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No more standing on the sidelines

Developing effective approaches to city
leadership in an era of devolution and
austerity

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Contents

Executive Summary.....	4
Introduction.....	11
Section 1: The context of contemporary English cities.....	13
Section 2: Leading a new urban landscape.....	20
Section 3 “Being clever is not enough” What do we need local leaders to do?.....	30
Section 4: The risk of absent and poor city leadership.....	44
Section 5: Summary.....	51
Bibliography.....	54

Many thanks to those who agreed to be interviewed for this research. I hope you find the report useful. Special thanks to Professor Gordon Dabinett, Charlotte Hoole and Kay Kirk. This project was made possible through the Crook Public Service Fellowship scheme at the University of Sheffield, generously supported by Professor ADH Crook and the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Impact Accelerator Account.

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Executive Summary

England is embarking on a new era of leadership and governance. The most notable changes are the elections of new city region metro-mayors in Greater Manchester, Liverpool City Region, Sheffield City Region, and the West Midlands in May 2017 and the creation of new Combined Authorities underpinned by the roll out of Devolution Deals, delegating greater powers and responsibilities to metro areas. A shift in funding arrangements from central to local government may also signal the beginning of independently financed cities and city-regions.

So far there has been very little discussion about the impact of these new arrangements on local leadership. Do our national and local politicians already have the skills required for effective city and city region (sometimes called place) leadership, or do these new arrangements require different skills and behaviours? Who are these leaders? Are they the new metro-mayors or is city leadership more complex? This feels like an essential debate to be having at this time, given that Britain has been a highly centralised state for many years. There is a need to consider the fundamentally important questions of **who leads a city and what does effective city leadership look like?**

This paper summarises the findings of a 12 month collaborative research process, undertaken throughout 2015-2016. The research has brought together knowledge and insights from political, professional, business and civic leaders in four large cities (Leeds, London, Sheffield, and Sunderland). The views of key think tanks, academics and cross disciplinary academic literature are also represented, with the aim of considering what is known about leading cities effectively, and whether it is possible to begin to define the characteristics of effective city leadership.

This research concludes with a practitioner led and academically informed set of findings into the characteristics of effective city leadership in the current context of devolution and austerity. The research contributes to the development of policy and research of 21st century urban leadership and governance.

The context

The growth of the role of cities combined with the roll out of devolution, underpinned by austerity, has huge implications for local leaders and urban policy. This paper explores these issues in depth, considering:

- **Cities, where global meets local** is an area of growing interest in the role of place in particular cities, in relation to economic growth, social policy and environmental sustainability. As the world becomes increasingly urbanised, the ability to create and sustain a successful city is a key area of policy and academic study. Cities are seen as the place where local policy can shape global forces.
- **Devolution and decentralisation** is seen by many city and regional leaders in England as the primary policy tool for more effective city leadership ('the big idea'), challenging the centralisation of policy and resources and arguing for an increased recognition of the significance of place contexts.
- **Austerity politics** with many academics, political and professional leaders regarding austerity as an ideological policy rather than an economic necessity. However, it is clear that austerity will lead to a fundamentally different state, with plans from the current Conservative government to cut public expenditure and shrink the state to a size not experienced since the 1930s.
- **Local government and public services** cannot remain the same in this context, and public organisations are now recognising that the future will need to focus not just on efficiency but also the need to transform their services, including options such as greater outsourcing, charging, commercialisation and integration.
- **Public service reform** is becoming a key feature of devolution deals, with the Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Deal an example of the potential future of localised public services.

Effective city leadership in the context of devolution and austerity

The findings of this research present opportunities and challenges for city leadership. The research finds that the quality and ability of city leadership is seen to be a critical factor in the success of a city, particularly in this period of devolution and austerity. This supports current academic debate which argues that place-based leadership is a central factor in

whether a place will 'flourish or languish' (Rodriquez-Pose 2013) and that the absence of effective place-based leadership is a critical risk to cities (Beer and Clower 2013). It also builds on the work of Hambleton (2015) who argues that local leaders can, and should, play a key role in shaping inclusive and sustainable cities.

Who leads a city?

This research finds that effective and contemporary city leadership in England moves beyond traditional roles and hierarchies and depends on a range of local actors working together to shape new and innovative solutions to the 'wicked problems' of urban areas in the 21st century .

Local democratic leaders are critical, but they must act as **democratic leaders of place**, leading collaboratively with each other and other key organisations and individuals from:

- **Business communities**, to help to develop economic strategies, entrepreneurship and the branding of a city.
- **Academic sectors** (Universities, colleges and schools), who have a critical role in economic development, branding, social mobility and social cohesion.
- **Public sector** (in particular the NHS, criminal justice agencies and housing) to develop integrated, city-based services which meet the needs and aspirations of the local population.
- **Social entrepreneurs and innovators** to assist in reshaping economic and social interventions, utilising technology.
- **Third and Faith sectors** to represent communities help solve problems and reshape services.
- **Active citizens** who represent communities and bring new ideas to local places.
- **Trade Unions**, who play a key role in designing and delivering change.
- **Social and traditional media**, to help develop and deliver the story of the city.

What does effective city leadership look like?

The evidence from this research indicates that real progress can be achieved in cities where collaborative and shared local leadership works together to:

- Mobilise local assets
- Perform effectively on the global and national stage
- Create local platforms for dialogue and deliberation
- Communicate a shared vision for the city
- Articulate a strong and compelling local narrative

- Tackle the 'wicked issues' together, in a culture which is outward looking, future focused and committed to integrated planning and delivery.
- Operate as a catalyst for change, nurturing innovation and willing to challenge the status quo.
- Develop shared visibility and accountability
- Demonstrate emotional intelligence and empathy.

Demonstrating these leadership skills is not about personalities or even roles. For example, it's not dependant on implementation of the metro mayor model - but more about effective 21st Century urban leadership.

Evidence of effective city leadership

This research finds many examples of effective and innovative approaches to city leadership, including:

- Greater collaboration between city leaders, particular as a consequence of the devolution agenda, with politicians, business leaders, NHS , council, third and faith sector and other public sector leaders exploring new approaches to economic growth and public sector reform.
- Clear ambition and skills in representing the city on the global stage and developing the economic offer of a city.
- Greater recognition of the role of local mayors and other democratic leaders as city champions, with politicians developing their skills in partnering with other institutions.
- The increased use of deliberative forums for complex issues, such as Fairness Commissions, Smart City Commissions and Green Commissions.
- New structures for local dialogue arising out of, for example, the Cooperative Council movement, Community Connectors in Sunderland, Our Fair City campaign in Sheffield and the Poverty Truth Commission in Leeds.
- Greater recognition and involvement of local communities and citizens, including the third and faith sector groups and citizen groups such as Citizens UK.
- Greater involvement of social innovators, through initiatives such as Smart City Labs
- Greater use of online forums for communication and dialogue.

The problem of 'poor and absent leadership'

There is a significant amount of evidence demonstrating absent or poor city leadership (Beer and Clower 2013), in particular:

- **Council centric democratic leadership**, with a tendency for democratic leaders to focus on running the Council; be too inward looking, talking just to local authority staff or other local authorities (for example whilst forming Combined Authorities); lacking transparency and accountability; too focused on cuts and services; adopting tactical rather than strategic leadership roles, and at worst, primarily motivated by self-interest.
- Leaders from other sectors **standing on the sidelines** failing (and sometimes refusing) to recognise themselves as leaders in a city, remaining focused on their organisation and/or professional silo and cynical about the possibility of integrated, visionary and innovative city based leadership.
- **A lack of diversity and challenge** in city leadership, with a dominance of middle class white men and marginalisation of those who may challenge the status quo.
- Early concerns of the risks of **populist politics** dominating local leadership and local debates.

