traditional UK aversion to urban sprawl that has become firmly rooted in the mind-set of officials, councillors and constituents in Edinburgh (Hall 1973; Hague, 2005b). From this developer view, the ideal strategy has been proved not to be deliverable. So in the absence of a technical rationality, they view the current planning strategy of minimising land release as purely politically driven:

It clearly makes no sense and I just don't see how they can believe that deep down, as planning officers. But I mean there's a very clear political steer about what is and isn't acceptable strategically, and you know, with housing, large scale greenfield expansion around Edinburgh has just never been politically acceptable. Planning here seems to have now come down to 'well we have to keep Edinburgh for the Edinburgher's' kind of thing' (Interview 30: Housebuilding/Planning Consultant, Edinburgh, 2016).

A planning manager in a neighbouring authority agreed with this characterisation: "It's certainly been the persistent issue. Now I think there are signs that officers see the need to release greenbelt, but politicians in Edinburgh still don't" (Interview 44: Planning Authority, Edinburgh city-region, 2016). There was a broad perception, not just from developers, that the technical case surrounding the issue was smothered by the politics of locating housing growth.

Building on the greenbelt can be considered a logical outcome of the need to accommodate development, or alternatively a sign that planning is not really planning at all but simply follows the market to the most profitable location for landowner interests. However, the convenor of the Council's planning committee displayed no signs of an obsession with a 'sacrosanct' greenbelt ideal:

Yes the greenbelt's a major issue but I've said this before. There is no such thing as 'greenbelt'. Strangely enough, they're trying to protect something which actually doesn't exist. There's no geographic definition of what the greenbelt is. There are certain protected areas like the Pentlands for instance. You've got protection there but none of the other greenbelt has. So what then happens is you make a plan, you then release a bit of area which comes out of the 'greenbelt'. That's how we actually treat it and by doing that you're not developing the city in a very structured way (Interview 45, Planning chair, Edinburgh city-region, 2016).

This perspective, from the leading politician dealing with planning in the City, that there was no such thing as the greenbelt and no definition of it, severely contradicts a wider view that the Council is fixated on the greenbelt and is technically also incorrect. However, as the interview went on it was clear that he considered that the greenbelt is a policy construct, and

simply land that is protected from development until it is reviewed through various plans. The outcome of such an approach was a kind of incrementalism which, in resisting significant sprawl, was successful enough to be widely regarded as an implicit part of Edinburgh's housing land supply problem, but which has never really provided any protection as such. This particular councillor has recently become an advocate of a 'green corridor' approach for future plans, where development would be focused along arterial transport routes into the City and green wedges are protected between. If this plan gains enough traction in the next Local Development Plan, then that might represent a long-term strategy. However, this would signal a shift away from a current brownfield priority.

From the outside, Edinburgh's councillors appeared to have little concern for the underlying structures inhibiting the city's growth compact-city/brownfield first strategy. To make radical changes to planning, land reform is required, and this is not something that Scottish planning reform ever attempted to deal with. A group of six Green Party councillors in Edinburgh had been vociferous in their opposition to building on the greenbelt, arguing that something more radical is required. In an interview, a Green Councillor focused on the need for greater government powers in the land market and for land taxation. He suggested that this was not a view that other Councillors could hold because they had to stick to national party positions: "Some of the Labour councillors say, 'well, yes, I agree with you, Neil⁹, but you're being too idealistic here' and I think, well, no, you can make the same points. You're an elected councillor" (Interview 36: Green Councillor, Edinburgh). Neither planning reform, nor Edinburgh's recent experience with its growth strategy, had led to a significant challenge to the structures that inhibit the realisation of the better places in urban areas that Scottish planning is supposed to be set on achieving.

The Edinburgh LDP Process

There was a consistent Council position that SESplan housing targets had been unduly imposed because the Scottish Government had increased the housing requirement in its report on the Plan. In terms of party positions, according to a Green Party councillor's perspective, the Conservatives in the City had been split on greenbelt development depending on whether they prioritised faster growth or protectionism. The SNP-Labour coalition could not come to a plausible agreement on accommodating the housing requirement of SESplan. In the excerpt

⁹ name changed

below, the Green Councillor demonstrates a sense that officers and councillors were only really united on the need to be creative in dealing with the SESplan housing requirement in order to minimise the release of new housing land. The interview took place at the time when the LDP had, eventually, been submitted to the Scottish Government reporters unit for Examination:

When it came to the LDP and providing enough land to meet the Government's targets I think there was a strong desire amongst a lot of the officials to make sure it was managed as best as possible so that we didn't give up too much. There was a definite feeling that we will try and manage...we'll find ways, we'll find windfall sites, you know we'll do this, that, and the other rather than simply say "oh let them have as much as they want" (Interview 36: Green Party Councillor, Edinburgh).

By the time the LDP was finalised and submitted for government examination in 2016, Councillors in Edinburgh had been dealing with losing developer appeals for sites in the greenbelt. These were lost on the grounds that the Council had not maintained 5 years of effective supply of housing land as required by Scottish Planning Policy (2014). Scottish Planning Policy also promotes a town centre, and brownfield first strategy across Scotland, but housing land supply takes precedence over this. As a late measure to deal with this, Councillors inserted a note of support with their submitted LDP for the allocation of land for major greenbelt development in a site developers had named the Garden District (discussed later). This was land far away from any neighbouring areas, beyond the Edinburgh bypass. Strangely, however, this was the exact site that had recently been ruled out for inclusion in the LDP, by the very same councillors, on the grounds that it represented unsustainable urban sprawl.

When the plan was submitted for examination, one SNP councillor with a constituency in the greenbelt branded it, in the local press, a 'pile of mince'. The sense of disarray around the LDP portrayed in the local press and amongst the development industry largely rung true from this Councillor's perspective:

The LDP process, well yeah it was a kind of lethargy on the part of the administration. An inability to bite the bullet and realise what they were being forced to do instead of saying, look, this is wrong, the requirement is too large, and saying

so publically and loudly they tried to fudge it and fudge it and fudge it until they got to a point where they couldn't go any further.

Even the final submission was...well they asked for 'certain areas' to be included after all. And again that was just cobbled together into some hideous compromise which didn't quite work. When it went in, it was a case of 'well this is just going to have to do' (Interview 36, Green Councillor, Edinburgh).

From this councillor's perspective, SNP councillors in Edinburgh generally tried to tow a line set by their Government in Holyrood on the increased housing requirement that they had to implement through SESplan. He also considered them generally to be "more gung-ho and neoliberal" about the primacy of economic development in the planning system. Yet this position could not hold because certain SNP and Labour councillors in greenbelt areas opposed the plan in order to protect their constituency (and their own) interests.

Dealing with the LDP allocations: the failure of Edinburgh's planning strategy

Around 15% of the new housing land required through the Edinburgh LDP came in the form of new greenbelt releases. Aberdeen officers had won the argument with their councillors for far higher allocations. The Green Councillor accepted that this was not evidence of a 'greenbelt busting' plan and that officers and councillors had minimised such releases by ensuring as many sites as possible in the existing housing land supply were considered as 'effective' housing land. This was partly by arguing the viability and effectiveness of the waterfront allocations. However, from his perspective, the 15% figure was, in fact, misleading. The reasoning for this is important: in a market-led system, these sites would be relatively quickly developed whilst the brownfield sites in the city remained difficult to develop without major government intervention or a sudden return to pre GFC bank lending. Because of this, it was likely that further greenbelt land would have to be continually released and the Council's strategy would never be achieved.

A national housebuilder's management team was interviewed. Collectively, the three participants had decades of involvement in developing housing in Edinburgh. They discussed how this required a range of strategies which would keep them in the business of building houses in the region in the long run: including brownfield and greenbelt, with long term

approaches of strategic land promotion to short term land purchases and applications and risky appeals for quicker development:

With SESplan I think those neighbouring authorities saw it as an opportunity to make Edinburgh face up to its own housing demand, so did developers, and so you've seen that through the number of successful greenbelt appeals that have taken place in Edinburgh recently (Interview 46: Housebuilder, Edinburgh 2016).

The situation whereby Edinburgh offloaded much of its housing requirement to its neighbours had not been ideal for developers. However, previously, as long as the neighbouring authorities had been willing to engage in the strategy then, from this developer's perspective, it had been a way to keep building and selling houses in a region where there was high demand. SESplan and its problems had turned the developers' focus back to Edinburgh because neighbouring authorities had stopped accepting as much of Edinburgh's housing land requirement. So collectively developers were not getting the overall level of new housing allocations that they wished to see but individually, some, with land, had been put into a strong position when it came to winning individual planning appeals in Edinburgh's greenbelt.

In such cases of ineffective land supply, the planning process shifts, even temporarily, to a more technocratic one enforced by Ministers and Government Reporters. This overarching power of central government hangs as a threat to planning authorities to meet their own responsibilities on housing their population. To some, the technical threat might be deemed 'post-political', but it is a situation invoked when local politicians have failed to meet statutory responsibilities entrusted to them as a planning authority. It is this scenario that planners in Aberdeen used as they pressed the growth agenda and ushered councillors through a development plan process timetable that was markedly shorter than councillors had been used to pre-reform. This hurried process, encouraged by tighter plan-making targets via planning reform, was discussed by a councillor in Aberdeenshire (Interview, 5). From her perspective, this demonstrated an emerging lack of democratic oversight, which was inhibiting good plan making. Officers invoked the scenario of 'planning by appeal' and this appeared to have worked to keep the development plan making process on track in Aberdeen. However, in contrast, a planner in a neighbouring authority to Edinburgh considered the politics of approving housing permissions and allocating housing to have reached a point

where there was no political capital to be gained by even taking planning decisions let alone keeping development plan processes on target. There Councillors had become happy to allow the Scottish Government to take decisions for them:

The City of Edinburgh actually wants the Scottish Government to take the decisions. The elected members in Edinburgh now get so much heat from their community councils and indeed their MSPs and even MPs, that they just want the Scottish Government to take the difficult decisions (Interview 44, Plan manager, Edinburgh city region, 2016).

The same planner considered the underlying issue behind the breakdown in the earlier SESplan process (see chapter 6) to have been due to the issue of infrastructure provision that would support any future planning strategy. East Lothian has traditionally been less willing than some authorities to take Edinburgh's housing than its neighbours such as West Lothian and Midlothian, which as former industrial centres have tended to use Edinburgh's housing growth as a form of 'regeneration'. By the time that the SESplan bargaining process over housing allocations was underway, all neighbouring authorities had become more averse to development. This aversion was a result of experiencing the 'pains' outweighing the 'gains' of housing growth. From this planner's perspective, the neighbouring authorities had reached their infrastructural limits and in a context of public sector austerity, and a planning system that did little to address this, they had begun resisting Edinburgh's future housing growth:

Edinburgh is the driver of the regional economy but Edinburgh claims to be constrained by its own greenbelt and therefore exports an awful lot of its growth. Now a lot of the neighbouring authorities are starting to say, now come on Edinburgh you can't export all your housing growth and expect us to pay for the equivalent infrastructure to cope with that. Some might say if Edinburgh is to pursue that policy then they should actually make payments to the landward authorities (Interview 44, Plan manager, Edinburgh city region, 2016).

This statement from a development plan manager in the South East of Scotland highlights the consequences of the shift towards a market-based approach to housing and infrastructure provision in Scotland. Without any significant alteration to powers over land ownership and land value taxation, the public sector is left in a particularly difficult position when the legacy

of underinvestment in infrastructure over the years collides with a context of a growing population and public sector austerity. The provision of public infrastructure through the market is a key issue in the politics of development in any part of a city. Whilst at the waterfront there was the idea that housing development would deliver infrastructure, regenerate an area, and help provide a rapid transport network, on the edge of the city and in commuter towns there was no sense that places would actually improve through development.

Cammofields: housing in Edinburgh's greenbelt and the view from a community

Having considered the perspectives of politicians, civil servants, and public and private sector planners on the strategic issue and the politics of housing in the greenbelt, the following section now considers the views of a community council in a greenbelt area under threat of development through the Edinburgh LDP process.

Cammo is an affluent suburban community in the west of Edinburgh which had been the focus of the most high-profile debate over the allocation of housing land in the City's greenbelt throughout the LDP process. A site for 700 homes on the western edge of Edinburgh was identified by developers and then controversially included in the City's proposed LDP. While the site's selection was hardly surprising given its location – flat low lying land sitting between two of the main arterial routes into Edinburgh and located within the city side of the bypass – the site 'Cammo Fields' became one of the most highly contested locations because of a vociferous and well-organised resident group campaign.

The developer promoting the site through the LDP, aware of the run of successful planning appeals in Edinburgh, applied for planning permission before the site had gone through the full LDP allocation process. This ratcheted up the resident campaign opposed to the development. Controversially, the developer successfully won an appeal based on the Council's non-determination of the application. However, the wider area was a key marginal seat politically, and as Holyrood elections approached in spring of 2016, the SNP minister responsible for planning used his powers to 'call-in' the application. The call-in essentially paused the development by supporting the Council's position that the application was premature. While the resident campaign assumed they had successfully resisted the allocation, the site was eventually allocated in the adopted LDP in November 2016.

The Community Council had opposed the allocation, but the highest profile campaign on the issues was actually conducted by a residents' campaign, Cammo Residents Association, which sprang up on this single issue. The two groups did not have a particularly good working relationship, and the Residents Association claimed to be taking on the issue as they perceived the Community Council have not been strong enough in fighting the application. In an interview, the Chair of the Community Council suggested that the Residents Association had misunderstood the workings of the planning system and reflected on his Community Council's position on development. The interview took place at the time when the application had been halted through the Ministerial call-in (early 2016). The community councillor viewed this as an 'entirely political' act (Interview 31: Community Council, West Edinburgh) and reflected on a meeting with a local City of Edinburgh Councillor who had been dealing with constituents concerns over the rise in planning appeals around the edge of the City:

We had a long meeting with Councillor who deals with the community councils and she's also on the planning committee and we said look we're totally and utterly fed up, she said so am I and I'm on the planning committee she said what's happening is developers are simply bypassing the council we have no power at all so they go straight to appeal and then they go to the minister who keeps approving them. So the process is breaking down at that point because the councillors couldn't influence things and if they did they were just completely overruled. I don't know who was more depressed: me or her!

Here the councillor in question was either playing an obvious political strategy of blame deflection (it is the developers' fault) or honestly saw no possible role that politicians had played in Edinburgh getting to the stage where its development plan process had broken down and its housing supply was being found to be ineffective with power handed over to the Scottish Government and, ultimately, to developers. If it is the latter, then this displays the naivety of politicians that developers discussed.

The interview provided a deeper understanding of what, from a Community Council perspective, the problem was with the development of land for housing. To do this it is worth analysing the Community Council's perceptions of their problems with the impacts of development and the role that they play in terms of trying to balance the needs of the current community with the broader need for growth in Edinburgh:

We're not opposed to growth. But it seems with the local development plans they are just looking for some holes. Some holes in the ground where they can stick some houses. If they achieve that they call it "planning". In our view that is not planning at all that is just sticking houses in a hole. There's no concern for infrastructure be it roads, be it health or whatever. Therefore, all these things are going to degrade if that housing development goes ahead. So, it's housing development with nothing alongside it. We believe that's faulty. And alright it's not a planning issue, the National Health Service, but if we are going to get any service from our local health service which is absolutely up the gunnels well it's a planning issue for us. So not a planning issue? Well it's a big issue for people living here.

This argument is one raised continually and faced by actors in planning process since its inception as a statutory process: that of defining a 'planning issue'. While there are clear legal definitions of this, planning must still take account of (but not necessarily resolve) various and at times conflicting roles of the state. The point he refers to might have been something that could be considered as falling into the sphere of Scotland's system of 'community planning' - the partnership approach to planning better services in places in Scotland. This is an example of the continued inability to fuse community and land use planning through a spatially based planning reform. More importantly, no system would have been able to deliver such infrastructure alongside development in a time of public sector financial constraints, and private sector borrowing and spending constraints.

The community councillor reflected on the role of such planners. He considered his own interactions with 'planners' as not particularly problematic. In fact, there was a pragmatism overall from this interviewee around the need for development. In a similar way to the Aberdeen greenbelt community councillors, he considered his role as something of a conduit with the planning authority on one side and what he thought were anti-development tendencies in his own community on the other, with his Community Council trying to mediate this by working with the planning department. The reason for the anti-development tendencies were not simply an aversion to development per se but to development without infrastructure, and so a failure of an integrated spatial planning. The literature on Edinburgh, as SPR was being developed, reflected predictions for a broadened role for planning and an integrating role (Vigar, 2009). Here the 'planning issue' and the disconnect of services such

as transport and health represented a failure to achieve the aims of ‘strategic spatial planning’.

The real problem is the transport department because their job is to deal with the transport issues. They’ll say ‘our job is to enable development’. It’s absolute madness. The officials in terms of planning can be okay but the ancillary reports that have to go in with the application, like transport, well we worry about because we just get totally ignored by that lot (Interview 31: Community Council, West Edinburgh).

This idea that the transport service considers their role to be to ‘enable development’ encapsulates the positive pro-development mantra of strategic spatial planning in Scotland. I reflected on this point made by the community councillor and the Edinburgh LDP examination hearing in 2016, which I observed for this research. There, very unusually, Transport Scotland openly criticised the Edinburgh LDP. They considered that as it stood transport had not been appropriately assessed, and that the plan would create issues of public safety without more specific mitigation in certain locations. However, in line with the community councillor’s view, what was very revealing was a statement from their representative which was that today’s Transport Scotland were, in an official’s words, “no longer a predict and provide service.” ‘Predict and provide’ conjured up images of rational planners predicting growth in car use and therefore building roads to accommodate (and encourage such growth). Their contemporary role was essentially to try and encourage a modal shift in planning, but really to accommodate development and suggest how to mitigate impacts. While moving away from ‘predict and provide’ it was still not one where they were involved in early strategic planning and investment. While the rational technocratic status of planning has diminished, it appears that in its place Scotland’s strategic spatial plan approach, a vacuous and underfunded ‘enabling development’ approach has emerged.

I discussed this with a recently retired civil servant who had a major role in planning reform:

I think it is a huge issue, because I remember having discussions with Transport Scotland and saying, “okay, are you telling me that around Edinburgh, no place can accommodate development, you know, is that what you're saying? Well, we need to run this past ministers to say, no, we can't take any more development.” Would ministers accept that? Well, of course they wouldn't. So, I don't think that the

whole Edinburgh experience was very good at facing up to those sorts of issues (Interview 47, former chief civil servant, Scotland 2016).

The problem for planning in Scotland, and the one that communities feel the effects of, is that strategic spatial planning has not yet provided the 'joined up spatially based governance' that had once been hoped for. In a context of public and private sector austerity, delivering timely infrastructure through planning appears even less likely.

The community councillor was very aware that the Council had a duty to meet a housing requirement and that to enable this to happen they had to negotiate with developers who were responsible for funding much of the infrastructure. From his perspective, the obvious problem was that the developer would be aiming for the minimum possible provision and the community council was unable to influence the Council, through the planning process, in order to get what they saw as the required provision of community infrastructure: "why would they (developers) care? They aren't going to have to live here". The community councillor considered his community's idea of community viability, and the developer's idea of development viability, to be completely incompatible.

The compromise planning strategy represented by Edinburgh's LDP is a failure to plan strategically, not just on the waterfront but also to deal with a planning failure and find another strategy. When the community councillor described planning in Edinburgh as "filling-in holes", he was not far off the description that a housebuilder provided:

Edinburgh has a premium as a market, but by its very nature is relatively constrained in terms of open space. It's grown to the boundary of the bypass. We, as an industry, well as our chief executive is fond of saying: "we've been very clever over the last thirty years in being able to find every little scrap of land to build houses on." Whether it can take much more without a very significant review of the greenbelt is questionable though (Interview 46, Housebuilder, Edinburgh, 2016).

This section has revealed the story behind the failure of a strategy and the inability to find an alternative when planning for growth in Scotland. It has done this from a variety of perspectives. The purpose of the planning system in this case is not to roll out growth but in the absence of that any purpose becomes unclear. It appears that avoiding the politics of

growth on the greenbelt and avoiding any radical assessment of the structures shaping the city's spatial strategy is the strategy itself.

