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Evolving public sector roles in the leadership of place-based partnerships: from controlling to influencing policy?

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Abstract

This study argues that the role of the public sector in the leadership of some place-based partnerships is changing. It begins by developing a new framework for place-based leadership around a vehicle metaphor. The emerging shift in leadership roles is explored through a comparison of three pairs of UK-based case studies. It concludes that in some partnerships, local community representatives increasingly hold the more powerful leadership roles (driver, navigator) with public sector organizations relegated to the back-seat role of technical expert (mechanic), with a more subtle, yet still significant, influence on policy.

Keywords: policy, austerity, localism, leadership, partnership

JEL classifications: L98, R11, R50, R58

INTRODUCTION

...the 'plausible confluence' of ideas concerning place-shaping in the knowledge-based economy and the significance of network and boundary mediation has influenced [leaders] to move ... towards an emphasis on more fluid relational processes that favour association, interaction and collaboration between individuals, institutions, firms and community level groups.

GIBNEY, COPELAND and MURIE, 2009, p. 7-8

This quote summarises the complexity and fluidity of the leadership of place-based partnerships in a pre-austerity era. But the world has changed. The banking crisis of 2007-8 and resulting global recession sent ripples throughout the global economy, which resulted in an era of austerity and significant cuts to public sector budgets (AYRES & MARSH, 2013; LOWNDES and MCCAUGHIE, 2013). In addition in the UK, the formation of the Coalition government in 2010 brought about ideologically driven changes associated with the localism agenda (HASTINGS and MATTHEWS, 2014; NEWMAN, 2013).

This paper will explore the impact of austerity and localism on the leadership of place-based partnerships. The claim made in this paper is that the task is just as fluid and complex as described in the above quote from GIBNEY *et al.* (2009) – perhaps even more so. However, since the global recession, at least in some areas of public policy, there appears to have been a distinct shift in the balance of roles and capabilities, and the location of ultimate leadership. (Public leadership is taken to be a complex mix of politicians and public servants working together to deliver civic, political, bureaucratic and administrative leadership (I'HART, 2014).)

Leadership of place-based partnerships is distinct from leadership of organisations (BEER and CLOWER, 2014; JUNG *et al.*, 2013) and significantly in recent years leadership has increasingly been seen as critical to growth of places (OECD, 2012; BEER and CLOWER, 2014). Therefore research into the leadership of place-based partnerships has expanded rapidly over the last decade, exploring a number of dimensions of this complex field. The first area of research has focused on the complex

webs of organizations and individuals from the public, private, third sector and/or citizens, that have worked together in partnership (FENWICK *et al.*, 2012; LIDDLE, 2010). The second focus of research has been the nature of the wicked problems they attempt to address, which involve a complex mix of often intractable social, economic and environmental problems and more rarely, opportunities (FERLIE *et al.*, 2011; GRINT and HOLT, 2011). The third and final dimension is that previous research has considered the diversity of places (AYRES, 2014), for example both different degrees of centrality, from urban core (GIBNEY *et al.*, 2009) to rural periphery (KROEHN *et al.*, 2010), and different levels of analysis, from local (HORLINGS, 2012) to regional (NORMANN, 2013).

In the UK and elsewhere, partnership working was central to pre-austerity place-based policy (AYRES and MARSH, 2013; PERKINS *et al.*, 2010). This was not simply based on public-public partnership working, but involved private businesses, voluntary and community organizations, and citizen representatives from local communities (ELSTUB and POOLE, 2014; JUNG *et al.*, 2013). This created the need for public servants to become leaders rather than managers (LIDDLE, 2010), and has profoundly influenced the leadership of place-based partnerships (GIBNEY *et al.*, 2009).

The argument of this paper is that, in some cases, the leadership of place-based partnerships has changed. By drawing on deviant recent cases and comparing them with paradigmatic cases from the preceding pre-austerity era, the aim of this 'Policy Debate' paper is to highlight this emerging shift. The claim is not that public sector organizations are no longer leaders. However, whereas in the past 'the public sector adopts the role of initiator and convenor' (ZAPATA and HALL, 2012, p. 63), it appears that key collaborative leadership roles in some partnerships have shifted away from the public sector. Put simply, the organizations or individuals who act as chairperson and hold or access funding have particularly powerful leadership roles, and the organizations or individuals fulfilling these roles in some partnerships are changing positions. As the balance of power shifts, the public sector has less direct control and must exercise more subtle, yet still significant, influence on policy development. The nature of who is leading is also shifting, from public organizations (represented by ephemeral and faceless politicians and technocrats) to community individuals chosen for their

individual capabilities (not their organizational positions). Indeed these individuals may have a background in the private, voluntary, community or even the public sector (they may be retired or acting in a personal capacity), however what is key is that they emerge or are chosen as an individual because of their particular capabilities. There are potential human resource implications for recruitment and training.