Alongside these problems, there also appears to be, in some areas, a consistent;

- Resistance to involving and utilising the skills of the third sector, active citizens and trade unions in contemporary city leadership.
- Failure to recognise and consequently mobilise local assets, with no tangible examples of local asset audits.
- Resistance, particularly from Local Government, to developing a local vision.
- Reluctance to develop and articulate an inspiring local narrative about a place.
- Tendency to tackle local issues separately, in professional and organisational silos.
- Need to accelerate innovation and creativity and avoid a tendency to preserve the status quo.

Devolution: "*it brings out the best and worse in us*"

Recent approaches to devolution also appear to be having a damaging effect on city leadership. Research participants were conflicted about their views of devolution. On the

one had it was seen as a positive development with enormous potential, whilst on the other hand, it was cited as an example of poor city leadership. This raised some key fundamental concerns:

- Devolution feels like an 'elite to elite' conversation between a few local leaders and central government.
- Devolution has lacked an inclusive and deliberative dialogue.
- A lack of a clear local vision or compelling narrative underpinning devolution.
- Devolution and Devolution Deals are often presented in 'technocratic language' overly focused on traditional approaches to economic growth.
- Devolution creates the risk of the dominance of pro-growth models of urban governance, excluding the opportunity to fully address social and environmental issues in a city.
- Devolution is creating remote and poorly understood governance structures and sometimes tries to create a sense of place which does not exist.

City leaders therefore need to reconsider local approaches to devolution.

The future of the State and a framework for assessing city and city region leadership

The research identified some powerful examples of city leadership, in particular for shaping new approaches to collaborative leadership, building new partnerships, creating new platforms for dialogue, utilising social and technical innovation, reshaping public services and creating new solutions to entrenched problems. Devolution has helped to energise these initiatives.

The research raises concerns about the amount of evidence that demonstrates poor or absent city leadership and that recent approaches to devolution appear to be having a damaging effect on city leadership. Devolution appears to be overly focused on traditional approaches to designing public policy within the corridors of Whitehall or Town Halls across cities.

Poor and absent leadership is seen to present a significant risk to some cities. Evidence indicates that successful cities need strong collaborative leadership, which is visible and

accountable, able to mobilise the diverse assets and resources of the city and focused on finding inclusive and innovative solutions to the 'wicked issues' facing that city.

A key conclusion is that the local state could and should be behaving differently, with a need for democratic leaders to focus on building effective local leadership of cities in order to realise the full potential of the city. There is a strong sense that the public, civic society, the business community and academia are just waiting for this to happen.

A framework for assessing the quality of local leadership may help to assist in discussing issues related to local leadership and finding ways to rectify deficits. It may also help to shape the leadership behaviours adopted by the first set of metro-mayors and how existing leaders work in partnership with them. The findings of this research, combined with the work of leading academics and organisations such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), could be utilised to develop such a framework.

Leading cities and places; the need to build expertise

This paper demonstrates an urgent need for further research and discussion about the characteristics of effective city leadership, within the academic and management school communities and also political and practitioner circles.

Cross disciplinary research is important and all research should be underpinned by greater learning and dialogue between academics, politicians and practitioners as devolution unfolds and profound decisions about cities, city regions and their diverse communities are made.

Introduction

“There is increasing evidence that local leadership is fundamental to the success of cities, regions and communities....work by Rodriguez-Pose (2013) suggests that leadership is perhaps the ‘missing variable’ in understanding why some places grow and others languish” (Beer and Clower 2013)

England is embarking on a new era of leadership and governance, with elections in May 2017 for at least six new city metro-mayors in Greater Manchester, Liverpool City Region, Sheffield City Region, North East, Tees Valley, and West Midlands underpinned by the roll out of Devolution Deals, delegating greater powers and responsibilities to metro areas. For some, this is creating the conditions whereby:

“Parliament can only haemorrhage more influence as devolution gathers pace through English cities and regions....Former Ministerscan see that to achieve something as the elected mayor of, say, Manchester or Birmingham is a nobler path then futile plotting in Westminster” (Rafael Behr; Guardian 2016)

There is very little discussion about the impact of these new arrangements on local leaders. Do we assume that our national and local politicians already have the skills required for effective city and city region (sometimes called place) leadership or do these new arrangements require new and different skills and behaviours? Who are these leaders? Are they the new metro Mayors or is city leadership more complex? This feels like an essential debate to be having at this time , with the need to consider further the key questions of **who leads a city and what does effective city leadership look like?** given that Britain has been a highly centralised State for many years.

This paper summarises the findings of a twelve month collaborative research process, undertaken throughout 2015-2016. The research has brought together insights from political, professional, business and civic leaders in four large cities (Leeds, London, Sheffield, and Sunderland) with the views from key think tanks, academics and cross disciplinary academic literature, to consider what is known about leading cities effectively, and whether is it possible to begin to define the characteristics of effective city leadership.

The research process has been undertaken within a challenging national policy context, in particular a continued programme of austerity with profound cuts to public service

budgets, welfare reform and the Conservative government commitment to a smaller state, alongside a programme of devolution of powers and budgets to city regions and more recently, the profound impact of Brexit.

This research presents a practitioner led, academically informed set of findings into the characteristics of effective English city leadership in the current context of devolution and austerity. The research therefore aims to contribute to ongoing academic, political and professional conversations and enquiry into 21st Century urban leadership and governance.

Section 1: The context of contemporary English cities

Cities: where global meets local

There is a growing interest in the role of place, in particular cities, in relation to economic growth, social policy and environmental sustainability. As the world becomes increasingly urbanised, how to create and sustain a successful city is a key area of policy and academic study. Academics, such as Sassen (2001) have pointed to the rise of the city, and especially global cities, as creating a geographical space which encompasses both the local and global. Kantor et al. (2012, p241 in Hambleton, 2014 p114) for example make the claim that;

Global forces are not making the politics of place less important. Globalism and local governance are not mutually exclusive but are deeply entwined... important difference remains in the ways particular world city regions are mediating international forces.

The connection between leadership, place and policy became apparent in the late 1970s and early 1980s when the pace of globalisation accelerated. During this time, place was considered “an arena in which generic or society-wide factors – such as de-industrialisation – were combined in particular ways to produce specific mixtures of results on the ground” (Collinge & Gibney, 2010 p381). As such, place-shaping was thought to be a top-down process controlled by global and national forces (see Massey, 1984; 1995). Policies were set nationally and delegated out towards local governments who provided an administrative base for the organisation and delivery of these. To a large extent, this signified their role as managers or enablers, rather than leaders of a place (Collinge and Gibney 2010).

Some authors have argued that cities have consequently become over-reliant on the top tiers of government and too focused on inward investment for economic development, with little autonomous control over local policy (Tiebout, 1956; Peterson, 1981). This analysis is based on the premise that wider economic forces are creating the conditions for labour and capital to move more freely, through the flow of people and industries who relocate to find work or cheaper and more distant locations to retain their competitive advantage (Peterson, 1981). To this end, Hambleton (2013 p12) states:

Cities and localities must conceive of themselves as business corporations – as efficiency maximising organisations, which must strive to enhance economic productivity as determined by the needs of capital.