Wishing away the politics of housing development: west Edinburgh and spatial planning strategies

Edinburgh International Business Gateway

The final section of the chapter now moves further west, to land lying beyond the physical boundary of the Edinburgh bypass: land which has been deemed unsuitable for housing expansion. This chapter and the preceding chapter have made it clear that housing development in the Edinburgh greenbelt and employment development in the greenbelt are, politically at least, very different matters. Edinburgh's westward expansion for employment development has been identified officially since at least 2003 through the West Edinburgh Planning Framework (WEPF). This was eventually revoked in 2014 having served its purpose, with the principles of development there incorporated into the NPF3, the SESplan SDP, and the emerging Edinburgh LDP.

Described in the WEPF (2008) as 'a national asset', it should perhaps be a place that demonstrates the benefits of strategic spatial planning in full effect. It is located on land adjacent Edinburgh Airport, where two decades of road, rail, and tram investments have now created Scotland's most easily accessible location. A significant part of the WEPF is land identified now as the 'Edinburgh International Business Gateway' (EIBG); a nationally important development in the NPF and one seen by successive Scottish Government's as key to Scotland's international economic competitiveness. In regional planning terms it is an 'internationally recognised area of economic importance' (SESplan, 2014).

However, while there are signs that this site might become a positive example of strategic spatial planning and the mediating of state-market relations in Scotland, this site and the area surrounding have recently been a battleground upon which the contestation for Edinburgh's spatial strategy has played out. In 2016, as Edinburgh councillors desperately searched for housing allocations that were likely to appease development averse constituents, they turned their attention to the EIBG and more isolated land nearby as potential sites for significant housing allocations.

Studying this location in the mid-2000s, Vigar (2009) describes the site as something of a signifier of Edinburgh's inability to handle strategic planning. This was compared with Glasgow's tradition of regional planning coherence and pro-development city-regional politics (Vigar, 2009; Goodstadt, 2007). The WEPF in that study was described by civil servants as a reaction by the then Scottish Executive to the site's strategic importance, the politics of development in Edinburgh, and the lack of strategic planning skills available at the time in the Council, and central government decided to take the initiative and lead on its planning.

Reflecting on Allmendinger's conception of post-political neoliberal spatial governance (2016), the WEPF can be considered an example of the post-political nature of spatial planning; a 'soft space' in which the politics of development are suspended through a usurping of plan making and political control from the planning authority to a less tangible and accountable body than the local authority. In an interview with a former head of the Council's planning committee, the view that the Council could not be trusted to get on with planning and development at that time was rigorously disputed. He discussed the Council's long history of proactive engagement in development in the area:

I – In West Edinburgh we'd been very successful as a Council, we had a lot of land that had been developed out there – a lot of that was bought up by forward thinking estates officers decades ago. Then there's the land out at the airport. My predecessor was taken utterly by surprise one day he was at a conference with a minister and the minister suddenly announced that the Scottish Government was going to do the planning for that.

R – The west Edinburgh planning framework?

I – Yeah. They were slow it was bad and it didn't do the work. It was an outrageous thing to do and what I think what probably our director had known and had talked to the Scottish Government and told ministers because he knew there'd be some kind of row about the site which he wanted to avoid.

R – It's been said that the Scottish government didn't trust Edinburgh to get on with it.

I – Well they were wrong and their plan was wrong. What it needed was infrastructure, like everything else: the tram, the waterfront, the south east wedge¹⁰, this. It wasn't about putting lines on piece of paper, that's the easy bit. It was infrastructure money.

(Interview 43, former head of planning committee, Edinburgh LPA, 2016)

The Scottish government had decided to lead on a nationally important location for business development and had possibly done this with the blessing of senior members of the Council who had presumed that this would simplify the process where multiple landowners (including the Council) would be subject to a single planning framework. Scottish Government involvement in this respect supports the idea that the Council did not want a political fight over the site. From this former councillor's perspective, the real issue had never been one of debate over whether to develop this prime location in the greenbelt, it was an issue of how to make development happen and who should pay for it. Transport infrastructure had undoubtedly improved in the wider area but there was still no sign of the money to actually get an internationally renowned business location up and running. These are issues which have not been resolved through strategic spatial planning in Scotland. The West Edinburgh Planning Framework has traits of the 'soft spaces' and 'fuzzy boundaries' that Allmendinger and Haughton (2009) associate with English spatial planning. Looking at this example, such fuzzy ideas and boundaries are, perhaps, not a cynical idea. It is possible that planners have lost the ability to say 'here are the constraints and opportunities of each site, the government will deliver development timeously at this location'. Such concepts are only 'fuzzy' or 'deferred' or 'displaced' because there are not the skills or resources, ability or power to make specific things happen in specific places at a specific time.

By 2016, land in the WEPF on paper included the International Business Gateway (IBG) and in physical terms the wider transport infrastructure was largely in place. However, as an exceptionally well-located site primed for development and in the context of Edinburgh's desperate search for housing land, the attention of developers and Councillors in 2016 turned,

¹⁰ The example raised about the 'South East Wedge' One of Edinburgh's long-running strategic development locations, allocated for around 20 years now, the idea has been that the land south-east of Edinburgh would absorb a significant amount of the region's housing demand on the edge of Edinburgh. The land encompasses a part of the former Midlothian coalfields and falls across both City of Edinburgh Council and Midlothian Council boundaries. Development has been delayed by land stability issues, wrangles between the Councils and the Scottish Government over infrastructure provision and funding, the GFC and changing private sector developers, but has significant development of the site is now finally underway.

perhaps inevitably, towards the housing potential of this site and land around it. Before presenting and analysing the outcome of this sudden shift, this section of the chapter first focuses on a site nearby but completely unallocated greenbelt site that has become known recently as ‘Edinburgh’s Garden District’.

The ‘Garden District’

Greenbelt land separated from Edinburgh by the city’s bypass, but near the IBG, has become the focus of a proposal named ‘Edinburgh’s Garden District’ by land promoters. This includes up to 6000 houses and it represents an attempt to conclusively breach the physical boundary of the Edinburgh bypass and begin build housing in this as yet off-limits area of greenbelt. Since the bypass was built in the 1980’s, developing significant housing land ‘beyond the bypass’ has been an idea that Edinburgh’s development strategies have consistently resisted. The ‘Garden District’ is important because a proposal with such a disregard for the City’s housing land use strategy actually gained the support of councillors in 2016. This occurred at the point where arguments over where to locate Edinburgh’s growth had reached something of a breaking point. The Council had submitted its LDP for Examination by Scottish Government reporters and councillors had already declared it a failure as they faced numerous residents’ campaigns such as that described here at Cammo Field. In taking a sudden decision to allocate significant housing land ‘out of sight and out of mind’, regardless of arguments around sustainability, there are similarities with the decisions taken by councillors in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire.

An international team of consultants working for the high-profile landowner, Sir David Murray, promoted the benefits of the ‘Garden District’ by couching it in sustainability terms. The promotion of the site for development was carried out through international design and public consultation firms and planning consultants who were ingrained in the local politics of development. In 2016, as the Council fought and lost planning appeals on high profile greenbelt sites, Councillors spotted an opportunity offered by the Garden District. As a relatively isolated site which could accommodate thousands of houses, there was an abrupt shift from a united officer-councillor position on the ‘unsustainability’ of the site to an idea that actually had the potential to quell rising anger to development around the City fringes. Aware of the success of planning appeals and aware of the difficult dilemma councillors were in, despite recently failing to get their site in the LDP, they submitted a speculative planning

application. Councillors overruled their officers' recommendation and approved this as phase 1 of the 'Garden District' – a sustainable extension of Edinburgh.

While the change in decision on the Garden District was abrupt, interviews with councillors and developers revealed that there was a gradual change around the politics of greenbelt, which had been building for at least two years. The idea of 'green wedges' in future plans, referred to earlier, is a signifier of this. One interviewee representing developer interests described how senior politicians in Edinburgh had been privately telling developers that they were beginning to accept that the west of Edinburgh would have to be opened up to significant housing development in future. However, in 2015-16, and as Edinburgh produced its LDP, that point had not been reached as the Council continued its focus on a brownfield first strategy. For one developer, what caused the sudden shift, and split between councillors and their own officers opposed to Garden District, was purely short-term political interest:

They've suddenly waking up to the fact that actually, this may have been more politically acceptable than releases right in on the edge of it, because no matter where you release within the city boundary of Edinburgh, you get huge public opposition. We've already seen that. Cammo was probably the most vociferous and most high-profile resistance, you know, they were running to the press every other day and arguing against that one. But nobody actually lives out there (Garden District). There's been pressure to go out there for a while now but I think the dam has well and truly burst (Interview 30 housebuilder/planning consultant, Edinburgh, 2016).

With the decision by Councillors to press for a major allocation of thousands of houses in the Garden District, there were remarkable similarities with the allocation of Elsick, and not just in terms of the 'out of sight out of mind' politics of housing allocation. The project team included the very same international design firm, DPZ, and consultation and public relations experts that Elsick promoters had hired in to support their own allocation in Aberdeenshire. The SSCI concept was again being deployed in Scotland, this time to promote major development on a relatively dislocated site which greatly contradicted Edinburgh's stated sustainable development strategy.

In hiring Andres Duany's Florida-based DPZ practice, the landowner of the 'Garden District' demonstrated that the concept of sustainability could be utilised to tempt controversy averse politicians who were desperate to save their own political futures. With its links to the Princes

Foundation and support of the Scottish Government through the Sustainable Communities Initiative, they would have recognised the success that the firm was having in convincing councils across Scotland on the case for major greenfield developments in housing-pressured areas. The Garden District design utilised the same traditionalist/new urbanist design principles and discourse of the Scottish Sustainable Communities Initiative. The same SSCI charrette process was carried out as well, in west Edinburgh. This engaged the local population of the area (or what exists of it at least). It is important to reiterate that the site is not in anybody's 'backyard', so to speak, and so gauging public engagement is again very difficult. In buying-in the services of DPZ, the promoters of the site were buying the legitimacy that comes with an international firm that the Scottish government had promoted and paid to play a major role in the SSCI process – a key part of Scottish planning reform's design agenda.

An Edinburgh-based architect and urbanist with significant experience in promoting the Government's town centre and brownfield first approaches to development reflected on this:

Andres Duany is doing the greenbelt busting stuff round David Murray's land which is all about this raising value of farmland. Big glitzy stuff and basically you do everything wrong by pulling development out of there, but then you try and put a blindfold over people by getting him talking about, he does public presentations where...

I: Yeah charrette.

R: Yes you know, a charrette is? "Do you want to live in this 20 storey housing block in Wester Hailes? Or would you prefer this wee grannie's heilan' hame¹¹?" So the community say "oh we'd prefer grannie's heilan' name". So then that allows them to build Prince Charles pedimented homes out in the greenbelt because the public say that that's what they want, which I this is just the most disgraceful charade as oppose to charrette.

¹¹ Referring to old fashioned looking houses in a romanticised Scottish vernacular

I: He seems to have got involved in Scotland through the Sustainable Communities Initiative and...

R: Yeah. He picked up a lot of...And he was obviously...They do the same thing again and again because they can. It's a disgrace how all that happened because everyone else has to go through a terrapin to get the tiniest wee job with the Government but he was just shoved enormous amounts of government money because there was a wee link up between Alex Salmond, him and the Prince of Wales. There was a wee meeting they had down at Holyrood where all that was kind of cosily agreed and caused. It's tremendously embarrassing for everyone. So now Edinburgh has all sorts of people getting excited about building outside it. That's the actual result (Architect and urbanist, 2016).

In this example, the scale and interactivity of Scotland's 'policy village' becomes clear with high-profile actors at the national and international level hatching ideas for the spending of public money, and the direction of planning and design in informal spaces and with little democratic oversight.

As the councillors scrambled to allocate housing beyond the City bypass, and approved 'the unsustainable', they also presented a letter of support to the LDP Examination stating their wish to increase a relatively small allocation of around 300 houses, which were to support the business uses at the International Business Gateway, towards a strategic allocation of 2500 houses. This represented a dramatic divergence from the NPF and SESplan supported plan for the IBG. It also completely contradicted their own plan and their officers' stated positions at the Examination.

In the end, the Government Examination of the Edinburgh LDP rejected both the Garden District proposal and the plan for up to 2500 houses at the IBG. The ministerial letter of adoption for the LDP is unusually scathing of the behaviour of Edinburgh's councillors and of the whole LDP process. It accuses Edinburgh Council of taking too long to prepare their LDP, failing to consider infrastructure properly, failing to allocate sufficient housing, and then, in the period after submission, signalling changes and making decisions that could impede the delivery of the strategy that was contained in the submitted LDP (Stewart, MSP, 2016). Essentially this was a 'slap-down' from central government to Edinburgh's

councillors, and a clear statement of central government power, forcing them to revert to the previous version of the LDP which they had worked out with their officers and publically consulted upon.

The Council's Planning Convenor's response, in the local press, captures the conflicting signals and imperatives that Councillors were weighing up:

Councillors reserve the right to suggest any changes to any report written by officials at any time. To deny otherwise would be to undermine local democracy and an individual councillor's ability to respond to the concerns of their local communities who were affected by the proposals in the LDP. We welcome confirmation from the Scottish Government that Edinburgh's LDP can now be formally adopted, providing more certainty for residents and developers (Grant, Edinburgh Evening News, 2016).

Chapter Conclusion

The statement above is an appropriate way to end this chapter. It encapsulates the arguments often made by developers and others that some politicians invoke 'local democracy' as a term that is utilised, as in this case, without a sense of wider responsibility for a sustainable spatial strategy. This raises the question of where 'local democracy' ends and electability begins. Planning in Scotland similarly shifts on a spectrum of the technical and the political, finding an appropriate place in any given situation. In the Councillor's statement, there is the assumption that at all times the technical act of planning can be overridden by 'local democracy'. The Councillor defers to the Scottish Government though, and in this respect the statement encapsulates the ultimate formal power of central government in Scottish planning.

Of course, this leaves unmentioned the informal structural powers, upon which formal planning 'systems' have been overlaid but only ever temporarily. These structures shift and evolve with little regard for formal systems that attempt to regulate it. While this makes Edinburgh's strategy incoherent, it might not necessarily make Edinburgh's planning system better or worse than Aberdeen's, rather it is just a different assemblage: planning is simply the condensation of social relations in a particular time and place.

Edinburgh's and Aberdeen's experience in planning for growth involved significantly different political processes with planning actors wielding varying powers.

In Aberdeen, a planning strategy looked likely to mark a serious shift from the growth pattern of the past. A strategy of bringing councillors and communities on board was conducted through a variety of techniques which include traits of the 'deferral, displacing and transferring of the politics of growth' (Allmendinger, 2016). This including utilising the Scotland's Sustainable Communities Initiative to allocate development concepts on a scale that would have seemed impossible only a decade before. Yet in the region there has been no fundamental reconsideration of the structural factors that inhibit the making of better places. As chapter 6 and the next chapter elaborate upon, in Aberdeen fluctuations in the global price of oil have again rendered the overall growth strategy for the region ineffective.

In Edinburgh, where the City has faced the conditions of development-averse communities on the greenbelt, visions for brownfield development on the waterfront, and developers and landowners looking to realise their own strategies through land value uplift, Edinburgh's political classes have been incapable of successfully deferring the politics of growth. Edinburgh's experience demonstrates the continuing politics of growth, even at the early development plan stage of planning, and how these become ever more fraught as planning strategies 'hit the ground'. However, each case shares a common experience of difficulties in arriving at outcomes that might be considered as 'sustainable economic growth'. Neither could possibly resolve the structural issues of infrastructure funding, market-led planning, and the fluctuating economic conditions within which strategies and plans are made. The next chapter will analyse the varying influences of planning actors in each case, but it presents this analysis within a frame that understands the structural constraints that each case operates within. Overall, in both cases this chapter has demonstrated how while in one case plan making was more efficient, the idea of an inclusive and integrated strategic spatial planning has failed to arrive in Scotland.

CHAPTER 8: Whose plan? Do ‘narrow, sectional interests’ dominate planning?

Introduction

This chapter, the final data chapter, will focus on contrasting approaches to growth in Aberdeen and Edinburgh, exploring the extent to which the relative power of business interests explains the difference in the approach to growth in each case. This chapter builds on chapter 6, by considering the planning system in a wider sense than that of ‘development plan processes’, and chapter 7, by moving beyond the point where development plan strategies ‘hit the ground’. It investigates planning as ‘spatial governance’ through the formal and informal structures that planning operates within. In doing so it establishes the extent to which ‘planning is dominated by narrow sectional interests’: the charge set by Allmendinger (2016) as one that demonstrated the shift away from planning in the public interest.

Chapter 6 set out the ways in which the technical cases for growth were treated. It has demonstrated that in each place there were differing pressures for growth and that the critique that planning is focused primarily on facilitating economic growth holds in each case, but that conceptualising this as ‘neoliberal’ and ‘post-political’ is complex. Chapter 7 concentrated on the issue of housing growth. It demonstrated how the treatment of greenbelt in each city was important to understanding the way that growth agendas were formed and resisted and this helps to understand more about what planning in Scotland represents in practice.

This chapter is structured into two main sections with a focus on the Aberdeen case study followed by the Edinburgh case study. Within each of these sections, the chapter explores both the role of private-public-partnership and business interests in each city and focuses specifically on the housebuilding interest as a special interest in each case. It concludes by analysing what is meant by pro and anti-development councils and specifically responding to the charge that planning might be dominated by ‘narrow sectional interests’.

Organised business interests in each case

This section of the chapter focuses firstly on Aberdeen, where a powerful public-private-partnership has already been highlighted as very influential in driving the growth agenda in the region in the mid-2000s. It then compares this to Edinburgh which has a public-private relationship which has had a different assemblage and rationale, but wields power in a less obvious manner.

Business interests in Aberdeen

The Aberdeen case study has revealed that the development industry, specifically, played a significant political role in the emergence of Aberdeen's ambitious growth agenda: an agenda that crystallised in the Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan (2009) and the region's two Local Development Plans, which were adopted in 2012.

Aberdeen has a history of private sector involvement in local governance which has influenced planning in the city and its suburbs (Lloyd and Newlands, 1989; Tiesdell and Allmendinger 2004). Following the discovery of North Sea oil, the North East Scotland Joint Advisory Planning Committee (NESJPAC) and North East of Scotland Development Agency (NESDA) were formed in 1969. Davidson and Fairley (2000, 60) describe NESDA as a public private partnership agency that was 'pioneering' and 'widely regarded as a model' in Scotland. NESDA was a reaction to the rapidly evolving need to accommodate the emerging oil industry and specifically the need to ensure the public sector was not doing anything that would 'frighten' away the industry (ibid). But NESDA was a fairly logical coalition of public and private interests because "the North East has a strong tradition of public private partnership even by Scottish standards" (ibid). In 1975 NESDA became the economic development arm of the new Grampian Regional Council and in 1990 was merged into the regional council's new Economic Development Department.

According to Lloyd and Newlands (1989) NESDA was a reaction, and probably an inadequate one in hindsight, to an "abdication of responsibility" (1989, 99) by central government in terms of a weak national oil industry strategy. For Lloyd and Newlands (1989) this entrenched the already existing private sector domination of planning and economic development strategy in the City. One outcome of this was 'Aberdeen Beyond 2000' (Wood

et al. 1987), a document, written by a coalition of business interests in the area detailing various projects and strategies to deal with the region's first major oil downturn in 1986. Writing in the 1990s, Lloyd and Newlands describe the document as one that failed to suggest a life beyond oil for the region, and was "published by a self-appointed, ad hoc committee of business interests in the city" (1989, 52). They describe the committee as a growth coalition, as three quarters of the committee was made up of local business interests, including land-based interests such as local building firms. The document challenged the official planning policies in Aberdeen, calling for less restrictive city centre policies, more greenbelt development, and criticised local government for 'an unwillingness to place the sensible use of resources before local political issues' (1987, 43). According to Lloyd and Newlands (1989, 53), 'the document 'effectively provides an alternative 'privatised' planning perspective on the growth and development of the city'.

Reflecting on this, some of the group's suggestions made in that document were already in the development pipeline. For example, significant retail development in the City centre, involving the demolition of historic buildings and street patterns, was already approved when the document was written. High-tech business parks were developed in the greenbelt in that period, as the committee called for. It is hard to decipher whether the 'privatised planning perspective' of this document was reflecting or leading official development strategy. It included plans for a levelling and rebuild of the City's Union Terrace Gardens as a part recreation, part retail, and part car parking development. Indeed, this idea has been pursued by these same private interests without success in the 30 years since. Most pertinent to this thesis, the Beyond 2000 strategy called for significant greenbelt housing development over a brownfield first approach which did not take hold in the 1990s and in this sense the committee (or coalition) was clearly unsuccessful in these early stages. It is important to point out at this point that the business interest constellation, even some of the same personalities, are still at the forefront of public-private-partnership approach to urban governance in the region.

