GREEN BELTS AS A MEANS OF MANAGING THE LANDSCAPE AT THE EDGE OF THE CITY
LE CINTURE VERDI COME STRUMENTI PER LA GESTIONE DEL PAESAGGIO AI MARGINI DELLE CITTÀ

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Summary
This paper will review the theory and practice of green belts as instruments of urban containment in a European context. It will point to the emphasis given to the compact city in the European Spatial Development Perspective. It will then review and compare some of the practices in different parts of Europe. Particular emphasis will be given to a comparison of policy and implementation in Scotland and the Netherlands.
The analysis will show that green belts are used to pursue a number of policy aims: they are not exclusively a tool to manage landscape resources. Furthermore they have social and economic impacts as well as landscape impacts. There are also important questions about the relation between policy and implementation. Finally recommendations are made for a more active design and management approach to planning land at the edge of the city as part of strategic spatial planning practice.

Key-words
Green Belts, Urban Fringes, Landscape Management.

Abstract
L'intervento esamina la teoria e la pratica delle cinture verdi come strumento di contenimento urbano all'interno del contesto europeo. Si evidenzia l'importanza attribuita alle città compatte nell' European Spatial Development Perspective e pertanto si riflette mettendo a confronto alcune pratiche in differenti parti di Europa. Una particolare enfasi è posta alla comparazione delle politiche e dell'implementazione in Scozia e in Olanda.
L'analisi mostra che le cinture verdi sono finalizzate a perseguire numerosi obiettivi di politiche di piano: esse non sono esclusivamente uno strumento per gestire le risorse del paesaggio; infatti hanno impatti economici e sociali allo stessa stregua degli impatti paesaggistici. Ci sono inoltre importanti questioni circa la relazione tra le politiche e l'implementazione. Raccomandazioni conclusive sono volte ad un più attivo disegno e approccio gestionale alla pianificazione del territorio ai confini della città come parte integrante della pratica di pianificazione spaziale strategica.

Parole chiave
Cinture verdi, margini urbani, gestione del paesaggio.

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How to manage the landscape at the edge of the city is an important question across Europe. The European Environment Agency (2006) has highlighted the problems posed by urban sprawl; it says that urban expansion is occurring in "a scattered way across Europe's countryside", and that this is a major common challenge facing urban Europe[1].

This paper will discuss:
- What are the characteristics of the urban fringe?
- Urban fringe and place identity;
- The compact city as a European approach to development at the urban fringe;
- Green Belts as a planning instrument to manage the urban fringe;
- The Scottish experience of Green Belt policies;
- Other European practices for planning and managing the fringe;
- Lessons for managing urban fringe landscapes;
- Some ideas for a European research agenda on planning and landscape at the urban fringe.

WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE URBAN FRINGE?

The urban fringe is often seen in negative terms by European urbanists. In Italy, for example, the quality of the urban cores and the hill villages is celebrated, but the way that the land at the fringe has developed is seen as a problem. Phrases like "urban countryside" or "a quilt of urbanized spots and pocket country areas" are used to describe the area immediately beyond the town[2].

Figure 1. The urban fringe as a "pressured landscape": new development on the south-east edge of Edinburgh, June 2007.

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[1] European Environment Agency, *Urban Sprawl in Europe: The ignored challenge*, EAA Report No 10/2006, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg 2006, pag. 5.
[2] GLEN BRAMLEY, CLIFF HAGUE, KARRYN KIRK, ALAN PRIOR, JEREMY RAEMAEKERS, HARRY SMITH, with ANDREW ROBINSON and ROSIE BUSHNELL, *Review of Green Belt Policy in Scotland*, Scottish Executive Social Research, Edinburgh (UK) 2004, pag. 90.

Figure 2. "Service-scape": the urban fringe as a corridor for electricity: Uppsala, Sweden.

However, while the European Environment Agency[3] sees southern Europe as one of the areas particularly at risk from urban sprawl, disparaging commentaries about the fringe are by no means monopolized by Italians.

As Gallent, Andersson and Bianconi note, "the fringe is frequently portrayed as an ugly, scruffy or anonymous landscape"[4]. They further argue that the fringe is perceived as lacking order and so is thought to have little aesthetic appeal. Such an unloved area is easily ignored by researchers and practitioners. However, it can be argued that the fringe is an extremely important area. Gallent, Andersson and Bianconi call the fringes "pressured landscapes"[5]. The fringe of a city is very dynamic in economic terms and its effective development is critical to the vitality of the cities on which Europe's economy depends. The challenge at the fringe is not to stop urban growth but to plan, design and manage it in ways that contribute to sustainable development.