Collinge et al. (2010 p.xv) argue however that “*if we seek to address global issues at a global level we may need to wait forever for an appropriate consensus or compromise to emerge*” and thus they contend that action and challenge can and should emerge locally. They claim that “*place matters because it constitutes similar problems differently (p.xv)*”. Hambleton (2011) draws upon a cross-national study by Savitch and Kantor (2002) who make the case that “*cities with strong popular control systems exercise greater influence over capital investment and influence the course of economic development decisions*”. And Hambleton (2013) goes further by saying;

Cities, far from being business corporations, are political entities with, in democracies, elected civic leaders who are accountable to their citizens. Cities have particular socio-cultural values, histories, traditions and identities. It follows that civic leaders should be expected to pursue policies and practices relating to the needs and values of their residents, not the requirements of place-less capital.

By introducing a political and local democratic dimension to the debate rather than giving sole focus to economic performance, Hambleton (2011; 2013; 2015) focuses on leadership with a sense of place and local community which appears all the more important within a global world order.

City leaders in the UK and abroad share the view that cities are ‘*places which matter*’, with organisations such as the Core Cities group (representing the ten largest cities in the UK) focused on the role of cities and their regions in driving economic growth:

The importance of cities as drivers of national economies and stronger communities has never been clearer, with report after report highlighting their importance. The core cities sit at the centre of UK’s ten biggest urban areas outside London, delivering around 25% of the UK economy –more than London- and are home to 19 million people (Core Cities, 2015 p.10).

The Devolution Debate

Devolution and decentralisation is seen by many current city and regional leaders in England as the primary policy tool for more effective city leadership ('the big idea'). The devolution agenda can be seen to be building on work that emerged from the early 1990s, which began to question the centralisation of policy and argued for an increased recognition for the significance of place contexts, as Healey (1998, p.3 in Collinge & Gibney 2010) highlights:

There is strong evidence of a reassertion of place-focused concerns in public policy... if the qualities of place are important, and if public policy has to acknowledge that 'geography matters', then the challenge for public policy... is to develop the institutional capability to respond to concerns about place making in the contemporary period.

The introduction of the Single Regeneration Budget in 1994 marked the first step towards achieving this transition, and in the years that followed, this agenda was rolled out through initiatives such as the City Challenge, Neighbourhood Renewal and Social Exclusion, Regional Development Agencies, Local Strategic Partnerships, Local Area Agreements, Comprehensive Area Agreements and more recently, Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs). Place has become where "*[l]ocal people are placed at the heart of the discussion about what's best for the kind of place they live*" (Trickett & Lees, 2010 in Collinge et al, 2010 p.387).

Drawing comparisons from international case studies, Stimson et al. (2009) found that the devolved government arrangements in Germany and the US are favourable for local leaders, whilst highly centralised systems such as Australia and the UK foster adverse conditions. In their analysis of the impact of the centralisation of power and decision-making in England, Marshall and Finch (2006) found that city leaders in the UK '*have their hands tied*' when it comes to impacting upon local development due, largely, to financial dependence on central government.

The influential Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (RSA) City Growth Commission report, *Unleashing Metro Growth*, (2014) set the framework for current approaches to devolution with the ambition that "*[c]ities across*

the UK need to be empowered to unleash their creativity and innovation potential, improve their connectivity and boost their productivity” (RSA, 2014 p. 14).

The UK Coalition government (2010-15) and more recently the Conservative government (2015 to date), have articulated a strong commitment to the idea of local areas having more control over their economies, working with cities and regions to shape the devolution agenda through the negotiation of Devolution Deals such as those agreed in 2015 with Greater Manchester, Sheffield City Region and Cornwall. The Sheffield City Region Devolution Deals (2014, 2015) state their primary objective as economic growth for the newly created ‘economically viable’ region, arguing that by having more local control over the ‘levers for growth’ (such as skills, employment, business growth, transport and housing funding) the region will be able to “[a]ccelerate the delivery of its Strategic Economic Plan and strengthen its position as a centre for advanced manufacture and engineering” (SCR Devolution Deal, 2015 p.4).

Each Devolution Deal is conditional on the implementation of the new institutional forms of Combined Authorities and from 2017 the introduction of directly elected metro-mayors. Local Enterprises Partnerships are to be aligned or integrated into these new structures, as are Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) and School Commissioners. The shift in the funding of local government away from the centralised Revenue Grant to self-funding models reliant on business rates and local taxation (as announced in the 2015 spending review) signals the beginning of independently financed cities and city-regions, and further accelerates the changes in the relationship between central and local government.

There is also much political and business rhetoric about the importance of the ‘agglomeration economies’ of larger regions, such as the ‘Northern Powerhouse’ and the ‘Midlands Engine’ (West/East/North Midlands), with the need for cities, city regions and larger regions to build effective and complimentary economic strategies. The commitment to devolution from local government is significant, with one leader interviewed for this research stating:

Economics is ahead of politics. Politics is frozen in old ways of representation of places: the political footprint is a product of the past. The economic footprint is much larger than existing cities” (Chief Executive, London, 2015)

The Core Cities group argue that “*broader and deeper devolution packages should be agreed*” supported by “*multi-year place based financial settlements*” underpinned by “*a reformed local government finance system*” and “*roadmap for fiscal reform*” and *local retention and devolution of taxes*” (Core Cities, 2015).

There is significant debate within both academia and professional networks on the impact of this emerging model of devolution. Whilst many agree that the UK has traditionally been an over centralised state and therefore devolution is a good thing, others are expressing significant concerns about the current approach. Concerns centre on issues such as geography, with some new City Regions failing to build on historic and cultural identities of places or existing democratic structures (for example the Nottinghamshire/Derbyshire ‘North Midlands’ proposal). Flinders (2016) raises concern from a political perspective, with the view that regional governance is already complex and that governance models within devolution deals have ‘*too many loose ends*’. Flinders also points out that “*the dominant city-mayor model is also being reconsidered in many countries due to concerns regarding the rise in personality politics and vanity projects*”.

The premise of cities driving economic growth has also been questioned. For example Fothergill and Houston (2015) state that growth in ‘hinterlands’ and smaller cities/towns is just as significant as big city growth, concluding that “*cities as drivers of UK regional growth is ideology more than reality*”. The Centre for Public Scrutiny raise concerns about accountability, with little detail about scrutiny in new Combined Authority arrangements. Many have raised issues of capacity at the local level; with research around support for LEPs finding capacity ranging from small dedicated teams to a part-time policy officer in the council. Others argue devolution is really about implementing austerity:

“Critics argue that the new agenda amounts to a strategy to decentralise super-austerity, shifting responsibility to the local level for ever deeper cuts and inevitable service reduction” (Lowndes and Gardner 2016 p.1).

Those who most question current approaches articulate the view that it pitches place against place and could therefore lead to a ‘race to the bottom’ for some cities, and fails to recognise the need for redistribution of wealth in a country that has historically invested more in London and the South East (IPPR North, 2015).

Austerity and a 'Small State'

Britain continues to experience what some call “...*an eye watering period of austerity*” (Lord David Blunkett 2016) with others arguing that we are now in a period of super austerity (Lowndes and Gardner 2016). Whilst many academics, political and professional leaders see austerity as an ideological policy rather than economic necessity, it is clear that austerity will lead to a fundamentally different state, with plans from the current Conservative government to shrink the state to a size not experienced since the 1930s. Budget cuts are already having a major impact on local public services, with funding for Local Authorities reduced, on average, by 28% (NAO, 2014) and further cuts of 54% of the local authority budget announced in the 2015 Spending Review. Police, fire and rescue, courts, probation and other key public services are experiencing significant and ongoing cuts. Whilst NHS and Education budgets are protected, the relentless pace of increased demand has effectively led to cuts in services. Education providers, such as Further Education Colleges and Universities have experienced significant cuts to budgets and the introduction of new funding models.