The partnership has morphed into various forms and at the time of the research was known as ACSEF (Aberdeen City and Shire Economic Future). ACSEF was not a completely new partnership, but one which emerged out of Scottish Enterprise Grampian (SEG). In 2007 John Swinney, then the Scottish Minister for Finance and Sustainable Growth, was the Minister responsible for planning across Scotland. He described ACSEF as a model of public-private-

partnership for other regions in Scotland to follow as they implemented planning reform (ACSEF, 2013). In 2013, ACSEF promoted itself as “a public-private partnership that drives economic development in the region [...] to ensure a collaborative approach to growing the economy and enhancing quality of life” (ibid). So, in period of planning reform, this group was backed by central government, was influencing local planning policy, and was utilising the discourse of collaborative governance.

At this point it is worth noting that by the end of the research period, the group had been disbanded and broken up into a more explicitly private sector funded and focused development partnership known as Opportunity North East (ONE). This section has set out the long-running integration of the public and private sectors in terms of Aberdeen City and Shire’s governance. The next section analyses the role that private business interests played in the emergence of the region’s growth agenda.

Public-private partnership in Aberdeen in the development of the planning for growth agenda: the role of Aberdeen City and Shire Economic Future (ACSEF)

I have discussed how following a sense of divergence in the 1990’s, the public and private sectors had forged closer working relationships as part of a wider aim of improving the international competitiveness of the region. In the mid-2000s this was framed by officials and private sector interests in the region as a time to focus on the recovery of the oil and gas economy and plan for a greater scale of growth in the short term, while recognising a need to diversify the economy in the longer term. ACSEF documents (2008) called for a more ambitious growth strategy and a removal of planning system impediments to the local economy. This manifested in the Structure Plan (2009), an ambitious growth agenda which heralded a need to hit a certain scale of population (500,000) in order for further growth to essentially become self-sustaining. This chapter drills into the experiences of a range of actors, reflecting on business interests in the formal and informal processes of planning in the region and explores what this reveals about the driving forces behind the growth agenda.

One key actor reflected on the period in the early-mid 2000's when Scottish Enterprise Grampian had begun a concerted effort at achieving a more cooperative pro-development regional politics. At that point, there was not a consensus on this strategy:

We all had to kind of work at it you know. I mean there was a reality that something had to be done but it was a case of how do we get that engagement? So part of that was bringing in other experiences. I remember one time we took someone in from America who'd done something similar work in cities in the States and he was able to demonstrate just how powerful you could be in terms of getting everybody to work together, as opposed to working in isolation: the two councils working together, the public and private sectors working together: one plus one can equal three if you know what I mean? (Interview 39, Former leader of ACSEF/SEG).

Here the former leader of the partnership describes how the discourse of international competitiveness had been utilised through the deployment of ideas of cohesion (and potentially coalition) borrowed from the US context. By 2007 Aberdeen City and Shire Economic Forum emerged out of Scottish Enterprise Grampian (1991-2007). It was a partnership that was supposed to move away from what was seen to be a public-sector dominated model that had roots in the old Scottish Development Agency (1975-1990). In 2008 there was a further transition away from Scottish Enterprise and it became 'Aberdeen City and Shire Economic Future' with a looser, more local, and more private sector oriented make-up¹². However, the ACSEF ('Future') board, as it stood in 2008, still contained membership from Scottish Enterprise, and the board was 50% public sector, and importantly included the leaders of both councils.

My research revealed that although this partnership has moved towards an increasingly private focus, it has struggled to deal with the public-private balance. The private sector lamented the political and financial barriers of a public sector organisation, and some, but not all, on the public sector side considered the final form of the partnership in ACSEF to be a

¹²A snapshot of rotating board members from 2008 when ACSEF was made up of: The chief executives of both Councils, the leaders of both Councils. Scottish Enterprise. As well as: Chairman Tom Smith (Chairman of Nesso Group Holdings) Stewart Milne (Stewart Milne Homes), John Michie (Michie Chemist local retail businessman), Stewart Spence (Marcliffe Hotel owner) Andy Willox (Federation of Small Businesses) Mike Pitillo (Robert Gordon University) Dave Blackwood (Oil and Gas UK) Melfort Campbell (Imes Group (oil and gas)) Michael Clark (Fish processing) Claire Bruce (Royal Deeside and Cairngorms Tourism) Colin Crosby (Aberdeen Asset Management) Mike Salter (Scottish Chamber of Commerce / and oil and gas industry) Professor Stephen Logan (Aberdeen University)

private sector 'bosses club'. Importantly, a key locally based national house-builder was placed on the board which, for some, represented an undue influence of the development industry on planning in the region. My research conducted in 2013 (O'Sullivan, 2013) revealed that half of ten councillors interviewed found ACSEF to be a problem in terms of democratic accountability. The other half largely felt that ACSEF were controlled by the Councils and were mostly doing a good job in terms of its economic development focus. I re-interviewed some councillors who had had interesting perspectives in 2013 and asked them how things had changed over the subsequent period as the various development plans were implemented. I picked up on this finding again in the research in 2015-2016 with a far wider range of planning actors:

I mean ACSEF is part of the Council. Yeah. There's the City and Shire councillors on the board and there's officers attending. There's people from business - of course. But it isn't just councillors; there have also been business people who have said 'well they don't represent me.' Some of them see it as a bit of an oil and gas thing who of course feel that they have the right to demand and interfere in the public sector (Interview 16, Senior Councillor, Aberdeen City Council, 2015).

The quote above sets out the position of one senior councillor who, when weighing up the function and form of the ACSEF (as it existed at the time), could see the problems with it, but very importantly considered it to be a part of the Council. This councillor's viewpoint was somewhere around the mid-point in terms of the level of concern about ACSEF. Because at board level ACSEF was represented by the two Council leaders, there were no perceived problems with democratic accountability, but the councillor felt that the private sector influence had to be kept in check. The 'oil and gas thing' referred to is interesting because ACSEF did contain an oil and gas influence, but through more of the locally rooted firms¹³ rather than the multinationals. With this in mind, the following section explores multiple perspectives on the role of ACSEF in the region's growth agenda and, in a wider sense, the role of the private sector in the Aberdeen planning system. It focuses on what this partnership might mean for democratic accountability in planning and the possibility that ACSEF advanced the formation of a 'UK style growth coalition' (Harding, 2000) in this case with

¹³ Some of these local organisations are major globally operating companies in the industry

implications that planning was run for and by ‘narrow sectional interests’ (Allmendinger, 2016)

The Pro-ACSEF view

It’s not ‘democratic’ itself, but then the decisions which come from it are taken by the respective councils who are accountable to their people. It is a business lobby who are there to provide that expertise to the council in a similar way that there are community councils, parent councils who the Council will engage with to form a better understanding of the needs of the particular area before they take decisions on it (Interview 1, Former SNP leader of Aberdeen City Council).

The above statement typifies the view of Councillors and other planning actors who saw the role of ACSEF as a fairly rational one within a context of governance where the private and public sectors worked together on a range of issues. At this point it is important to consider that in recent years ACSEF were associated with the SNP-led administration (2007-12) which was seen to be very pro-development. Conversely, the ACSEF sceptics were associated with the Labour and Independent administration that followed in 2012 onwards. That Labour-led administration was seen as, in effect, reining in the power of ACSEF. In the 2005-2012 period ACSEF became heavily involved in promoting controversial development projects in the region. Those projects are crucial to understanding the growth agenda in the mid-2000s.

I interviewed a former Head of Planning (Interview 35, Aberdeen City Council) in order to understand the experience of working with ACSEF and its influence on development in the city. She described how ACSEF and the Chambers of Commerce had been “engaged and supportive” of the planning department and that planners and ACSEF had a strong relationship, particularly in the period of the mid 2000s as planners worked towards producing a more ambitious plan “with the promise of something different”. Interestingly, there was no sense that ACSEF had gained a level of control over the growth agenda. However, the cordial relationship was perhaps because collaboration had led to a planning strategy which was following a path that had been pressed by business interests.

Another management level planner reflected on the idea that ACSEF pushed the growth agenda, as opposed to the alternative view, that it flowed with what was already an obvious technical rationale for an ambitious scale of growth:

R- ACSEF was another track of the agenda if you like where the business community were jumping up and down about growth and through ACSEF, but the City and the Shire were part of that. There's some challenges there in relation to how businesses view the planning system and indeed how Scottish Enterprise view it often in quite simplistic ways which presents some quite significant challenges for stakeholder engagement. But yes that kind of ACSEF agenda was growing at the same time as we were pushing on a separate but parallel track."

I – "So it seems like it's not really a coincidence that ACSEF and the councils were on the same page."

R -Well yes there were a number of streams (Interview 14, ACS SDPA, 2015).

The interviewee in this case was carefully non-committal on the role of ACSEF in terms of their influence on the overall growth agenda, maintaining a position that there was not an undue confluence of the public and private sector agendas. However, it was clear that the business community and the two councils were at least pushing for the same agenda at the same time. In chapter 6 it was demonstrated that ACSEF's Economic Action Plan (2008), in plain terms, called for more growth, more development land, and a less restrictive planning system in the region. The Structure Plan (2009) as well as planning reform and its 'spirit' of culture change in planning were used to pursue this.

However, that interviewee was clear that there are important differentiations between ACSEF, the Chamber of Commerce, and the local and national housebuilder lobbies. Elements of the private sector are in a default position where they will always seek to press the public sector towards a position of ever more growth. Even after Homes for Scotland (the national industry lobby), after more than a decade of argument, had stated publicly that they were satisfied with the level of housing land supply in the north east in 2015, some elements of the local – wider - development industry lobby still would not accept this:

I was updating the community planning partnership on land supply and the person from the Chamber of Commerce was still saying that there still isn't nearly enough land - so you need to just double the amount of housing and employment land and the market will take care of it. Now without wanting to be disrespectful that's just a ridiculous perspective to take but it's that 'we want more' kind of approach (Interview 14, ACS SDPA 2015).

The point here was that ACSEF were not necessarily the only business representative group in the area, but they were the most respected and the most integrated into local governance. The region still has other organisations that will lobby the councils, such as the explicitly business focused (but less planning focused) Chambers of Commerce and the powerful Grampian chapter of Homes for Scotland which lobbied specifically on housing land supply, as covered later in this chapter.

Another planner considered the role of ACSEF as that of a partner rather than a lobby. In the example given below, ACSEF had worked with the planning department to begin to address the longstanding issue of mid-market housing affordability. The council's Housing Need and Demand Assessment had raised this as a specific issue in 2010. Essentially, housing was becoming unaffordable, not only to poorer households but to people who might be defined as 'key workers' in the public sector. By 2013, the issue of housing affordability was seen as something that was impacting not just on the public sector but also on the high paying oil and gas sector. In this context, the affordable housing issue was reframed not as one of social justice, or even operating public services, but as an economic development issue in itself: specifically, the ability to attract and retain 'talent' for the region's employers:

I don't think they have much power. Just because it's ACSEF we don't run in one direction or another. I am not convinced that they have a great influence over planning matters.'

For example, I had to write a paper on 'housing for talent' and that was a very useful exercise because it highlighted in my mind a major problem in the North East. We have a development industry building one thing, and housing associations another, and then nothing in the middle. I was quite happy for ACSEF to request that paper, for me to write it and them to think about whether it's an issue.

The fact that they are now running around with it doesn't bother me at all. I'm quite happy for it to be a main issue in the MIR and then for ACSEF to write into the MIR consultation and say 'yes that's an issue' but I'd equally expect ACSEF to go to companies like Shell and say if you want 'housing for talent' then you'll have to buy it, and get involved. They'll have to go to the landowning community who are represented on the ACSEF board and say well you'll have to accept less for your land because we need to reduce the profit margins on these sites so we can build cheaper houses. I don't think they are dictating the agenda, when they come up with an issue

it's rarely an issue we weren't already aware of (Interview 12, Plan manager, ACS local authority, 2013).

From this perspective, ACSEF was a private sector dominated group that told the planning department to research and write a paper on a topic of their choosing, and then forced the issue into the Local Development Plan process in order to elicit their own pre-conceived response on the issue. However, ACSEF was responding to the affordable housing crisis, albeit to protect their own interests, and was potentially providing a public benefit. In this sense, a public good may come about from this: ACSEF was influential and well placed to actually get something done about affordable housing in region. Using the planning system to provide in this case the policy impetus for 'housing for talent' provided an official legitimacy that might have pressured landowners, industry, the public sector to act. Overall, the view of senior councillors and officers was one that, ACSEF was very powerful, but in this example was not wielding an undue influence over the work of the planning authorities. Rather this was an example of how public-private-partnership was intended to work.

Another interesting factor at play in this scenario is that of the concept of the race for 'talent'. ACSEF utilised the discourse association with policy guru Richard Florida's 'Creative Class' (2002) (see chapter 2), itself a neoliberal construct which implores urban policy makers to join the competitive race for a talented workforce. This offers something of a recipe book for urban success based on creating specific conditions which are often associated with gentrification and wage inequality in urban areas. In chapter 6 interviewees from the public sector had stated that the public generally agreed with their message that something needed to be done to address affordable housing concerns in the region in the late 2000s. For this interviewee (Interview 17, former head of planning Aberdeen city-region) it was economic concerns and issues around 'housing for talent' rather than 'affordable housing', that captured local media and wider business attention, confirming its acceptance as an issue of major concern because it demonstrably linked housing to economic growth and affected people who might never have imagined themselves or their families as being at risk of not owning a home.

The negative view of ACSEF

So far, this chapter has demonstrated that senior officers and most senior councillors were quite relaxed about ACSEF and its level of influence on council policy. The growth agenda from this perspective might have been supported and even led by ACSEF. Chapter 7 conveyed the strongest opinion from senior officers, councillors, and members of the business community was that the business lobby was effective at pushing for growth but only because the technical rationale for it existed in the first place. However, my analysis of this was more critical of the ‘technical rationale’, questioning its extent and the isolating of the technical from the political. Foucauldian analysis points to a vigilance around the construction of issues and rationales as technical: this is inevitably in itself a political act with policy does not just addressing problems but produced problems as well (Flyvbjerg, 1998). Planning in this case seemed to offer no alternative for anything other than an ‘ambitious’ market-led growth agenda.

This, the main section of the chapter dealing with the Aberdeen case, now investigates the view held by more sceptical stakeholders that the ‘ambitious’ scale of the growth agenda, and its ‘high growth’ forecast, was an outcome of development industry pressure which was directed through groups such as ACSEF as well as through informal networks.

It has no formal role but it quite clearly is a forum where economic development gets discussed. So people with particular needs can input into the development process. But you have to look at the composition of ACSEF where some people on it aren’t necessarily interested in providing sustainable jobs for the community. They’re actually developers who would wish to influence things so that they can build more houses (Interview 8: Councillor, Aberdeenshire, 2013)

The above quote from a councillor in the region demonstrates a view that was held by six of the eleven councillors interviewed in 2013 and 2015. To varying extents, they considered that ACSEF had a legitimate purpose in providing economic development expertise, but that there was a more problematic purpose of some members in that they carried vested development interests into the organisation that were impossible to ‘bracket-off’. From this perspective, the high growth forecasts and the ambitious growth agenda were driven by the development industry: “I feel quite suspicious of their motives. I have a feeling that our head of Council is on the board to keep an eye on them; it seems like a captain of industry club” (Interview 2:

councillor, Aberdeenshire, 2013). The aforementioned quote, from a councillor who viewed ACSEF with a degree of suspicion, but one that could probably be held in check by the democratic oversight of the Council leaders, perhaps represents a mid-way point between those who saw no issue with ACSEF and others who viewed ACSEF as a significant problem in terms of democratic planning. However, there were some councillors, former councillors, and local issue-based group campaigners with experiences that made them view ACSEF with far greater suspicion. This will be examined in detail through examples in this section. These are based around important spatial governance matters which demonstrate the obvious and also inconspicuous ways in which ACSEF influenced planning. Through this analysis, the workings of business interests in this will be opened up and understood.

There is no clear mechanism on their declaration of interests; their businesses are not unlinked to their 'issues'. They are publicly funded but are self-appointed. There is no democratic accountability. I know there are two councillors, but it is not clear that they have any influence (Interview 4, Aberdeenshire Council 2013).¹⁴

ACSEF is completely undemocratic. There used to be the structure plan team and a planning partnership made up of business but also transport with groups like NESTRANS. However, now ACSEF and the SDPA is a kind of corporate blancmange with the Strategic Development Plan as a tool (Interview 9, Aberdeenshire councillor, 2013).

The views above set out the key reasons that there was an apparent democratic deficit created by ACSEF: that it was seemingly self-appointed with no mechanism for removal of members and that it allowed the pursuit of private agendas under the pretence of the public interest. From this perspective ACSEF demonstrate a clear case of neoliberal spatial governance which is at diminishes democracy in the region. Another councillor in Aberdeen reflected on this way ACSEF had changed over the years:

I thought Scottish Enterprise Grampian worked better than ACSEF. I think sometimes they can be very controversial especially in the business element. They are, well, they are not so much straight developers but well they have that focus.

¹⁴ Part of this quote was used in O'Sullivan, 2013

Both Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire have had reservations about it. I don't think it's accountable (Interview 3: Chair Planning Aberdeen City Council, 2013).

The 'business element' that the councillor referred to appeared to be based on ACSEF's involvement and support in shaping specific economic development projects in the region, specifically: their support for the highly controversial Trump International golf course and its related housing development in Aberdeenshire from 2006 onwards; the less controversial but enigmatic Energetica 'Energy Corridor' - an economic development project conceived by Scottish Enterprise in 2007 which is ongoing; and finally, the highly controversial proposed redevelopment of Union Terrace Gardens in Aberdeen which ACSEF led through the project's private backer Sir Ian Wood in 2010 and then abandoned in 2012. The Trump International and finally the Union Terrace Gardens controversies led to a widespread association of ACSEF's with raw civic boosterism. For reasons of brevity, this thesis focuses on the Trump International debate. This is because it took place at the time of the formation of the growth agenda, whereas the Union Terrace Gardens issue was brought to life again¹⁵ after the adoption of the Structure Plan (2009).

While ACSEF included housebuilder interests, the same councillor did not, however, conflate ACSEF with the housing lobby itself:

No there's ACSEF and then there's the builders which are really Homes for Scotland. We get lobbied weekly by the builders, so you know who they are. At the moment they are taking issue with our affordable housing policy and yes they're strong as well, oh god yes (Interview 3: Chair Planning Aberdeen City Council, 2013,)

From this perspective, ACSEF were not to be conflated with the house-building lobby, which consisted of Homes for Scotland and their local Grampian branch. However, one councillor considered their operation to be a lot more subtle, describing ACSEF as "setting the mood music" for the scale of development required in the region. He considered this to have had a "malign influence on the direction of strategic planning" in the region and that it became

¹⁵ As discussed earlier in this chapter, the ACSEF led proposal to redevelop Union Terrace Gardens has a history of promotion by private sector interests which goes as far back as 'Aberdeen Beyond 2000' (1986)

difficult to separate the agenda of ACSEF from the agenda of the Council (Interview 9, Aberdeenshire councillor, 2013).

So, when operating in such a small network, it was difficult to separate these groups on formal lines and ACSEF can be considered as part of a pro-development network. The examples below demonstrate how this works in a small isolated region facing growth pressures. When I pointed out that many councillors and officials considered ACSEF's formal power to be very limited and so this lack of democratic accountability may not be an issue, one councillor (interview 19) gave an example of the way in which an apparently informal advisory body had actually morphed into one practicing formal powers.

ACSEF and democratic governance

As a councillor sitting on the Council's Infrastructure Services Committee and responsible for all planning decisions and much of Council's wider strategy, the Committee were routinely asked to 'note' the decisions of ACSEF's recent meetings. At one committee, councillors debated whether or not to signal the Council's support for a third runway at Heathrow. The broad debate was that a third runway would maintain Aberdeen region's landing slots within the global hub airport, helping maintain its international status and the competitiveness of its oil and gas industry, but that there were also significant environmental issues around Heathrow to consider. At that meeting it was pointed out by an official that the Council had already endorsed the third runway because it had previously 'noted' a decision taken at an ACSEF board meeting that supported it.