In England the fringe has been defined as "that zone of transition which begins with the edge of the fully built-up urban area and becomes progressively more rural whilst still remaining a clear mix of urban and rural land uses and influences before giving way to the wider countryside"[6]. However, this concept of a continuum between urban and rural is of doubtful value, because it imposes a model of order and urban-rural difference on a situation that is in

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[3] European Environment Agency, *Urban Sprawl in Europe: The ignored challenge*, EAA Report No 10/2006, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg 2006, pag. 5.

[4] NICK GALLENT, JOHAN ANDERSSON, MARCO BIANCONI, *Planning on the Edge: The Context for Planning at the Rural-Urban Fringe*, Routledge, London and New York 2006, pag. 72.

[5] NICK GALLENT, JOHAN ANDERSSON, MARCO BIANCONI, *Planning on the edge: England's rural-urban fringe and the spatial-planning agenda*, in "Environment and Planning B: Planning and Design", 33, 2006, pag. 461.

[6] Countryside Agency, *The state and potential of agriculture in the urban fringe,* Unpublished project brief, Cheltenham 2002. Quoted in NICK GALLENT, JOHAN ANDERSSON, MARCO BIANCONI, *Planning on the Edge: The Context for Planning at the Rural-Urban Fringe*, Routledge, London and New York 2006, pag. 5.

fact characterized by disorder and the urbanization of the countryside. It echoes the planning policies that sought to keep urban and rural distinct – policies which have been overtaken by new forms of development and increasing mobility.

The fringe is the place where many important but often unpopular land uses are to be found. Waste disposal, sewage plants, electricity stations, park and ride are examples. It is an area that is crossed by transport routes. It is the area nearest the existing centres of jobs and entertainment where land is likely to be available for new development. Unless there are supplies of land that can be reused within the city it is arguably the place where new development should be steered if the aim is to contain travel distances. Yet it is mainly perceived to be the area where the city threatens to take over the countryside.

There is, of course, some truth behind the negative image of the fringe. Cheap land and hyper-mobility have made the fringe a key focus for a range of employment and leisure uses, not least retailing. Retailing is not only a vital service but an important industry. In the UK, for example, retailing provides jobs for one in ten of the working population; retail sales account for 24% of Gross Domestic Product by expenditure; and retail outlets account for 50% of institutionally held property investments (British Retail Consortium 2000). This very competitive industry knows that it maximizes its productivity when it can build large factory-like sheds on the urban fringe, with good access to the motorway network.

Discussion of development policy for the urban fringe also needs to recognize the changing nature of agriculture. As production methods have become ever more intensive, so agriculture has become an increasing threat to cultural landscapes and to natural heritage. Restructuring of farming is seeing the emergence of a "post-production countryside".

These changes raise important questions about what kind of landscapes we are seeking to conserve and manage on the urban fringe. Rural-type uses such as equestrian centres can operate out of buildings that look much the same as a modern factory or warehouse.

The quality of the landscape on the urban fringe will vary from place to place. There can be no *prima facie* grounds for saying that it should be defended against development. Indeed the fringe is almost inevitably a landscape characterized by fragmentation, not least because it serves as a conduit to the main urban area.

Figure 3. "Business-scape": A designed business-park on the western fringe of Edinburgh.

The Centre for Urban and Regional Ecology[7] has disaggregated the fringe into an "urban edge", "inner fringe" and "outer fringe". However this typology, with its implicit presumption of a continuum, is not helpful. It understates the nature of the fringe as a landscape in its own right. It also provides a descriptive categorization, rather than one aimed at design and policy interventions. In this respect, we should perhaps be asking what would a "sustainable fringe" look like? As a start to addressing that question we need to recognize the components of fringe landscapes and their underlying rationale for being there. Table in Figure 4 is a first attempt at that.

Landscape component	Main uses	Reasons for being there	Implications for sustainability
Institution-scape – large bulky buildings, extensive car parks, but a landscape setting	Universities, hospitals	Need large amount of land, preferably in a pleasant environment – as cheap as possible	Increases car dependency unless integrated with public transport. Distances the institution from those it serves
Shopping-scape – mainly large bulky buildings with extensive car parks and prominent advertisements	Superstores, shopping centres, garden centres, farm shops.	Cheap land that is accessible to a large amount of income	Increases car use; replaces areas of open landscape by predominantly hard surfaces
Entertainment-scape – similar to shopping-scape.	Cinemas, sports stadia, hotels, equestrian centres, golf courses.	Similar to Shopping-scape with which it often shares sites.	Again displacement to the edge of facilities once in town means more car use and hard surfaces. Golf courses in arid regions make demands on water
Business-scape – free-standing buildings in parkland setting with service roads.	Business parks, science parks, warehousing.	Accessibility to fast roads, and chance for modern, functionally efficient buildings in well designed landscape.	Increases car travel but chance to achieve energy-efficient building design.
Service-scape – fragments the natural landscape by cutting through it.	Roads, airports, railways, overhead power lines, sewage works, waste disposal sites.	Connections into and from the city.	Some of these uses pull other activity to the edge of the city. Some of the uses are necessary but unacceptable in the main built-up area.
Run-down-scape – often degraded and under-used land.	Farms or areas of contaminated land, or areas subject to fly-tipping.	Residual uses on sites for which speculators have options, or where improvement of land is not commercially viable.	Wasted resources.