The paper begins by introducing the leadership of place-based partnerships. It then outlines the methodology and provides a framework of leadership roles based on a vehicle metaphor. The main body of the paper describes three pairs of cases representing before and after comparisons from heritage, economic development and planning. It ends with a discussion of the changing nature of leadership and concludes with implications for theory and practice. The insights offered by this paper are expected to be of interest in other countries where austerity policies have resulted in significant cuts to public services and where alternative forms of place-based leadership are being imposed or are emerging.

LEADERSHIP ROLES: DRIVING, NAVIGATING, AND BACK-SEAT DRIVING

This study focuses on the changing nature of who are doing which leadership roles in place-based partnerships. More specifically, it looks at the impact of austerity and localism on which public sector organisations and community individuals are taking on different leadership roles. To do this a framework is required that will enable a before and after comparison.

HIMMELMAN (1996) introduced a framework of ten collaborative roles in community-based partnerships (table 1). A similar framework, around the leadership capabilities required for successful regional development in a knowledge-based economy, has been developed by SOTARAUTA (2005). This contains seven capabilities, which can be mapped across to Himmelman's leadership roles

(table 1). There appears to be a good match with a small number of exceptions, which result from their different contexts. Useful though both of these frameworks undoubtedly are, it was felt that neither resonated fully with contemporary roles in the leadership of place. However a more recent review developed a novel language. 'When Tomorrow Comes – The Future of Local Public Services' (SULLIVAN, 2011) proposed four new roles for twenty-first century public servants: navigator, story-teller, resource-weaver, and system architect (as well as three evolving roles of reticulist, commissioner and broker, and four longstanding roles of adjudicator, expert, regulator and protector). These roles can be mapped against Himmelman's roles and Sotarauta's capabilities (table 1) with four exceptions that do not apply to the leadership of place: commissioner, broker; regulator and protector. The initial role of navigator acted as a stimulus for the current work in two ways. First it suggested the metaphor of a vehicle. This was appropriate as vehicles, like places, have periods where they are static, but more importantly they also have periods where they are dynamic, on the move, changing rapidly. On a different scale, different sizes of vehicles with various mixes of occupants was an interesting visualization of partnerships, temporarily working together with a shared direction. Secondly, thinking about Sullivan's navigator role prompted the question – is the public sector always navigating in a post-austerity era?

The vehicle metaphor has therefore been further developed from this kernel to include a range of roles relating to the leadership of place, which have been mapped across to those proposed by Himmelman, Sotarauta and Sullivan (table 1). The most influential leadership roles are the first two: driver and navigator. The drivers utilise their own social capital and their personal and/or organizational reputation to invite key individuals to form an embryonic partnership, to inspire people, and to act as a catalyst to the formation of a shared sense of purpose. The second critical role is that of navigator, who pay attention and respond to multiple internal and external stimuli, partners and stakeholders, enabling cooperation and taking advantage of opportunities, whilst avoiding tensions and threats; they make sense of the complex world. Supporting these are a series of passengers, including two financial roles: the money holder has core funding that can be aligned to support partnership delivery; the debit card holder can access extra project funding. Also, sat in one

of the back-seats, is the mechanic; the technical expert providing the enabling knowledge, skills and assets that ensure that planning and delivery is robust. Finally, there are other roles which ensure that the partnership is strong and does not become dysfunctional, however they are ancillary to the main strategic leadership functions.

The next section outlines three pairs of case studies illustrating leadership roles in the post-2010 Coalition era and the preceding New Labour era. The following section then discusses these changes in the leadership of place in relation to the framework of leadership roles outlined here.