My answer to that was, noting their decision is not the same as agreeing with it, or saying that it's our decision. So then the ACSEF papers came back to the next Infrastructure Services Committee meeting, we were no longer asked to note the decisions of the ACSEF Board, we were asked to endorse the decisions of the ACSEF Board. And as you would imagine, we didn't have the information on which they based their decisions, that their interests and ours were not the same as ours, and the notion that we were simply agreeing with whatever they decided, without any separate scrutiny of our own, was extremely undesirable in governance terms. But more worryingly, effectively, a self-appointed group of people from one particular part of society, were setting Council policy and this was completely unacceptable, democratically (Interview 19, Senior councillor, Aberdeenshire Council, 2015).

The Councillor described how he had to argue that endorsing a largely unelected group in place of conducting the debate via a democratic process was unacceptable, and eventually other councillors and officials accepted his view. In this example, this particular councillor demonstrated a clear case of the incursion of the particular developer interests into public democratic decision-making. This is an incursion that almost went unchecked by fellow councillors. This example provides a useful counterargument to officials and councillors who, perhaps unwittingly, considered ACSEF to have limited power.

ACSEF, the media and the politics of development

Another councillor's experience of coming up against ACSEF brings to life the multitude of actors, the nodes, and the formal and informal ways in which ACSEF wields power: a form of power that may go unnoticed by others. From his perspective, Scottish Enterprise Grampian (SEG) had been more of a technical forum and responded to economic development issues and arguments, but progressively ACSEF developed its own agenda, which then became the agenda of the two councils. He considered that the transition away from Scottish Enterprise Grampian towards ACSEF had led to the growth in the power of private interests, but that even in its previous form of public-private-partnership, because of the small isolated governance network of the north-east of Scotland, the private sector had always wielded a significant power. To demonstrate this, he recalled an example of an issue when there had been character attacks on councillors like him who had spoken out against the proposed Trump International golf course and housing development. As one of the councillors who refused the initial Trump International planning application in 2007, he had faced intense pressure from members of ACSEF to change his stance: "One or two people on that body called for a kind of retribution because I took a planning decision, which they as private business people, but sitting on a government body, took exception to (Interview 18, Aberdeenshire councillor, 2015).

The newspaper headlines and quotes below demonstrate the level of intimidation and pressure that Councillors and officials were placed under at the time of the Trump International application:

'You Traitors!' (Headline of *Evening Express*, 29 November 2007)

‘Betrayed by stupidity of seven’ (Editorial *Evening Express*, 30 November 2007)

“These people are absolute traitors. They have not only committed treason to the people of the north-east but also to the whole of Scotland.” (Stewart Spence (Hotelier), in *Daily Record*, 1 December 2007)

Lloyd and Newlands (1989, 52) identify Aberdeen’s local media as particularly useful for business interests in their role of promoting and legitimising the ‘Beyond 2000’ initiative locally. This is a key role identified in Logan and Molotch’s (1976) growth coalition concept. In Aberdeen this role takes on a heightened local significance through the regional pro-development *Press and Journal* and *Evening Express*. For example, Trump International’s spokesperson for its Aberdeenshire development is the daughter of an Aberdeenshire Conservative councillor and she is now married to the editor of the *Press and Journal*. The councillor explained his experience of this period when he was branded a ‘traitor to the public’, the means by which the pressure was maintained, and the sense of claustrophobia that occurs in such a small network of planning actors:

So one particular member called me a traitor and of course that was published on the front page of our local newspaper. He then had that put up with my photograph in the lobby of his hotel - I haven’t spoken to him since. That’s how bad it got. So you know, that’s how influential they can be. At the close of Scottish Enterprise Grampian they held a dinner for all of the retiring members who, like me, weren’t going on to ACSEF. The dinner was to be held at this particular member’s hotel. Yet I knew that this thing about me as a traitor and everything else was still hanging up there in the lobby of his hotel (Interview 18, Aberdeenshire councillor, 2015).

Rather than a trivial story, this example reveals the intimacy of the planning and development network in Aberdeen and the importance of a very pro-growth local media – a factor that does not appear to exist in Edinburgh; at least to the same extent. Even though ACSEF in all its guises has officially maintained an independence from either personal business or statutory planning, it is nearly impossible to separate the different remits and responsibilities in an intimate community like Aberdeen’s. The Trump International episode is important because it occurred at the same time as Aberdeen’s growth agenda was in formation. The

Structure Plan (2009) at this point was moving towards its final stages before adoption. At this time, the same partnership that was pressuring councillors (to the point of harassment) to vote for the application was in the words of an officer “pushing on a separate but parallel track” in formulating the region’s statutory growth plans.

ACSEF and Trump International

A final example, and one of the ultimate manifestation of this power, comes from another councillor who raised concerns about the incursion of ACSEF’s meeting agendas into that of the Council’s. The specific councillor became synonymous with the Trump International application, after he used his casting vote to refuse the initial application and asked Trump International to come back with a proposal that did not involve developing on a part of the application site designated Site of Special Scientific Interest. In an interview with the councillor, he reflected on the process by which he was removed as Aberdeenshire’s Chair of the planning committee after pressure from Donald Trump’s organisation, local media, fellow councillors and very importantly ACSEF. The following extract from the regional Press and Journal provides some context in this respect:

‘We want “Trump traitor” sacked’

Yesterday the powerful Aberdeen City and Shire Economic Forum (ACSEF) met to discuss where to go now after the Scottish Government ‘called in’ the Trump planning application. The group is angry Cllr Ford, a non-driver who is against airport expansion and the bypass, oversees planning matters. One Forum member said: ‘Some fairly strong things were said about Cllr Ford. ‘Certainly a lot of business leaders have written to the Chief Executive of Aberdeenshire Council Alan Campbell asking for Cllr Ford to be removed.’ (*Press and Journal* 9th December 2008).

It is clear, and in the public domain, that ACSEF were driving an agenda to have an elected member of the Council removed from his job because they did not agree with his position on a planning application. This campaign was successful and the councillor was duly told to step down by his fellow elected members at a special meeting of the Council.

That crystallised that the business community asserted a right of veto over who could chair the planning committee. And the Council accepted that the business community

had a right to veto. Now, that was a piece of monstrous folly for the Council, to bow to that pressure. And I had a personal interest in that, you understand, but I believe if I'm objective enough to recognise that the correct answer to that was, 'take a hike, it's not up to you, we had a democratic election, everybody voted, the result was that these parties went into administration, and these councillors chose this person to chair this committee' (Interview 19, Senior councillor, Aberdeenshire Council, 2015).

It is clear that ACSEF had the power to remove an elected member of the Council administration. More subtly, as earlier chapters demonstrated, years before this, certain senior officers had been "pushed aside" (Interview 30, Housebuilding/Planning consultant, 2016) as the development sector in the region called for a culture change and personnel change in the Council with officers more attuned to the needs of the development industry. The two episodes demonstrate that developer interests had the power to discredit and remove individual officers and politicians who they considered were expressing an undue degree of agency and so required preplacing by more pro-growth individual actors. Through such examples it is clear that planning was being dominated by narrow sectional interests at the time that the region's growth agenda emerged.

The Trump application in its initial refusal, then approval after a subsequent government call-in, public inquiry, and, the sacking of the Councillor who made the casting vote decision, demonstrated an extreme example of the way in which the planning system was blindsided by the promise of a 'once in a lifetime' development opportunity from a globally recognised developer promising to build two of the 'world's greatest golf courses' with a related leisure and housing complex. The company stated that the development would be worth over £1bn of investment and provide 6000 jobs. Strangely it also required the allocation of over 500 houses on the site in order to 'enable development'. Enabling development is a policy approach used to enhance the viability of otherwise unviable projects – such as historic refurbishments of buildings. Yet these figures were assessed and supported by the Scottish Government's independent economic consultants as part of the Public Inquiry which approved the plans. "More than ten years on, there's one golf course, a clubhouse with some bedrooms, and a fountain, which I'm not sure he has permission for, and that's it" (Interview 19: Senior Councillor, Aberdeenshire). The promises of the Trump application were particularly well received in a region where the business community and the two Councils

had (with good reason) been calling for long term economic diversification away from oil and gas dependency. The idea that this would diversify the economy was a key argument presented and a reason why the environmental damage was worth incurring. This episode, coming at the same time as the region was developing an ambitious growth agenda, provides a useful record of how the politics of development was situated at that time.

Planning in this case was simply used as a means to roll-out development (Allmendinger, 2016). The planning system was treated first as a process by which to judge the merits of a proposal, but when the correct result was not achieved it was then reorganised, manipulated. This was before it was more or less discarded in favour of a political decision taken at the national scale to ensure that Scotland remained internationally competitive and seen as 'open for business'.

As an example, it reveals the workings of ACSEF and reinforces evidence that the group, as they operated in the mid 2000's, were very important in the emergence of the 'ambitious' growth agenda in the region. This was an agenda which evoked the discourse of the importance of a spatial planning approach utilising the development sector as 'stakeholders', but used planning to legitimise an agenda for an ambitious level of growth that was based on a questionable evidence base and framed as required in order for the region to avoid stagnation and decline. The Trump case, because of its extremity, perhaps reveals that Scottish planning as a formal technical exercise contained within the realm of local democracy can be pushed aside at will by the Scottish Government because of growth imperatives. But, there is a need to be careful in considering the local context. First, while no polling data is available, at the time of the application (the same time as region's growth agenda was being formulated) there was still a lot of public support for the application in the form of a '£1bn investment' in the region. It is possible, even likely, that any other planning authority would have acted in the way that Aberdeenshire Council did when faced by a similar offer and similar pressure from the Scottish Government and so this cannot be read simply as part of the wider growth agenda.

Housebuilding interests in Aberdeen

The previous section revealed the importance of ACSEF to the emergence of the growth agenda in Aberdeen, and the power it wielded in the region at the time. It illustrated the

separate, but blurred, boundary between public-private-partnership and the powerful local and national housebuilding lobby in the region's governance network.

It presented the importance of the integration of housebuilding and development industry interests within ACSEF itself and the wider 'business' lobby network in the region. It is important to consider these together, as a powerful force in the region's development planning processes. However, building on chapter 7 and 8, it is worth briefly considering the particularities of housebuilders and the agents that represent them.

First, it is important to consider that ACSEF had since at least the mid 2000's, had been pressing the argument that housing land supply and economic growth were intrinsically linked, as evident in the partnership's own documents (ACSEF, 2008). As the regional economy continued to grow in the years after the adoption of the new development plans, this link between lack of housing affordability and economic growth was borne out:

At business breakfasts you go to the businesses will tell you 'we cannot grow, we cannot expand, why would we build the next subsea vehicle here if we can't get folk up to work here? The industry is snapping up houses in Westhill off-plan for £750,000 just to help with relocations. There were threats at the last one I was at of 'we're going to move'. One of them has announced they'll be off to West Lothian and that's scared the pants off folk up here, it's now absolutely clear to them that housing is a key component of economic development (Interview 17: former head of planning/planning consultant, Aberdeen city-region, 2015).

This interview took place in the spring of 2015 as the region's economy, buoyed by high oil prices, continued to grow. The plan had provided the housing allocations that the industry had demanded. However, there were widespread concerns expressed by interviewees within the public sector and the development sector that both infrastructure and houses were not being 'delivered' as quickly as has been expected. "The housebuilders are happy because they've now got lots of land and they are able to control the tap" (ibid). A local authority planner used a similar analogy describing the housebuilders as 'drip feeding' the new allocations (Interview 12: Plan manager Aberdeen City-Region). That 'controlling of the tap' was likely to have been a key objective of the housebuilding industry but, as chapter 7 has demonstrated, technical supply is one thing and infrastructure delivery and the commensurate delivery of 'better places' are far more complex. In gaining power over housing supply

though, a greater degree of power has been won from the local authorities compared to before the growth agenda was adopted.

In an interview in the spring of 2015 a development plan manager (Interview 14: ACS SDPA, 2015) considered that housebuilding rates were starting to move towards the levels the industry had promised as the growth strategy was being drawn up. However, by later that year the oil and gas downturn had led to the mothballing of building sites. Another plan manager in the region reflected on this: “I was at an RICS developer meeting the other day actually. It was totally depressing. The only topic for discussion was ‘how do we maintain high land values for our clients?’ That was it. Not how do we deal with a future without oil in the region? No nothing like that - just the here and now” (Interview 12: Plan manager, Aberdeen city-region, 2015). In this example, it was clear that strategic planning, for landowners, was not about adapting plans to fit changing circumstances. It was about trying to ‘lock in’ the value of land allocations.

The integration of the housebuilders as a connected lobbying unit has been discussed in each of the chapters so far. One councillor reflected on the planning ‘culture change’ as being particularly potent in the North-East of Scotland where housebuilders and planners naturally operate a less formal more integrated and tighter planning network than in other places where networks are less integrated.

Developers are now far more involved in partnership at many levels of local government. But there is a real trend here of developers engaging well with planning officials but with nobody else. [...] ¹⁶We have inexperienced officers, underpaid officers, who are being mauled by developers, and their agendas are bulldozed through pre-application discussions, and when issues are discussed at committee the argument from the developer is ‘but we agreed this with the planner’. The idea of the planner as an independent expert role is now being removed by the drive for more corporatist agendas (Interview 9, Aberdeenshire Councillor, 2013).

For this councillor, strategic spatial planning, governance, and the stakeholder agenda simply has meant a new kind of corporatism but one where developers are in an increasingly powerful position as their network of relations has grown more integrated with planning

¹⁶ Part of this quote was used in O’Sullivan (2013).

officials. He explicitly mentions the problem of an imbalance in resources between council and industry. In other interviews, public sector planners discussed the inability to match the salaries offered by private consultancies in the region. In effect the public sector was prone to having its staff (and their knowledge) ‘poached’ by developer interests and put to use, for the private rather than public good, in the same planning governance network. Chapter 2 established that in Scotland such neo-corporatism (Keating, 2007) is used by some to suggest that private-sector influence on governance need not necessarily be the fully blown ‘neoliberalism’ that might be said to exist in England. But in the North-East, through its scale, isolation, and culture, ‘network governance’ and ‘stakeholder approaches’ take on a different meaning and conceptualising it as ‘neoliberal’ in form or ‘neo-corporatist’ is perhaps less important than considering what the actual effect is in a particular place.

As one example, in the north-east, local housebuilders have a history of integration within the Council’s housing policy formation particularly via the Housing Land Audit process. While there are certain standard requirements for these audits across Scotland, the approach in the North-East has long had a very strong housebuilder involvement. These annual processes were fundamental in setting a technical basis for housing land supply to inform the Structure Plan (2009) and the subsequent local development plans (2012):

The housebuilding industry is a very powerful lobby and they have been given tools to engage with us through the land audits which mean that they have extraordinary influence over what we can do. All they have to do is at that stage tell us that all their sites are constrained and they can’t take them forward and hey presto we have to allocate more land (*laughs*) ...hmmm (Interview 12, Plan manager LPA in Aberdeen city-region, 2013).

While the statement here is quite flippant, the serious underlying point is one which consumed a very large scale of each council’s resources: that of calculating, contending, and defining the supply of housing land. In such a scenario, there is an obvious incentive for the housebuilders to maintain a position of supply scarcity. Indeed, they were very successful in arguing this position with the Councils. This is particularly the case where they know that, with an ability to ‘control the tap’ on housing development; a larger supply on paper would not necessarily mean a lower eventual price for housing on the market. This passage also demonstrates the strategy at work in this ‘technical’ process.

In the north-east, developer interests achieved what they were seeking in terms of a supply of land that they can turn on and off as they wish. In terms of demand, following the GFC, in order to keep the national housing market functioning, government has increasingly stepped in to maintain demand¹⁷ with the effect that house prices and land prices are maintained. The housebuilding industry had a greater than normal influence on the emergence of the growth strategy in the region. However, even as the region's economy has experienced a severe oil related downturn, the net effect has not been a significant drop in house prices, and so the growth-agenda did not deliver on one of its key arguments of more affordable housing being delivered by the private sector. From a developer perspective, housing land supply is only one issue whereby there is seen to be a need to take control from the public sector: "They are happy there's enough land but the thing now is speed of applications (Interview 14, Plan manager ACS-SPDA). Such a view was indeed demonstrated by the developers who were interviewed, in the sense that regardless of supply of housing land, there is still a broken system that holds back development.

This thesis argues that in the Aberdeen city-region case, plans were produced projecting a scale of growth that was driven largely by developer interests and it provides evidence to support this. It has demonstrated how including the development industry as a key stakeholder in a market-led planning system has resulted in tightening of control over the development planning system in one region. Yet developer interests have in no way relaxed their campaign locally and nationally to 'fix' the planning system.

One local authority planner, with a long history of working with the private sector, considered that such a view is unlikely to be held, even privately, by developers themselves: "Developers are happy with the numbers, yes. But even this plan is still seen as an officers' plan. Many developers think the officers and councillors have their views on the market and that's what's reflected in the plans" (Interview 26: Aberdeen city-region LDA). The reason, as reflected upon in chapter 7, is the 'developer versus council' debate over the location of development. Developers considered that the councils in Aberdeen were allocating on land that was not 'where the market wanted to go'. In particular there was a debate over the level

¹⁷ For example "Figures gathered by forecaster Hewes & Associates shows the UK government supported the construction of an estimated 71,000 homes in 2016/17 through housing associations, local authority building, affordable homes, shared ownership schemes and Help to Buy. This means the government directly contributed to 50 per cent of all housing completions in England to some degree over the last financial year" Schouten, C. 2017. *Half of all housebuilding 'backed by government'*. *Construction News*. Online: EMAP Publishing.

of housing allocated to rural areas at the expense of the Aberdeen housing market area. What communities perceive as a lack of power and agency in the system, that inability to have ones' voice heard, often framed as *post-political*, is often seen by the development industry as *too political* and it is encapsulated here:

Apart from that, I think there's a feeling that the way the planning system's gone since reform means there's much less independent review in the system. A lot of developers say there's no point commenting on the plan, or coming to an examination, because it's just the council's view and it gets approved anyway. We can make all the responses in the world but you're just forcing the market to do certain things and you're not listening to us about where there's market demand (Interview 26: Aberdeen city-region local planning authority, 2015).

A strong message that came from the developers in Edinburgh that I interviewed broadly reflected this view as well: that planning was still too political; that officers were acting on their own accord with flawed technical rationales or for the political purposes of their elected members; and that the reformed Scottish planning system had, particularly via the move from Public Inquiry to Examinations which had become a less technical process. For SDPs this was even more pronounced. By 2014, with all new Scottish SDP's adopted, not one had actually had to go through the public hearing element of the Examination process. In Aberdeen, developers influenced the system to increase housing land supply, through years of work via public-private-partnership, via straightforward lobbying, and through using the more nuanced idea of 'culture change', but there was still no sense that anything had been 'fixed' from their perspective: the quest for a planning system that 'delivers the right development in the right place at the right time', where the 'market wants to go' continues.

Business interests in Edinburgh

Chapters 6 and 7 demonstrated that business interests and the housebuilding industry were less coherent, less organised and less powerful than in Aberdeen. This section goes into greater detail to understand how, in Scotland's capital city and economic powerhouse, that could be the case. What it reveals is that business influence operates in a different, more subtle way than in Aberdeen, but this does not mean that business is less powerful or that planning somehow works in the 'public interest'.

Edinburgh's prosperity is underpinned by its Scottish capital status in the UK. As a comparatively less industrial city than many of its counterparts, its transition towards a service sector focused economy was less arduous than that experienced by the core UK cities. However, this does not mean that even its recent history is a benign one politically, with a stable and established role for business interests in the city. Harding (2000) researched the existence of business 'regimes' in Edinburgh in the 1990s. He pointed to two important phases in the recent political history of the city. City politics had been dominated by a 'progressive' and 'non-political' (anti-Labour) coalition until the early 1980s when a Conservative leadership was elected. The Conservatives' grip on power only lasted until 1984 when a Labour administration was elected in the city, and then in the Lothians. Harding (2000) describes the Labour administration in the city as akin to the radical mould of Labour metropolitan councils in the UK's core cities of the time and as something that had been 'unthinkable' in the city's politics.

The 'radical' Labour administration pursued policies that ran against the grain of the Conservative Government but also against those of the local business interests, and the Scottish Development Agency. Harding points out that this 'radical' programme was met with resistance from Council officials as well as the less radical Lothian Council. In this period the main contribution to economic policy was actually a selective acquisition and development of property for commercial uses around the City. This 'radical in principle rather than practice' phase ended in the late 1980s following Thatcher's 1987 victory and a 'new realism' that required city government to work through a 'partnership model'. This model in Edinburgh typified that which was followed elsewhere in the UK of informal networking with local business interests, new quangos, and project based approaches to the development of the City economy.