Figure 4. The fringe: components landscapes and issues of sustainability.

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[7] Centre for Urban and Rural Ecology, *Sustainable Development in the Countryside around Towns,* Countryside Agency, Cheltenham 2002, pag. 18.

URBAN FRINGE AND PLACE IDENTITY

Urban fringe areas are often seen as lacking identity. Much development is a product of mass consumerism or institutional uses. There is thus a sameness that gives a feeling that you could be "anywhere". One word often used in relation to suburbs is "anonymous". Another description given to these fringe areas is that they are "non-places". "Transitional landscapes" is another phrase expressing their functional nature. See Gallent, Andersson and Bianconi[8] for discussion of how the fringe is typically represented.

New development on the fringe can often be seen as changing the character of a town, especially if the amount, scale and character of the development is out of sympathy with the vernacular of the older areas. For example, the small Scottish town of Ellon is now home to nine thousand people or more. This represents a five-fold increase since the 1960s, with most of the growth in a period from the mid-1980s to mid-1990s. Modern housing from the standard catalogues of big building companies is now the dominant feature of the town. While planning policy has prevented a straggle of development, and has ensured that there is still a strong urban edge, it has not been able to conserve the traditional identity of Ellon as an old village.

One important fringe landscape concern is with the landscape setting of a settlement. A settlement is more likely to be distinctly recognizable if it has a clear visual edge. This notion has underpinned green belt policy as we shall see later. However, we need to recognize that places no longer have just one identity[9].

A MULTI-FUNCTIONAL AREA UNDER PRESSURE

In summary the fringe is an area that poses major questions to planners and landscape designers. It is rarely celebrated, often disparaged and primarily conceived of as a transition from two other types of landscape – the urban and the rural. However, this conventional interpretation under-estimates the importance of the fringe as a multi-functional area facing pressure for change, and an area where new development is added to the city. It is important for sustainability, as Figure 4 indicates. So how has planning policy treated this complex zone, and contributed to its management? The issues are relevant across Europe, so how have European policy-makers responded?

THE IDEAL OF THE COMPACT CITY

"All available evidence demonstrates conclusively that urban sprawl has accompanied the growth of urban areas across Europe over the last fifty years"[10]. In 1990 the European Commission published the Green Paper on the Urban Environment[11]. This stressed the importance of the city in Europe's history, culture and economy. It "established a narrative about the nature of European urbanization that echoed through European Union documents since then, and which essentially counterposes the classical compact European city with urban sprawl"[12]. The same narrative is evident in the 2006 report from the European

[8] NICK GALLENT, JOHAN ANDERSSON, MARCO BIANCONI, *Planning on the Edge: The Context for Planning at the Rural-Urban Fringe*, Routledge, London and New York 2006, pagg. 76-81.

[9] CLIFF HAGUE, PAUL JENKINS (ed.), *Place Identity, Participation and Planning*, Routledge, London and New York 2005.

[10] European Environment Agency, *Urban Sprawl in Europe: The ignored challenge*, EAA Report No 10/2006, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg 2006, pag. 9.

[11] Commission of the European Communities, *Green Paper on the Urban Environment*, EUR 12902 EN, Commission of the European Communities, Brussels 1990.

[12] CLIFF HAGUE, "Urban containment: European experience of planning for the compact city", in GERRIT-J KNAAP, HUIBERT HACCOU, KELLY J. CLIFTON, JOHN W. FRECE, (ed.) *Incentives, Regulations and Plans: The roles of states and nation states in smart growth planning,* Cheltenham (UK) and Northampton (USA) 2007, pag. 19.

Environmental Agency. Similarly, Apel et.al. argued that: "The dispersed expansion of developed land (particularly in the outer reaches of urban areas) and the ever more pronounced segregation of different land uses not only leads to threats for open space, to increased social costs for urbanization and transport, to growing energy consumption, air pollutants and noise, but generally endangers European urban culture and the associated capabilities and achievements of social and cultural integration, of tolerance and responsibility for the common good"[13].

The endorsement of urban containment was reiterated in the European Spatial Development Perspective (Commission of the European Communities, 1999). Specifically this stated that: "Member states and regional authorities should pursue the concept of the "compact city" (the city of short distances) in order to have better control over further expansion of the cities. This includes, for example, the minimization of expansion within the framework of a careful locational and settlement policy, as in the suburbs and many coastal regions"[14].