Local government and public services cannot remain the same in this context, and most public organisations are now recognising that the future will need to focus not just on efficiency but also the requirement to transform their services including options such as greater outsourcing, charging, commercialisation and integration. Public service reform is becoming a key feature of Devolution Deals with the Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Deal an example of the potential future of localised services.

The government's policy on welfare reform continues to have a profound impact of people's lives. George Osborne, when Chancellor, talked about his ambition to “...*move Britain from a low wage, high tax, high welfare society to a higher wage, lower tax, lower welfare economy*” (Summer Budget, 2015). A Centre for Cities (2016) report finds that many cities, including a number of the large northern cities, are increasingly reliant on low wage, high welfare economies, and even in those cities there has been a significant increase in welfare, due primarily to high housing costs. The growth in poverty and financial insecurity has been identified as a critical risk within communities, and underpins the increasing concern about the growth of inequality within cities, which is seen by some as a key global challenge:

“...rising inequality and declining mobility are also bad for our families and social cohesion – we...trust our institutions less (and) trust each other less when there’s greater inequality. And greater inequality is associated with less mobility between generations.” (President Barak Obama, December 2013)

“...the economics profession (has) downplayed inequality for too long. Now all of us have a better understanding that a more equal distribution of income allows for more economic stability, more sustained economic growth, and healthier societies with stronger bonds of cohesion and trust.” (Christine Lagarde Director, IMF, January 2013)

Section 2: Leading a new urban landscape

“ I suggest that urban governance in the EU is to a large extent characterised by three features; inter-city competition; increased self-reliance and a strong emphasis on innovation in governance and service delivery” (Pierre,2015)

Undoubtedly, the growth of the role of cities combined with the roll out of devolution underpinned by austerity has huge implications for the role of local leaders within urban policy. Moving away from the management of nationally set strategies, local leaders have become increasingly responsible for leading discussions and making decisions that endorse a new ideology around entrepreneurship, knowledge exchange, collaboration, communication and innovation (Mabey & Freeman, 2010).

The fragmented emergence of new leadership and governance structures, including metro-mayors, Combined Authorities, Local Enterprise Partnerships and Regional Commissioners presents both opportunities and challenges for local leaders. As this approach to governance evolves, it exposes a number of new and unfamiliar agendas that local leaders have to contend with. Beyond becoming accustomed with the transition of representing a place rather than simply an organisation or local council, leaders are now increasingly judged by outcomes that are less concrete and hence more uncertain, and have to contend with a wide array of diverging views and interests of the many sectors, actors and organisations that make up a place (MacNeill & Steiner, 2010; Trickett and Lee, 2010). Peters (2011 p.11 in Hambleton 2013) point out, *“governing has never been easy”* but within the current context: *“...it has become all the more complicated... The process of governing now involves more actors, more policy areas that impinge upon one another, and most importantly involves a wider range of goals”*.

Local leadership; the missing viable?

This research explores further the role local leader's play in shaping economic, social, cultural and emotional wellbeing within cities and communities, building on a statement by Trickett (2011 p.6) that:

Place is a key determinant in defining people's experiences of social exclusion, poverty, and socio-economic opportunity... The development of effective place leaders is a public policy requirement that cannot be left to chance or the market.

Within academia, there appears to be a longstanding debate around place-based leadership, which can be exemplified with the following quote: “*Place based leadership; there no such thing. It's just about good leadership*” (Senior think-tank Officer 2015) and a smaller group arguing that place-based leadership does exist: that it may even be “*the missing viable in understanding why some places flourish and others languish*” (Rodriguez-Pole 2013), and that “*the absence of local leadership is a critical risk to the success of local places*” (Beer and Clower 2013).

The research starts with consideration of the question **who leads a city?** Academic research has informed the findings, but the evidence gathered from politicians and practitioners is fundamental to understanding the complexity of contemporary city leadership.

Who leads a city?

“The rise of elected mayors in the early 21st century is probably not a coincidence and seems to relate to a growing unease with...the status quo. Indeed, there are three related aspects ...that might explain this phenomenon: (a) the world we live in could literally be anywhere.....its 'placeless':(b) we now live in a world that –to some people- appears to be out of their control...it is faceless: (c) that faceless and placeless world seems to be proceeding in a directionless wayit is pointless” (Warwick Commission, 2012)

The belief that strong city/city region mayors (see Barber 2013) is the way forward for city governance, due to their greater visibility and accountability, has influenced much political and public policy and is clearly central to the UK devolution agenda. Yet this research and other academic studies find that effective city leadership is based on a complex and interconnected set of actors and actions. City leaders are not necessarily those occupying traditional roles of formal authority, such as political leaders or Chief Executives of local authorities. These roles, whilst still important, now make up just one dimension of city leadership (Sotarauta et al., 2012). City leadership is more often made up of members from the state, non-state, business, community, voluntary and faith sectors (Liddle, 2010).

When asking the participants in this research, *who are the city leaders*, some consistent findings emerged. Overall, the participants' views were that a city is led by a range of key partners and individuals, and that leading a city is a hugely complex, collaborative and challenging task. This finding supports the work of Hambleton (2015) who identifies five categories of city/place-based leaders;

- **Political leadership** – political leaders who are elected by the public on a mandate
- **Public Managerial/Professional leadership** – public servants who possess professional and managerial expertise
- **Community leadership** – people with civic interests including community activists, voluntary sector leaders, religious leaders and higher education leaders
- **Business leadership** – local business leaders and entrepreneurs
- **Trade Union leadership** – trade union leaders elected by their members

Horlings (2010) finds that leadership may also be shown by those who are able to bridge the gap between formal and informal roles. As such, city leadership emanates from the social fabric of places (Peters, 2012) and more specifically in social relationships (Sotarauta, 2014), and Beer and Clower (2014) note that *“One of the key differences between leadership generally and local leadership is in how, if at all, leadership emerges in communities”*.

One participant in the research focused on the role of those 'who can be bothered', stating:

“It's about influence, networks, power dynamics in a city, who influences things and how a city gets things done....who is important depends on who can be bothered” (Chief Executive 2015).

Recognising that city leadership involves a wide range of actors, including those without formal roles, does not easily align with the dominant discourse about leadership, drawn from organisational settings that emphasise hierarchy, elite direction, and bureaucratic procedures and processes (Sotarauta & Beer, 2015). Complex and collaborative local leadership also brings a critical risk of the blurring of roles and responsibilities. Without formal appointment, leadership roles may not be performed and as Beer and Clower (2014) state:

In formal organizations, leaders – such as the chief executive officer, secretary of a department, and president of a university or chair of the board – are appointed by the institutions and either performs that role well or not. However, in understanding how leadership might find expression in the city, community or region we need to accept that despite apparent need, leadership roles may not be taken up. Not every vacuum gets filled, which in turn implies that the leadership of places carries with it both the risk of poor leadership and the risk of the absence of leadership”.

