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**Title: Leading in multi-sector contexts: the case of UK Neighbourhood
Management and Renewal**

Theme: Leading in multi-sector environments

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Introduction and policy context

Since the mid-1970s there has been pressure on governments worldwide, criticised for being bureaucratic and centralised, to abandon the traditional public-administration paradigm and address the rise in the costs of their public sector budgets and social welfare. ‘Public Administration underwent a crisis of credibility. It did not work anymore’. (Gow & Dufour: 585). A focus on reform to redress inefficiencies and cut costs in the way the states discharged their functions took hold. New Public Management (NPM) changes are well documented, and throughout the “Westminster-system” countries the economic market model was applied to the reorganisation of the public sector to attack inefficiencies through privatisation, deregulation, decentralisation and de-bureaucratisation in an effort to replace the Weberian paradigm of public administration (Gow & Dufour, 2000). It was expected that traditional hierarchical structures would be flattened and that the people would have a voice.

The history of UK based policies aimed at developing communities and managing neighbourhoods is, at first sight, one of discontinuity, and defined by the political priorities of whichever party is in government. The origins of this complex arena can be traced back to the Urban Programme of the late 1960s, as it sheds light on the current approach of developing a New Deal for Communities and a UK National Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy. For well over 30 years, practitioners have been involved in this policy field as successive governments (both Labour and Conservative) have accepted the notion that urban poverty and civic disengagement can be addressed by neighbourhood (area or locally based) renewal schemes. Whilst there have been differences of emphasis during this period (from policies aimed at improving the physical infrastructure to explicit strategies for addressing social exclusion) the underlying assumption has remained the same.

The two major initiatives developed since 1997 under a Blair Government i.e. The New Deal for Communities (NDC) and the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal (NRS) are, in some ways, a continuation of earlier initiatives. They share many of the same characteristics of contemporary UK programmes. They are based upon area-based initiatives (ABI); adding additional layers of monitoring and delivery to existing systems and claiming to engage in facilitating a partnership between the public, private and voluntary sectors.

The significance of these initiatives derives from their focus on inter-agency working and the need to develop a clear succession (or exit) strategy which is dependent upon the capacity of existing local state agencies and local communities to ensure that change is maintained. In the UK the analysis which underscores these new programmes is partly based upon an evaluation of earlier schemes and upon the experience of Labour during the Thatcher years. Both indicate that it is necessary to create the conditions for effective collaboration between welfare agencies and to develop a local or neighbourhood response (Burgess et al 2001; Filkin et al 1999; Newman 2001). In addition there is an assumption that changes in service delivery and more effective managerial systems will affect the necessary reforms, particularly if achieved in partnership.

The UK Local Government Modernisation Agenda (LGMA), and other important reports focused attention on the need for leadership to stimulate change, with new service delivery mechanisms, new action spaces and new service domains now occupied by a variety of stakeholders (Brown and Liddle, 2005). A *Modernising Government White Paper* (1999) had set out three aims of: (i)ensuring that policy-making is more joined-up and strategic; (ii)making sure that public service users, not providers, are the focus, by matching services more closely to people’s lives; and, (iii)delivering public services that are high quality and efficient.” (Cabinet Office, 1999, taken from Newman, 2001:58). Re-iterating the need for ‘joined-up’ solutions and policy making as Newman notes the White Paper “...called for a more inclusive policy process which draws on a range of stakeholders”. The White Paper, and subsequent recent guidance, gave clear evidence that the approach to be adopted at a local level was one that worked in collaboration with service users and stakeholders in both the design and delivery of services. As **Figure 1** illustrates, service delivery is now a more cooperative endeavour between a range of partners. The crucial need to align managerial, administrative, political and community objectives is core to driving transformation, and not only is it important for community leaders to be concerned with what works, but what works, for whom and in what circumstances (Gray and Jenkins, 2001). In doing so, it is possible to ascertain what new approaches, structures, processes and personnel may be needed to lead neighbourhood transformation.