[Table 1 around here]

METHODOLOGY

This is a comparative study following the methodological approach of POLLITT and BOUCKAERT, (2009, specifically ch. 1). It is a multiple case study design (EISENHARDT and GRAEBNER, 2007) of three pairs of case studies: in each pair, the first case study is taken from the era of the New Labour government (1997-2010) and the second is from the era of the Coalition government (2010-2015). The first pair of case studies is from the heritage sector, the second is from an economic development context and the final pair from planning. These diverse fields were chosen to illustrate the variety of contexts, particularly the mix of sectors and past history of joint working, in which a shift in leadership is occurring. Case selection differed for the New Labour and Coalition eras (FLYVBJERG, 2006): for the former, paradigmatic cases were selected to establish the generalised situation during this period; for the latter, deviant cases were selected to emphasise an emerging shift in leadership roles that is occurring in some partnerships. The level of analysis of each pair of case studies is similar in scale: the heritage and planning cases are all local; the economic development cases are regional.

The methods were consistent for each pair of case studies, but differed between each pair. The pair of heritage case studies were both ethnographic: [30 words removed for anonymity]. Both cases are

supported by formal documents (e.g. committee minutes) and the second case is also supported by primary data collected through interviews. The pair of economic development case studies are based on secondary documentary sources, mainly peer-reviewed journal articles. The final pair of planning-based case studies are based on interviews and grey literature (planning documents and consultancy reports available online).

CASES

This study uses three pairs of case studies in heritage, economic development and planning from England to facilitate a discussion on leadership roles in place-based partnerships. The first of each pair of cases is from the 1997-2010 period of the New Labour government and each of these is contrasted with a second case from the post-2010 period of the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition government. Each case begins with an overview, then the issues relevant to leadership of place are discussed.

Heritage

The paradigmatic form of the leadership of place in the heritage sector during the New Labour era is illustrated by two linked examples. Keys to the Past and Past Perfect were two related projects that aimed to make accessible a range of information sources held by the archaeology teams at Durham County Council and Northumberland County Council between 2001 and 2003. Keys to the Past is a publically accessible online version of the two Historic Environment Records covering County Durham and Northumberland, which contain information on all heritage sites from metal detector finds to castles, and medieval crops marks to war memorials. Previously this information had only been available by appointment to people who knew of its existence, therefore the project employed a project officer to prepare the content (e.g. to re-write all the text in less technical language) and the project also included the cost of the website development. At the same time, Past Perfect made the

rich and varied archaeological archives of seven of the most interesting and inaccessible sites available online, from a prehistoric burial site to a 20th century coal mine. For example the medieval castle at Wark was brought to life through a series of virtual reality models, carefully reconstructed from archaeological and documentary evidence by heritage professionals.

Both projects were developed and delivered in partnership by the archaeology teams at Durham County Council and Northumberland County Council. Keys to the Past was funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and Past Perfect by the New Opportunities Fund, both distributors of National Lottery funding. Both projects were supported by a partnership of other public sector heritage organizations, and the only external involvement was a group of community volunteers recruited to visit heritage sites and take photographs to illustrate the Keys to the Past webpages.

The second case is a deviant example from the Coalition era. The Flodden 1513 Ecomuseum is a community-led, heritage-based, social enterprise. The short-term aim of its founders was to act as a catalyst for the community to commemorate the 500th anniversary of the Battle of Flodden in September 2013 (BOWDEN and CIESIELSKA, 2016). The longer term legacy was the setting up of an ecomuseum., which have been characterised as community-led ‘museums of place’ that encompass buildings, natural landscape, objects and intangible heritage (oral history, myths, music, poetry and literature) that aim to support the sustainable development of communities, economies and heritage (DAVIES, 2011).

Wark Castle was also involved in the Flodden 1513 Ecomuseum, as it was captured by the Scottish army prior to the Battle of Flodden. However the way in which the site, its owners and the local community were engaged in the ecomuseum development work differed significantly from the Keys to the Past and Past Perfect projects. The first way in which the mode of engagement differs is that since 2013, the archaeology is being carried out by volunteers from a local community archaeology group. This group has been trained by the County Archaeologist from Northumberland County Council and now carries out excavations, field walking, metal detecting, finds processing and other technical work with ongoing technical support. The second difference, adopting a ‘Mountain to

Mohammed' approach, is that people living in the adjacent village have been supported to carry out excavations in their own back gardens. Finally in tandem with this activity, archival sources are being transcribed by volunteers who have been given rigorous training by the archivist at Berwick Record Office (previously part of Northumberland County Council, but now part of an arms-length heritage trust).