Like so much of the development of spatial planning within Europe, these ideas had been strongly influenced by the Dutch. Compact city became official policy in Netherlands in 1988. The aims were to protect valuable open space in the existing cities' surrounds and locate new development to minimize transport needs, that is as urban infill or, where greenfield urbanization was necessary, immediately adjacent to existing settlement areas.

However, we should note that many aspects of public policy in the Netherlands have been changing in recent years, and there have been some shifts towards a more market-responsive position[15]. It is also interesting to note that the strategy paper[16] agreed by urban ministers of member states meeting in Leipzig in 2007, while making a routine reference to urban sprawl, does not dwell upon it. Instead the paper concentrates on urban deprivation, transport, security and competitiveness.

Thus there has been recognition at the level of the EU that what happens on the urban fringe matters, but that there may be the start of a divergence between the current EU "jobs and growth" agenda and the traditional concern for compact cities. Of course, the EU itself has no legal competence in the field of spatial planning. Thus application of the ESDP and compact city policies was left to member states and regional and local authorities. Research by Bramley et.al.[17] found that approaches to regulating development at the edge of the city varied considerably between different countries. One key approach within the UK has been the use of Green Belts.

HISTORY OF GREEN BELTS

The idea underpinning the use of Green Belts is that urban spread should be halted by a green belt once a city had reached a certain size, and a new settlement should be started some proximate but safe distance away[18].

[13] DIETER APEL, M. LEHMBROCK, TIM PHAROAH, J. THIEMANN-LINDEN, *Kompakt, mobil, urban: Stadtentwicklungskonzepte zur Verkehrsvermeidung im internationalen Vergleich,* Deutsches Institut für Urbanistik (difu), Berlin 1997, pag. 455. Translated by and quoted in JAN SCHEURER, *Urban Ecology: Innovations in Housing Policy and the Future of Cities: Towards sustainability in neighbourhood communities*, PhD Thesis at Murdoch University, Perth (Australia) 2001, pag. 171, downloadable from www.murdoch.edu.au

[14] Commission of the European Communities, *European Spatial Development Perspective: Towards Balanced and Sustainable development of the Territory of the EU*, Office for the Official Publications for the European Communities, Luxembourg 1999, pag. 22.

[15] NEEDHAM, FALUDI, 1999; KUHN, 2003; VAN DER VALK, 2002; BERTOLINI, LE CLERQ, 2003.

[16] THOMAS FRANKE, WOLF-CHRISTIAN STRAUSS, BETTINA REIMANN, KLAUS J. BECKMANN, *Integrated Urban Development – A Prerequisite for Urban Sustainability in Europe,* Federal Ministry of Transport, Building and Urban Affairs, Berlin 2007, downloadable from http://www.bmvbs.de

[17] GLEN BRAMLEY, CLIFF HAGUE, KARRYN KIRK, ALAN PRIOR, JEREMY RAEMAEKERS, HARRY SMITH, with ANDREW ROBINSON and ROSIE BUSHNELL, *Review of Green Belt Policy in Scotland*, Scottish Executive Social Research, Edinburgh (UK) 2004.

[18] CLIFF HAGUE, "Urban containment: European experience of planning for the compact city", in GERRIT-J KNAAP, HUIBERT HACCOU, KELLY J. CLIFTON, JOHN W. FRECE, (ed.) *Incentives, Regulations and Plans: The roles*

This notion was particularly developed in England in response to the nineteenth century industrial city, though its application was by no means restricted to the UK. Indeed as Hague noted, the catalyst for the diffusion of the idea of Green Belts probably came through the work of Ebenezer Howard who had seen for himself the rapid spread of settlements across late 19th century America.

In Britain in the 1940s there was a strong reaction against the unregulated suburban development that had devoured so much agricultural land around cities in the 1930s. For example the city of Edinburgh had doubled in land area between 1919 and 1939. This led to central government support for a policy of urban containment and planned dispersal of population. From 1955 onwards in England and a couple of years later in Scotland, Green Belts became an officially advocated tool to achieve these aims.

THE SCOTTISH EXPERIENCE OF GREEN BELT POLICY

A number of critical questions can be posed in relation to Green Belts. Amongst them are the following:
- What are the aims behind a Green Belt policy?
- How important is landscape quality in designating a Green Belt?
- How important is ecology in designating a Green Belt?
- Are Green Belts permanent?
- What uses are acceptable in Green Belts?
- How does having a Green Belt affect land management?

This paper now draws on research on a review of Green Belt policy in Scotland[19] to explore these questions.

The *aims* of Green Belts in Scotland were set out by central government in 1960 and repeated in 1985[20]. They are:
- To maintain the identity of towns by establishing a clear definition of their physical boundaries and preventing coalescence.
- To provide countryside for recreation or institutional purposes of various kinds.
- To maintain the landscape setting of towns.

