**The ‘filling in’ of community-based planning in the devolved UK?**

**Abstract** Political devolution in the UK has afforded opportunities for studying policy differences and similarities in relation to local level community-based planning initiatives in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Organised around the concepts of ‘lesson-drawing’ and the ‘filling in’ of local governance, this paper critically considers aspects of policy design and development associated with community-based planning within and between the devolved UK polities. In practice, policy instruments vary with respect to their institutional, scalar and organisational rationalities. A policy mobility perspective may enable a relatively more critical understanding of how local governance arrangements are being externally and internally shaped in the respective devolved nation-regions.

**Key words** Devolution, UK, lesson drawing, ‘filling in’, policy mobilities

**1. Introduction**

Contemporary political and administrative devolution in the UK may be understood as a set of responses to a number of long-established pressures for economic and democratic change. Arguments for devolving powers to Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland included the advocacy of accommodating national and cultural diversities; addressing calls for the wider democratisation of governance; securing opportunities for public sector modernisation; and adapting to changing functional economic and social restructuring (Keating 2006). In tandem, devolution has enabled a greater assertion of territorial identity, political self-confidence, and understandings of nationhood – as demonstrated, for example, by debates in Scotland (McCrone 1994; Bond *et al* 2003). Scottish Independence arguments further reinforce the point.

In practice, the devolved UK has an asymmetrical constitution in that the new territorial institutions were granted substantially different powers and responsibilities (Keating and Cairney 2012). This resulted in re-balancing central and regional autonomies, as demonstrated by the delineation of reserved powers (Westminster) and variegated devolved powers to the nation-regions of Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. Foreign policy, taxation and economic policy remain with Westminster and local governance, land use planning, and regeneration, for example, rest with the devolved administrations. Arrangements for local government are themselves differentiated as demonstrated by the review of public administration and efforts to restore powers to the local level in Northern Ireland.

In this evolving constitutional landscape, initiatives were put in place to clarify the emerging relations across the devolved UK. The purpose was to support the transition to devolution and to encourage a generic progression of policy thinking in different contexts (Peel and Lloyd 2012). This narrative illustrates attempts to facilitate deliberation and policy learning between and within the new policymaking entities. As Jeffrey (2007) argued, however, the UK model of devolution remains permissive of divergence in policy design and implementation. Reflecting their respective historical trajectories, cultural ambitions, experiences, and relative economic performances it would be expected that different policy domains and priorities would emerge in Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland. This argument not only concerns the material composition of their respective prevailing political priorities and policies but the timing of effecting individual actions. The differentiated - yet historically connected – UK landscape provides a new context for examining policy mobilities at the local level and the extent to which policy knowledge fills in, flows and is exchanged within, and between, the individual nation-regions.

The discussion in this paper is based upon on-going research into community-based planning by the authors in each of the devolved nation states since 1995. Reflecting the diversity of approaches and nomenclature of community-based planning approaches, this research has involved detailed analyses of relevant policy measures and documentation, together with examination of a number of published local level plans, including sustainable community strategies, community strategies, community plans and emergent neighbourhood plans. Over more than a decade, the research has involved discussions with strategic policymakers, elected officials, and front-line practitioners, alongside attendance at related practitioner conferences and the development of training and professional development programmes. This mix of critical and applied work can help inform wider debates on how governance is filled in and shaped through policy exchange and learning and serves to underline the dynamics of a policy mobility critique.

The paper seeks to offer insights into the ways in which policy ideas and knowledge are socially constructed and spatially constituted across a ‘devolving’ nation state. The argument is structured as follows. The next section contextualises the discussion with some critical reflections on devolution and the ‘filling in’ (Jones *et al* 2005) of local governance. Section 3 examines theoretical perspectives on policy learning with particular reference to Rose’s (1991) articulation of lesson-drawing. This section considers the caveats to a rationalist policy transfer approach which draws on subsequent arguments around policy flows and circuits of knowledge (Healey 2013). Following Shaw and Mackinnon’s (2011) elaboration of the concept of ‘filling in’ with reference to the rescaling of governance, section 4 examines the maturation of community-based planning initiatives to illustrate policy reflexivity and sources of policy thinking across England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland. Section 5 presents a critical understanding of community-based planning using Rose’s (1991; 1993) framework of international lesson-drawing. Section 6 reflects on the implications arising from Peck and Theodore’s (2010) critical policy mobilities analysis which asserts the importance of understanding policies in transformation and the inter-penetration of policymaking sites. To date, the primary focus of policy mobilities has tended to focus on international and European scales of policy engagement. In this paper we examine local and community-based experiences of policy development across the devolved UK space as a way to critically reflect on the insights offered by a policy mobilities perspective.

**2. Devolution in the UK**

Devolution has provided a reflexive context for policy learning which is relatively more sensitive to the differentiated polities of the devolved UK (see Keating 2003). The nature of the new regimes should not be underestimated. Occurring in the context of prevailing regional, political, economic, and institutional restructuring (Allmendinger *et al* 2005) regional experimentation in the devolved states has variously taken place. On the one hand, devolution has involved relatively extensive legislative and administrative competence being granted to Scotland over a number of strategic issues, whilst in Wales and Northern Ireland, a rather more incremental devolution of powers has been subject to certain constitutional limitations, contextual circumstances, and protracted procedures. The English regions, on the other hand, fall directly under the jurisdiction of Westminster (Keating and Cairney 2012). Indeed, in England, there has been a febrile debate around the nature of regionalism and a rescaling of governance through an explicit localism agenda involving specific community-based planning arrangements. Reflecting the complexities of cross-sectoral service provision, the practicalities of how much power, and what type of service responsibilities, to devolve to local communities remains contested and is further complicated by the blurred relationship with statutory land use local development plans (Gallent 2013). In practice, as Owen et al (2007), for example, have argued, ideas of holistic governance that seek to integrate and/or bridge different levels of activity remain difficult to secure in practice.