The ecomuseum was born into the turmoil of successive changes in the public sector. Initially the loss of local capacity, with the announcement in 2007 that six District Councils would be abolished in 2009 and that Northumberland County Council would take on their roles, becoming a Unitary Authority. Then after 2010, the instability caused by budget cuts and re-organisation of the tourism support infrastructure, the disappearance of regional tier of government and economic development support, and repeated budget cuts and re-organisations in Northumberland County Council. Therefore the community organisers of the ecomuseum took on an enabling and support role, which they have maintained assiduously. An initial grant application was successful in gaining £35,000 to set up an initial ecomuseum, and a later grant for £877,000 was successful in 2012 to deliver the 500th commemoration activities and secure a legacy for the local community. The Flodden 1513 Ecomuseum Ltd, a not-for-profit limited company, was set up to bid for grant funding. Importantly however, the financial administration of the grant funding was dealt with by two third-sector organisations, a heritage trust and a local community development trust. The role of the English and Scottish local authorities (both very supportive of the ecomuseum), was advisory, mainly around technical knowledge areas of archaeology, museums, archives, education, event management and tourism development (BOWDEN and CIESIELSKA, 2014).

Economic Development – New Labour era: Regional Development Agencies

The initial case represents a pre-austerity paradigmatic situation. Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) were created by the New Labour government in 1999, for the nine English regions. They were charged with furthering economic development, skills and employment, promoting business and investment, and improving regional competitiveness (LIDDLE 2015), in effect acting as the

'guardians of their respective regional economies' (PUGALIS and TOWNSEND, 2012). They were an attempt to devolve sub-national power, with significant statutory, financial and strategic responsibility, as a precursor to establishing regional government across England.

RDAs were quasi-public sector organizations chaired by central government appointed business leaders and their boards were private sector dominated (PUGALIS and TOWNSEND, 2012). They had significant annual budgets set by central government: before the global financial crisis RDAs had an annual budget of £2.3 billion in 2007/08, though this reduced over coming years to £1.4 billion in 2010/11 (PUGALIS and TOWNSEND, 2013). They also managed the European Regional Development Fund for each region on behalf of the Department for Communities and Local Government (PUGALIS and TOWNSEND, 2012). Although the RDA Board brought together public, private and civic society sector partners, and they were expected to be 'business driven', in reality they relied heavily on resource deployment from contributing public agencies, and the majority of their activities were implemented by state officials employed in the administration of RDAs, or through their well-established partnerships with state and non-state agencies.

In contrast to this, the second economic development case is a deviant example of post-2010 leadership of place. The new Coalition government introduced Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) very quickly. They had the stated aim of 'reforming our system of sub-national economic development by enabling councils and business to replace the existing Regional Development Agencies' (CABLE and PICKLES, 2010), which 'were quickly identified by the Coalition government for closure, in order to make some short-term budget savings' (PUGALIS and TOWNSEND, 2013, p. 701). A growing literature critically reviews LEPs (e.g. WARD and HARDY, 2013).

Leadership was commonly shared between the local business community and local authorities within a LEP 'with a prominent business leader in the chair' (DBIS, 2010, p. 14). Perhaps the greatest leadership challenge was the lack of prescription and funding from central government: LEPs were not mandatory, they had no legislative basis, and no core revenue funding and relatively little project funding (LIDDLE, 2012; PUGALIS and BENTLEY, 2013). Finance was therefore a major issue for

LEPs, with Local Authorities acting as ‘responsible bodies’ for accessing limited central government funding, but with the onus on each LEP to generate significant funding from private sector sources locally (LIDDLE, 2015). LEPs were a deliberate attempt by central government to enable local business leaders to lead on economic development in sub-national governance, but in reality there is still much reliance on the local state for resources, expertise and strategic intelligence to implement their activities (BENTLEY and PUGALIS, 2016). The leadership of LEPs is much more complex than leadership of RDAs, because of the increased responsibility forced upon the private sector and marginalization of the public sector. In reality most have a business leader at the helm, but in some of the 39 LEP areas the local state is still a dominant force due to the capacity to draw on (albeit a rather diminished) resource base. Central government rhetoric on devolving power to LEPs has not been matched by corresponding resource and funding streams, so power remains largely centralised. It is difficult to assess whether or not LEPs, as non-public sector driven entities, have narrowed or widened the partnership base because RDA Boards did involve a large constellation of public, private and civic society partners. Delivery of programmes also involved wide partnership involvement, despite the strong reliance on public agencies and state officials for resources, expertise and intelligence to delivery on objectives. LEPs on the other hand have minimal contribution from civic sector partners, and despite a smaller Board structure led by the business leadership, in reality they too rely on public and state agencies to deliver on objectives. RDAs had more financial resources devoted to their activities, and they were able to draw on additional public and civic support, whereas LEPs, in many cases, have been unable to secure the expected private sector support to achieve their objectives.