Insert Figure 1 here

The document ‘Exemplars of Neighbourhood Governance’ pointed to potential success indicators, and factors hindering neighbourhood leadership. Arguably deficits in leadership skills can be addressed by more focused and continuing professional development. This has become an imperative since the establishment of multi-agency Local Strategic Partnerships in 360 areas of the UK. They were created for multi actors and agencies to determine local priorities, and enshrine them in a Sustainable Community Strategy (NRU, 2006) (**See Figure 2**).

Insert Figure 2 here

Local leadership is regarded as a crucial factor in driving transformation, as the failure of traditional decision making forums has created a vacuum for more deliberative, consultative and participative forms of leadership to occupy (Pratchett, 2002). Indeed the most recent White Paper

on Local Government (2006) shifts the emphasis towards devolved decision making to communities, as selected quotations shown at **Figure 3** illustrate:

Insert Figure 3 here

The White Paper is but one attempt to improve service delivery and engage communities in driving the change process, and in the following discussion the underpinning rationale for leading neighbourhood renewal is articulated.

Leading neighbourhood renewal; the rationale

Neighbourhood leadership as a new orthodox has been informed by ‘top-down’ rational models of decision-making. New forms of governance and management take place in turbulent, dynamic and ever changing ‘action spaces’. Global and other environmental changes have rendered obsolete some of the existing approaches to leadership, as leadership now requires an appreciation of top-down and bottom-up connectedness in neighbourhood management. The current restructuring of individual and inter-agency, inter-community relationships means that localities must be refashioned to cope with rapid contingencies and environmental forces.

In order to create sustainable communities that balance economic, social and environmental concerns, and produce thriving and socially cohesive localities with well planned and designed public services, it is imperative to focus on the particular strategic, leadership and other skills to initiate and promote change. Moreover, policy makers, practitioners, and academics in the field of neighbourhood management need opportunities to discuss and debate current knowledge bases and provide evidence on creative and entrepreneurial solutions to on-going problems. In this way process skills of communication, innovation, adaptation, and flexible approaches can be more effectively aligned to a set of enhanced professional skills. In providing forums where various stakeholders can exchange good practice on managing people, projects, initiatives and programmes, or how to deliver, implement, monitor and review the impact of new initiatives, a vital two way exchange can be maintained.

The importance of providing an evidence base for introducing changes to existing services is paramount in the minds of professionals and policy makers, and will become ever more significant as the resource base for regenerating neighbourhoods demands more effective and efficient management, to provide value for money (Pawson, 2001). The need to provide continuous learning from past experience and life long learning is essential as professional and communities ‘co-learn’, ‘co-design’, ‘co-plan’, ‘co-produce; and ‘co-deliver’ (see **Figure 3**). Not only, it is argued, will this create more cohesive communities, but it will aid competitiveness and enhance

success in the global economy. To further these aims the UK Government has set in train numerous leadership programmes, to be introduced now.

Some examples of UK leadership programmes

There have always been leaders and innovators in the public sector, but in the drive to reform and modernise public services and confirm that leadership matters, the UK Government has supported each by investments in leadership and skills development in central and local government (Milner and Joyce, 2005, Ferlie et al, 2003, Gus O'Donnell, 2006), health and education, fire and police services (ODPM, 2005), Sector Skills Council (Haynes, 2006) communities (Egan, 2004, BURA,2004) with specific programmes for political leaders (LGA, IDeA, LGUI, www.politicalskills.co.uk), leaders and managers within the public sector (for example National School of Government, Professional Skills for Government, Leadership Centre, Leadership UK, Fire Service Leadership Course, National College of School Leadership, NHS Leadership Centre, Defence Leadership Course, Police Commander's Course) and communities (Regional Centres of Excellence for Sustainable Communities, Learning Curve). The importance of leadership in the wider public sector and regeneration and management of localities, more specifically, has not been not confined to the UK, as writers have identified this significance element in Europe and beyond (John, 2004, Chondroleou, 2005, Osborne and Gaebler, 1992, Schneider et al, 1995, Starkey et al, 2004)

Existing models of leadership as a problematic

Existing UK literature on public leadership, with the exception of a few writers, tends to be based on private sector models that are either organisationally bounded, based on psychological traits or focused on 'one' individual champion who has vision, can inspire and 'get things done'. There is a growing body of research on public leadership in the USA, but the different social and political systems make it difficult to make neat comparisons.