Kerr (2005) describes the emergence of the redevelopment of the west of Edinburgh city centre as Scotland's prime financial district, the seeds for the redevelopment of Leith and Granton, and the opening up of the west of Edinburgh for commercial uses

A key difference between the cases is the level of integration of the development industry into local governance arrangements. In Edinburgh this was conducted through Lothian and Edinburgh Enterprise Company (a local offshoot of the SDA and then Scottish Enterprise). However, even in this period while Edinburgh certainly attracted government funds, compared to rivals such as Glasgow it was seen to lack a clear strategy. Harding (2000, 66) cites the Scottish Secretary of State stating in that period 'it is the capital city and no administration is going to forget that. Edinburgh will always get consideration, and money, if only it can get its act together'. Harding (2000), like Kerr (2005), demonstrates the physical signs of the success of Edinburgh at times 'getting its act together' but overall points to the failure of Edinburgh Vision in the 1990s. Edinburgh Vision was an attempt to forge a public-private-partnership to create a strategic-framework to improve local relations and lead towards a single business and development voice in the city. Its 'failure' was, at the time, put down to a lack of significant funding and a series of 'turf wars' (Harding, 2000). This means that by the end of the 1990s Edinburgh was still perceived as a successful city but one that, when the yardstick of urban production and entrepreneurial partnership governance was used as a measurement, 'couldn't get its act together'.

Harding (2000) compares Edinburgh and Manchester and describes how both moved towards an urban politics of production that was characterised by coalition formation, and elite consensus building. Both cities, like other UK cities, existed with a politics of consumption constrained by tight expenditure and broad centralised policy directives. He finds that Edinburgh's businesses were never integrated within urban policy-making and production to the extent of Manchester's and suggests that political instability – rather than Labour domination of Manchester – made a political regime difficult to solidify. Overall, he finds that 'development coalitions are heavily people dependent' (Harding, 2000, 70). Comparing Aberdeen and Edinburgh, both have experienced political instability in the period of the research and the decades preceding it. The persistent political fluctuations demonstrate no established political regime. However, Aberdeen has been shown to have established a firm business influence in local governance which has promoted the politics of urban production. This chapter now focuses on multiple perspectives on why and how Edinburgh has for over

30 years experienced, a less visible at least, business influence on its local politics. At all times, it retains a focus on how this explains its approach to growth when implementing planning reform.

There are business organisations up there (Aberdeen) where house builders and other development interests are very active. And yes, it's a smaller pond in a way, people, they're much more interpersonal contacts, there are much more channels of communication between the business and the council and councillors, it's easier to access councillors in some ways. So I think all of that helps, you know, it's all about, in the end, you know, you only get culture change if people are talking to each other, understanding each other's points of view, which I think is helpful in the North East... That has not happened here of course (Interview 30. Housebuilder/Planning consultant. Edinburgh 2013)

Here, a housing development interest provides a picture of the integration of the development industry into the Aberdeen region's governance arrangements, demonstrating the way in which this encouraged 'culture change'. Culture change here is framed as communication and the breaking down of barriers between the public and private sectors, between planners and builders. This is in marked contrast to Edinburgh region where the business lobby wields less power and crucially differs in composition; lacking the house building element that proved crucial to the growth agenda in Aberdeen. It is this housebuilding and wider developer focus that geared Aberdeen towards agendas of urban production.

The following comparison to Edinburgh, discussed in the midst of the LDP process, demonstrates the outcome for developers when sufficient strength was not wielded to bring about a plan in their interests.

It's partly down to the pressure and the battling process that Edinburgh has set up so people are fighting to get in and fighting around the edges of the City, so there's very little reason to form alliances. Everyone is out for their own at the moment.

(Interview 34: Urban Design Consultant, Edinburgh)

This section of the chapter analyses this key difference in each case: the strength and unity of business interests and importantly, and housebuilders in Edinburgh which appear to have less power than in Aberdeen. Through this analysis, it focuses on the way in which power is

perhaps just more difficult to 'locate' in governance networks than in Aberdeen and where it is targeted differently as well. General business influence in local government was not necessarily weaker than in Aberdeen; rather it was not directed at the development plan process in the same way and with the same results.

Edinburgh has not lacked organisations with a business focus. Scottish Enterprise Lothian has been a constant in various guises throughout the 1990s into the present day. City Vision petered out as a group but Edinburgh (along with the other Scottish Cities) developed a Scottish Executive induced 'City Vision' (2003). This was produced in a community partnership guise and differs from Aberdeen's pro-business literature described earlier. Also, as discussed in chapter 7, the City and a collection of interests, including some business stakeholders, produced the document 'Edinburgh 2020' (City of Edinburgh Council, 2003).

Edinburgh's equivalent to ACSEF is now operating as Edinburgh Business Forum, which "provides a platform for business to engage with the City of Edinburgh Council and its partners on issues relevant to Edinburgh's future economic competitiveness". It is "a panel of leading businesses and public-sector organisations providing a strategic perspective on the future development challenges facing the city" (Edinburgh Business Forum, 2017). Its formation was driven by the Edinburgh's Chamber of Commerce and its membership brings together the public and private, research and development and the third sector, including key employers in the area¹⁸. While it is chaired by a consultant in the property development sector, importantly this did not include housebuilders or specific private property interests. In addition to this, the Edinburgh Development Forum was set up in 2009 as a 'one stop shop' for the development industry 'to engage with the planning system' (City of Edinburgh Council, 2012). The Edinburgh Concordat emerged from the Edinburgh Development Forum. The Concordat sets out an established working relationship between the City Council and the development sector, focusing on the process of planning and 'performance agreements'. For Inch (2013) and Peel and Lloyd (2012), this process focus signifies what planning 'culture change' in Scotland has come to represent.

¹⁸ It is made up of: Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce; Federation of Small Businesses; Scottish Council for Development and Industry SCDI; The City of Edinburgh Council; Marketing Edinburgh; Essential Edinburgh; CBI Scotland; Edinburgh Partnership; Scottish Enterprise; Scottish Development International; Scottish Financial Enterprise; Edinburgh College; Queen Margaret University; Edinburgh Napier University; Heriot-Watt University; University of Edinburgh.

The Edinburgh Development Forum appears to have fizzled out as a functioning forum since around 2015. Again, it did not include specific housebuilders but it did include Homes for Scotland – who represent private sector housebuilding interests in the region and Scotland. It also included the Scottish Property Federation which represents the property industry across Scotland and is based in Edinburgh. The Edinburgh Development Forum’s (EDF) agenda was – linked to the Concordat – again more about process and planning applications that forming development plans in the city and region. Here ACSEF and Edinburgh’s equivalents differ, with the Edinburgh approach process focussed rather than plan focused. They were not driving the spatial vision or a particular agenda for the region.

The EBF and its make-up is probably in the mould that would be expected of a medium-sized capital city. The lack of local housebuilders, hoteliers and special business interests is not surprising. In this sense the ACSEF arrangement was more unusual. I interviewed the chair of the EBF and he reflected on the role of Business Forum and its integration into local governance.

I spend a lot of time, having built up a rapport with the chief exec, right through all the various heads of department, including planning. And I sit on the Edinburgh Development Forum, as well, as a constituent part of the, the sort of, people involved in the city, and, I suppose, the city region (Interview 42. Edinburgh Business Forum, 2015).

The EBF and the EDF are clearly interlinked and the chair felt he was suitably linked to the local Council. The Convenor of Edinburgh’s Economy Committee sits on both forums. However, a significant difference with Aberdeen was the fact that both forums were only City-based and had no ties to the wider region. Chapter 6 identified that making regional governance work was logistically more complex in Edinburgh than in Aberdeen, but that Edinburgh compares badly to Glasgow in this respect as well and it has tended to dominate any attempts at regional ‘collaboration’. This was identified as a problem:

We’ve been heavily involved in promoting the sort of regional focus going forward. We have been acting alone really. Now for obvious reasons, if we had that strategic set up then planning, development, business, whatever we do would be a lot easier.

Edinburgh's outgrowing itself, and it needs its city region. That's the next step I hope.

The work of the EBF was not seen as being particularly related to promoting physical development in the way that Aberdeen's ACSEF was.

We provide a business perspective to the Council, to act as a critical friend. That's the theory but it doesn't always happen. It's not just business mind you, we've got all the universities, the NHS, the colleges, so we get all the problems and we see it from all the different sides. (Interview 42: Edinburgh Business Forum, 2015).

However, while private development interests did not sit on the board, the interviewee did confirm that the head of the Economy Committee and himself were both also board members of EDI. The EDI Group Ltd is a property development and investment business based in Edinburgh. It was established in 1988 by the City of Edinburgh Council as the Council began its own property development projects to the west of Edinburgh. At the time of the research, EDI was still technically a private company, owned by the Council and run as an arms-length operation. Edinburgh's public-private governance differs from Aberdeen particularly when the operation of EDI is concerned. The existence of EDI demonstrates that Edinburgh's Council cannot be dismissed as anti-development – it is an important player in the City's development sector. It largely follows a regeneration model where the public sector goes first where the private sector will not and then opens up areas for development. However, its recent greenbelt allocation for 1300 houses through the Edinburgh LDP2 (2016) does not really fit this model.

No interviewee from the development sector raised the issue in my interviews, but according to this interviewee from Edinburgh Business Forum, it had become a perception, during the property recession, that EDI had taken on the role of the city's most important developer:

Edinburgh, for a few years, was seen to be becoming quite a closed shop; because of all EDI was doing. It was preventing other developers and investors coming in - well, not investors, more the developers. Now I'm not sure what they'll do, it's up to the Councillors but I said I would resign as soon as we started doing development, and we didn't involve others, like, investors or developers. Because it's the worst thing you can do. (Interview 42: Edinburgh Business Forum, 2015)

He discussed how it was also taking the lead with differing tenures, not just locations for development: ‘We’re doing the first private rental scheme in Scotland at Fountainbridge. It’s been clear for a while that Edinburgh needs more private rental stuff’. In this way, EDI was actually providing a type of tenure for the mid-market. This was what Aberdeen had been attempting to get the market to deliver and which ACSEF had raised as an unaddressed housing need. In this sense EDI was actively doing what business interests had been pressing for in Aberdeen and providing such housing on a brownfield site in close proximity to one of city’s key new employment areas.

Arms-length public sector development companies are not unusual in the UK, but Edinburgh’s has clearly been a significant part of the city’s development sector. The key difference between Aberdeen and Edinburgh in this respect is that, while EDI has a brownfield-first focus, Edinburgh City Council also then has both a political interest and a financial one to ensure that growth is largely constrained on the periphery of the city in order to bolster the viability of brownfield sites in the city (such as those at the Waterfront and elsewhere). This specific market-shaping influence of Edinburgh City Council through EDI did not, however, come up as a problem when the City’s development strategy was discussed with private sector interviewees. Rather, there was a sense that private business in the City had never really permeated the political agenda in a cohesive organised way in Edinburgh.

The effectiveness of the business lobby

The various public-private-partnerships and organisations in Edinburgh demonstrate that experimentation is being conducted in order to try and find that elusive form and dynamic: one with a regional scope and a strong influence. The following passage demonstrates a sense of lack of organisation with the business lobby in Edinburgh:

R: Is the business voice in Edinburgh primarily heard through the Chamber of Commerce, and through yourselves? And is it strong enough, do you think, or is it...?

I: “No, I think it could be a lot stronger. The problem is, we are all voluntary, we have our day jobs, and, you know, we can’t do everything. But, you know, we do voice our views at times. The voice of the, sort of, historical, restoration,

conservation bodies, are still far too strong in Edinburgh. (Interview 42: Edinburgh Business Forum, 2015)

The interviewee from Edinburgh Business Forum equated conservation of the historic environment with a broader anti-growth feeling in the Council, and elsewhere in the interview, he suggested this differed greatly from Aberdeen and Glasgow as well. This was the fairly standard ‘heritage versus development argument’ that is often associated with the politics of development in Edinburgh. In the extract below, there was a reflection on the continued lack of unity in Edinburgh in terms of the business lobby.

It’s an attractive place to be. It’s a great city, it’s got a lot of positives. One of the things about Edinburgh is we always go on about our negatives, rather than the positives. But the reality is, Glasgow, which has even got more problems, and cities like Liverpool, Manchester, they just always express the positives. And their business population get behind whatever the Council is doing, and work with them. And the messages go out from the business sector and are a lot clearer. Glasgow is very good at it. Manchester is very good at it. Edinburgh, well it’s a bit more dislocated. (Interview 42: Edinburgh Business Forum, 2015)

Rather than a collective failure to unite behind a message, the private sector sensed that it was up to the public-private-partnerships to provide a coherent strategy, rather than the other way around (as in Aberdeen).

“We’ve said to the Council, look you really should be doing more about this. But it’s just giving the business people something, you know, a clear message. The business community will help out if they believe in the cause.” (Interview 42: Edinburgh Business Forum, 2015)

There was this lack of a clear cause which compares to Aberdeen where the business community reflects local attitudes to growth in terms of the need to deal with a post-oil future, or more aptly, the need to grow us much as possible before the oil industry declines. Edinburgh, as a city without a cohesive collective memory of post-industrial economic crisis, with an established political class, and where the future fundamentals for growth are broadly good is less conducive to the planning policy being very strongly influenced by business interests. In the section below, a planning consultant, with decades of experience in

Edinburgh and Aberdeen, reflected on this. In particular, he drew on a current project in Aberdeen where a small beach with significant amenity value, close to the traditionally working class area of Torry, is being replaced with a deep water dock. This is the expansion of Aberdeen Harbour (Aberdeen Harbour Board, 2017) which is a £350m project intended to seize opportunities in North Sea oil extraction as well as decommissioning, and finally, to help reposition the City as a cruise ship port of call in future:

The Chamber of Commerce in Edinburgh and others are very powerful voices, you shouldn't underestimate them. What I think is different in Edinburgh compared to Aberdeen...and I know this from doing the harbour stuff up there which is a massive project...there is just a general positivity towards growth. I mean that's a terrible sweeping generalisation and I know it's not the same in the suburbs and in places like Stonehaven. But I think the understanding of the need to keep growing and to remain economically active and all that...I think that is in the psyche in Aberdeen, certainly in the city. And I've noticed that with regards to the harbour, and people are coming to our consultation events and are like, "well you know, it's a shame what's happened to the bay, but you've got to do it". People understand economic growth. Maybe because Aberdeen in the last forty years has had such an enormous boom, and people have seen the benefits of that in the city and have something to compare it to, you know the years before (Interview 22: Planning consultant Edinburgh/Aberdeen, 2015)

He compared this to his more common experience of working in Edinburgh:

Edinburgh, however, has a much greater kind of amenity view of urban life; it's not just about economic growth. You know, people that live in the city and in the areas immediately around the city, they like the lifestyle, it's very...they kind of, they understand the need for Edinburgh to be successful, but not *too* successful, not to the point where it might mean they can't jump in the car and come into town and do whatever they want to do. You know, it's a different mentality. And I think actually, culturally and politically that's a massive difference between the two cities"

I interviewed a planning consultant who, in representing housebuilders, has a long record of friction with the City Council over housing land allocations in and around the City. This has

continued recently as his practice represents the consortium looking to develop Sir David Murray's land west of Edinburgh at the 'Garden District' (chapter 7). In considering the lack of business and particularly housebuilder cohesion, he discussed the formation and the withering of the Edinburgh Development Forum:

You know, there was something I imagine about two years ago where Edinburgh, more than other councils, at least so far as they appeared, to say kind of, embraced the idea of culture change. And they started a liaison group with developers where on a regular basis, there would be at least council, probably some community representatives, developer representatives, the Chamber of Commerce, would all sit down, discuss the problems. I'm not aware that's happened recently (Interview 23: Planning consultant, Edinburgh, 2015).

From his perspective, the Council's fledgling pro-partnership and engagement (if not development) approach had waned because of the impact of cuts to public sector resources

These things started up but think about two/three years ago (2012-13), I got a sense of the council retrenching. And part of that might be a resource issue. I mean, Edinburgh are in a mess at the moment resource-wise.

Resource cuts facing the Council have impacted immediately on the availability of staff and the funding of partnerships, but also in a wider sense, on the funding of actual infrastructure to help deliver development. Added to this, was the feeling that Edinburgh's Councillors, still very much in control, and they were maintaining an aversion to development.

Edinburgh have had a lot of good things to say about how they want to liaise with the private sector. But I'll tell you where I think things went wrong: They weren't delivering. In other words, they were saying, "we're going to be better", and then every planning committee another planning application recommended for approval got refused by the Councillors. And there was more criticism. And I have a feeling it might have been killed by a perception that it wasn't working for people.

I don't hear about it anymore, makes me think that it's withered and died. So at the moment, I'm not aware of an effective liaison group, particularly one that brings in the business community. I don't think that really exists."

From this perspective culture change was again about collaboration and, from a development industry perspective, about the Council approving planning applications. The Edinburgh Development Forum, along with the Edinburgh Concordat, was seen to have lost its way mainly because Councillors were still refusing to approve the bigger more controversial planning applications and were instructing officers to fight planning appeals even where they were likely to be lost. This view of a Council which had ‘upped its game’ in terms of dialogue but failed to take on board the development industry view was shared by three of the four Edinburgh development sector interviewees. The effect of austerity on the planning department was raised in this interview, and elsewhere, by a range of participants. There was a sense that reduced budgets thus reduced collaboration. And reduced resources put planners in a weaker position when it came to dealing with their councillors and building the case for development. The reaction from the development industry was to lose trust in the Council and revert to the combative approach which defined the SESplan and LDP formation periods. Comparisons are more difficult with Aberdeen in this respect, because there austerity is being played out with a wider recent downturn in the local economy and Aberdeen City Council had its own experience with budget cuts in 2007/2008 which chapter 6 referred to.

Housebuilding interests in Edinburgh

Interviewees from all sectors suggested that there were planners, economic development officers and increasingly councillors in Edinburgh who were very receptive to housebuilding interests. However, in Edinburgh’s recent strategic and local plan processes the protection of councillors’ own interests had snuffed out the chance of any sort of pro-development approach taking place in the City’s politics. This section focuses on housebuilders in the city and region and why they never became enmeshed within the City’s governance structures, but how they have used other tactics to wield influence.

Edinburgh has major, locally based, developers who are individually well connected with the Council. But this did not appear to encourage any particular company to lead a united lobbying agenda beyond that conducted by Homes for Scotland. House builders had their own particular interests and followed their own strategies. I conducted a three-person group interview with a major housebuilder that operate in Edinburgh. They considered this an “every man for himself” (Interview 46, Housebuilder, Edinburgh) approach locally. From

their perspective, in their operations throughout the UK, this was quite normal and this possibly makes Aberdeen the outlier. An ex-councillor reflected on this:

It's a strong housebuilding lobby. But many of them recognise that because Edinburgh is Edinburgh things have to be done well, and you have businesses like Miller that will go along with that agenda (Interview 43: former chair of Edinburgh planning committee)

Here a kind of place attachment comes through, and a sense that it was better to work on developing a relationship with the Council rather than acting together. This was confirmed by the housebuilder interviewed as well.

A planner in East Lothian reflected on developer-council relations. As a smaller council on the edge of Edinburgh they tended to deal with larger scale regional and national developers. There were no real 'home-grown' major developers like those that existed in Aberdeen. The planner felt that it was a fairly well established that his Council had a fractious working relationship with developers: "I'd go as far as to say there is no relationship" (Interview 44, Plan manager, LPA East Lothian). East Lothian is known as a development-averse authority. Chapter 7 detailed pressures with Edinburgh over SESplan 2013 allocations and with developers, particularly over paying for infrastructure associated with housing. However, for planners to state explicitly that they have no relationship with the development industry is unusual in Scotland, where the public and private sectors might be expected to at least engage in the 'performance' of culture change.

The former head of SESplan I interviewed, who has a strong knowledge of planning in Aberdeen as well, considered the lack of a regional business organisation to be important. From his perspective was the lack of housebuilder solidarity which was one important reason for the timidity of SESplan1 (2013).