However, through the 1990s another two related aims became attached to Green Belts through local practice and supportive Scottish Office actions. They were to reduce the need to travel and also to promote regeneration by steering development to inner city and brownfield sites. Furthermore, in the early years of the present century plans also began to equate Green Belts with sustainable development[21].

There is a general view that these aims have been successfully achieved. For example, the councils responsible for the Green Belt around Aberdeen argue that it has prevented "unnecessary sprawl"[22].

However, it should be noted that the city's built up area expanded by 16% between 1975 and 1998[23]. Indeed, all of these aims and their underlying assumptions can be challenged.

of states and nation states in smart growth planning, Cheltenham (UK) and Northampton, MA (USA) 2007, pag. 17.

[19] GLEN BRAMLEY, CLIFF HAGUE, KARRYN KIRK, ALAN PRIOR, JEREMY RAEMAEKERS, HARRY SMITH, con ANDREW ROBINSON e ROSIE BUSHNELL, *Review of Green Belt Policy in Scotland*, Scottish Executive Social Research, Edinburgh (UK) 2004.

[20] Scottish Office, *Scottish Circular 24/1985: Development in the Countryside and Green Belts,* Scottish Office Development Department, Edinburgh 1985.

[21] GLEN BRAMLEY, CLIFF HAGUE, KARRYN KIRK, ALAN PRIOR, JEREMY RAEMAEKERS, HARRY SMITH, with ANDREW ROBINSON and ROSIE BUSHNELL, *Review of Green Belt Policy in Scotland*, Scottish Executive Social Research, Edinburgh (UK) 2004, pag. 21.

[22] Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council, *North East Scotland Together: Finalized Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire Structure Plan 2001-2016,* Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council, Aberdeen 2001, pag. 50.

Hague showed[24] that housebuilders did not recognize coalescence of settlements as a factor likely to depress the market demand for their properties in those settlements. Furthermore, in the case of Aberdeen, the effect of Green Belt policy was to force development to leapfrog the Green Belt: instead of being an incremental addition to the city itself new development took place around the edges of some of the smaller towns some distance away. Thus Portlethen, a small town some ten kilometers to the south of Aberdeen experienced an 18% increase in its housing stock between 1991 and 1998. There is clear evidence that the impact of such substantial amounts of new housing changes the identity of these smaller towns[25].

In the light of the review by Bramley et.al. (2004) and subsequent consultation, the Scottish Executive (2006) has issued a new policy statement on Green Belts. This largely re-asserts the value of Green Belts, but puts more emphasis on their management. It also says that "Green belt policy is not a designation to protect natural heritage"[26].

While there is reference to the landscape setting of towns amongst the aims, the *landscape quality* is not actually a concern in designating an area as Green Belt. Green belts are essentially a two-dimensional geometrical concept. They do not necessarily protect the best landscapes. Green Belts are seen by planners and many of the public as a means of defending open land against development pressures. However, this can be done through other mechanisms – it does not depend on having a designated Green Belt, and the evidence shows that in the UK at least, Green Belts are not immune from development. However, there is a case for arguing that landscape appraisals should be undertaken as part of the process of designating Green Belts so that the case for protection can be strengthened where appropriate.

Similar points can be made about the *ecological and environmental qualities* of Green Belts. Belts are not designated as ecological units, and key ecological sites can be protected in the UK by other designations. It was thought in the past that keeping land in agricultural use was valuable in itself and a means to conserve nature. However, the evidence of the destructive impact of intensive farming on habitats, together with agricultural surpluses in Europe has undermined the case for unquestioning retention of farm land.

While the public often believes that a Green Belt implies a *permanent* veto on development, the reality in the UK is rather different. Not only is the UK's system of planning control discretionary (in contrast to the less flexible zoning systems elsewhere in Europe), but Green Belt boundaries get reviewed, and there are releases of land for development from time to time. The research in Scotland looked at several plans. It concluded that: "The general tenor of these plans is to treat the Green Belt as a durable, permanent feature – phrases like 'long term' occur frequently. However, this is slightly attenuated by the extent to which boundaries have been revised, substantial new housing developments permitted, and particular important non-housing uses allowed to develop within some Green Belt areas"[27].

The evidence is that releases of Green Belt land for development most often are of sites that are close to the edge of the settlement. For example, in Edinburgh in the early 1990s a decision was taken that housing pressures were so severe that a release of land from the Green Belt adjacent to a large social housing area was essential. This one area of land removed from the Green Belt was large enough to accommodate around four thousand houses. In all over one thousand and six hundred hectares of Edinburgh's Green Belt have

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[23] Aberdeen City Council, *Aberdeen City Local Plan Consultative Draft*, Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeen 1998, pag. 3.

[24] CLIFF HAGUE, "Identity, Sustainability and Settlement Patterns", in CLIFF HAGUE, PAUL JENKINS (ed.), *Place Identity, Participation and Planning*, Routledge, London and New York 2005, pagg. 159-182.