Two inter-connected conceptual features are of note in understanding devolution and policy knowledge and learning in the UK. First, it has been argued that regional distinctiveness is reflective of a number of complex and spatially differentiated processes associated with a ‘hollowing out’ of national state functions to other scales of governance (Goodwin *et al* 2005). This theoretical perspective sought to explain the early effects of a neo-liberal and deregulatory regime on national governance arrangements. In spatial terms, this included, for example, a focus on national civil service dispersal (Lloyd and Peel 2006). This hollowing out debate is associated with the early phases of devolution and reflected the then concerns with the moves to a relatively more minimalist state.

Second, devolution and the decentralisation of powers to the regional and local levels created opportunities for the ‘filling in’ of governance (Jones *et al* 2005). This dynamic has variously involved the formation – or reconfiguration – of organisational and institutional arrangements in the devolved nation-regions. In effect, it has involved a recasting of territorial and functional policymaking by the individual devolved entities over time. The experience with addressing inequality and the relative maturity of established local democracy in Scotland, for example, led to the early articulation and adoption of community planning in 2003 (Peel and Lloyd 2007a). The Scottish approach to community-based planning is intended to secure the more efficient and effective delivery of local services. This governance capacity may be contrasted with the position in Northern Ireland where a centralist regional governance, which has prevailed since the early 1970s, is the subject of an extensive review of public administration to create a new technocratic and democratic form of local government (Cave 2013). This situation has resulted in community-based planning arrangements remaining to be formally introduced in 2015. This evolving policy environment is illustrated in colloquial references in Northern Ireland to playing ‘policy catch-up’. It follows that filling in of devolved functions through the reconfiguration, evolution and development of both new and existing organisations, relationships and cultures across scales of governance is spatially and temporally differentiated, affording different opportunities for leap-frogging of policy experimentation and learning.

As Jones *et al* (2005) observed, filling in is complex and involves the sedimentation of existing institutions and the design of new organisational forms at other spatial scales. The relations between the shifting sands of filled in governance themselves change over time and space. In the context of evolving devolved relations, attention must then be paid to the social construction of policy provenance and localised ownership and the inherited and prevailing politics, cultures and geographies of each maturing territorial nation-region. Specific contingencies not only determine the capacity to design appropriate rescaled central-local relations and local policies, such as those concerned with community-based planning, but, following Jerram (2011), are locally shaped through being very precisely spatially located.

A filling in conceptualisation of the morphology of governance of the devolved spaces profiles policy practices and policy learning opportunities between, and within, the devolved nation-regions, and the differentiated arrangements in England. An important aspect of filling in is a new ‘policy reflexivity’ relating to modes of policy learning and local negotiation. Understood as comprehensive strategies for promoting the wellbeing of individual areas, community-based planning in the devolved UK can inform – and be informed by - understandings of policy mobility since these processes involve filling in of governance, navigating the various flows of policy knowledge, and being alert to the dynamics of local interpretation, explicit attempts at innovation, and application.

**3. Theoretical Perspectives on Policy Learning**

In the devolved UK, there has, to date, been evidence of both policy convergence and divergence – reflecting the complexity of filling in and propensity for policy adoption of policy adaptation respectively. Drawing on experiences in the preparation of local land use development plans, for example, the extent to which policy divergence is appropriate, or discretionary policy making feasible, is largely dependent on appreciating the power and authority of the sponsoring policy interest, the purpose and focus of individual policies, the degree of policy expertise available, and the potential scope for policy departure (Peel and Lloyd 2006). It follows that understanding the development in thinking around community-based planning requires sensitivity not only to ideological contexts but also to the degree of discretion afforded by the prevailing statutory arrangements. Informed by modes of formal and organic policy learning (Peel and Lloyd 2008), this section critically reflects on different influences on policy development.

There is a diverse interdisciplinary literature relating to policy transfer with respect to policy design, implantation and outcome. In part a consequence of efforts by the European Union to secure greater consistency across member states, academic and practitioner interest in recent times has variously focused on ideas relating to, for example, policy diffusion (Bennett 1991; Ward 1999); policy transfer (Wolman and Page 2000; 2001; Evans and Davies 1999); policy networks (Stone 2001); policy learning (Dolowitz and March 1996; 2000) and policy harmonisation (Jörgens 2005; Busch and Jörgens 2005). Such literature is multifaceted, blurred and contested in relation to the respective conceptual foundations (James and Lodge 2003). The focus of each conceptualisation reflects dynamics and priorities at specific times. More recently Peck and Theodore (2010) have highlighted the narrow assumptions lying behind policy transfer concepts. Their emphasis on policy mobilities, policy*making* and policies in transformation is further supported by insights into the dynamic and localised narratives associated with devolved policymaking.