Planning

The first planning case is paradigmatic of the approach to planning in the pre-austerity New Labour era. Between August 2005 and March 2010, Eden District Council produced a Core Strategy, the first step in developing a new Development Plan that would also include more detailed thematic and site specific policies and would guide development until 2025 (EDC, 2013a). As with all such documents,

it followed national guidance and it was thorough and comprehensive in its coverage. It contained sections on sustainable communities, rural settlements, flood risk, transport, housing, efficient use of land, affordable housing, gypsies and travellers, economic development, tourism, the natural and built environment, energy conservation and renewable energy, to name but a few (EDC, 2010).

The development of the Core Strategy followed a nationally set, rigorous, transparent process (thus the four and a half year production period), led by Eden District Council and involving formal consultation with key stakeholders.

Finally, this second planning case is a deviant example of a new, community-led approach to planning. In July 2010, soon after coming to power, David Cameron launched four Big Society Vanguards (CAMERON, 2010). One of these Vanguards was the Eden Valley in Cumbria, where a commitment was given to remove bureaucratic barriers (DCLG, 2010). Building on earlier draft policy (CONSERVATIVE PARTY, 2008), one strand involved the production of an Upper Eden Neighbourhood Development Plan; an innovative planning solution, commended by the Royal Town Planning Institute in 2009, that had not been incorporated in the Regional Spatial Strategy and the Local Development Plan Framework (ROBERTS, 2011). The power to produce Neighbourhood Plans was part of the Localism Act 2011, which aimed to enable communities to ‘influence the future of the places where they live’ by allowing them to ‘say where they think new houses, businesses and shops should go – and what they should look like’ (DCLG, 2011, p. 12). Neighbourhood Plans were supplementary to local authority planning policy, containing policies that are local priorities. The Upper Eden Neighbourhood Development Plan (UECPG, 2013) was initiated in 2011. Following the support of 17 Parishes working together, broad consultation with citizens and organisations, an independent examination by a planning inspector, and amendments to the Plan, it was successfully supported by a referendum on 7 March 2013 where 90.22% of votes cast were in favour of adoption (EDC, 2013c).

Between 2005 and 2008, the Upper Eden Community Plan Group led the development and delivery of the Upper Eden Community Plan (UECPG, 2008). Having established their competency to deliver

within the local community and with a range of formal institutions, and having raised planning issues that were accepted nationally as progressive, they were the natural community-led organisation to act as a vanguard for Big Society changes. The role of a locally-based, experienced planning consultant and community leader was significant (ROBERTS, 2011). Eden District Council was involved at a number of formal stages, overseeing formal stages of the planning process (EDC, 2013b) and also conducting the referendum (EDC, 2013c).

EVOLUTION OF LEADERSHIP ROLES

In the case studies drawn from the Coalition era, which have been deliberately chosen to highlight deviant examples, the balance of power in terms of ‘who is leading’ has changed from the New Labour era. Using the Vehicle Leadership Roles developed above (table 1), it is possible to explore how the leadership of place-based partnerships has shifted (table 2).

The first pair of roles – driver and navigator – are critical to the balance of power. Drivers draw upon social capital and reputation to initiate, inspire, and act as a catalyst to a shared sense of purpose. Navigators pay attention and respond to stakeholders (in the vehicle) and the environment (outside the vehicle); they make sense of the complex world. Both of these roles were dominated by the public sector in the three cases from the New Labour period, however in the latter Coalition era, in the three case explored in this study, business people and/or community representatives carried out these roles (table 2). In the heritage cases, in the earlier Keys to the Past/Past Perfect case senior public sector staff that acted as drivers; conceiving the project, putting the delivery team together and carrying out the project management. Then operational public sector staff delivered the outputs and acted as navigators, adapting to opportunities and threats on a day-to-day basis. In contrast in the later Flodden 1513 Ecomuseum case, it was a local landowner that took on the driver role, utilising their considerable social capital to draw together a very effective set of partners, including technical advisors drawn from public sector organizations. Arms-length contractors delivered the two grant-