[25] CLIFF HAGUE, "Identity, Sustainability and Settlement Patterns", in CLIFF HAGUE, PAUL JENKINS (ed.), *Place Identity, Participation and Planning*, Routledge, London and New York 2005, pag. 168.

[26] Scottish Executive, *Scottish Planning Policy 21: Green Belts*, Scottish Executive, Edinburgh 2006, paragraph 9, downloadable from http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2006

[27] GLEN BRAMLEY, CLIFF HAGUE, KARRYN KIRK, ALAN PRIOR, JEREMY RAEMAEKERS, HARRY SMITH, with ANDREW ROBINSON and ROSIE BUSHNELL, *Review of Green Belt Policy in Scotland*, Scottish Executive Social Research, Edinburgh (UK) 2004, pag. 34.

been developed for other uses since it was originally set out in a plan in 1949 (Edinburgh's current Green Belt amounts to some seventeen thousand hectares)[28].

Developers are well aware of all this, and consequently do not treat the Green Belt as an area where they will never get a permission. Instead they take out options to buy sites if planning permission can be obtained. The differential in market value between land in agricultural use and land in urban use is huge, and so there is every incentive to land owners to ensure that their land becomes so degraded that the case for allowing it to be developed is strengthened.

Of course the nature of Green Belts varies. Not only is the landscape different from one Green Belt to the next, but so are the wider economic circumstances. Green belts are most likely to be effective when there is development pressure in a strong market and planners can restrict land supply and are in a strong position to steer developers to preferred locations. In situations where jobs and growth are in short supply the planners are in a much weaker position, and the local politicians are likely to favour development rather than Green Belt preservation.

The case of North Lanarkshire illustrates some of these pressures. North Lanarkshire lies to the north-east of Glasgow. It is an area of small towns, with substantial areas between them designated as part of the Glasgow and Clyde Valley Green Belt. North Lanarkshire is an old industrial area, with much derelict and contaminated land and relatively high unemployment. The research by Bramley et.al. observed that "the North Lanarkshire case study interviews would seem to indicate that in certain circumstances Green Belt policy may be secondary to other more pressing economic development priorities"[29].

The data for North Lanarkshire in Tables of Figures 5 and 6 confirms this picture.

New Land Use	Nos.	% Approved	Area (Hec.)	% Area approved
Residential	69	58	172	25
Telecoms	22	86	1	94
Business / Storage	16	94	58	100
Minerals / Waste	5	60	27	51
Other, incl. Leisure	39	81	137	88
TOTAL	151	71	395	60

Figure 5. Planning Applications in the Green Belt in North Lanarkshire 2001-03.

Previous Use	Number	% Approved	Area (Hectare)	% Area approved
Greenfield	128	71	283	72
Brownfield	23	70	112	28
TOTAL	151	71	395	60

Figure 6. Planning Applications in North Lanarkshire 2001-03 by previous type of land.

So what uses are appropriate in a Green Belt? The answer is not easy to find. The Scottish research found that while government set out policies and aims for Green Belts, it did not clearly explain what was acceptable or unacceptable. In particular there are ambiguities about "institutional uses", which in the cases of universities or hospitals can be major developments generating volumes of traffic not dissimilar to those for retail developments

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[28] GLEN BRAMLEY, CLIFF HAGUE, KARRYN KIRK, ALAN PRIOR, JEREMY RAEMAEKERS, HARRY SMITH, with ANDREW ROBINSON and ROSIE BUSHNELL., *Review of Green Belt Policy in Scotland*, Scottish Executive Social Research, Edinburgh (UK) 2004, pag. 39.

[29] GLEN BRAMLEY, CLIFF HAGUE, KARRYN KIRK, ALAN PRIOR, JEREMY RAEMAEKERS, HARRY SMITH, with ANDREW ROBINSON and ROSIE BUSHNELL, *Review of Green Belt Policy in Scotland*, Scottish Executive Social Research, Edinburgh (UK) 2004, pag. 66.

for example. The research found that there was provision for local authorities to identify "exceptions" to the general presumption against major development in the Green Belt, and noted that critics saw this as a means for local authorities "to make opportunistic decisions to capture particular developments, particularly economic developments"[30].

It should be clear by now that Green Belts are not quite what they seem to be. So how does having a Green Belt affect land management?

Again there are variations between places to place but the fundamental point is that Green Belts are not really a tool for managing land. While Green Belt designation does not impede programmes of environmental improvement, for example, it also does not automatically trigger them. Similarly issues such as public access to land, a key and contentious issue on the urban fringe, are not directly addressed by a Green Belt designation. Basically there needs to be positive land management actions to make the Green Belt work as intended, certainly in respect of recreational access from the urban area and for environmental enhancement. For example one common problem in Green Belts, as elsewhere on the urban fringe is unauthorized tipping of domestic or small business waste – see Figure 7. Effective management is needed to prevent such abuses, and to clear the waste when they do occur.