Reflecting concerns with so-called ‘best practice’ and a latent enthusiasm for ‘what works’, a critical policy studies literature highlights the intrinsic complexities of policy formulation and exchange, and serves to emphasise the need for cautious and appropriate policy adoption strategies (Davoudi 2006). In tandem with this concern to promote technocratic reflexivity there has been an associated democratic turn. Itself a consequence of devolution, democracy-related arguments assert that policy effectiveness in terms of relevance, implementation and outcome is predicated on enhancing community engagement and ultimately ‘empowerment’. This bottom-up (filling in) of governance actively invites locally based interpretations and applications of what may be considered top-down, generic policy measures. These relationships tend, however, to be subject to central-local adjustments, as in Scotland, for example. A contemporary critical policy mobility analysis is apposite to an examination of processes of devolution and community-based planning since it helps to reveal the detailed nuances of policies on the move. This perspective builds on a view that transferability is subject to particular conditions and that policies are intrinsically dynamic, reflecting changing circumstances.

Following Daβler and Parker (2004), three broad categories of policy transfer are evident. The first is *normative* policy transfer which is where there is held to be a common conceptual and theoretical understanding of what policies may need to be *prescribed* so as to address a particular problem or issue. Neo-liberalism demonstrates a normative agenda in its advocacy of transferring specific market-based policies to localities, including Business Improvement Districts Ward 2006). This category requires some mutual compatibility in ideological or political conditions and in policy origin and destination. The second category is *mimetic* policy transfer where the copying of ‘effective’ policies occurs, partially in order to limit or reduce uncertainty, reduce transaction costs, and also to gain legitimacy through providing what appears to be an accepted and rational approach (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). Notwithstanding a wide spectrum of mimetic behaviours, an a-critical mimetic approach will likely ignore the spatial heterogeneity of various circumstances and expectations (Peel and Lloyd 2007b). This category may be illustrated by the mimetic tendency to reprise and designate enterprise zones across the devolved nation-regions (Lloyd and Peel 2012a). The third category is *coercive* policy transfer where policies are subject to mandatory transfer and where frequently one actor can assert power over another. In the context of devolution, this may be illustrated by specific fiscal measures, such as the ‘bedroom tax.’

Devolution in its differentiated forms may involve all three categories of policy transfer over time and take place in different combinations. This reflects the variegated institutional, financial and organisational power relations involved between Westminster, Scotland, Northern Ireland, and Wales; and the respective power relations within the devolved polities. Moreover, Healey (2013) points to the significance of resistances, contingencies and adaptations which tend to shape the meanings and contributions of a potential policy transfer or adoption. It follows there is a need to be alert to the contingency dimensions of any policy transfer, taking into account the specificities of a policy’s origins, its deftness, and destination.

Within the broad field of policy transfer, the work of Rose (1991) with respect to international lesson-drawing offers a specific analytical framework for exploring policymaking. In terms of a policymaking pragmatism, Rose (1991, 118) highlights how ‘harried policymakers’ may simply prefer the assurance of attempting to do what has appeared to work somewhere else. In alerting policymakers to the specificities of time and space, however, Rose (1991; 1993) draws attention to a number of contingencies, including the degree of complexity of the intended policy objectives; the extent of policy interdependencies; the necessary consistency of the values between the ‘exporting’ and ‘importing’ politicians and policymakers; resourcing issues; the degree of uniqueness of the important constituent elements; and the potential replicability of the necessary delivery institutions. Notably, these prerequisites inform the scale of change required to execute an effective policy transfer.

In the context of international lesson-drawing, Rose (1993) asserts that both pragmatic and ideological dimensions need to be in place, indicating that specific interactions of politics, culture and territory must be taken into account. This framework provides an appropriate organisational frame to understand the evolution of community-based planning in the individual parts of the devolved UK where iterations of politics, culture and territory continue to evolve and morph as new institutional conditions and organisational arrangements establish themselves. Locating these debates within the meta-scale agenda of on-going economic restructuring and local democratic renewal enables consideration of how forms of community-based planning are being variously advanced to fill in the devolved spaces. This filling in can be further conceptualised either as being horizontal, that is emerging evenly among the devolved nation-regions, or vertical, with different forms emerging between core and periphery (following Keating *et al* 2012). There are related issues of conformity or divergence to be considered according to the extent to which established policy communities exist and operate in the devolved UK (Keating *et al* 2008). In this context, the importance of space and time with respect to policy mobility cannot be overestimated as policy momentums themselves may emerge and prove to be significant for the individual nation-regions concerned. Public sector reform and local government boundary changes, as in Northern Ireland, for example, are important elements of the re-drawing of governance. Such arrangements provide a very particular anticipatory context for community-based policy development

Taking emergent forms of community-based planning as the focus, the next section examines how various policy delivery models are, following Larner and Laurie (2010), being socially constructed and spatially constituted. Alert to a spectrum of policy influences spanning coercion or degrees of copying, the discussion considers how community-based planning may illustrate how politics, culture and territory are shaping and modifying policy design in England and the devolved nation-regions respectively.

**4. Community-based Planning under Devolution**

Community-based planning has been socially constructed and implemented differently across the devolved UK. Nomenclature and differentiated practices have included, for example, local strategic partnerships in England, community strategy partnerships in Wales, and community planning (and neighbourhood planning) partnerships in Scotland. Legislation for community planning in Northern Ireland is yet to be implemented, although pilot studies and discussions around its implementation are taking place (Cave 2013). This diverse context both confirms scope for pan-UK learning whilst illustrating the propensity for policies to be in constant flux. It also accentuates the complexities of comparative study.