City leadership; the key players

Participants in this research identified some key roles and organisations which underpin effective leadership of a city/place. These are:

Democratic leadership of place

Participants, from all sectors, identified the role democratic leaders have in city/place based leadership as critical:

“The key is democratic and community leadership; that is what makes place based leadership work” (Political leader 2015)

The following participant articulated the view that democratic leaders are fundamentally central for city-based leadership, which was a view commonly shared by other participants:

...leading a place has to be distributive... it can't just be control and command, but you need something or somebody or some group of people to very very clearly set the agenda with the engagement of others... where you haven't got that compass then you'll have people floating all over the place” (NHS leader, 2015)

Interviewees outlined a need for democratic leadership to be effective at all levels from city region through to city; from borough through to local community. As one interviewee stated:

“Leading a place effectively is about doing different things at different levels....you can't neglect any level” (Political leader, 2015).

Whilst one interviewee argued that different leadership models are needed at different levels: *“The strong leader and cabinet model works best at the city level: you need greater*

visibility and the ability to make decisions at the city region level, areas over 1 million, and that is where Directly Elected Mayors work best” (Think Tank officer, 2015), most of those interviewed talked about a consistent and inter-connected system, and culture of effective place based democratic leadership. For example, leaders interviewed in London talked about the need to build an effective link between neighbourhoods, boroughs, the Greater London Authority (GLA) and London Mayor, with statements such as: “London needs the GLA as a strategic body, but it needs to be connected to the pulse of the city” (Chief Executive, 2015) and “This borough is part of a global city. We need to act as part of that city” (Political leader, 2015). Democratic leaders in London recognised their role in developing a culture of connected city-based leadership, demonstrating the positive and ongoing evolution of the GLA and its relationship with borough leadership. Interestingly much of the focus of London leaders was on developing cross-borough collaboration, with statements such as: “some leaders and politicians are trapped in their place....it can be a ward or a borough... we need to work better together across boroughs and wards” (Political Leader, 2015).

Leaders in the northern cities, many of whom are negotiating or beginning to implement Devolution Deals, identified ongoing concerns about the how best to develop relationships between city, region and metro-mayors, with statements such as “*everyone thinks their place is unique and distinctive: the challenge is how your place connects globally and locally” (Chief Executive 2015).*

Participants also identified the need for Mayors to link with other politicians in a place:

“The Mayor also has to play a political leadership role with all Councillors....this took the council a long time , but the Mayor and Councillors learnt to operate the new system” (Political Leader 2015).

Most participants recognised that connected democratic leadership is difficult, particularly in areas where different political parties have control, or areas where the ‘region’ was suspicious of the city and its potential dominance. The risks associated with disjointed or conflicted democratic leadership in a place have long been identified in a number of reports. Reviews such as those of Birmingham City Council (2014), Tower Hamlets Council (2014), Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council (2014), Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council (2010) and Stoke-on-Trent City Council (2008) demonstrate significant risks

associated with disconnected democratic leadership, as exemplified in the Audit Commission Report (2010) on Doncaster where;

“Some influential Councillors place their antagonism towards the Mayor and the Mayoral system, and the achievement of their political objectives, above the needs of the people of Doncaster, and their duty to lead the continuous improvement of services”.

The review on the impact of the Bristol Mayor found many positives but raised concerns about the relationship between the Mayor and the 70 local councillors, finding that:

“Councillors tend to display considerably more negative views on the impacts and performance of the new model compared to those in public managerial, professional, community or business realms” (Hambleton and Sweeting, 2015).

Other key actors and partners

Reflecting the academic literature, participants in this research also identified that political leaders cannot ‘do it on their own... [we] need the active and committed support of local partners’ (Political Leader 2015). Another interviewee stated:

“[A place] can succeed when we bring together the voice of business, talented leaders, civic leaders ...can mean people from variety of backgrounds in leadership roles but they are your local assets” (Chief Executive 2015)

The research supports the academic literature in finding that local leadership is about formal and informal actors. Most participants identified a consistent set of key actors as central to success. These are:

Business leaders

“The private sector is key. Not just local businesses but also the supply chain. Issues such as quality of service need to match the sense of place” (Chief Executive, 2015).

Business leaders were quickly identified as critical to successful city leadership. Three fundamental aspects of working with business leaders were identified; developing shared plans and approaches to economic growth, promoting entrepreneurship and developing the ‘branding’ of a city and place.

Some interviewees articulated the view that the relationship between political and business leaders will become more important as business rates become localised, and consultation with the business community has been central in the negotiation of many Devolution Deals.

Academic leaders and institutions

“Education is the most important place partner, for example Goldsmiths, local schools and colleges. They are focused on young people making a better life for themselves. It’s important that the branding of those institutions match the branding of the place...it’s about success, edginess, innovation, social mobility through education” (Chief Executive 2015).

Universities are often named as key local partners, with an increasing recognition within these institutions of their role as an anchor organisation within a place, (Harkavy and Puckett 1994). The roles identified for universities in this research ranged from helping to shape local economic growth plans and inward investment strategies; developing the branding of areas; support for strategic visioning (for example Sunderland and Sheffield); publication of ‘city reviews’ (e.g. State of Sheffield reports) through to co-production of local evidence and knowledge and utilising the role of ‘engaged and independent scholars’ (Hambleton and Sweeting 2015).

Similarly local colleges and schools are also identified as key partners, with a focus on developing shared aspirations around qualifications, skills and employability, as well as helping to develop economic strategies and to develop and promote social cohesion. One interviewee talked about the potential of the devolution agenda for education, stating:

“We know the issues facing our local children and devolution can help us take more control over local education provision so we can sort those issues” (Political Leader, 2016)

Public Service leaders

As public sector budgets are cut but demand increases, and the devolution agenda begins to consider public service reform, political and organisational leaders are increasingly realising that local public service leaders need to work more closely together, considering issues such as place based public service budgets and integration of public services at the local level. The NHS was identified as a key local partner and the greater focus on place

now features in the NHS Five Year Plan (2015-2020). Police, housing, criminal justice, fire and rescue and other key public services are also mentioned as key local partners, with a need to develop greater integration of public services and public service budgets, and to reform services to meet the aspirations and needs of the local population. For example, housing providers are now working together to produce joint memorandums of understanding (Greater Manchester) or Compacts (Sheffield City Region) focused on developed collaborative plans to meet the needs of the local housing market with an emphasis on more affordable housing and challenging national housing policy focusing on home ownership.

Social entrepreneurs and innovators

“Look at innovation e.g. social entrepreneurs finding new ways of engaging with people. Is the Local Authority preserving old patterns of provision? The rise of the digital and sharing economies is key; we need to find new ways of ventilating new community entrepreneurs”. (Chief Executive, 2015)

The growth in Smart Cities and Smart Labs (for example Bristol, Manchester, Sheffield) positions social entrepreneurs and innovators as central to developing urban policy and shaping new, often technology based, solutions to issues such as public service reform and an ageing population. However Smart Cities is often discussed as a technological trend rather than, as Robinson states: *“The goal of Smart Cities is to invest in technology in order to create economic, social and environmental improvements. This is an imperative economic and political challenge, not a technology trend”* (Robinson 2015).

Third, Faith sectors and community leaders

A surprising finding from this research was how few of the local government leaders interviewed mentioned the importance of the third and faith sectors and community leaders. One leader stated:

“The VCF sector has an important role to play but is only as strong as it's allowed to be. The Local Authority can listen and create space for the VCF to have a voice and represent communities” (Chief Executive 2015).