Figure 7. Unauthorized tipping of waste in the Edinburgh Green Belt.

Opportunities for landscape enhancement identified in the research in Scotland included[31]:
 - Better tuning of agri-environmental schemes to the circumstances of peri-urban land;
 - Urban forestry;
 - Environmental and design enhancement of parts of Green Belts as gateways to settlements;
 - Re-use of brownfield sites within a Green Belt.

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[30] GLEN BRAMLEY, CLIFF HAGUE, KARRYN KIRK, ALAN PRIOR, JEREMY RAEMAEKERS, HARRY SMITH, with ANDREW ROBINSON and ROSIE BUSHNELL, *Review of Green Belt Policy in Scotland*, Scottish Executive Social Research, Edinburgh (UK) 2004, pag. 104.
[31] GLEN BRAMLEY, CLIFF HAGUE, KARRYN KIRK, ALAN PRIOR, JEREMY RAEMAEKERS, HARRY SMITH, with ANDREW ROBINSON and ROSIE BUSHNELL, *Review of Green Belt Policy in Scotland*, Scottish Executive Social Research, Edinburgh (UK) 2004, pag. 41.

Following the research some changes have been made by the Scottish Executive (2006). In particular the new policy recognizes the importance of management plans, agreed between local authorities, land owners and other interests, to maximize the benefits from Green Belt land.

OTHER EUROPEAN PRACTICES FOR PLANNING AND MANAGING THE FRINGE

In the research project for the Scottish Executive some study was undertaken of practice in other countries. One interesting approach was that for Helsinki.

Helsinki: Positive Management of the Urban Fringe

Helsinki's new 2002 Master Plan (strategic development plan) aims to preserve the natural boundary with its neighbours. In practice, this is followed to the letter. Since 80% of the land is in public ownership, the City of Helsinki has a monopoly over the planning process. This determines *what* the type of land use will be, *how much* floorspace will be used, *where* it will be located, *when* it will be built, and *who* will build it, subject to competitive tendering. The *good practice* in Helsinki is so good, the only arguments tend to be haggling over the *quality* of the environment. Occasionally, there are isolated 'green' areas that come under threat of urban development, but such is the outcry from the public, that the development proposals usually get withdrawn. The results are that on a walk along any of the peripheral areas around Helsinki you will see a spider's web of tracks and forest for recreational pursuits during summer, and machine-made skiing tracks in winter. So, a visit to the periphery would show a well-used park recreational system in summer and winter.

The high level of public ownership of land is both critical to the outcomes in Helsinki and also unusual now across Europe. However, experience from elsewhere in Scandinavia may be more transferable.

Figure 8: Stockholm: Green wedges bring high quality open spaces into the heart of the city.

Strategic Planning and Sustainable Urban Form: Stockholm

The comprehensive plan approved in 1952 planned to accommodate growth through new suburbs focused along metro stations, with high density close to the station. This simultaneously created a green structure with parks and open areas dividing the suburbs. The result is that people can enjoy a high quality of life in the suburbs but still reach city centre jobs and facilities. Current planning policy retains this core structure, and accommodates modern day 'big box' type structures (retail sheds, car show rooms etc.) in the transport corridors, capitalizing on sites near junctions. However the green wedges bring the natural environment into the heart of the city. There is a strong emphasis on brownfield development and mixed uses, but development is also going to the surrounding municipalities beyond the city boundary. During the 1990s an average of 32,000 people moved into the Stockholm region annually. The changes have not been without problems, with growing concerns about the segregation of the poor in some older neighborhoods, but again this is relative to a long tradition of egalitarianism. Stockholm's corridor planning has allowed Sweden's most important economic region to grow without sacrificing the environmental quality that makes it such an attraction to its highly skilled workforce.
We can also still learn from the Dutch.

Landscape-led planned expansion at Groningen

A team of consultants was appointed to produce proposals for the development of the town, the countryside and the aquatic system for a zone running some ten fifteen kilometers from the west side of the town of Groningen. The area included four small towns and a few villages and was mainly an area of dairy farming. The consultants defined the priorities for the development as to "protect and strengthen ecological, landscape and recreational qualities" of the area. Their report emphasized the cultural landscapes of this area. There was also a thorough analysis of the character of the settlements, as well as the soils, hydrology, landscape and ecology. The design they produced sought to "embrace the emptiness". The aims included a clear transition between town and countryside; a network of recreational routes extending to the centre of the town; a spatial image of the landscape that would still be defined by farming; maintenance of the open nature of the countryside and enhancement of the cultural landscapes[32].
Finally, having been critical of much of what happens in Scottish Green Belts, we should recognize one very positive feature. That is the active involvement of voluntary organizations in their management.