Transactional leadership, on which there is a huge body of work, chronologically encompassed research on "The "Great Man or charismatic visionary / Trait" approach between 1930s and 1950s (Conger,1998) and the ".Behavioural " approaches of the 1960s. These theories were then augmented, but not entirely replaced from the 1970s onwards, by "Situational"; "Adaptive/reflective and Enabling (Bass, 1985); "Situational & political/ mandatory" (Milner & Joyce) 2005, and "Collaborative Advantage" (Huxham & Vangen, 2006), and are loosely categorised within *Transformational leadership*. Whereas *transactional* leadership had been described as series of exchanges between leaders and followers, *transformational* leadership went beyond exchanging inducements for desired performance by developing, intellectually stimulating, and inspiring followers to transcend their own self-interests for a higher collective purpose (Boehnke et al 2003:5). The latter seems to apply more readily to the dynamic, incremental, experiential, crafting of situations typified in public sector contexts, and in which leaders seek to secure public rather than private value. Leaders in the public service work within traditional rules, regulations and mandates, and reconcile top down and bottom up decision making. They are continuously being urged to be more innovative in their problem solving approaches and take more risks, but despite an apparent increase in freedom to act if they achieve certain targets, they still have a 'duty of care', are accountable to communities, and measured on performance outcomes and impacts. Policies for neighbourhood renewal in the UK as part of a much wider public sector

reform programme, emphasise partnership as the key to transformation and these complex spaces are now crowded with leaders from a host of multi-agencies.

Public leadership within complexity: multi-agency settings

Partnerships have come to be seen as the solution to multi-faceted ‘wicked issues’ in deprived neighbourhoods, and the existence of a partnership is now a pre-condition for most funding streams provided through UK central government or the European Union. This and the explicit commitment of the ‘partners’ to a specific initiative is seen as evidence of an understanding of what needs to be done and why. They hold out the potential of drawing together the diverse range of agencies and services present in a locality in order to tackle deep-rooted problems in a way which is beyond the capacity of one agency or one initiative. They are also seen have the potential to act as ‘change agents’. By bringing together different agencies and agreeing a common set of goals they can focus on particular needs and by so doing introduce new ways of working which become part of the legacy of the partnership. There are many barriers to effective partnership working, not least of all the leadership issues, and partnerships cannot be seen as the panacea for all policy ills.

There is a positive strength in developing leadership in multi-agency working partnerships, and by encouraging a process of change, shared among others in a system. As the lines between public, private and non-profit have become blurred and sectors are converging (Kellerman and Webster, 2001, Mumford et al, 2003) the environments inhabited by neighbourhood managers and policy makers are fuzzy, and there is limited critical mass of scholarly work on public sector leadership to develop effective guidance (Kellerman and Webster, 2002). The multi-faceted, multi-level, multi-agency nature in this field (Townsend, 2006, Pearce, 2006) means that numerous professionals, not traditionally solely part of local government have become part of the ‘neighbourhood regeneration milieu’, and from an EU perspective excellent leadership of localities can be used to aid competitiveness and cohesion (Sapir, 2004).

Defining partnerships is no simple task, as it is a contestable concept. Indeed, the UK Audit Commission claims that many so-called ‘partnerships’ are not partnerships at all (Audit Commission, 1998: 6). At a minimum a partnership must involve two or more agencies, which are independent from each other, but have some common goals. The agencies collaborate in order to achieve these goals, which can often include sharing information, skills, resources, capital and staff. The partnership should also involve trust and equality between partners (Powell and Exworthy, 2002: 25).