In England early efforts to promote the wellbeing of local areas took the form of comprehensive (community) strategies to co-ordinate (and potentially streamline) the actions of relevant actors to meet the needs and aspirations of local communities (Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions 2000, Hogg 2000). In other words, this model of community-based planning was initially a direct policy response to addressing the fragmented delivery and institutional arrangements for public services in defined places. The focus was principally on strategy development (Pemberton and Lloyd 2008). This changed to an emphasis on active community engagement at the neighbourhood level with the Localism Act 2011. The step-change involved has provided the opportunity for local communities / neighbourhoods (including parish councils and newly-established neighbourhood development forums) to develop physical neighbourhood plans and scope to take responsibility for designing, developing and delivering local services. This indicates a particular type of filling in of governance. Nevertheless community-based neighbourhood plans have to be in conformity with the local authority’s physical land use development plan. In effect, community-based planning in England tends to be focused on land use and economic development issues.

In Wales, the modernisation of the public sector promoted citizen-centred public services and closer engagement with local communities. Relevant mechanisms included the creation of, for example, Crime and Community Safety Partnerships, Local Service Boards and Communities First Partnerships, all of which attempted to link communities (of place, or neighbourhoods) with their service providers (Pill 2011). Parish and town councils feed into the local authority level community strategies and land use local development plans. Community agreements / neighbourhood agreements are now being developed alongside Single Integrated Plans (which are replacing community strategies). The aim of the new community / neighbourhood agreements is to strengthen the relationships between local residents and service providers at a more local level, but without the need for the explicit creation of detailed neighbourhood plans / neighbourhood planning partnerships, as has been the case in England. Rather, their aim is to help residents in an agreed area monitor the services they receive, take responsibility for finding solutions to problems, and to improve services by working with specific service providers. They also seek to give residents a say in how issues are tackled and to build better relationships with local services (Welsh Assembly Government 2012). This represents a maturation of the approach to community-based planning in Wales by reconciling the democratic dimensions with the technocratic delivery aspirations for local services.

The situation in Northern Ireland is very different as a consequence of more than forty years of centralised public service delivery, itself the result of distinctive political and community instabilities. Change is imminent as a consequence of the Review of Public Administration, which will involve a reduction in the number of councils from 26 to 11 and the decentralisation of a range of powers to local government (anticipated in April 2015). The Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 involves restoring regulatory and forward planning powers to local councils as part of a form of double devolution (Lloyd and Peel 2012b). The planned introduction of community planning at council level involves a new duty that is still being actively devised. Moreover, it is the case that state and non-state actors alike are currently in the process of developing suitable models of provision that are informed by practice from elsewhere. Taken together, these practical elements are illustrative of Rose’s (1991) suggested scale of change required for policy transfer, an issue which is returned to in the final section in terms of policy mobility.

In Scotland, experimentation with community-based planning through Social Inclusion Partnerships (Fernie and McCarthy 2001) was in operation in advance of the national legislative requirement for local government to lead on the preparation of community plans. In Scotland emphasis has been placed on processdevelopment, and aligning local and national priorities for action through specified outcomes, and a concordat (agreed in 2007) between central and local government. As such, community planning has gone through a number of changes in efforts to instill a step-change in joint service delivery (Audit Scotland 2013). This is founded on strong evaluation from the centre and a commitment to a virtuous cycle of continuous improvement in community planning (ibid). Notably, then, the Welsh Assembly Government (2006) noted that a strategic approach in Scotland has provided a more consistent basis for the relationship between the process (community planning), the partnership mechanism (community planning partnership) and the product (a community plan / community strategy) than was then the case in England and Wales. Within a broad framework, local differentiation nonetheless exists in Scotland both in relation to the 32 council-wide community planning arrangements and the parallel web of statutory land use plans. The development of strategic or neighbourhood partnerships responsible for executive or operational aspects of community planning have emerged in a context of targeted regeneration and a general focus on equality, fairness and social justice. Morevoer, there is no one Scottish model of community planning but an explicit attempt by individual authorities to interpret the statutory duty to produce a community plan involving a mosaic of (variously titled) neighbourhood level community-based plans.

In terms of policy mobility within a devolved polity, it is clear that national community planning priorities in Scotland have a degree of flexibility to be able to be interpreted and implemented locally. Alignment with national objectives and funding opportunities, however, is secured through single outcome agreements between each local authority and the Scottish Government (Community Planning Review Group 2012). As noted, further alignment is reinforced through the work of Audit Scotland (2013), for example, which demonstrates an important parameter in terms of vertical relations between the centre and local authorities, whilst also offering an important medium for policy learning across the devolved polities.

**5. Lesson-drawing and Community-based Planning**

Using Rose’s (1991) interpretation of lesson-drawing as an organisational heuristic device to guide policy analysis this section reflects in more detail on particular aspects of community-based planning in the devolved polities which impact on potential policy transfer. The discussion serves to reinforce the dynamic nature of locally driven policymaking activities which may then be explained by Peck and Theodore’s (2010) ideas of policy mobility and policies in transformation.