We don't have a strong organization I mean a sort of umbrella for business. If you look at Aberdeen City and Shire, I mean, I think the Chair of ACSEF was chairing their Housing Land Audit Committees at one point. Was that really an independent chair? (SESPlan, SDPA, 2013)

This point was misplaced but the comparison is useful. Scottish Planning Authorities consult with Homes for Scotland and individual housebuilders in the housing land audit process. In Aberdeen meetings would be chaired by the head of Aberdeen Solicitors Property Centre in order to ensure ‘impartiality’. However, as a leading member of the property sector, surrounded by others from the house building sector, this possibly pushed the balance of power away from the Councils and towards the developers. He reflected on Edinburgh, and the wider SDPA, again:

Homes for Scotland are obviously...I say obviously, because I think it’s the case everywhere, they’re the most vociferous and regular, so they’re a contributor to the discussion and we’ve tried to involve them as much as possible. I know they’ll not say they’re involved as much as they want to be, but we’re trying to improve our involvement with them and their engagement with us. But I have to say that historically there’s a huge amount of distrust round the table, especially amongst our member planning authorities. (SESPlan, SDPA, 2013)

The picture painted here is one of a lack of organization from business in the region. A better organized business group acting strategically might have actually improved the outcomes of SESplan, even from the SDPAs perspective. Homes for Scotland and SESplan and its constituent local authorities were clearly in disagreement as to the suitable level of influence for the housebuilding sector. This was in stark contrast to Aberdeen’s experience which had gone down a route of collaboration which verged on housebuilder domination in the Housing Land Audit: a key technical part of the planning for housing process.

The level of mistrust even between authorities was also acknowledged. Rather than capitalizing on this though, the housebuilding sector was marginalized from the development plan process. The following passage illustrates this and how SESplan appeared to never have been in a position to engender any kind of better collaborative working relationship between the development industry and the councils and between the councils themselves:

They’ve (Homes for Scotland) got a very difficult job, a very diverse set of members, and obviously their members by definition are in competition with each other. I think it’s very hard for an umbrella body like Homes for Scotland and the people representing them. We tried to involve them as much as possible in SDP1 at a

technical level, but there was a point where essentially I was instructed that we were in a team, we should not have any further contact with them until we produced a proposal, and yeah, I mean, it is quite difficult, it's a difficult relationship (SESPlan, SDPA, 2013)

While revealing the lack of unity from the housebuilding sector, this also reveals that in being 'instructed' SESplan, as the Strategic Planning Authority, was never in control of the Local Planning Authorities. In this way the purpose of planning reform and its hierarchies – the tiered spatial approach – never took hold in the Edinburgh region. This issue was introduced in chapter 7.

Edinburgh City Council effectively had a very, very significant control over the SESplan policy board, over that group. And so when Edinburgh decided that they were not going to zone land in the greenbelt, et cetera, it put the others in a very difficult position. It's probably enough to say that just the round the table politics caused a huge amount of the problems themselves. (Interview 22: Planning consultant Edinburgh/Aberdeen, 2015)

The quote above demonstrates the widespread belief by those internal and external to the SESplan process that Edinburgh were still in charge of this. So, if housebuilders were unable to influence Edinburgh City Council, it would be unlikely that they could gain influence through the strategic planning authority. The SDPA as the authority with power that separated and sat over the Local Planning Authorities, representing an overall 'best interest' was a key part of the attempted strategic spatial planning approach that planning reform intended. In this sense it had failed in the Edinburgh city-region.

A former senior civil servant cautioned around giving too much respect to the organisational capacity of the housebuilding and wider development sector in local and in national political arenas at the time of reform. Elsewhere in the interview he pointed to ACSEF and the developers that surrounded it as a strong example of housebuilder interests in the planning system but did not think that, at least a decade or so ago, this was necessarily the normal way of builders, and the wider development industry, operating in Scotland. In this section he reflected on the path to planning reform. In this interview, the terms development sector and housebuilders were also used interchangeably signifying a collective issue:

Now with planning at a national level, you're often dealing with MSPs who have experience of the planning system as local councillors, they think about the votes adding up. A lot of them would complain about the quality of housing that was being built as well. Now the sector as a whole weren't actually very good at getting their point across, nationally anyway. I remember having to talk to them, "do not turn up with men, late middle aged men with Rolex watches and saying, oh life is hard for us. That's just not going to play." So, they took that message on board. I said to the development industry that they did not have a voice and that led to the creation of the Property Federation so they could speak with one voice. So, ministers could actually speak to them about what they saw as the issue. (Interview 47: former chief civil servant, Scotland, 2016)

This scenario of a senior civil servant having to tell an industry to organise is intriguing. It appears that, the property development industry at least, and possibly the housebuilding industry specifically too, had 10 years ago not really organised effectively at a national level in terms of lobbying the Scottish Government. This is not to say that individual housebuilders and developers were not powerful and did not use their privileged position in the case of their own planning applications. Rather there was less organisation than might have been expected when it came to lobbying collectively. In south east of Scotland Homes for Scotland has long provided that function, but never achieved the same purchase as in Aberdeen where via their Grampian chapter they had become a strong influence. In Edinburgh, while Homes for Scotland is useful, the industry was acting on an individual basis and has not gained or it, seems attempted, to organise access to the city's wider business forums.

An anti-development council?

This raises the possibility that Edinburgh Council, reflecting a local culture, is incognisant of the housing development sector and that this is reinforced because the sector, and wider business interests, has a poor record of organising in the city and wider region. This is not to say that the planning system itself does not put economic development, in a broad sense, first. The fact that the Scottish Government eventually imposed a housing requirement on the individual SESplan authorities in 2014, and that in 2016 the Government again severely condemned Edinburgh City Council in its handling of the LDP (2016) process with an

overarching threat to step in again if housing allocations are not dealt with soon, testifies to this.

One Councillor reflected on this, considering that individual councillors would often resist development in their own areas and that as a Council there had been a collective attempt to push growth into other authorities. However, this was not radical or in any way offering a resistance to the market-led growth model that planning supports: ‘Well the idea...I suppose this blind belief that the market will supply and all development is good development is shared by most of the main parties.’ Here, the resistance to growth was not combined with ideas around why they were resisting growth and why the system appeared to be broken. In the passage below he reflected on the futility of resisting the growth model generally as a councillor:

I think that even within the law we have to give massive weight to economic development. I know that the economy committee try and pressure the planning committees as well. Though obviously with any planning stuff you can put the emphasis on whichever bit of policy you think is most important because quite often they’re incompatible overall. I will stretch parts of policy, which aren’t genuine policy, but some of my colleagues and the ones in economic development will be doing the opposite and working in another direction (Green Councillor, Edinburgh, 2016)

In terms of the specific influence of economic development officers and councillors in planning in the City, he was clear that while there was undoubtedly an aversion to housing growth in sensitive parts of Edinburgh, he still considered that this was not really challenging the overall neoliberal growth model and planning’s role within it. He pointed to the overbearing influence of Scottish Government policy on planning decisions as evidence of why any sort of radical take on planning would be unlikely to succeed in isolation.

It is worth, briefly, comparing to the Aberdeen case here. I had been interviewing planners who felt that with the regions strategic and local development plans in place (all adopted by 2012) there had been a noticeable loss of priority given to planning. In an interview with the head of economic development in the City Council I discussed the perception from planners around this and specifically that they had never really been engaged in the City Deal (chapter

2) process emerging at the time. I also asked about what he saw as the role for planning as the City economy dealt with the oil price crash. His reply was indicative of the narrow conception of planning which the Councillor in Edinburgh reflected on above. Development planning was seen as having removed the legal barriers to growth in the last decade, but the wider strategy had moved on and planning was really a tool for economic development anyway. The growth strategy was not really in need of any change either. There was a discussion (elsewhere in the interview) around diversification, but it was still expected that the oil and gas focussed planning for growth agenda would be the route the region would be following:

“With the policy framework, well you’ve got a regional economic strategy. And therefore all other plans and strategies support that, including the planning system, including the framework, so essentially structure plans, local development plans whatever they are, a pound to a penny they are all about economic growth in a different way shape or form. So they are to provide the parameters within which this city will grow and compete and compete on an international stage which is really important for Aberdeen in the context of you know, we’re in a downturn now but one in four jobs are still directly attributable to oil. There’s still a massive prize to be won in the North Sea.” (Interview 32: Economic Development Aberdeen City, 2015).

One final point to consider is that of scale. While Aberdeen’s economy contains oil and gas multinationals, it is the local (but still major) operators in that industry which take part in the city and region’s governance. Personality is important and Sir Ian Wood – the local founder of the international Wood Group – and his associates have been particularly prominent in ACSEF’s various forms for more than 30 years now. But Edinburgh’s economy operates at a different scale and the operators within it represent a broader range of industries. One participant reflected on the priority the City Council gave to ensuring a greenbelt location for the RBS headquarters in the mid-2000s – a time when RBS were one of the world’s largest banks. Such clout and quick response did not require a long-game approach of collaborative governance on the industry’s part. Also the decision to prioritise the tram route that serviced RBS and the airport in the first phase of its development pointed to the same powerful actor wielding power. Linked to this, the subsequent plan for significant housing development in

that location was inextricably linked to nationally recognised business people, such as Sir David Murray as well as Fred Goodwin at RBS:

We invested a huge amount of this City's money essentially under the bullying of Fred Goodwin. He wanted all the money to go into something which would raise the value of the land he thought he could control around Gogarburn. We were bullied into using the tram to do exactly the opposite of what it does best which is spread wealth to poorer parts of town like Leith and Granton and even Niddrie and Craigmillar (Interview 32: Architect-Urbanist Scotland, 2016).

This example brings through the individualistic approach that was operated by businesses in the City. It also demonstrates the power of business in the City's politics and why it is important not to conceive of Edinburgh as an anti-development City. Rather when comparing to Aberdeen, to reflect on the different scale, context, and agendas that were at play in each place. A cohesive, definable, 'growth-agenda' in the regional sense, was not in play in recent decades in Edinburgh. However, that did not mean that the Scottish planning system and local politics could not easily be utilised to fit the specific needs of powerful business interests the City. The example above demonstrates both this and the path dependencies and wider impacts on the City of such actions.

Chapter Conclusion

The chapter has demonstrated two important findings which tell us about the domination of particular interests in Scottish planning. In Aberdeen, the region's growth strategy and its broader politics, and approach to growth, has been dominated by a public-private-partnership approach which has been firmly in place for at least four decades but which was particularly influential at the time of the emergence of the Structure Plan (2009). It demonstrated the way in which ACSEF acted within informal spaces in the region's governance structures but managed to solidify this into formal outcomes and strategy making. It was able to do this because the, less tangible 'culture of the place' is one where there is less resistance to growth and to private sector involvement in the region's politics. Its agenda also overlapped with the Scottish Government's pro-growth approach to planning and economic development. Importantly in Aberdeen the local development sector was, through ACSEF, and through other informal means also deeply integrated into the region's planning system. This

assemblage left little means for any sort of resistance to a growth agenda as a planning strategy through development planning and specifically through the collaborative governance approach encouraged by Scottish planning reform.

In Edinburgh the key finding centres on the way in which the City's public-private-partnership (EDF) has had less influence over city politics and had a very different agenda which in many ways was more focused on the 'public good' but with less ability to achieve its aims. Importantly, of course, the City and its region is larger and more complex than Aberdeen's and this has had some important outcomes in terms of the ability for any particular interest to dominate through a cohesive agenda. The lack of integration with neighbouring authorities has led to a kind of stasis in terms of governing growth. The City's economic context differs from Aberdeen's; there is less sense of 'emergency' in that the economy is not based on a finite resource and so business interests are more complex. The 'culture of place' is less focused on growth and so housebuilding interests have adopted their own individual strategies for dealing with the local council and with the planning system in the City to suite this culture. There is an established heritage lobby in Edinburgh, which on the surface, wields power when it comes to city-centre based planning applications which affect conservation, and this is incomparable to other Scottish cities. The chapter has also demonstrated the nuance of considering particular interests in planning. The city has a Scottish-liberal tradition and something of a strong public-private approach to land development which is less obvious in other cities. In addition, as a larger, and as a capital, city it also has a history (as evidenced in this chapter) of responding positively to some major personalities and major institutions with their own land-based agendas.

In each case, it can be demonstrated that planning is open to domination by special interests but Aberdeen's is a special case that might not be exemplified elsewhere in the UK, of a particularly strong role for the private sector in urban governance. The Scottish planning system, in both cases, has aided private interests and not held them in check or steered them towards the ethereal 'public good'.

CHAPTER 9 - Conclusion

Introduction and revisiting the research questions

This thesis has analysed what contemporary Scottish planning represents in practice, doing this through a focus on how planning is used to deal with the politics of growth strategies and housing growth in particular. It has provided an applied Scottish perspective to debates around the ‘neoliberalisation of planning’. The thesis compared qualitative case studies of planning for growth in the Aberdeen and Edinburgh city regions, while drawing upon strands of critical theories of the state in order to understand the extent of and meaning of neoliberal planning in the Scottish context. In particular, Allmendinger’s (2016) conceptualisation of contemporary English planning as ‘post-political neoliberal spatial governance’ provided a planning-specific critique that has been useful for comparing and understanding planning in similar structural conditions in Scotland. This concluding chapter first revisits the research questions. It then draws together the key findings and presents the central arguments of the thesis. Following this, it discusses the contribution of the thesis to academic and practice knowledge before providing potential avenues for further research.

This key aim of this thesis was to understand what Scottish planning represents by analysing the way the planning system has been utilised to deal with growth pressures in Scottish city regions. It did this through a focus on the specific public policy concern of planning for housing growth. This was tackled through three key research questions:

1. To what extent is planning driven by narrow sectional interests?
2. How is planning used to deal with the politics of growth in growth-pressured locations?
3. What factors explain the main variances and commonalities in the way Aberdeen and Edinburgh have dealt with growth pressures?

Through these research questions, I developed a framework for researching what contemporary Scottish planning represents in practice. The framework was developed by fusing the research aims and research questions with a structure based on existing research on this specific topic (Vigar, 2009; Lloyd and Peel, 2007) and particular theoretical critiques of broader contemporary planning (Purcell, 2009; Allmendinger, 2016), doing this within a Gramscian influenced critical theoretical framework. The framework helps to explain and

understand the formation of planning agendas in case study, while considering what this tells us about planning in Scotland. From this, lessons can be applied to understand planning practice, in similar political-economic contexts, more generally.

In Chapter 2 I placed the Scottish planning system into its historical structural context of state-market relations, considering the planning system as an institution of the capitalist state that has been used to resolve spatially based governance concerns since the mid-20th century. In its contemporary form, via Scottish planning reform (SPR), it was established that planning in Scotland contains the traits of a 'Third Way' strategic spatial planning approach. It has been tasked with increasing place competitiveness and, particularly since the SNP came to power in 2007, planning for the competitive state has become a key component of a wider nation-building process in Scotland. It has been, and continues to be, tasked with responding to opposing views that planning must respond more readily to the needs of the development sector while offering greater influence for communities affected by development. Planning reform was devised and rolled out within a broader context of neoliberal state-market relations in the UK and Scotland. Scotland differs from the broader UK context, however, in that neoliberalism is practiced within a tradition of neo-corporatist approaches to state-market relations. The fusion of these two ideologies are important to consider in terms of the way in which SPR has evolved through implementation. SPR was Third Way planning, brought about to deliver what I consider to be contradictory objectives and reacting to pro-growth and growth-sceptic views on the purpose of the planning system. While exhibiting strong traits of a spatial planning 'ethos', I broadly agree with Lloyd and Peel (2007) that what emerged in Scotland was ultimately 'neo traditional' in terms of its institutional policy design. Like English 'spatial planning', it opened the way for a smoothing of paths to growth in the making of plans, but retained the traditional British separation of development plan and planning permission. It was strong in rhetoric on integrating land-based governance but was not accompanied by significant structural changes to the financing of development or the public-private sector relationship around property rights and land taxation. Responding to competing objectives, SPR was intended to provide an efficient, integrative, and inclusive route to 'sustainable economic growth', and was intended to particularly respond to a need for more development in growth-pressured areas. What this meant, on the ground, at a city-regional and local level was less clear, and there have been very few cases of such studies in Scotland, and none of note since SPR was implemented. This thesis has sought to address this gap.

Chapter 3 explored useful theoretical conceptualisations of planning. This was in order to develop a deeper understanding of the ideologies and processes which have driven SPR. It considered the emergence of collaborative stakeholder approaches to planning as susceptible to co-option by increasingly powerful pro-development interests. Scotland's fusing of neoliberalism with a neo-corporatist tradition meant that a 'big-tent' approach to planning would be particularly prone to this. It presented a conceptualising of planning as a form of neoliberal spatial governance with traits that depoliticise the objectives and means of market-led growth. However, it was cautious overall of the actual use of post-foundational theory within such conceptualising. It also recognised that a careful deployment of theories around neoliberalism and depoliticisation, through a framework developed by Allmdendinger (2016), would be useful in understanding what Scottish planning represents. This was broadly deployed to respond to a critique that planning might have become 'neoliberal spatial governance, operated for narrow sectional interests.' Similarly, it argued that studying planning as a market-led state structure requires more applied contextual case studies of its competing and often contradictory objectives in order to move to an understanding of what planning represents. Chapter 3 demonstrated how this could usefully be framed by drawing upon strands of Gramscian critical theory in order to understand the relative importance of SPR as a system and how and why it has been operated with different context specific outcomes. This would place planning actors as agents operating strategically with their broader structural conditions in order to make sense of consistency and variation in each case and to understand the formation of 'hegemony' in the form of spatial strategies in each case. Chapter 4 developed a method for deploying the conceptualising of planning as a form of neoliberal spatial governance with depoliticising tendencies, but one that is contingent on context dependencies. The comparative case study approach was identified as required because even in a small country and with only two city-regions facing real growth pressures in the period studied, Aberdeen and Edinburgh demonstrated very different approaches to planning for growth and dealing with the politics that surrounds it. Chapter 5 introduced the case study contexts for Aberdeen and Edinburgh. It provided the local historical planning context and demonstrated how SPR was to be used as a means of resolving key spatially-based tensions in each place. The three research questions, set out above, drove the research, culminating in research findings that provide the key arguments of the thesis.

Key arguments of the thesis

As a study of Scottish planning in practice, this thesis makes four key arguments which have emerged through the guiding of the research via key research questions. These arguments have been developed through a grounding of the empirical research within the existing literature (chapter 2) and the deployment of a critical theoretical framework (chapter 3). As such, the arguments are both empirical and theoretical in nature. Following the presentation and discussion of the four arguments, this section of the chapter then reflects on what this tells about what Scottish planning represents.

RQ1. To what extent is planning driven by narrow sectional interests?

Key argument 1: Business interests can successfully use collaborative approaches in planning to enhance their power and pursue their own particular interests, but organised community interests require continued attention too.

This thesis considers that Scottish planning, as developed through planning reform in the mid-2000s, demonstrates many negative effects of the stakeholder approach to spatial governance. In this way, it lends to a long running debate in planning theory and practice (Healey, 1998; Purcell, 2009). In the Aberdeen city-region, collaborative planning arrangements between the development sector and less powerful groups and interests have been treated as if there was an equivalence of power between each group. The effect of this, *where conditions permit*, is that collaborative planning can potentially be co-opted by a deepening of narrow developer interests in planning. In the Edinburgh city-region there are other reasons (discussed elsewhere in these key arguments) as to why developer interests have not become as embedded within wider governance arrangements and collaborative planning processes. There are signs in both cases that the development management process has been subjected to an increase in the power of developer interests and that this has occurred particularly through the ‘culture change’ element of SPR. However, perspectives on the extent of this and the very concept of ‘culture change’ varied in this research. This research provided a much stronger focus on the earlier development planning stage of planning, rather than the development management stage. It found that in Aberdeen ‘culture change’ had fused at the time of its growth strategy with a change in attitudes to development that were emerging in reaction to land supply shortages. This led to a hegemony in the form of a radical new approach to planning for housing growth. In Edinburgh there was no clear

evidence that a pro-developer interest ‘culture change’ had taken hold in regard to development planning, at least not in the processes of SES Plan and Edinburgh’s LDP. In the Edinburgh case, long-held debates over the use of the greenbelt and the scale to which Edinburgh should grow and the role of its neighbouring authorities proved difficult to change. Third Way conceptions of the stakeholder agenda in governance highlight the contradictions at the heart of neoliberal governance. Scottish planning reform built on decades of incremental moves towards greater community involvement in planning and attempts at engaging a broad pluralist approach to planning. At the same time, SPR also aimed to take a more developer-interest approach and speed up both plan making and development management process to aid economic development: these are hallmarks of the neoliberalisation of planning. Growth-focussed planning, via SPR, was formed as a response to housing affordability issues and the link between housing and regional economic competitiveness. Planning reform was then a compromise between competing interests. This thesis found that the contradictions at the heart of neoliberalism as an ideology in practice were evident as the Scottish government attempted to forge a Third Way ‘modernised’ planning system which was more socially inclusive, apparently focused on environmentally sustainability, while giving far greater weight to business considerations.