Mackintosh developed three models of partnership, based on differing rationales (1992: 213). Firstly the *synergy* model where distinct sectors each have their own resources and objectives. The objective is to maximise added value by amalgamation of resources (1992: 213-214). This, for Mackintosh is the *ideal* model, and one that has been adopted by New Labour. In the *transformation* model (1992: 214-217), partners aspire towards achieving common goals but possess differing objectives. In PPPs more innovative approaches and business management expertise can be transferred to the public sector, whilst the private sector might gain greater awareness of social policy. In the final model, *budget enlargement* is used to pool capital and

increase financial capacity (1992: 217-218). Hastings refines Mackintosh's work by dividing synergy model in two, firstly the *resource synergy model*, where value is derived from intra-sectoral partnerships, secondly the *policy synergy model* to develop new policy solutions (1996: 257-262)

In multi-agency partnerships there are no defined hierarchies, or formal lines of authority, so partners need to consider other means of influencing behaviour and performance. Partners hold unequal amounts and type of power, so it is often difficult to determine who can exert influence. Moreover, the temporary nature of some regeneration partnerships, the time they take to set up and manage, and the dynamism, fluidity and their emergent nature means that individuals are continually included or exit the partnership, thereby exacerbating the difficulties in assigning responsibilities/rewards/sanctions for actions

Clearly partnership working presents challenges for developing community leadership and accelerating transformation, but there are other key problems facing those who are working to lead the transformation by achieving common goals, as the following section shows.

Policy learning and benchmarking. Searching for lessons from past or current experience to improve practice is not an original idea, and Rose argues that lesson drawing and learning from the experience of others is simply what intelligent people do all of the time (Rose, 1993: 13). In attempting to generalise across space and time, by trial and error, by identifying similarities and differences the aim is to counteract the uniqueness of situations and reduce parochialism and isolationism. This can be done by copying or adapting a reform programme, combining elements from two programmes to form a hybrid, synthesising elements to produce a wholly new programme or gathering inspiration as a stimulus to developing an entirely novel programme of action (Rose, 1993).

It is important that public leaders have the opportunity to learn from others, and benchmark their practice with other programmes/initiatives. Lesson learning is about developing a set of tools or actions and requires leaders to identify and design feasible, incremental changes by gathering information from other settings. They must be capable of experimenting with new ideas, imagining future scenarios and above all, be abstractors who can conceptualise changes before they are introduced.

Lobbying, advocacy and understanding the politics of situations. Public leaders need to have a strong sense of the politics of situations, and must therefore develop their negotiation and bargaining skills. To do this requires them to attune their political and lobbying antennae, and develop high-level skills of advocacy. Increasingly, as public leaders vie in competition with others leaders for resources, they must be capable of knowing when and where to exert influence, and understand the formal and informal aspects of power relationships. Joyce (1999:172) suggested a grounded theory of strategy in a public sector context must be directed towards managing within public and political pressures (eg public opinion, elections, pressure groups, changes of government) and it can lead to innovation in services and activities because the consensus needed to satisfy the myriad of competing forces requires leadership, empowerment and co-operation between organisations. The political environment creates a level of

entrepreneurialism that is a healthy improvement of strategic management in this field. Joyce (2000) sees the importance of identifying, monitoring and managing issues and articulates the way senior managers respond to changes in the organisational environment by confronting resource issues, democratic community issues, and organisational issues (51-55). To do this, however, involves having an understanding of overlapping mandates and boundaries, co-operating, and dealing with conflict, but still being able to create public value.

Managing knowledge, structures, processes and people. Managing knowledge is perhaps is one of the most important elements of a public leader's role as the development, and usage of ICT s and other forms of knowledge transfer escalate. However, the need to manage structures, processes and people are still significant, because without the capacity to know when changes are necessary, it is difficult to lead effectively. In a globalised environment where cross-boundary and cross-national linkages are becoming more prevalent, leaders need to understand the changing context and how to seek opportunities for adding value to their organisations. The visionary leader is still a vital component in the change process, but leadership needs to be focused on working in collaboration with others to respond to the changing order. Technical skills are important, but alone are insufficient to bring about change, so a programme for leaders must include experiential learning in managing structures, processes and people. Essentially, leaders must be capable of knowing when to reconfigure and re-engineer the whole, or part of an organisation, and how to measure and evaluate performance.