funded projects, acting as navigators and adapting to day-to-day changes. The planning pair of cases were similar. In the earlier New Labour era case, Eden District Council acted as drivers and navigators in the production of the Development Plan. In contrast during the development of the Coalition supported Neighbourhood Development Plan it was the community that drove and navigated their way through the process, albeit that they had a competent planning consultant in their midst, with formal support (e.g. administering the referendum) provided by Eden District Council. The economic development cases were more subtle. In both cases it was a business person that usually acted as driver, though typically in the New Labour era the chair was appointed by central government and in the Coalition era the chair is appointed locally. It is less clear which type of organization or individual normally took on the navigator role, as this varied between examples. However the typical expectation was that in RDAs and LEPs it was a business person that took the lead and the public sector that acted in a support role. In summary, in each pair of cases there seems to have been a shift away from the public sector in occupying the key roles of driver and navigator.

The two financial roles – money holder and debit card holder – also hold significant influence. In the two heritage cases, the funding was sourced from lottery distributors who therefore hold the money. In this sense they were the ultimate funders whose application criteria guide what could or could not be accomplished. It should be noted however that small but significant amounts of match funding were also provided by local businesses and local government. In contrast there was a distinct shift in the activity of debit card holder – the person or organisation able to access and administer the funding. In the earlier Keys to the Past/Past Perfect case, local government officers were in control of accessing and administering the funding, whereas in the latter case it was third sector partners that supported the steering group of the Flodden 1513 Ecomuseum Ltd in applying for and administering the funding. The shift in the economic development cases was clear for both the money and debit card holders. In the earlier case both financial roles were controlled by public sector organizations and significantly there was a large amount of financial support available: both in terms of core funds and additional funds that could be bid for. The money holder was central government with significant new sources of funding made available, which could be accessed by the debit card holding RDAs.

However in the latter case of LEPs both financial roles were more mixed and significantly had less financial support available. The money holding activity was only partly controlled by central government with only small amounts of funding made available, which it was hoped would be used to leverage in large amounts of local, private sector investment. The debit card holding activity formally sits with Local Authorities as 'responsible bodies', but it is unclear how they will administer funds in partnership with LEPs. Finally the two planning cases differ significantly from a financial perspective. The Local Plan was developed using core local government budgets so they were their own money holders, with no need to access external additional project resources so there simply was no debit card holder. On the other hand the Neighbourhood Development Plan required the Upper Eden Community Plan Group to act as debit card holders to access funding from the central government money holder.

Finally and perhaps most significantly, it appears that the public sector have maintained their dominance over the technical expert mechanic role, supplying knowledge, experience and assets to enable professional success. Whilst they are no longer driving, navigating nor in control of finances in the Coalition cases, and they now have to sit in the back-seat, the public sector still maintain an influential position based on technical expertise. In the heritage case studies, the Keys to the Past/Past Perfect online access to information was entirely enabled by public sector technical expertise and though public sector guidance was still important in the later ecomuseum case there was also expertise drawn from third sector organisations. In the economic development cases, public sector expertise was critical during the New Labour and Coalition eras, with RDA and local authority expertise providing the technical support to all partners. In both of the planning cases the expert knowledge was provided by the public sector, the local authority utilising its own internal planning staff in the production of the Local Plan, whilst central government provided advice on the production of the Neighbourhood Development Plan.

Finally, the various other back-seat roles that enable a harmonious and successful collaborative process (and help to avoid the pitfalls of a dysfunctional partnership), largely continue to be held by a mixture of partners. In the economic development cases, these roles continue to be carried out by

a mixture of public and private sector partners. In the heritage and planning cases there has been a shift away from the public sector, with an increasing input from a wider set of community stakeholders.

So what are the implications of this shift in power in the cases presented? Where austerity cuts have left a vacuum and/or where policy changes have encouraged local responses, it can be argued that the public sector no longer acts as the driver steering the partnerships, nor the navigator making sense of the complex world for all partners. In addition, they no longer fulfil the roles of the money holder with core budgets that can be directed towards particular agendas, nor the debit card holder with responsibility to draw down and administer extra project finance. Now the public sector is relegated to the back-seat, where its claim to a presence in the car is based on its expert knowledge, past experience and assets.