Allmendinger (2016, 65) considers collaborative planning as “the perfect shell for the neoliberalisation of planning.” This thesis argues that planning’s ‘inclusive’ ‘stakeholder agenda’ privileged business interests in the case of planning in the Aberdeen city-region. The data illustrated how planners, the development sector (importantly including local housebuilders), and willing councillors united around a growth agenda in the region. This growth agenda was driven by business interests, and specifically the development sector, which has for decades had a very strong role in the city-region’s governance assemblage. Utilising SPR, this assemblage was able to take on a new legitimacy at the earliest stages of plan-making by steering a call for planning to become geared towards a greater focus on economic growth. Such a shift was commended by the Scottish Government at this time. As such, the Aberdeen city-region case does offer support to conceptions of Scottish planning’s related ‘culture change’ as a pro-growth political agenda (Inch, 2013). This means that *where local conditions permit* there are few checks and balances in the Scottish planning system when growth agendas are successfully framed as ‘ambition’ and in the Aberdeen case, planning was used to ‘facilitate development and economic growth for narrow sectional interests’ (Allmendinger, 2016).

An important point, however, is that business interests must be organised, cohesive, and have a particular goal to pursue through the planning system. In Edinburgh, while there is business organisation in the broad politics of the City, there was not a strong development industry organisation which was focused on achieving a specific aim through the development plan side of the planning system. The development industry in the city has tended to pursue individual company strategies to a greater extent than in Aberdeen. Business interests in Edinburgh were still able to act strategically in the Edinburgh case, with major companies such as RBS simply bypassing the ordinary planning process and any collaborative governance networks to achieve their own specific goals at points in time when they needed to. Crucially, the Edinburgh case revealed the continued importance of organised homeowner interests particularly in affluent greenbelt communities. When such interests organise and are not met with a similarly organised and powerful housing development lobby at the city-region local level then the planning system does not necessarily smooth a path to growth. Accordingly, notions of ‘community interest’ and ‘business versus community power’ must be considered critically when planning is practiced in the context of regional housing shortages.

The Aberdeen case is the more interesting in terms of demonstrating change, and the local development industry’s fusion within a wider public-private-partnership was a foil for the pursuance of its various land-based interests. This was officially ingrained in the local political culture at least as far back as the 1960s before such partnerships began to emerge in more widely in the UK. Aberdeen’s integration of the private sector into local democratic decision-making has been unusual in a UK context. It displays signs of the US-based ‘growth machine’ (Molotch, 1976) traits in that ‘boosterist’ agendas have been pursued by a coherent group of locally based business groups and key individuals. These have aligned with particular centralised government funding programmes and projects. Business interests have consistently invested time and resources in pursuing strategies for the physical expansion of the city, lobbying for infrastructure, and promoting the redevelopment of the city centre in their own image. The informal road to planning reform in the pre-2006 period was found to have been as important to consider as the 2006 point where SPR officially began to be legally enacted. Through the process of planning reform, Aberdeen’s business interests legitimised a role within the city-region’s development strategy and this played a fundamental role in the emergence of the ambitious growth agenda which was crystallised in the Structure Plan 2009. The thesis demonstrated concerns from councillors over the subsequent infiltration of private

sector business interests into wider governance and democracy in the city-region. In particular, there was concern around the way in which the ‘culture change’ agenda had brought the development industry and planning officers into collaborative working relationships in planning in ways which appeared to be beyond democratic control.

However, in neither Aberdeen City, nor Edinburgh City could there be detected the traits of a classic ‘regime theory’ (Stone, 1989). Divisive politics and fluctuation in political party control in both city councils meant that a regime of pro-development private and public sectors aided by consistent political power has not taken hold. Nonetheless, in Aberdeen there are signs that with development plans firmly in place, a locked-in pro-growth approach has now been secured regardless of changes in local party politics. Caution has to be exercised here in that it is the entire purpose of development plans that once a political decision is taken any plan is supposed to rise above overt politics for a foreseeable period of time. This is the classic conundrum that planning deals with in the apparent pursuance of a democratic and effective urban development process.

Overall, the research demonstrated that concerns raised about English planning, around neoliberalisation of planning, resonate with the experiences of planning ‘on the ground’ in a Scottish case study approach. The critique of collaborative planning as being “extremely attractive” in political terms for neoliberals (Purcell, 2009, 140) is demonstrated here. Carefully learning from U.S based theories on urban coalitions based on growth and the fusing of this with contemporary planning theory has proved useful in terms of understanding the effect of the ‘stakeholder’ agenda in Scottish planning. However, in all cases this was context dependent and more applicable to the Aberdeen case than Edinburgh’s.

RQ2 How is planning used to deal with the politics of growth in growth-pressured locations?

Key argument 2: The Scottish interpretation of spatial planning can, where circumstances permit, be used to minimise objections to growth. However, this cannot resolve the limitations of neoliberal, market-led, planning.

The second key argument is that an interpretation of strategic spatial planning in Scotland has been unsuccessful in achieving the aim of a less conflictual and more integrated approach to spatial governance; one which delivers the ideal of ‘the right development in the right place at the right time’. This is because SPR has been a weak project when carried out in a context

where the state is strongly driven by neoliberal ideology including the primacy of property rights and low (up-front) taxation and public spending. In the Edinburgh city-region, as elsewhere in Scotland, strategic spatial planning offered a national, regional, and local joined-up approach to plan-making and delivery. This has proved unachievable because strategic spatial planning never resolved a key tension in the coordination and regulation of land development. Seventy years on from the emergence of the Town and Country Planning Act we remain operating what can be thought of as half a planning system in Scotland and the UK. Through neoliberalism this imbalance has deepened and there is an expectation that the right to develop land can still be regulated but that the market will deliver public benefit. There is an aim of making better places and resolving the need for housing growth in growth pressured places. However, the actual development process continues to rely on a particular constellation of benign global and national lending conditions and local market conditions which are impossible to control through the planning system. In the Edinburgh case, a regional economy heavily based on financial services was especially prone to the effects of the Global Financial Crisis (GFC).

Despite its relative insulation from the GFC, and an economic reliance on global oil prices, the same argument still applies to the Aberdeen case. There an ‘ambitious’ suite of development plan documents – an example that other authorities in Scotland were advised to learn from – has not resolved the structural barriers to better planning that are an implicit result of an overly market-led approach. In recent years, the contradictions of neoliberal planning and the wider housing development process have become ever more apparent. In the post GFC era, ‘market-led’ development has actually evolved into a reliance on government funding (through schemes such as help-to-buy) which retain the notion of market-led delivery. This shatters any pretence of a market-led system and raises further questions about how, in attempting to reboot a neoliberal model which was failing to deliver a socially optimal scale of housing and quality of development, we should expect to achieve the stated, laudable, aims of planning reform.

This thesis provides something of a post-mortem of the post-2006 reform era of strategic spatial planning in Scotland via SPR. The spatial approach to planning delivered ‘business as usual’ planning. This was not simply because of its neo-traditional design as a system. In both cases, planning did not move towards a shared societal understanding of how to bring together the positive forces of the state and the market in order to resolve public policy objectives. It still pits interests against each other, and in its new form provides the conditions

for powerful interests to entrench their positions. In terms of planning for housing, this continues to take the form of ‘a numbers game.’ This was apparent in each case study where planners, councillors, developers, and communities argued over the technical details of essentially how much housing is needed and where it should go. This often manifests in poorly conceived developments which serve, variously, developer interest and middle-class homeowner interest rather than overall societal interests. In the Aberdeen case, rather than seeing public benefit through growth, the supply of housing remains in the control of the developers who pursued the growth agenda on their terms. In the Edinburgh case, as the economy recovered, a political-stasis has seen house prices escalate and commuter congestion worsen, and planning is still regarded, variously, as the cause of or solution to these perennial problems.

SPR and culture change were rolled out with a dialogue around the need to not only develop a spatial approach to planning integrating land-use governance more effectively through inclusive forms, but with the aim of implementing Scotland’s design agenda. That would have meant moving away from the ‘numbers game’ of plan making towards one focused on placemaking through the agreeable design agenda of SPR. This was something that Homes for Scotland (Scotland’s housing developer lobby) and Scotland’s broader planning practitioner community agreed was required to shift away from the divisive politics of growth. However, in practice this was far harder to deliver.

The cases analysed here were partly fought around the need for ‘growth’ vs ‘sustainable development’. The process of determining housing needs and the ‘sustainable’ location of growth is in many ways a battle between technical rationality and a relational place-focus, within the confines of existing power structures. This can be placed with a broader debate that was emerging in the 2000s, documented by Murdoch (2000), where the importance of spatial specificity and sustainable development was being used by development-sceptic networks to challenge the rationalities and techniques of pro-development governmental networks. The latter had long used housing projections to instrumentalize a rationality around the need for ‘a decent home for all’ (Murdoch, 2000) but this was challenged because of the consequences of poor quality development, and the apparent over-emphasis on greenbelt housing in development pressured areas. Importantly, Murdoch (2000, 514) reminds us of the way in which such ‘alternative objectives of government’ which successfully lowered housing targets tended to emerge in relation to places most valued by middle-class residents.

While this thesis has partly focused on the greenfield-brownfield debate, it does this in order to demonstrate the inability of planning to overcome classic political issues. A powerful critique of the tendency to limit planning strategy in the UK to a debate between ‘greenfields and brownfields’ has already been well established. Adams and Watkins (2002) demonstrated the way in which institutional factors, operated in a context of changing state-market relations, result in this misunderstood public policy issue of tremendous complexity being cyclically framed as straightforward and resolvable without quite significant structural changes to land use governance. Chapter 2 made clear that these persistent planning issues have been studied without resolution practically since the inception of planning as a formal system (e.g. see Hall, 1973). This thesis demonstrates how regardless of SPR, strategic planning in Scotland remains essentially ‘planning by numbers’ and practiced through the prism of greenfield vs brownfield development conceptions. The class politics around the location of development, and who the planning system is supposed to plan for, obviously persists too.

In Scotland, regardless of the emergence of a spatial approach, there was no discernible trace of the impact of Scotland’s turn to Community Planning, nor an action-focused strategic spatial approach to development delivery. Rather than a relational approach to understanding differing development needs, each development plan process and their Examinations in Public essentially culminated in men (and some women) in suits debating housing numbers. Importantly the key challenge to the SESPlan strategy and its Edinburgh LDP came from a clash between powerful developer interests, and powerful middle-class homeowner interests. In the Aberdeen case planning strategy did get beyond the numbers issue, but this was only through an ambitious growth agenda which surprised even members of the housebuilding lobby with its scale of allocations. But even there, getting ‘beyond the numbers’ has not resulted in better quality places and more equitable planning outcomes. Indeed, handing the power of housing supply to developers simply saw them ‘turn off the tap’ or argue for reduced ‘public benefit’ obligations when market conditions deteriorated.

In using planning to deal with the politics of housing growth, it is easy to look to the political problems of the Edinburgh city-region as demonstrating why the national-regional-local planning hierarchy in Scotland’s city-regions have apparently ‘failed’. Yet this thesis demonstrates how it is the quality of development, often the lack of infrastructure, (the planning outcomes) which gives communities good reason to resist within the planning system even if the opportunity for such resistance has been reduced systematically. Planning

in Scotland is now undergoing another ‘root and branch’ reform, however the most important lesson of how to achieve the development of better places has again been missed: I consider this the need for a stronger role for government. This thesis builds a stronger case as to why there is a need for radical reform and a serious programme of public sector house building. Strategic spatial planning itself as an idea is not dead. It is more needed than ever, but in a way that does not prioritise a flawed notion of ‘sustainable growth’ as pursued through the planning system and in a way that does not further empower narrow powerful interests whether they be pro or anti-development. The lessons of why the post-2006 reforms never achieved their aims, particularly around housing growth, need to be learned and this thesis provides a contribution to this.

RQ2. How is planning used to deal with the politics of growth in growth-pressured locations?

Key argument 3: The Scottish planning system can be used to depoliticise ‘growth,’ but framing this as ‘post-politics’ only takes us so far.

The third key argument of this thesis again follows from research question 2. The planning system in Scotland can be used to depoliticise the politics of growth, but theoretically conceptualising of this as ‘post-political’ has limitations. This argument is based on a number of findings which came out of this research.

First, in both Aberdeen and Edinburgh tactics were used to ‘*defer, delay and displace*’ (Allmendinger, 2016) the politics of growth. This makes the post-political critique very relevant. The Scottish planning system *delayed* and *deferred* the political – in terms of ‘who gets what, when, and how’ (Laswell, 1936) – through depoliticised objectives that could really mean all things to all people. Problems were to be addressed at a future point in time through framing of the chosen development strategies as ‘sustainable’. In Aberdeen, a strategy based on maximising oil extraction offshore without addressing economic diversification in the region, while pursuing a spatial strategy based on intensifying car use through a £1bn city bypass funded through the Private Finance Initiative, was still deemed to be tackling climate change and representing ‘sustainable economic development’. In Edinburgh, not addressing the immediate needs of the City through a ‘sustainable’ option identified over a decade ago - was still deemed ‘sustainable development’.

The politics of growth was *deferred* and *displaced* to experts in specific arenas outside the realm of the planning system which were closed off from debate. In Aberdeen planners pursued a growth strategy based on figures which could not be questioned by critics including members of the public and even elected members of the Councils. In the absence of private sector opposition to the strategy there was no forum or method available to question this. In Edinburgh a struggle took place over the scale of growth, but only between local government and the Scottish Government. This demonstrates the continuing domination of planning by the concept of rational experts acting in the public interest, and it questions any emergence of a relational approach to planning. However, this would not surprise advocates of communicative planning who have long viewed relational neutralised power relations as part of a project to be realised not one already won.

The politics of growth was *delayed* and *displaced* through new style Strategic Development Plans which meant that growth requirements could be allocated without raising the concern of particular communities. The point of debate – the red lines on maps – would only come at the Local Development Plan stage when it was too late for communities to resist. In Aberdeen, the political moment was also *delayed* through the (unfilled) promise of up-front infrastructure for communities to be provided through a *deferral* to yet to be worked-out public-private infrastructure delivery mechanisms. This represented a post-political strategy which could not necessarily be resolved but which quelled resistance to growth at a point in time. In Aberdeen and Edinburgh, it is argued in this thesis that concepts of ‘sustainability’ were further depoliticised. As an example, although derived possibly with good intention, the Scottish Sustainable Communities Initiative, was quickly misappropriated by landowners, developers and possibly by politicians to displace the politics of growth into locations that were not necessarily the best place for development but which were ‘less political’ and would keep planning and its outcomes ‘out of sight and out of mind’. So, through a case study approach, this thesis argues that critique of spatial planning as post-political and centred on gaining ‘consensus’ around growth is evident in practice in Scotland.

However, a second finding is that there is a need for a stronger understanding of ‘growth’ and the normativity that surrounds it. Allmendinger (2016) touches on the need to understand growth depending on any person’s structural position (for example, the homeowner or the person in need of a home). However, I argue that structural positions need even greater focus in studies of planning. A finding of this thesis is that there is still an undeveloped understanding of what it is that might be bad about ‘growth’ in planning. Through its

theoretical and case study focus it begins to address this, but far a far more nuanced approach to understanding ‘planning and growth’ is required in planning studies. In this thesis Aberdeen’s pro-growth approach, co-opted as it might have been by developer interests, at least lent the (elusive) possibility that the city-region’s affordable housing problems might be resolved. Edinburgh’s politically irresolvable approach to growth did nothing at any point to offer any hope that the city might achieve its long-held vision around the provision of affordable housing and places to work for citizens within its city boundary. On this note, Chapter 6 made clear that we must consider the detail of any planning case study in its context before drawing generalizable conclusions, however they conceive of ‘growth’. For example, in Aberdeen and Edinburgh it must be remembered that planning authorities were dealing with legacies of housing shortage and out of date plans. This thesis has questioned the actual role of planning and the potential for SPR to ever resolve these land-use based public policy concerns, but only after a picking apart of the technical context in each case and a consideration of the potential winners and losers from ‘growth-focused’ planning strategies.

The third finding lending to this key argument is that ‘post-political’ is considered to be of use, but only when applied critically and contextually, and even in such circumstances it does not offer an obvious route to better planning – that must come (theoretically) from elsewhere. By way of this critique, it is argued here that if any system was ever post-political, in terms of the disavowal of opposition to particular forms of growth as recommended by experts, then it was probably the period of post-war consensus politics discussed in Chapter 2. However, that system was at least driven by a public-interest rationale. Post-political planning is a useful concept because it demonstrates how in the neoliberal era contemporary planning can provide ‘the worst of both worlds’: often only a pretence of democracy, but without the provision of a public good or the resolution of land-based public policy concerns. However, a danger in the contemporary post-political critique is a lack of specificity about how planning might become a process by which an agreed position of ‘public good’ can be arrived at through the collective debate and an allocation of the use of our finite resources.

These three findings can provide useful lessons for understanding planning in other advanced capitalist democracies where public policy makers grasp with the complexity of environmentally sustainable growth and more specifically socially-optimal housing growth within political contexts where house-price escalation is conceived of as economic success. It is in these conditions that the elusive ‘win-win-win’ scenario for spatial planning was conceived. The post-political critique builds on an existing political-economic critique of

planning systems inspired by communicative theory which are seen to be driven by the wishful thinking of 'sustainable economic growth'. This perhaps serves to distract from a common enemy: that of economically driven short termism which maximises private gains from the development of land at societal and environmental expense and which disallows democratic processes that could resist this. Conceiving of this as 'post-political' adds to this argument in that it establishes some new ways of conceptualising and identifying the pretence of democracy that is occurring in contemporary planning - for example via so called 'community engagement' in the planning process. It critiques the twisting of terms and agendas such as 'sustainable development' where they become misused to the point of meaninglessness. This thesis finds such traits very much exist in Scotland within government and developer agendas. However, a post-political critique is unlikely to change our world for the better and might actually serve to further cast adrift the planning academy from the practices which individuals and communities who are actively working to make their lives, and the places within which they live them, better. Yet, considerations of depoliticisation used with existing political-economy critique of planning practice and supplemented with micro analysis provides a way of incorporating this into planning practice as well as academia.

Finally, this thesis found a Scottish specific application to the critique of planning as post-political, lending support to the need for a contextual understanding of the application of this broad critique. The 'Scottish approach' to policy making pertains to make policy following consultation and negotiation with participants such as interest groups, local government organisations and unions, with an aim of avoiding the worst excesses of neoliberalism (Cairney et al. 2016). However, this cannot resolve contradictions of neoliberalism and tensions including the need for central control and local discretion (ibid). With a specific focus on planning, SPR was developed by Scotland's own planning-elite community with an enhanced role for the development industry. This community of interest has continued to reshape planning in practice. This can be considered within Scotland's long-established neo-corporatist tradition which I have argued is increasingly used to develop neoliberal forms of policy. In Scotland the making and practicing of SPR can be thought of as 'big tent' politics conducted in a 'policy village'. It is argued in this thesis that in these political-economic circumstances, depoliticisation can temporarily diffuse controversies around matters of public concern, but that politics inevitably emerges. Planning in Scotland can then be seen as operating a distinctive form of 'neoliberal spatial governance'. Other countries and regions

will of course have their own political-economic contexts, but can learn from this example of considering ‘neoliberal spatial governance’. However, crucially, this does not mean the politics of growth and specifically housing growth is dealt with in a consistent way. The case studies demonstrate that what when ideologies and international imperatives hit the ground in any situation local context still matters.

RQ3. What factors explain the main variances and commonalities in the way Aberdeen and Edinburgh have dealt with growth pressures?

Key argument 4: There is a continuing need to understand planning actors and the interplay of structure and agency in a variety of ways and contexts.

The fourth key argument of this thesis emerges from the gathering of a multitude of perspectives of participants, as planning actors, operating within structured conditions to achieve their own, or collective, ends. This research highlights the continuing need for case study research that keeps the planning academy focused on planning practice. Academic research is required to critically analyse the structures that shape planning and the way that planning actors reshape these. It is through this kind of research that possibilities and limitations of types of planning reform can be considered.