Strategising and target setting. It is taken as a given that leaders will know how to strategise and set objectives. However, this is far from true, and as there are so many competing definitions of the concept and operation of strategy, any effective leadership programme must have a series of workshops on strategic processes, content and contexts. In this way public managers will appreciate that there is no 'one right way' to carry out strategy, and understand that strategies must be feasible, appropriate, and acceptable to all stakeholders. Existing programmes with strategy as a vital component still rely on linear and rational approaches, when in fact the strategic environment is not, and never has been static or stable. New approaches to strategising must be based on complexity, ambiguity and messiness, as there are no right answers, simply satisfactory ways of fitting organisational forms into a dynamic context.

Project and performance management, evaluation and research tools. ODPM in its latest capacity building scheme has identified that leadership, performance management and evaluation are key skills deficiencies, and as public managers are now expected to provide an evidence base to support their change management. So many initiatives have been introduced across all social policy areas that there is a crucial need to develop research skills, as well as the capacity to monitor, evaluate and measure performance. Public leaders need to be equipped with different types of performance management tools and techniques. The complex auditing and monitoring systems in local, regional, national and European governance systems means that increasingly there is a requirement to produce outcomes and impact assessment. These fundamental skills should be an embedded part of leadership programmes.

Risk management and dealing with failure. The new 'action spaces' that leaders are now expected to work within are quite risky environments, in which no tried and tested approaches may

exist. These new spaces contain both threats and opportunities, but many actions will still be governed by accountability mechanisms and mandatory of legislative frameworks that can act as constraints. Being au fait with risk management strategies and preparing to cope with failure should be essential parts of a training programme for public managers. They should be introduced to either case materials or real world situations in which risk is central, or be asked to make choices on various options. Learning by doing should equip public managers more readily with the tools to operate in risky situations, and might improve the levels of risk averse-ness.

Sense making. The key to leading and operating in a complex world is to have a range of appropriate and flexible tools to make sense and detect the emerging ‘swirls’ in the whole system. Leaders need to understand *trends* (political, social, market, technological), *contexts* (political, socio-cultural, economic, mandates), and the *content* of what is needed to achieve objectives, as well as the *processes* necessary to effect change. Techniques such as story telling or narrative, scenario planning and other foresight techniques, ethnography as well as traditional qualitative and quantitative techniques are important.

The notion of sense making can be achieved through models based on viewing a subject from different perspectives, rather than by categorisation. Categorisation assumes that the whole is the aggregate of the parts, each of which can be understood in its own right. Perspective modelling argues that by looking at a thing from many perspectives new patterns of meaning will emerge. In all human systems the whole is never the sum of its parts, it may be more, is frequently less but it is never the same thing. (Snowden 2003)

Stakeholder engagement. Identifying and understanding how and why stakeholders are important to strategic change requires public managers who are capable of appreciating the need to involve them. There are considerable barriers to overcome in successfully identifying, engaging and managing stakeholder groups. Public sector leaders must be capable of harmonising and marrying a vast array of stakeholder demands, preferences and choices as they conduct the various elements contributing to strategic intent, but more importantly strategic success. To achieve a strategic positioning, and in appreciating the many conflicting agendas requires a high level of skill, experience and knowledge of the key issues. It is important to understand some of the underpinning motives of those individuals and groups engaged in making strategy.

A primary concern must be to connect and network with key groups and individuals that can help to bring plans to fruition, and to appreciate who should be included, or excluded from decision-making, as well the basis for your choice. Once stakeholders are invited on to forums there is an additional question in determining which of those identified stakeholders may present barriers to the achievement of objectives, and if so what levels of power and influence can they wield to frustrate future plans.

As stakeholders from wider agency backgrounds and experiences/histories begin to pool resources and work more collaboratively it becomes evident that managing and communicating between them will become increasingly difficult. In contrast with established mechanisms used in formal top-down hierarchies, new relationships based on informal, and continued relational inter-actions

demand higher-level skills to understand and appreciate how each partner is able to aid or frustrate strategic performance and success.