First, the complexity of community-based planning arises because of its intellectual associations with thinking around community development, community education, community work and community engagement. Moreover, there is scope for considerable misunderstanding in relation to other arrangements for locally based planning and intervention. Conceived as a primarily strategic policy instrument for coordinating a range of public services, community-based planning is inevitably complex. Moreover, in its explicit engagement with local communities – and its requirement to address local priorities – community-based planning necessarily has a local focus. Its *raison d’être* is to meet the specificities of place and moment. This sensitivity to context and complexity resonates with Rose’s (1991) emphasis on the unique elements in policy processes which may limit transfer in practice. Moreover as circumstances change, so policies evolve.

Critically, community planning is predicated on addressing ‘wicked problems’ (Rittel and Webber 1973), that is policy problems which are, by their very nature, difficult to define and solve, and which necessitate working across policy boundaries (Cowell 2004). The intrinsic complexity of community-based planning tends to be problematic, given that each of the devolved territories of the UK has their own particular political and cultural inflections. In Northern Ireland, for example, its history of political and civil tension means that any new community-based planning process will need to respect the interests of inhabitants and businesses throughout the region, rather than political benefits to specific locations or particular groups. A deliberate strategy of commissioning research and working up comparative case studies and analyses (for example, Blake Stevenson Ltd and Stratagem 2005) have served to inform and shape thinking in Northern Ireland in a deliberately non-prescriptive way. Moreover the disjointed journey towards community planning in Northern Ireland enables the iterative learning and experimentation of Scotland and Wales, and to a lesser degree England, to be consolidated and absorbed. In other words, tracking policymaking in one territory shapes policy thinking elsewhere and may even prompt policy resistance to commit to early policy implementation, given that policies continue to evolve elsewhere.

In addition, the political ambitions variously to modernise public service provision, improve policy outcomes, and join up service providers also render community-based planning contested. Indeed, community planning’s emphasis on policy outcomes requires aligning different service providers’ strategies and programmes in more or less coercive ways. The Christie Commission (2011 68) in Scotland, for example, noted that “the public service landscape remains crowded with multiple points of authority and control” prompting a concern with “how to improve coherence and coordination within public services.” An emphasis on continuous learning and reflexivity highlights a tendency to policies being in continuous transformation as they are required to adjust in the light of monitoring and evaluation, but also emphasises the normative tendencies of community-based planning which are to transform policymaking processes and service delivery.

Second, the extent to which contemporary community-based planning is inter-dependent with physical land use planning processes, and / or the delivery of public services remains core to debates informing its direction as a distinct policy field. In Scotland, the nature of the relationship was demonstrated by the development of an interface to reconcile the appropriate positioning of community planning and land use planning objectives (Peel and Lloyd 2007a). According to Ellis *et al* (2013) in England this differentiation has become more pronounced under the Conservative–Liberal Democrat Coalition government. Ellis *et al* (2013) claim that recent changes in political control have created a new dynamic for devolution that is being played out in respect of territorial or nationalist purposes. Furthermore, they point out that the Coalition is implementing its own brand of pro-development localism in England. Yet, as Gallent (2013) notes, reform of the statutory land use planning system on its own will neither alter traditional modes of governance - which are based on norms of administration - nor extend community responsibility to include strategic and service issues which are integral to a more holistic conceptualisation of community-based planning. This complexity and interdependency not only involves reconciling policy sectors and outcomes but addressing various inter-related scalar dimensions.

Third, it is important to acknowledge the different value metrics involved in community-based planning. In Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, for example, forms of community-based planning would appear to have been devised in the context of their specific institutional and organisational circumstances. There is a reaching out of community-based planning. The turn to neighbourhood planning in England, however, as the preferred model of community- based planning represents a potential divergence. This style of community-based planning reflects the Coalition government’s deliberate localism agenda with its rhetoric of decentralising power to lower scales of governance, including local authorities, ‘neighbourhoods’ and ‘citizens’. There is evident introspection and ideological zeal involved. The normative policy motives in England have been questioned, however, with a view that neighbourhood planning may be more about aligning localism with economic development (Cowell 2013). This points to the power dynamics of policy momentum as yet another influence on policy development. In England, the localism agenda is driving policy design rather than allowing for iterative bottom-up filling in from the original concepts involved in community strategies.

Fourth, across the devolved nation-regions, the turn to community-based planning is associated with seeking to maximise the best use of available sector resources in an integrated matter to realise efficiency gains in different communities. Thus community-based planning, in various ways, explores alternative organisational arrangements to better secure the wellbeing of neighbourhoods and communities. The move to neighbourhood planning in England has also been viewed as helping to address local needs, but within its specific institutional and policy conditions. Moreover, it is of note that in Scotland, for example, the ambition is to secure the pooling of budgets across different service providers to create more effective networking potential. The differentiated departmental arrangements and jurisdictional boundaries in the individual nation-regions, however, again serve to emphasise the complexity of securing horizontal convergence in community-based planning practices.

Finally, community-based planning has been initiated and delivered in different ways with evidence of policy tracking and explicit policy learning evident amongst the devolved administrations (see Pemberton and Lloyd 2008). Implementation of community-based planning, however, depends on the particular institutional contexts in which service delivery occurs. Where community-based planning is predicated on bringing different service providers together (for example, health, education, police, local government, community and business groups) it is necessarily affected by issues of co-terminosity and contiguity. From this perspective, community-based planning may be considered as a sophisticated and complex form of public service delivery since it requires an elaborate meshing of organisational capacities and competencies. These will demonstrate varying degrees of uniqueness in terms of context, capacity, consensus, experience and leadership. Ultimately, such differentiation militates against simplistic applications of policy transfer, given the nature of the respective institutional and organisational arrangements in place.