The second key argument above highlighted the limitations as well as opportunities that neoliberalism imposes on planning and planning actors. Case study research demonstrated how in Aberdeen and Edinburgh the realisation of spatial visions and specific spatial strategies was firstly contingent on global economic conditions. In Edinburgh, the GFC hit the City’s finance-based economy and specifically severely damaged (misplaced) hopes that the waterfront could be regenerated as a market-led, rapid transit served, focus for decades of future growth. In Aberdeen, what has emerged through the research, has been the near impossibility of planning strategically in an isolated city-region which in the last 40 years has (while enjoying undoubted socio-economic benefits of growth) allowed its future to become tied to the trading price of one global commodity.

However, while at the whim of international forces, planners in nations and regions can shape their conditions where political-economic forces permit. Global fluctuations do not mean we should give up on the planning project. Planners in Aberdeen need only to look to Stavanger and Bergen in Norway for examples of North Sea oil focused regions where, it could be argued planning outcomes in terms of better places and better lives (Healey, 2010; Hall,

2013) are apparent. Similarly, planners in Edinburgh can look to the multitude of northern European examples of waterfront regeneration. While not to ignore the importance of economic-geography, comparing Leith to Malmö and Rotterdam reveals some initial and obvious differences that national political economy makes to the structures that planning actors operate within. This does not mean that all outcomes in such countries are inherently 'good'. The Netherlands is currently struggling with an affordable housing crisis. Sweden appears not to have learned the lessons of its last house price bubble in the early 1990s. Similar conditions exist in Norway, and their North Sea cities are yet to demonstrate a plausible ability to diversify away from oil. But many northern European countries at least have a record of shaping markets and making places of a quality that planning in Scotland has been unable to achieve consistently (Adams and Tiesdell, 2013). This does not mean outcomes in Scotland are inherently 'bad'. But there is a need to give more consideration as to why consistent patterns emerge in particular conditions.

At a local scale, the research reveals that as planning actors operate, individuals still matter. Gramscian understanding of hegemony applied to city politics and Jessop's strategic selectivity can be used to understand the moments when opportunities arise for individuals to reshape structurally conditioned, but locally conducted, matters to fit their own or sectoral interests. In this thesis, actors representing powerful interests, such as local and national government and developers, generally demonstrated such moments. An important example was the 'shifting aside' of the old guard of officers and their replacement with officers more in tune with 'culture change' in Aberdeen. This can be compared to the stubborn hegemony around the issue of the ideal scale of growth and how to accommodate growth in Edinburgh. Again, this thesis does not suggest that Edinburgh's apparent stasis is a good planning outcome, rather that despite both applying SPR as a legalistic framework, it is still the nature of individuals interacting with forces and structures and this provides an interesting difference from Aberdeen's case. Each case's demonstration of the strategic selectivity of more powerful actors is more common in planning studies, but this does not discount cases where actors who represent less powerful interests also demonstrate moments of resistance or successfully reshape local conditions. The broader focus on institutionalisation, similarly helped to bring to light the powerful outcomes of the informal spaces in which planning takes place. As a formalised state structure, planning is conditioned by planning actors who often operate in the spaces 'in-between' in planning. Planning ideas emerge from the informal meetings and the coincidences as well as from formal 'planning system' arrangements. While

it is not possible, or advisable, to stop such unpredictability, collaborative informal networks that are increasingly encouraged in planning practice, make the study of such occurrence and the minutiae of planning practice all the more necessary.

The interplay of structure and agency have been demonstrated through a case study approach not only in terms of more obvious outcomes and processes but also within the ideas and discourse which surround planning practice in Scotland. Planning actors' own narratives of their positions and motivations importantly demonstrated the ideological ingrained concepts of what planning can be expected to achieve within a structural context. From a public sector perspective, the limitations that neoliberal ideologies enforce on planners was apparent, for example concepts around the need to 'keep growing', without deeper understandings of why and for whom were common. Similarly, ideologies of place competitiveness were unchallenged by the vast majority of participants. Planners operate as market actors (Adams & Tiesdell, 2012) but still, from a variety of perspectives, misunderstood their roles in shaping the market. For example, planners and politicians spoke of 'waiting for market to return' without questioning whether pre-GFC conditions were actually something to strive for. It was clear that politicians and planners who challenged such ideas on a fundamental basis were not in any way empowered by the planning system; rather, they were shut down. This thesis found that the dangers for planners in accepting planning's place as one of encouraging market growth to be a dangerous trap. In the Aberdeen city-region planners gave 'the market' what it wanted but once development plans had locked this in, planners had little influence on the future shaping of their city-region. It was seen that planning had fulfilled its growth-focused role. As the global oil-price downturn in Aberdeen took hold in 2015, it was not for planning or planners to perhaps begin to re-engage a wider community and to forge a different spatial vision for the city-region.

While this thesis argues that planning is not achieving its potential, there is a need to retain a view about what good planning can do without thinking of planners or planning as inherently good or planning as something to be proud of and above criticism. The conception of the good planner trying to do his or her best in the face of adversity needs attention in future research and is something I intend to focus on in the further research. This research revealed that obviously motivated private and business interests can take-over planning processes where permitted. This should be expected and planning actors should be aware of that. However, the deep lying motivations of the modern-day planner, conditioned by decades of neoliberal practice, are harder to assess. This study reveals that instrumental approaches to

planning and constrained ideas of what might be achieved are prevalent on the part of planning professionals as well as politicians. It is here that viewing the state as a social relation, and planning as part of such a social relation, formed through competing interests in a specific time and place, but always evolving, is useful. This conception as advocated by Jessop's strategic relational approach, may help get the beyond complexity, rigidity, and normativity and might ultimately lead to better understandings of planning in practice.

This thesis demonstrates the need for, and benefit of, context specific cases of planning in practice. Even in a small country subject to the same planning system, planning practice differed greatly between the Edinburgh and Aberdeen city-regions. Chapters 6, 7, and 8 demonstrated the main reasons for these differences and set these out in detail. Each place faced obvious requirements to plan for growth and this thesis does not conceive of growth as a bad thing. The Aberdeen city-region's relative isolation, its unusual oil and gas based economy, the fact that development cannot be shifted elsewhere, and its unique political and cultural circumstances gave rise to a particular form of planning. Edinburgh has its own unique circumstances and subsequently its own planning culture. The broad use of Hajer's (1989) Gramscian three-dimensional approach opened up an understanding of each culture. This thesis argues we should not conceive of places such as city-regions as having a simply anti-development political culture or a pro-development culture. Contextual factors are too complicated for such generalisations. This research has demonstrated that context matters greatly but that the planning system is still key to determining planning outcomes. This is because planning systems reflect the political economic structures that shape any given state. This means that understanding what such a system represents is crucial and it is through case study research (in specific contexts) that we can help to establish this.

Reflecting on what Scottish planning represents

Having considered these three research questions it is worth reflecting on what Scottish planning has come to represent. Planning is a state structure in which social interests compete over land-based strategies. In the time and places in which this research took place I argue that we have arrived at a distinguishably Scottish form of a strategic spatial approach to planning and that this still resembles the UK spatial planning paradigm which Allmendinger (2016) identified as 'spatial planning: housing and development without conflict (2002-2006)'. However, strategic spatial planning was always a nebulous concept; an ideal rather than a reality, and this thesis support the view from Lloyd and Peel (2007) that Scottish

planning is neo-traditional in form. So, planning can be thought of as part of a neoliberal competitive nation-building project, it is a distinctively neo-traditional form of spatial planning. The following paragraphs reflect on what this means in practice.

Scotland's planning system had been developed to respond to contradictory aims which are inherent to capitalism in liberal democracies. That is the 'property contradiction' between the social character of land and its private ownership and control and, arising from this, the 'capitalist-democracy contradiction,' where the need to socialise the control of urban space to maintain capitalism is balanced with the danger of democratising the control of urban land on the other (Foglesong, 1986). SPR was another means of regulating capitalism through 'reform'. In doing so it involved a continued acceptance of neoliberal ideologies with a view that a pro-market approach, without structural land-reform or new means of paying for infrastructure, could respond to the need for more housing in places where they were needed most and often where local democracy tended to work to protect the interests of homeowners.

Scottish planning and SPR was 'compromised', however, because it was designed to be used in pre-financial crisis (GFC) conditions. Since 2007 planning has been implemented in very different conditions and planning has been seen as culpable in failing to achieve what it was supposed to achieve. There has been very little questioning of the broader neoliberal economic model within which planning operates.

'Neo-traditional' refers to the fact that the system still takes a form that, while displaying traits of a spatial planning approach, remains close to its traditional regulatory form. This is also a compromised neoliberal-neo-corporatist state-market relationship. I take neoliberalism as an ideology which dominates Scottish public policy regardless of definite traits of a social-democratic 'Scottish difference' and I am critical of the infusion of neoliberalism with Scotland's long-held (and often exclusionary) form of neo-corporatism. Planning in Scotland also represents as tool for 'nation-building'. This refers to the Scottish political-economic context since 2007, which marks a transition to SNP government. In this period planning has become something that is more distinctly Scottish but where support for planning is conditional on its use as a tool to achieve conceptions of the competitive state and 'sustainable growth' which are difficult to define in practice. Pre-GFC, planning was framed through public policy concerns: specifically, the competitiveness of the Scottish economy and resolving concerns around housing growth in city-regions where housing was needed most. After 2008, planning was more explicitly tasked with encouraging economic recovery and

dealing with economic crisis. This period has been politically tumultuous in Scotland and planning has been framed as, but not yet used effectively as, a means towards building an economic case for a new a nation and a national new identity. As the next section elaborates upon, this is all subject to further significant change as planning evolves, but these fundamentals are likely to remain in the coming decade at least. Lessons can be learned from this study of planning in practice. It can be used in other contexts particularly across Europe as planning is potentially to be used to aid economic recovery after a decade of austerity, to respond to a variety of regional economic and housing crises', and to be used nationally and in devolved contexts to instil national and regional identity and distinctiveness through its inherent political status.

Thesis Contribution

This section of the thesis brings together the central arguments of the thesis and demonstrates its key contributions. This study set out to develop the existing research base on planning in Scotland by providing a practice-based empirical evidence grounded in wider theoretical debates on the current nature of planning in the UK. The central contribution of this thesis is that it goes towards filling a gap in terms of academic, practice based, qualitative research and analysis on the implementation of Scottish planning reform as introduced through the Planning etc. (Scotland) Act 2006.

Chapter two provided a critical review of concepts of strategic spatial planning and the place of planning within wider governance shifts. Chapter three critically analysed neoliberal planning and the theoretical conceptions of planning as post-political. The research has placed planning actors at the centre of the Scottish planning system. In doing this it has provided meso and micro-level analysis of actual development plan making processes. This has provided a deeper understanding of what planning in Scotland has come to represent, particularly through the way that planning addresses key spatially based public policy concerns around economic growth, the quest for sustainable development, and specific issues including the provision of providing housing in areas of greatest demand. The research has contributed a practice based, theoretically grounded, analysis of what drives planning actors and the impacts they have, while working within particular structural conditions. In doing so it provides both a study of interest to those particularly interested in Scottish public policy making in practice but also to a wider audience with interests in urban policy in broadly similar political-economic contexts. In doing so, it has provided a contribution to studies of

urban governance generally and, with its Scottish focus, it has captured an important period in Scotland's spatial governance as the planning system begins yet another phase of reform and as Scotland evolves as a nation.

Beyond this, the work contributes to debates in planning theory. It provides a Scottish case-study based application of a long running debate around the effect of collaborative planning based on communicative theory. It argues that Scottish planning is influenced by an interpretation of this through the encouragement of a stakeholder agenda and greater upfront engagement with communities and business. The case studies demonstrate that power has not been neutralised. Rather, government and business interest power has deepened because this is still neoliberal governance, with neo-corporatist traditions, and powerful interests are well suited to take advantage of such processes. This thesis provides a Scottish-based contribution to the related debate around post-political nature of planning. It demonstrates that depoliticisation of key areas of public concerns are pursued through the planning processes in Scotland. At all stages of planning, from the plan-making process through to the allocation and management of development, planning strategies which foreclose resistance are inherent in Scottish planning. While there has been a turn towards communicative inspired planning, this thesis makes a case that rational, technocratic, planning never died out in Scotland, even if the associated post-war ideals of planning which they are often associated with did. It argues that planning has been and continues to be an inherently depoliticising activity; not always successfully and not at all stages of the planning process, but depoliticising in its premise nonetheless.

This brings us to the final main contribution. In placing theoretical conceptions into the reality of planning practice, this research provides a basis for praxis in terms of the realisation of theory and a leading to the improvement of planning practice. Framing this theoretically has been important in understanding power in the planning system. This thesis argues for a more complex approach to conceiving of power and the 'winners and losers' from planning strategies. I argue that it is important for planning actors to maintain a focus on the obvious as well as subtler forums within which power emerges and is directed in planning towards hegemonic strategies. It is obvious that what is often conceived of as 'planning' often falls outside the remit of 'statutory planning'; agendas and decision making processes with land-use based outcomes are often not planning matters. In a less obvious way, the cases provide many examples of the informal nodes of planning: from stakeholder events, to off the record meetings, and social events seemingly beyond the realm of planning. The modes of power are

obvious in terms of development plan processes, the agendas of local media, but also the less obvious deployment of particular discourses that travel internationally around ‘sustainable growth’ and ‘community’ in planning.

Perhaps more important is the focus of this thesis on the winners and losers from planning strategies. Practitioners and academics need to keep considering the power of who gets what, how and why from planning and to do this critically. The structural position of those involved in planning needs to be more carefully considered and this does not require any grand new theory but rather a continuing focus on power and the forms it comes in. This does not just mean wealthy landowners and developers looking to raise the value of their assets, but even homeowners who conceive of their home as an asset to be protected by planning. We need to consider the outcomes of voters reluctant to pay for public services and quick to punish politicians and parties who suggest that changes from the neoliberal state model might be required. The impact of such actions on the less powerful, on the amenity of communities requiring infrastructure, and on groups such as renters and priced out commuters, all needs continued focus. This is particularly important as Scotland again reforms its planning system; reform which is taking place with a sense that it is planning that is failing rather than recognising the inherent structural limitations of Scotland’s neoliberal political economy. The wider debate, such as that now emerging around land reform does demonstrate signs of recognising these structures and this offers potential for a better way of planning. In these conditions now is a good time to add to the evidence base of practice-based research.

Developing the research agenda

The findings outlined in this thesis make an important contribution to three broad areas outlined above. Through the research and writing process, a series of additional questions and alternative ideas arose. Some of these are still pertinent and are now set out here. Considering these should aid further research of the type that I have set out as required in the previous section.

Firstly, this is a case study approach based on largely on development plan making processes. This qualitative research could only catch participants at a moment in time, capturing their current views and their reflections on the past. Planning processes obviously move on and future research might focus further on development plan implementation through a stage by

stage longitudinal approach. This may obviously take a lot of time to come to fruition. However, the ‘on the ground’ outcomes of planning offer a rich and valuable source for future research. This could focus on the way in which the development management system is being put into practice. Such work would be valuable in building our understanding of what planning represents in practice in any given local or national context.

Secondly, there is a need for further fine-grained case study research to understand why practice particularly in the UK appears to recurrently debate the same issues in terms of the need to deliver growth in the right places at the right time, without cognisance of the structures that are at work preventing the realisation of better planning processes and outcomes. Planning theories have a similarly repetitive lineage which does not demonstrably move planning towards making better places either. An intensification of ground-level planning research and a continued focus on bringing together planning practice and the academy could help to offer a route out of this cycle.

Thirdly, there is a need for research to focus on a broader range of contexts. My research demonstrated the value of the comparative case study approach in two city regions facing growth pressures. Future research could focus on city-regions facing different economic conditions in order to add to our understanding of what planning offers in such circumstances. Comparative case study research brought out the consistencies and differences. One consistency which requires further research was the role of central government in planning, not only in the sense of the ‘policy village’ of Holyrood but in the development of ideas what planning reform meant and its eventual interpretation in each case. The thesis borrowed from theoretical conceptions of English planning and applied it to a Scottish context. Future research could well borrow from such theory and comparisons, but what could lend to the debate is comparative work on planning systems in small countries particularly in the European context.

Finally, research needs to focus on spatially governance as it evolves, beyond statutory planning. I captured data which demonstrated how planning faces something of an identity crisis. This is occurring as community planning (the partnership approach to planning better services in places) takes on a greater importance. At the same while spatially based plans for economic development become focused on City Deals (collaborative, but elite-driven, approaches to the strategic improvement of regional economies). This is leaving an unclear role for planning. In Scotland a spatial approach to planning has not encompassed these roles, rather it appears planning could be being shifted aside. Future research needs to keep a focus

on the continuing 'spatial planning project' and the role for planning within spatially based governance.

Appendix 1

	Sector/Role	Title/Role	Case Study
	Interviews conducted in 2013 as part of MRes research.		
1	Councillor	Former leader city council	Aberdeen
2	Councillor	Councillor in area of major proposed change	Aberdeen
3	Councillor	Chair planning Aberdeen and rotating on ACSDPA	Aberdeen
4	Councillor	Former chair planning Aberdeenshire and ACSDPA	Aberdeen
5	Former Councillor	Former Councillor	Aberdeen
6	Councillor	Councillor in area of major proposed change	Aberdeen
7	Councillor	Councillor in area of major proposed change	Aberdeen
8	Councillor	Councillor in area of major proposed change	Aberdeen
9	Councillor	Councillor in area of major proposed change	Aberdeen
10	Councillor	Chair of planning Aberdeenshire and ACSDPA	Aberdeen
11	Planning Authority	Aberdeenshire Council development planner	Aberdeen
	Interviews below conducted 2015/16		

12	Planning Authority (interviewed in both research periods same person as interview 11)	Aberdeenshire Council development planner	Aberdeen
13	Planning Authority	Aberdeen City development planner	Aberdeen
14	Planning Authority	Aberdeen City and Shire SDPA	Aberdeen
15	Planning Authority	Aberdeen City Development Management Planner	Aberdeen
16	Councillor	Aberdeen City Vice Chair of Council	Aberdeen
17	Private Sector	Private sector planner ex Aberdeen City Council	Aberdeen
18	Councillor (interviewed in both research periods same person as interview 9)	Councillor Aberdeenshire	Aberdeen
19	Councillor (interviewed in both research periods same person as interview 4)	Former chair of planning Aberdeenshire	Aberdeen
20	Campaign group	Leader of Save UTG campaign Aberdeen	Aberdeen
21	Planning Authority	South East Scotland SDPA	Edinburgh
22	Private sector	Private Sector Planner	Edinburgh
23	Private sector	Private Sector Planner	Edinburgh
24	Planning Authority	Aberdeenshire Council development planner	Aberdeen
25	Planning Authority	Aberdeenshire Council development management	Aberdeen

26	Planning Authority	Aberdeenshire Council development planner	Aberdeen
27	Councillor (interviewed in both research periods same person as interview 4)	Chair of Aberdeen City planning committee	Aberdeen
28	Economic Dev Authority	Economic Development Aberdeenshire Council	Aberdeen
29	Community Council	Cults Milltimber and Bieldside community council	Aberdeen
30	Private Sector	Housebuilder interest/Private sector planner	Edinburgh
31	Community Council	Barnton and Cramond Community Council	Edinburgh
32	Economic Dev Authority	Economic Development Aberdeen City	Aberdeen
33	Planning Authority	Aberdeen City Council	Aberdeen
34	Private Sector	Urban Designer and Planner	Edinburgh
35	Private Sector	Private sector (former head of planning at Aberdeen City)	Aberdeen
36	Councillor	Member of Edinburgh Planning Committee	Edinburgh
37	Architect Private	Architect/Designer Scotland/ Government Advisor	Edinburgh
38	Campaign Group	Edinburgh heritage group	Edinburgh
39	Public-Private	Former ACSEF now part of Opportunity North East	Aberdeen
40	Community Council	Leith/Waterfront Community Council	Edinburgh

41	Campaign group	Pressure group that campaigns for public involvement in planning processes	Edinburgh
42	Public-Private	Public Private partnership – (Business)	Edinburgh
43	Councillor-academic	Former chair of Edinburgh planning committee	Edinburgh
44	Planning Authority	Development Plans South East Scotland Local Authority	Edinburgh
45	Councillor	Chair of Edinburgh City Planning Committee	Edinburgh
46	Housebuilder	3 Person interview national housebuilder	Edinburgh
47	Civil Servant	Former Chief Planner Scotland	Scotland
48	Planning Authority	Former City of Edinburgh Council officer	Edinburgh

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