[Table 2 around here]

CONCLUSIONS

The observations and conclusions of this paper are not meant to mark a 'line in the sand'. They are meant simply to throw some light on the implications of recent changes to the leadership of place-based partnerships. Some of these changes have been revolutionary, like the savage austerity cuts to public funding (LOWNDES and MCCAUGHIE, 2013). Whilst others have been evolutionary, like the continuation of a localism trend of devolved power and decision making (AYRES and MARSH, 2013). Nevertheless, the evolving nature of leading place-based partnerships outlined in this study has theoretical implications. Building on the roles of collaborative leadership (HIMMELMAN, 1996), the capabilities of the leadership of regional development (SOTARAUTA, 2005) and the public servant roles in the 21st century (SULLIVAN, 2011), a new framework of the leadership of place is proposed. This is based on a vehicle metaphor: driver (strategic direction), navigator (sensing and adapting to day-to-day changes), money holder (control of core funding), debit card holder (access

to and administration of project funding), mechanic (technical expert) and other back-seat roles (ensuring a harmonious and successful collaboration).

More significantly however, whilst the current models of the leadership of place-based partnerships do not presume that public sector organizations will hold all the most influential positions, they do assume that they hold significant power and authority (e.g. SOTARAUTA, 2005; GIBNEY *et al.*, 2009; FENWICK *et al.*, 2012; LIDDLE, 2010). This may have been true in the past, but a shift is occurring, at least in some deviant cases. Building on the vehicle metaphor, the changing nature of the leadership of place in the pre-New Labour, New Labour and Coalition era can be illustrated by different vehicles with key stakeholders sitting in different seats. First, prior to the 1990s the traditional position was that public sector organizations fulfilled all the roles in a family saloon car: elected politicians and senior officers were driving (setting policy), middle and junior rank officers were navigating (enacting policy, making subtle changes as necessary), and public sector partners held the money (core annual budgets) to buy the petrol. Second, during the succeeding period of the New Labour government, public sector organizations held many of the most influential positions amongst an expanding and diversifying mix of partners. The vehicle could now be characterised as a people carrier. Public sector organizations frequently, though not always, occupied the front seats and continued to set strategy and deliver operations. They continued to hold some money (though core annual funding was reduced each year due to efficiency savings), but increasingly use a debit card to access money when they need it (bid for funding from central government for discrete projects). Critically partnership working was enforced or simply became *de rigueur*, therefore there were multiple rows behind the front seats filled with a mixture of passengers (representing the private and third sectors, as well as individual citizens), all influencing the direction of travel. Third and finally, in the Coalition government era there remained many partners involved, so the vehicle is still a people carrier, though sometimes perhaps a minibus or coach would be a more appropriate analogy to illustrate the number of stakeholders involved. However the post-austerity case studies presented here demonstrate that non-public sector organizations are frequently driving (setting strategy), navigating (making sense of and responding to changes amongst internal partners and the external

operating environment), and accessing and managing resources (applying for project funding and administering project delivery). Public sector organizations are relegated to the back-seat as a mechanic (where they continue to fulfil the critical role of knowledge experts).

There is no doubt at all that public sector organizations continue to exert some power, but rather than direct control they now have a more subtle influence based on their knowledge and experience. In some situations this transition has already taken place (like the ecomuseum and Neighbourhood Development Plan cases), whereas in others the transition is more subtle (e.g. Local Enterprise Partnerships). The outstanding question is: to what extent is this shift part of a wider trend, which will result in non-public sector individuals coming to dominate the roles of driver and navigator in the leadership of place?

There are also implications for practice. New skills need to be honed in the new leadership of place, as well as maintaining the old skill sets (SULLIVAN, 2011). Firstly, public sector leaders had become adept during the New Labour era at leading in ever more complex situations, when they chaired the meetings, set the agenda and controlled the finance. However if the trend hinted at in the deviant case examples in this study becomes more prevalent, public sector leaders will need to learn about influencing from afar when they no longer have the roles of driver, navigator, money and debit card holder. The mechanic role, as technical assistance provider (expert knowledge and skills; corporate experience; access to facilities), can be leveraged as a significant source of influence, providing direction and enabling action. But this is a more subtle form of policy influence than the overt powerful roles they used to hold. Public sector leaders may have to adapt to survive. Secondly, non-public sector leaders need support in taking on their new roles. Undoubtedly these individuals will have been successful in some other sphere to gain influential positions in these new collaborations, but they are unlikely to have gained experience in leading complex collaborations. As the New Labour government took on the role of up-skilling new third sector leaders during their period in office (DIAMOND, 2012), central government and public policy academics need to consider how to support a new emerging generation of leaders of place-place based partnerships.