**6. Insights from Policy Mobilities: Concluding Remarks**

As a policy objective community-based planning may be seen (pace Bauman 2001) as warm and benign, yet, as a statutory duty, its interpretation and application are open to contested social constructions and potential policy captures as traditional and emergent local policy actors seek to assert their influence over individual community-based plans, as is the case in England, for example (Gallent 2013). Over time, iterative developments in community-based planning at the national level, illustrative of Lindblom’s (1959) disjointed incrementalism, are indicative of a continuous refinement and modification of policy as part of a self-evaluative and reflexive process. Resonating with Stoker (2003) and Sullivan and Skelcher (2002), for example, efforts at reworking state-market-civil relations have involved both promoting greater democratic engagement in local communities and delivering public policy measures through new forms of local governance. These processes have involved new forms of filling in governance at the micro scale. Community-based planning involves not just consulting and engaging market and community interests in the design and prioritisation of services, but their coordinated resourcing and delivery. A range of different interests have thus been involved in seeking to learn lessons from community-based planning across the devolved UK.

Tracing specific policy mobilities in relation to community-based planning is then complicated by the very dynamic and fluid nature of policy exchange and learning (Peel and Lloyd 2008). A specific commitment to an outcomes model and evaluation approach to community planning, as in Scotland, for example, creates explicit conditions for reflexive policy learning. Locally based community planning in Scotland is explicitly aligned with national strategic priorities. Potential for policy adoption by other devolved polities may be mediated by pragmatic mimetic behaviours, on the one hand, and critical policy analysis and thinking, on the other. In other words, policy mobility is shaped by explicit parameters of space, community and time and takes place in specific cultural and learning contexts.

The turn to a policy mobilities conceptualisation (Peck and Theodore 2010) is useful in informing our understanding of policy morphing and modification in community-based planning. A number of points can be made.

First, it is held that there is a requirement to move beyond the orthodox literature on policy transfer and learning to a more dynamic policy mobilities analysis that focuses on the complexities of mutation. This perspective highlights how fields of policy mobility are socially constructed and influenced by prevailing power relations. This resonates with the argument that favoured models or best practice solutions can predominate in policy debates to the potential detriment of defined locales (Davoudi 2006). Normative agendas in one part of the devolved UK may be resisted elsewhere.

Second, Peck and Theodore (2010) argue that, over and above the intrinsic politics to policy transfer processes, policy actors are not lone learners, but operate in particular communities of practice. The sharing of case studies across the devolved administrations, for example, illustrates this tendency. Particular lines of policy argument may be further strengthened by defined ‘circuits of knowledge’ (Healey 2013) which advocate and legitimise certain practices. Nevertheless, a self-awareness in the devolved nation-regions provides a fertile context for innovation in community-based planning as part of a receptivity for bottom-up filling in of governance.

Third, reflecting a tendency towards eclectic and selective policymaking processes, Peck and Theodore (2010) argue that policies that are mobile rarely travel as complete ‘’packages’, but may be disaggregated to fit the needs of importing localities. Furthermore, a specific policy may evolve during the journey and process of landing (Healey 2013). This analysis highlights the importance of the specific nature of the dynamic environments in which community-based planning is being executed, and chimes with the views of McCann and Ward (2010) and Allen and Cochrane (2007) who define policy mobility as the embedding of ideas from elsewhere within distinct sets of economic, social and political relations. This line of reasoning is evident in Northern Ireland, for example, where attention is drawn to the special circumstances prevailing and the need to ensure policy fit.

Fourth, interest in a policy mobilities approach emphasises mutation in policy form, selective or transformative adaptation of policy ideas, and new policy relations being established. Sections 4 and 5 illustrated how community-based planning in the devolved UK varies in terms of its institutional and organisational forms. This variation is also manifest at different scales and in relation to mechanisms for ensuring vertical integration. This suggests that the origins, articulation and implementation of community-based planning reveal traces of normative, mimetic and coercive mobilities, reflecting the peculiarities of the local policymaking sites, as well as the communities of practice involved in policy exchange and implementation. Moreover, these may be differentially framed, with, for example, a localism metanarrative in England and an emphasis on community empowerment in Scotland. A blanket interpretation of what constitutes community-based planning is clearly inappropriate.

In terms of normative influences, community-based planning may be understood as being infused with an explicit neoliberal economic agenda – especially in England. This is articulated in terms of the perceived need to ensure the efficient and effective allocation of resources in the local provision of public services. At the level of the individual devolved polities, however, other normative agendas are evident – as shown by the continuing mediating influences of social democratic values in Scotland. This countervailing value set is demonstrated also in Wales and is evident to a lesser extent in Northern Ireland where community planning is aligned with existing community development.

There is some evidence of coercive policy transfer, particularly in England with its specific anti-regional and restrictive public sector economic agenda, and the arrangements for resourcing its model of neighbourhood planning. In contrast, Scotland’s use of an alternative arrangement, a Single Outcome Agreement, would appear to provide scope for local discretion in executing community planning actions. The balance between sponsoring authority and delivery model is – in effect – more nuanced as a consequence.