The Edinburgh Green Belt Trust

The Edinburgh Green Belt Trust works in partnership with local communities, landowners and other organizations to create a sustainable, well-managed and accessible landscape in and around Edinburgh, East Lothian and Midlothian. It develops local environmental projects to and encourages individual and community involvement in environmental protection and enhancement. The Trust changed its name in 2006 to the Edinburgh and Lothians Green Space Trust – reflecting a recognition that the Green belt is important, but not the whole story![33]

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[32] CLIFF HAGUE, CLIFF HAGUE, "Identity, Sustainability and Settlement Patterns", in CLIFF HAGUE, PAUL JENKINS (ed.), *Place Identity, Participation and Planning*, Routledge, London and New York 2005, pagg. 178-179.
[33] Source: http://www.ewgbt.org.uk

LESSONS FOR MANAGING URBAN FRINGE LANDSCAPES

The pressure for development on the urban fringe is evident across much of Europe. It reflects the advantages that a peripheral location close to transport networks can offer. In particular there is a sharp growth of leisure and retailing sectors both of which prioritize time distance by car and extensive parking. However, the compact city as a "city of short trips" presumes that proximity defines movement patterns and therefore short distance trips that can be made on foot or by public transport will tempt people out of using their cars to travel to more distant facilities.

However, the ideal of polycentric urban development advocated in the ESDP implies that people will have multiple options to reach jobs, shops, or recreational facilities. In making decisions, proximity will only be one factor amongst many and will not necessarily equate with accessibility. Hague has argued that this is already the case in the Randstadt[34]. Similarly, Mommaas has argued that leisure trips are now a key aspect of movement in the Netherlands, and that this is increasingly likely to mean a journey to the edge of the city, not the city centre[35].

Although these trends portray a US-style future of sprawl and car dependency, that is not an inevitable outcome. Planners and urbanists need to recognize the fact that these trends are strong and arguably cannot be entirely resisted. The issue is how to manage change, not how to prevent change. This paper has argued that Green Belts, certainly as practised in Scotland, are not a solution, unless the concept is radically reinterpreted.

The challenge is to find ways, through strategic spatial planning, design and management to make the fringe a sustainable landscape. There is much that can be learned from the example of Stockholm, which has a high quality landscape setting and extensive open space within the city but has managed to conserve that while also accommodating strong economic growth and a relatively egalitarian social model. Long term stability in strategic spatial planning has played a key role, together with the positive use of development corridors.

Landscape evaluation and design, selective and effective long-term protection of quality landscapes are important. However, above all, if we are to manage the urban fringe effectively then management needs to be built into strategies. A weakness of the architectural design tradition that is evident in Green Belts is that it emphasizes a drawn form on paper and neglects the importance of skills of negotiation, communication, monitoring and evaluation etc.[36].

SOME IDEAS FOR A EUROPEAN RESEARCH AGENDA ABOUT PLANNING AND LANDSCAPE AT THE URBAN FRINGE

Finally, how might some of these ideas and arguments be tested and developed? There is certainly scope for valuable collaborative research across Europe on the issue of how to manage the urban fringe. I would suggest three opening questions that might be the focus of such international and comparative research. These are:
- Institutional analysis – what organizations with what skills and outlooks manage change on the urban fringe?

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[34] CLIFF HAGUE, "Urban containment: European experience of planning for the compact city", in GERRIT-J KNAAP, HUIBERT HACCOU, KELLY J. CLIFTON, JOHN W. FRECE, (editors) *Incentives, Regulations and Plans: The roles of states and nation states in smart growth planning,* Cheltenham (UK) and Northampton, MA (USA) 2007.
[35] H. MOMMAAS, "Recreation is now a leading factor of the physical planning of the Netherlands", in T. BAART, T. METZ, T. RUIMSCHOTEL (editors), *Atlas of Change: Re-arranging the Netherlands*, NAi Publishers and Ideas on Paper, Rotterdam (Netherlands) 2000.
[36] For more discussion of the skills planners need, in an international context, see HAGUE CLIFF, WAKELY PAT, CRESPIN JULIE, JASKO CHRIS, *Making Planning Work: A guide to approaches and skills*, ITDG Publishing, Rugby 2006.

- Identity analysis – how does development and management on the fringe influence the identity of places?
- Instruments – what protection and enhancement tools are used to manage the fringe?

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Figures 1, 2, 3, 7, 8: Photography of Cliff Hague.
Figure 4: Author's scheme.
Figures 5, 6**:** GLEN BRAMLEY, CLIFF HAGUE, KARRYN KIRK, ALAN PRIOR, JEREMY RAEMAEKERS, HARRY SMITH, with ANDREW ROBINSON and ROSIE BUSHNELL, *Review of Green Belt Policy in Scotland*, Edinburgh, UK: Scottish Executive Social Research 2004, pag. 142, pag. 141.

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