The deviant cases in this study are taken from different professional disciplines, to illustrate the diversity of the areas in which leadership roles are evolving. However further research will be required in coming years to test whether or not the dominance of non-public sector individuals in the leadership of place-based partnerships is restricted to a few isolated cases or if it is part of a wider and growing trend.

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Collaborative Roles (Himmelman, 1996)	Regional Development Leadership Capabilities (Sotarauta, 2005)	Public Servant Roles (Sullivan, 2011)	Vehicle Leadership Roles (this paper)
Convenor: bring people together	Institutional(1): combining webs of relationships	System architect: compile coherent local systems from public, private, third sector and other resources	Driver
Catalyst: create momentum and shared direction	Excitement: inspiration; create and utilise creative tension	No equivalent	
	Strategic: make decisions; set the strategic direction	Storyteller: author and communicate stories of how new worlds might be envisaged	
Advocate: represents other parties	Interpretive: makes sense of complex situations	Navigator: guiding partners around the range of possibilities	Navigator
	Absorptive: evaluate and use outside knowledge		
Funder: direct source of finance	No equivalent	Resource-weaver: creative use of resources	Cash holder
Conduit pathway to funding (bid writing administration)	No equivalent		Debit card holder
Technical Assistance Provider: provide expert knowledge and skills; access to facilities	Institutional(2): provide organizational capabilities	Expert: exercise of judgement based on skills and experience	Mechanic
Capacity Builder: enable and empower partners	Institutional(3): helping others develop their capabilities	Reticulist: development of networking skills; support partners to work together to achieve outcomes	Passengers
Facilitator: enable effective collaboration	Socialization: enabling others to share feelings and experiences		
Community Organiser: making sure all partners have a voice, contribute and benefit	Networking: forging trust, mutual dependency, loyalty, solidarity, cooperation	Adjudicator: make decisions on balance of evidence	
Partner: genuine balanced contribution	No equivalent	No equivalent	

Table 1. Leadership roles and capabilities

Leadership Roles (driving metaphor)	Heritage		Economic Development		Planning	
	Case 1 – New Labour Keys to the Past / Past Perfect	Case 2– Coalition Flodden 1513 Ecomuseum	Case 3 – New Labour Regional Development Agencies	Case 4 – Coalition Local Enterprise Partnerships	Case 5 – New Labour Eden Valley District Council Local Plan	Case 6 – Coalition Upper Eden Neighbourhood Development Plan
Driver	Senior officers, Durham and Northumberland County Councils	Community (local landowner)	Appointed by Central Government (usually business person)	Appointed locally (strong suggestion that this ought to be a business person)	Councillors and Director of Planning, Eden District Council	Upper Eden Community Plan Group
Navigator	County Archaeologists, DCC & NCC	Contract staff	Business-led, public sector supported	Business-led, public sector supported	Planning officers, Eden District Council	Upper Eden Community Plan Group
Cash holder	Heritage Lottery Fund; New Opportunities Fund	Heritage Lottery Fund, plus small contributions from local businesses and contributions from local authorities	Central government	Small amounts of central government seed corn funds, aimed at leveraging co-ordinated local private investment	Eden District Council	Department for Communities and Local Government
Debit card holder	DCC & NCC	Third Sector (heritage trust and local community development trust)	RDAs	Local authorities	N/A	Upper Eden Community Plan Group
Mechanic	County Archaeologists, DCC & NCC; Surveyors, English Heritage; Archivist, Berwick Record Office	Public and Third Sector (local authorities, heritage trust, and local community development trust)	RDA and Local Authority staff	Local Authorities	Eden District Council	Department for Communities and Local Government
Backseat activities	Mainly public sector dominated, with minor input from community volunteers	Flodden related heritage site managers, community groups, tourism businesses	Mainly private and public sector; some third sector involvement	Mainly private and public sector; some third sector involvement	Mainly public sector dominated, local community were consulted	Parish Councils and community

Table 2. Analysis of leadership roles in the six cases (fields coloured dark grey with white text indicate total public sector leadership; pale grey is some public sector leadership)