The third sector leaders interviewed feel they are an under-utilised resource in city leadership:

I am the Chief Executive of a large organisation. I see my role as one of creating our vision and ambition, setting our strategy.....and leading our role as one of main partners in the city who support disadvantaged and vulnerable people and communities. I have huge knowledge and resources that could be used more effectively to help the city achieve its objectives (Chief executive 2015)

Interestingly individuals who identified community leaders and active citizens as important actors in city leadership were predominately think tank representatives and the active citizens interviewed in this research. These are individuals involved in campaigns both online and within communities, or as part of organisations such as Citizens UK, London Citizens and Northern Citizens. As one interviewee stated:

I think I am seen as a problem; a trouble maker. I'm not taken seriously. But I am passionate about this city , it's my home, my children's home, my parents home. I belong to a group of about 300 people wanting to make a difference. We want to play a positive role; we just need to be asked (Community activist, 2015).

Trade Unions

Only a few of those interviewed talked about the role of Trade Unions, with one interviewee stating; *"this city has a history of strong Trade Unionsthat can be a problem for politicians who want to discuss change"* (Chief Executive 2015). However a trade union member interviewed for this research saw the unions playing *".... a big role in protecting members and organisations. But they don't have the time and resources to get involved in these types of discussions"* (Trade Union member, 2015).

Media

A few interviewees talked about the role of social and traditional media. One contributor, who has an active social media presence, saw social media as a significant part of local leadership, stating: *"It's my way of communicating and building a relationship with local people. I think it's helped in asking people to trust me"* (Chief Executive 2015). Conversely an interviewee talked about both social and traditional media as being *"relentlessly hostile, focused on talking the city down, and criticising everything we do"*. It is clear from both contributions that the media plays a key role in city leadership.

Summary

This findings of this research therefore support the view that effective city leadership depends on traditional and non-traditional roles working together (Sotarauta, 2009) and that city leadership potentially allows for new relations to emerge for shaping new and innovative solutions to the 'wicked problems' of urban areas in the 21st century (Sotarauta & Beer, 2015). City leadership moves beyond traditional roles and hierarchies to bring a range of actors together to achieve shared outcomes. As Stimson et al. (2009) state:

Leadership at the local scale is seen to be focused on the goal of improving economic-and potentially other- outcomes; it tends to be collaborative rather than hierarchical –that is, it involves collaboration across a number of institutions, individuals and firms, and it has a distinct long term dimension

Key actors in city leadership may vary in each city, with a reliance on “those who can be bothered”, but this research identifies a consistent set of city leaders. These are the democratic leaders, working collaboratively with business, academic, public sector, third and faith sectors, community activists and social entrepreneurs. At its best, this approach to leadership energises each actor. As the following participant states:

It's really exciting. We are talking about what's best for this city and region with each other, sharing ideas. We know we have to get better at this; we have just agreed to do some developmental work on collaborative leadership. That's never happened before (Third sector leader 2015).

The excellence of human resource and the quality of skills within a city and place are critical. There are strains of conducting place leadership on an individual's time, resource and career development (Gray & Sinclair, 2005) which can limit the extent to which someone can commit to thinking about the leadership of place alongside being a leader within their own organisation. To this end, the concept of 'slack resources' (Stimson et al., 2009) has been adopted to describe the availability of individuals who possess the skills, commitment and means to focus primarily on place issues (Sotarauta and Beer, 2015).

Section 3 “Being clever is not enough” What do we need local leaders to do?

“Being clever is not enough. A range of talents or aptitudes is required by contemporary (place) leaders” (Maddock 2009).

Having identified that city/place based leadership involves a range of local actors and organisations, the research went on to consider the characteristics of effective city leadership in England, within the current policy context.

All those interviewed talked about city leadership being different from organisational leadership, with the following quote summarising many of the views articulated:

Place based leadership is different from organisational leadership. We now need system wide place based leadership, which is about influencing others. This is a different mind-set and approach to that developed thorough organisational leadership, for example the Town Hall, which relies still on a command and control culture (Chief Executive 2015).

Yet when asked what the characteristics of effective city leadership are, answers were largely cautious and tentative. As one interviewee stated:

“I can tell you what I don’t like. But I am not sure what I want. I want direction and inclusion. Can we do both?” (Public sector leader 2015)

This research did however identify a number of common characteristics, arising from those interviewed and also from the academic literature which underpins effective city leadership. These are explored in more detail below.

Characteristics of effective city/place leadership

1. The ability to mobilise local assets

Perhaps the strongest message from this research is that all participants talked extensively about the core task of city leadership being to mobilise local assets:

“ Unleash the potential of the city.....local leadership is about inspiring people, taking people with you, helping us face the challenges together and be optimistic about the future”(Third Sector Leader 2015).

“Local leadership is about mobilising the talent of your place. It’s not all about inward investment. It’s about the offer of the place; the assets, what we already have and how we can work together for success” (Political Leader 2015)

This theme of mobilising local actors and assets is found in most academic definitions of place based leadership. Sotarauta and Beer (2015) describe place leadership as:

The mobilisation and co-ordination of activities of independent actors to achieve local, community or regional aspirations. Leaders as individuals, and groups of individuals, tend to possess a greater range and depth of assets - including commitment to advancing the region - than other actors.

Underpinning this view is the belief that place matters and that each place is different, in history, identity, assets, challenges and resources. This means that different solutions are required for different places:

“We need to recognise that the history, geography, culture of any given locality isn’t neutral...you can never take solutions from place to place...we need to learn how to do things in each place” (Political Leader 2015).

“There are distinctive issues in each city. The challenge is to understand this and build the right solutions”. (Chief Executive 2015).

In their report on *Global competition, local leadership* (2010) PWC interviewed over 40 senior leaders from cities all over the world to discuss effective city leadership. The report suggests that there *“....are a number of different asset groups, or capitals, that form the basis for developing a strategic agenda that will take a city forward”* and identifies six different types of capital, which are:

- Intellectual and people capital –people and knowledge
- Democratic capital- participation and consultation
- Cultural capital -values, behaviours and public expressions
- Environmental capital- natural resources

- Technical capital- infrastructure
- Financial capital- money and assets

The report emphasises the inter-connectivity between capital and the need to take a holistic approach to leadership, and suggests that city leaders need to identify their strengths in each of the categories, eliminate their weaknesses, and set a vision for the future.

Gibney, in a speech at Birmingham Business School (2016) recommended that to develop effective local leadership, places need to focus on the “*effective integration, sharing and leverage of local assets*”. Many of those interviewed for the research talked about using an asset rather than deficit based approach to city leadership:

“Politics and leadership is about discourse, involving others, enabling entrepreneurship, using an asset rather than deficit based approach to build the local story” (Political Leader, 2015).

However this research found no comprehensive assessment of the assets of a city using the concept of a range of capitals and in fact identified a strong concern that some assets are being ignored, under-utilised or marginalised. A number of interviewees talked about their concerns that their city was unaware of local assets, with statements such as:

We seem to talk about the risks and not a lot about the opportunities. We talk about the cuts and not the wealth...always seems a glass half empty.....this city is full of brilliant people, businesses and organisations. We hardly ever talk about them (Business Leader 2015).

2. The ability to perform on the global and national stages.

All those interviewed talked about the importance of local leadership being able to understand and operate effectively within a global world:

“The challenge is for the city to organise itself to be effective in a global world, with the need to build alliances, work with partners across boundaries and value diversity” (Chief Executive 2015).

“Leaders need to always think global, and learn to work with big players”. (Political Leader 2015).

This reflects international and national literature on what makes effective city leadership, with authors such as Barber stating that “... *only pragmatic problem solving by mayors ...promises a sustainable global future*” (Barber, 2015). The OECD examined four international mid-to-higher ranking cities in Europe in order to draw out common leadership traits and share lessons of good practice. It found that effective place leaders have a good understanding of the global and local economy; are popular public figures with a positive outlook, are hard-working; are able to connect with local people in a way that makes them feel valued; are influential in engaging a wide-range of stakeholders for gathering resources and promoting efficiency via partnership working, and are adept at foreseeing future challenges in order to develop a strategic purpose (OECD, 2015).