These distinctions drive to the very essence of community-based planning. In terms of mimetic policy behaviours, there is evidence of reflexive policy awareness, but with variances in the form of policy mutation. This may be in policy form or process, as well as style and intent. Rather than simply adopt or even transform a policy, efforts are being made in Northern Ireland to avoid or by-pass policy iterations so as to learn from design and delivery experience in policy maturation elsewhere. In Wales, community strategies and community strategy partnerships were styled on those in England, whilst in Northern Ireland, early interest in community planning partnerships would appear to suggest a ‘tracking’ of the approach as developed in Scotland (Northern Ireland Environmental Link, 2006). The evidence suggests that models of community-based planning in the devolved nation-regions continue to develop their own context-specific distinctiveness – witness the community / neighbourhood agreements emerging in Wales and the Consultation on Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill (Scottish Government 2013). Critically, it is clear that delivering better outcomes for communities depends primarily on mobilising policy communities to operate in a joined up way. It is evident that the filling in of governance through community-based planning in the devolved UK is witnessing the emergence of complex relational governance. Supported by a political commitment to continuous improvement, this is a dynamic arena involving degrees of policy mobility across sectors, boundaries and devolved nation-regions. As such, community-based planning policymaking will continue to transform.

**References**

Allen **J and** Cochrane **A** 2007 Beyond the territorial fix: regional assemblages, politics and power, Regional Studies 41 1161-1175

**Allmendinger P, Morphet J and Tewdwr-Jones M** 2005 Devolution and the modernisation of local government: Prospects for spatial planning[*European Planning Studies*](http://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/carfax/ceps)13 349-370

**Audit Scotland** 2013 *Improving Community Planning in Scotland* AGS/2013/3, Edinburgh

**Bauman Z** 2001 *Community: Seeking Safety in an Insecure World* Polity, Oxford

**Bennett C** 1991 Review Article: What is Policy Convergence and What Causes it? *British Journal of Political Science* 21 215-233

**Blake Stevenson Ltd and Stratagem** 2005 *Case Study Analyses for RPA on Community Planning in Operation within the UK and Ireland* Belfast, OFMDFM

**Bond R, McCrone D and Brown A** 2003 National identity and economic development: reiteration, recapture, reinterpretation and repudiation *Nations and Nationalism* 9 371-391

**Busch P O and Jörgens H** 2005International patterns of environmental policy change and convergence *European Environment*15 80-101

**Cave S** 2013*Community Planning*Northern Ireland Research and Information Service Research Paper NIAR 220-13, Northern Ireland Assembly, Belfast

**Christie C** 2011 *Commission on the Future Delivery of Public Services* Edinburgh, HMSO

**Community Planning Review Group** 2012 *Statement of Ambition* Edinburgh, Scottish Government, March

**Cowell R** 2004 Community Planning: Fostering Participation in the Congested State? *Local Government Studies* 30 497-518

**Cowell R** 2013 The Greenest Government Ever? Planning and Sustainability in England after the May 2010 Elections *Planning Practice & Research* 28 27-44

**Daβler T and Parker D** 2004 Harmony or disharmony in the regulation and the promotion of competition in EU telecommunications? A survey of the regulatory offices *Utilities Policy* 12 9–28

**Davoudi S** 2006 Evidence-Based Planning Rhetoric and Reality *The Planning Review* 165 14-24

**Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR)** 2000 *Preparing Community Strategies: Draft Guidance to Local Authorities* DETR, London

**DiMaggio P and Powell W** 1983 The iron cage revisited: Institutional isomorphism and collective rationality in organizational fields *American Sociological Review* 23 111-136

**Dolowitz D P and Marsh D** 1996 Who learns from whom?: A review of the policy transfer literature *Political Studies* 44 343-357

**Dolowitz D P and Marsh D** 2000 Learning from abroad: the role of policy transfer in contemporary policy making *Governance* 13 5-24

**Ellis G, Cowell R, Sherry-Brennan F, Strachan P and Toke D** 2013 Planning, energy and devolution in the UK *Town Planning Review* 84 doi:10.3828/tpr.2013.16

**Evans M and Davies J** 1999 Understanding Policy Transfer: A Multi-level, Multi-disciplinary Perspective *Public Administration* 77 361-386

**Fernie K and McCarthy J** 2001 Partnership and community involvement – institutional morphing in Dundee *Local Economy* 16 299-311

**Gallent N** 2013Reconnecting people and planning’: parish plans and the English localism agenda *Town Planning Review* 84 371-396

**Goodwin M, Jones M and Jones P** 2005 Devolution, constitutional change and economic development: explaining and understanding the new institutional geographies of the British state *Regional Studies*, 39 421-436

**Healey P** 2013 Circuits of Knowledge and Techniques: The Transnational Flow of Planning Ideas and Practices *International Journal of Urban and Rural Research* 37 1510-1526

**Hogg K** 2000 *Making a Difference: Effective Implementation of Cross-Cutting Policy* Scottish Executive Policy Unit, Edinburgh

**James O and Lodge M** 2003 The Limitations of ‘Policy Transfer’ and ‘Lesson Drawing’ for Public Policy Research *Political Studies Review* 1 179-193

**Jeffery C** 2007 The Unfinished Business of Devolution: Seven Open Questions *Public Policy and Administration* 22 92-108