Stakeholder mapping techniques, and the determination of levels of power and influence should form part of a public management training programme, and equip leaders with essential tools to prioritise each stakeholder individual or group. There is a need to:

- Identify stakeholders
- Prioritise according to relative importance/influence
- Understand their expectations
- Identify shared expectations
- Evaluation of consequential action of prioritising one stakeholder 's needs/demands over another.

Communication. Leaders need to be able to communicate and transmit ideas in forms, which connect with the agencies, partnerships and communities they work alongside. More deliberative, consultative and collaborative forms of decision making have increased scrutiny, accountability and legitimacy issues, and leaders can no longer assume that they have the backing of constituents to intervene.

Conclusion

This paper has argued that deprived areas of the UK need strong leadership if transformation is to be achieved, if services are to be significantly improved, and if communities are to be seriously engaged in determining their own priorities. Many recent UK policies and programmes have attempted to address the gaps in leadership capacity, but most have been experimental approaches based on inappropriate, and sometimes flawed private sector models of the heroic leader who 'leads from the front'. Rapid global changes have rendered obsolete some of the existing approaches to leadership, as leaders now need to appreciate top-down and bottom-up connectedness, as well as the restructuring of individual and inter-agency, inter-community relationships to create sustainable communities and balance economic, social and environmental concerns.

The process skills of communication, innovation, adaptation, and flexible approaches must be aligned more closely with enhanced strategic, leadership and other skills to initiate and promote change. Above all, policy makers, practitioners, and academics in the field of leading neighbourhoods need opportunities to discuss and debate current knowledge bases and provide evidence on creative and entrepreneurial solutions to on-going problems.

Leadership in public sector contexts involves very dynamic and complex process issues, beyond traditional organisational boundaries, and existing leadership models are largely 'organisationally bounded', although more recent work on communities of practice (Wenger et al, 2002) has added to the debate. The need to harmonise and synthesise many contradicting forces and appreciate the politics of situations and stakeholder demands, requires leaders who can add public value and demonstrate the impacts their interventions have achieved. Many experimental, untried and

untested programmes have been introduced without clear reflection on what has worked in particular situations, who has benefited, what barriers still exist, and how can learning be harnessed to address sustainable change. In adding public value, leaders have a duty to use finite resources more effectively, respond to infinite demands and these need to be conducted within a host of mandatory obligations. These are the key challenges facing leaders attempting to work collaboratively with partners and communities to revive deprived neighbourhoods.

There are obviously insights to be gained from existing research on leadership in the private sector, but we need further detailed research into the complexities and dynamic world of neighbourhood renewal, if we are to offer any real solutions to the most fragile and needy communities.

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APPENDIX

Figure 1: Service provision as co-learning

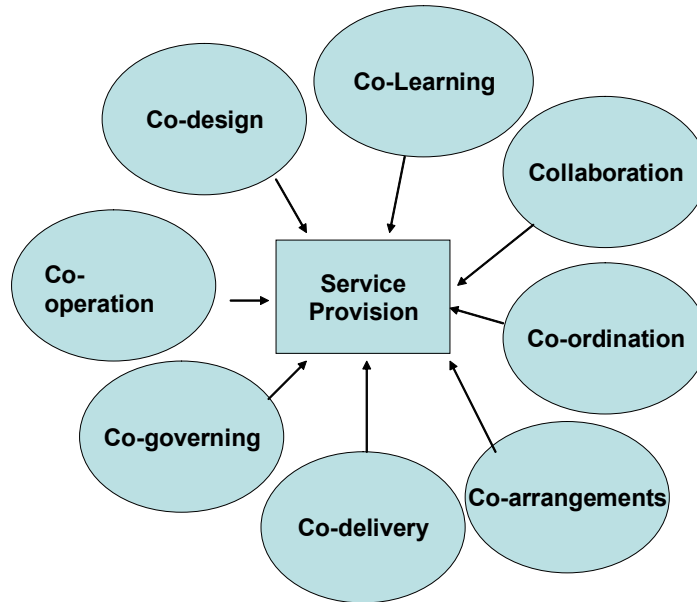


Figure 2: Agencies involved in developing Sustainable Community Strategies



Figure 3 : Direct quotations from the UK Local Government White Paper, October 2006