When asked how they developed their understandings of global business and politics, many local government leaders talked about the important role of local (particularly multi-national) business as well as Universities. However other leaders, particularly those from other public sector and the third sector organisations, raised concerns about local ‘international strategies’ , and indicated that the LEPs and councils seemed reluctant to have broad and open conversations about these strategies. Whilst the ability to operate effectively on the global and national stage is seen as an essential characteristic of successful city leadership, ensuring that “*the city gets a profile, is recognised as having a lot to offer...gets recognition*” (Business Leader 2015), this research identified a need for more collaborative and local discussions on the strategic choices a city has and the advantages and disadvantages of each choice. In summary, the complexity of the global stage requires further discussion.

3. The creation of platforms for insight, dialogue and collaboration

“It’s a fairly utopian dream, but I would like to see structures whereby the people of Sheffield ...are given a real say in its leadership. For this to become a reality we need to find real structures which can facilitate involvement beyond the usual suspects (Third sector leader, 2015).

Another key and consistent finding of this research is the need for city leaders to facilitate a form of ‘*inclusive and deliberative dialogue focused on the city*’ (Faith Leader, 2016). This finding supports academic literature which emphasises that effective place leaders are those who hold power but are also willing to share power (Sotarauta & Beer, 2015), as well

as understanding the 'civic consciousness' (Liddle, 2011) or motives that drive people to want to become involved "...partnerships work best when people and organisations are not compelled by authority to work with one another, but do so because they want to" (Kerslake Report, 2015).

Many of those interviewed talked about the need for local leadership to deepen their insight and understanding of the city and communities within cities. As one interviewee stated;

"They are out of the city all the time, talking about devolution, or HS2, or just meeting ministers. I don't think they have a clue what's happening in local communities. They said that cuts aren't having an impact on communities. They need to come to my organisation, or visit the food banks, or just look at the number of homeless on the streets" (Third Sector Leader 2016).

Participants in this research consistently emphasised the need for local leadership to focus on creating the environment for deliberation, where complex local 'wicked issues' can be explored in depth and local solutions emerge from this process, building on the assets of that place. Participants displayed significant interest and enthusiasm for getting involved in debates and decisions about the future of their place and a real desire for more deliberative discussions, both online and in traditional meetings, offering to utilise their knowledge and resources for the collective and common good.

For those leaders committed to effective city leadership, new methods of conversation and communication were identified as essential. The need for face to face meetings remains, and on-line forums for deliberation, innovation, debate and challenge have begun to emerge. One leader talked about the need to empower certain groups to take part in dialogue *"Our city is very diverse but the Black and Asian communities aren't organised. The Local Authority can work with them to help them play a full role in the city"* (Chief Executive 2015) whilst one (Black) community leader interviewed disputed the notion of empowerment, talking rather of the need to: *"Open the closed doors and let more people in"*.

Whilst this research did not have the time or resource to explore in detail examples of platforms for deliberative dialogue, it became clear that some cities are developing their approaches. Sunderland has taken its Community Leadership role seriously for some time,

working to “...create a champions network and have over 300 community connectors for different things ranging from neighbourhoods to business” (Public Sector leader, 2015).

The Co-operative Council movement, in areas such as Lambeth and Oldham, is beginning to see new models of dialogue and co-production emerge, and initiatives such as Leeds Poverty Truth Commission, which utilises the knowledge and skills of those living in poverty to build new policy responses, appear to be having a significant impact. The University of Sheffield is exploring the idea of community assemblies in Sheffield and Portsmouth.

Many of those interviewed identified ‘Commissions’, such as Fairness Commissions, Green City Commissions and Smart City Commissions, as an effective method of considering a complex problem, allowing for national and international expertise as well as local opinions to be heard;

“I think the Fairness Commission has made a real difference. It was about the city working together to agree what we are trying to achieve and how” (Academic Leader, 2015)

The research also identified an increasing interest in citizen led change, with organisations such as the People’s Assembly, Citizens UK, London Citizens, Sheffield *Our Fair City* campaign and the Leeds Poverty Truth Commission focusing on mobilising civic society to challenge local and national leaders, particularly on issues related to poverty and inequality. As Bunyan and Diamond state in their review of the impact of Fairness Commissions:

To this end a consensus- based partnership approach alone (as advocated by most of the Commissions) will not significantly address poverty and inequality. There is also a need for civil society-led adversarial models to be developed in order to compel those who hold power and make decisions to address more radically the problems of poverty and inequality that exist in the UK. (Bunyan and Diamond 2014)

The overarching impression however is that these approaches to increased local deliberation are piecemeal and related to a theme, service or specific initiative, rather than a holistic, integrated approach of the local state conversing and deliberating with its citizens.

4. Creating a vision

The academic literature strongly indicates that in order to reap the rewards that a distributed and collaborative style of leadership can offer, it is essential to develop a common strategic vision for a place and for that vision to be well known, owned and underpinned by a whole place plan or strategy;

We do not believe vision makes anything happen. Vision without action is useless. But action without vision is directionless and feeble. Vision is absolutely necessary to guide and motivate. More than that, vision, when widely shared and firmly kept in sight, does bring into being new systems. (Meadows et al., 2005)

On this premise, researchers have concluded that place leadership has to have an end target in sight in order to provide a more formative experience for the wider network (Hambleton, 2013). This followed earlier assertions by Stone (1995) who claimed that aimless interaction which does not follow a vision or strategy requires no leadership at all.

Many of those interviewed for this research talked about needing to build a local vision underpinned by a shared understanding of a city, focused on its strengths and weaknesses, history, legacy, opportunities and ambitions.

"I think the concept of distributive leadership, that's brilliant, but you need a really clear vision, journey, focus on where everyone's going" (Public Sector Leader 2015).

The research found however that there is a significant difference of opinion on whether a local vision is necessary and /or achievable. The majority of political and local government leaders dismissed the need for a long-term vision, with comments such as:

We know what the future looks like, its now, but sometimes it's happening somewhere else" (Chief Executive 2015) and "It's not about vision or a plan for the future; it's about a plan for how to position people, communities and spaces to maximise their opportunities for the future, as part of a global world (Political Leader 2015).

One chief executive talked dismissively about the ambition of creating "...a neat tidy mono vision" for a city. When asked if other local leaders and communities needed to have an accessible and articulated vision, local government leaders tended to emphasis the quality of local relationships, with people 'trusting each other' that they are going in the same

direction. Many emphasised a focus on themes or issues as both more accessible and pragmatic: *“We need to talk about specific issues and challenges and agree what success would look like” (Chief Executive 2015)*. However many other leaders, particularly business and third sector leaders, interviewed for this research identified the need for a shared vision for moving forward as critical. Devolution was mentioned by many as a policy initiative that needed to be positioned within a clear vision for the city and city region. As one interviewee stated:

They expect us to just trust them. They don't bother to explain what devolution means, why it's good, why giving power to them is better. I really worry because we are risking the future of this city and its people. (Third Sector Leader 2015)

This tension between a political and local government culture of pragmatism and shorter term planning compared to the need to mobilise, inspire and align partners through a long term shared vision is seen as a key challenge to effective city leadership. Flinders (2016) talks about devolution being a debate about “idealism and pragmatism”, with too much focus on pragmatism and not enough on idealism. One political leader interviewed talked about local politicians *“who do too much on the little things and not enough on the big things (and) being cynical and yet scared of visions” (Political Leader, 2016)*.