**Jerram L** 2011*Streetlife: The Untold History of Europe’s Twentieth Century* Oxford University Press, Oxford

**Jones R, Goodwin M, Jones M and Pett K** 2005 ‘Filling in' the state: economic governance and the evolution of devolution in Wales *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy* 23 337-360

**Jörgens H** 2005 Diffusion and convergence of environmental policies in Europe,*European Environment*15 61-62

**Keating M** 2003 Devolution and Policy Convergence *The Political Quarterly* 74 429-438

**Keating M** 2006 Nationality, Devolution and Policy Development in the United Kingdom in **Tewdwr-Jones M and Allmendinger P** eds *Territory, Identity and Spatial Planning. Spatial Governance in a Fragmented Nation.* Routledge, London 22-34

**Keating M, Cairney P and Hepburn E** 2008 Territorial Policy Communities and Devolution in the United Kingdom *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society* 2 51–66

**Keating M and Cairney P** 2012 Introduction: Policy-making, Learning and Devolution *Regional & Federal Studies*, 22 239-250

**Keating M, Cairney P and Hepburn E** 2012 Policy Convergence, Transfer and Learning in the UK under Devolution *Regional & Federal Studies* 22 289-307

**Larner W and Laurie N** 2010 Travelling technocrats, embodied knowledges: globalising privatisation in telecoms and water *Geoforum* 41 218–226

**Lindblom C E** 1959 The Science of Muddling Through in **S Campbell and S Fainstein** eds 1996 *Readings in Planning Theory* Blackwell Publishers, Oxford

**Lloyd M G and Peel D** 2012aUK Enterprise Policy – A Twist on Real Estate, Austerity and *Planning Journal of Surveying, Construction and Property* 3 1–7

**Lloyd M G and Peel D** 2012b Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 *Planning Theory & Practice* 13 177-182

**McCann E and Ward K** 2010 Relationality/territoriality: Towards a conceptualization of cities in the world *Geoforum* 41 175-184

**McCrone D** 1994 *Understanding Scotland: The Sociology of a Stateless Nation* Routledge, London

**Northern Ireland Environmental Link** 2006 *Introducing Community Planning to Northern Ireland* Northern Ireland Environmental Link, Belfast

**Owen, S Moseley M and Courtney P** 2007 Bridging the gap: An attempt to reconcile strategic planning and very local community-based planning in rural England *Local Government Studies* 33 49-76

**Peck J and Theodore N** 2010 Mobilizing policy: Methods, models and mutations *Geoforum* 41 169-174

**Peel D and Lloyd M G** 2006 Model Policies for Land Use and the Environment: Towards a Critical Typology *European Environment* 16 321-335

**Peel D and Lloyd M G** 2007a Community planning and land use planning in Scotland: A constructive interface? *Public Policy & Administration* 22 353-366.

**Peel D and Lloyd M G** 2007b Improving Policy Effectiveness: Land Use Planning in a Devolved Polity, *Australian Journal of Public Administration* 66 175-185

**Peel D and Lloyd M G** 2008 Re-generating Learning in the Public Realm. Evidence-based Policy Making and Business Improvement Districts in the UK, *Public Policy and Administration* 23 189-205

**Peel D and Lloyd M G** 2012 The Edinburgh Concordat: Contractual, Collaborative Positive Planning? *Public Performance & Management Review* 36 275-289.

**Pemberton S** **and Lloyd M G** 2008 Devolution, Community Planning and Institutional Decongestion? *Local Government Studies* 34 437-451

**Pill M** 2011 *Neighbourhood Management: Development of an Assessment Framework* Cardiff University Press, Cardiff

**Rittel H W J and Webber M M**1973 Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning *Policy Sciences* 4 155-169

**Rose R** 1991 What is lesson-drawing? *Journal of Public Policy* 11 3-30

**Rose R** 1993 *Lesson-drawing in Public Policy: A guide to learning across time and space* Chatham House Publishers, New Jersey

**Scottish Government** 2013 *Consultation on Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill* Edinburgh Scottish Government

**Shaw J and MacKinnon D** 2011 Moving on with ‘filling in’? Some thoughts on state restructuring after devolution *Area* 43 23-30

**Stoker G** 2003 *Transforming local governance: From Thatcherism to New Labour* Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke

**Stone D** 2001 *Learning Lessons, Policy Transfer and the International Diffusion of Policy Ideas* Working Paper No 69/01 Centre for the Study of Globalisation and Regionalisation, Warwick

**Sullivan H and Skelcher C** 2002 *Working Across Boundaries: Collaboration in Public Services* Palgrave Macmillan, London

**Ward K** 2006 ‘Policies in motion’, urban management and state restructuring: the trans-local expansion of Business Improvement Districts *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 30 54-75

**Ward S V** 1999 The International Diffusion of Planning: A Review and a Canadian Case Study *International Planning Studies* 4 53-77

**Welsh Assembly Government** 2006 *Mainstreaming Equality in the Work of the National Assembly* National Assembly for Wales, Cardiff

**Welsh Assembly Government** 2012 *Community Agreements* Welsh Assembly Government, Cardiff

**Wolman H and Page E** 2000 *Learning from the Experience of Others: Policy transfer among local regeneration partnerships* Joseph Rowntree Foundation, York

**Wolman H and Page E** 2001 Policy transfer among local government: An Information- Theory Approach *Governance: An International Journal of Policy, Administration, and Institutions* 15 477-501