5. A compelling local narrative

Another key characteristic of effective city leadership identified by many of those interviewed is the ability to tell a compelling local narrative of a city. This narrative needs to be authentic, rooted in local history and assets, outward facing and ambitious:

“Leaders who are leading anything can ground it in that place to help reinforce identity and connect to other places” (Chief Executive, 2015).

The purpose of the narrative is to mobilise local support, and inspire others:

“Politics and leadership is about discourse, involving others, enabling entrepreneurship, using an asset rather than deficit based approach to build the local story” (Political Leader 2015).

Developing the local story is seen as a significant skill: *“Place based leadership needs a hook/narrative. Something that wins for that place” (Chief Executive 2015)*. For many of

the leaders, this narrative was strongly connected to how they seek to brand their place: *“This is a city of entrepreneurs; it is an entrepreneurial city” (Chief Executive 2015); “This borough is edgy and creative” (Chief Executive 2015) and “This is a city where things are made. It’s our core offer” (Political Leader 2015).* Some leaders saw a definite need to challenge the history and culture of their place when developing their local story *“The history of leadership in a place is important. Myths and legends survive too long” (Chief Executive 2015).*

Some of those interviewed mentioned the impact of the devolution agenda in accelerating this need to articulate the local story *“We have to be able to sell our place to get their (Ministers) trust” (Chief Executive 2016).* Many of those interviewed saw the process of developing a local story as a ‘work in progress’ and some identified a need for more time and support in helping them shape this narrative *“I want to sound authentic, and represent what my city has to offer as well as I can. I’m not sure that I am doing that as well as I should be yet” (Political Leader 2015).* Sunderland for example, is investing in a shared initiative to build the local story of place, as a platform for further developments related to devolution and change

6. The commitment to tackle the ‘wicked issues’ together

Hambleton & Bullock (1996; in Hambleton, 2014,) suggests place leaders have a collective responsibility to address the most complex issues which *“fall between areas of interest... [by] bring[ing] together the right mix of agencies to tackle a particular problem”.* Many argue that place leaders must contribute towards the ‘bigger picture’ and tackle the most deep-rooted social problems that face their communities (Kerslake Report, 2014).

Many of those interviewed for this research stated that devolution and austerity require local areas to urgently discuss the ‘wicked issues’ with a focus on developing shared understandings of causes and solution. Many civic leaders talked about the dominance of economic growth in local strategic thinking and use of policy resources, with less focus on issues such as the impact of welfare changes, inequality and the wider agenda of public service reform. The following quote is representative of many views articulated:

They talk as if the economy will solve everything. It’s like Rome’s burning; people are losing their jobs and homes, but we don’t talk about how to cope with the cuts in welfare, or improve schools, or get more houses (Faith Leader 2015).

Some of those interviewed also began to suggest that an integrated plan for a place was necessary:

We need one plan. There must be about 400 right now. There's a new plan every day. I can't be bothered to read them anymore. And it's one plan for the city, not a plan for health, or transport, or the economy. Everything's connected (Business Leader 2015).

Speeches from Chris Ham, of the Kings Fund and John Gibney (University of Birmingham) also highlight a need for integrated, horizon city and city region plans:

The public health plan should be part of a city wide plan for the economy and public services as a whole....the plan should set out a vision for the future (of the city) with clear goals and priorities.....reflecting the local context and needs and wants of the public (Ham, 2016)

Inclusiveness in strategic thinking- the extent to which different interacting policies are embraced within an overarching trans-regional strategic development framework.... (and) the degree of harmonisation ...to which each policy is designed to enhance (rather than inhibit) other policy agendas (Gibney, 2016).

7. Valuing and facilitating disruption and innovation

Within a policy environment which is continually reshaped, it is considered important for place leaders to be flexible and to think beyond the limits of any previously defined boundaries (Hambleton 2015). Lowndes and Squires (2013) explored the need for greater local creativity in policy making and public service design as a response to public sector cuts, stating: *"Moving away from organisational, thematic or professional orientations towards a whole place approach is difficult.the key challenge therefore is how to 'design in' creativity"*. A strong message from this research is the escalating need for local leaders to act as catalysts for change and if necessary, disrupt the status quo, which many identified as both unsustainable and perhaps ineffective:

Look at innovation e.g. social entrepreneurs finding new ways of engaging with people. Is the Local Authority preserving old patterns of provision? The rise of the digital and sharing economies is key; we need to find new ways of ventilating new community entrepreneurs (Chief Executive 2015).

Many of the local authority leaders recognised their role in acting as catalysts for change:

The Council is about enabling things to happen and the visible managerial act of permission is important. For example our local street markets are successful because the council did not set them up but enabled them to be set up (Chief Executive 2015).

However there is a clear perception by many of those participating in this research that the “*status quo is entrenched*” (Political Leader 2015) and some interviewees talked about a “*culture of blame*” (Third Sector Leader, 2015) with tensions between politicians, local government officers, local partners and citizens perceived as resistant to change. Others talked about politicians being over cautious; “*...it’s all at the level of which library should we close, it’s not at the level of where we could be*” (Business Leader 2015).

The strongest message from the research is that devolution and austerity both demand, and conversely, provide the opportunity for innovation in economic, public and social policy. However in order to face up to the demand and/or capitalize on this opportunity new cultures and formats for innovation need to be developed at the local level. These need to be inclusive, mobilising local talent and diversity, and purposeful.

8. A culture of shared visibility and accountability

Kerslake (2015) emphasised that an effective leader will continue to endorse a positive narrative to those on the outside looking in and refuse to consider themselves or their place as victims. Stoker (2004) submits that effective leaders are those who acknowledge their role as ‘*the face of the place*’. Alexander (2010, 2011) found this to be all the more pertinent in an era of social media that provides the opportunity for greater access and exposure to the public. This has also been found to be important for making a positive and lasting impression on a national and international stage and for attracting inward investment opportunities from external sources. Hambleton et al. (2013) refer to the need for leaders to ‘sell their city’, although this does run the risk of leaders concentrating too much of their efforts externally at the expense of local communities (Hambleton et al., 2013).

These ideas have had a major influence on the recent introduction of a mayoral system in the UK as it is argued that mayors are more likely to champion a city’s cause and provide greater visibility to its leadership (Warwick Commission, 2012). On the other hand,

however, risks have also been exposed in relation to those “...whose popularity obscures their inadequacy in leading their communities” (Warwick Commission, 2012).

Those interviewed for this research emphasised the need for city leaders to be visible and accountable. Many mentioned the differences between Council Leaders and Mayors, with those working in Mayoral areas stating that Mayors have enhanced visibility and accountability;

It's easier for a Mayor to reach out to people as it's not just about the council. For example when challenging a local FE college it recognised itself as accountable to a Mayor (Political Leader 2015)

But the general view is that a leader can be visible whichever governance model is adopted, and it is about the need to recognise the importance of visibility, and to be committed to building the local and global profile:

If it's about succeeding in a global world, then the local leader needs to be able to head up that ambition (Political Leader, 2015).

Whilst many of those interviewed recognised the risk identified by Beer (2013) of the “blurring of roles and responsibilities” in collaborative city leadership, all of those interviewed talked about the need to develop a local culture of shared visibility and accountability. Most interviewees were pragmatic about this issue, acknowledging that politicians are always accountable through the democratic mandate: “Accountability will always be complex. Politicians will always seem to be the most accountable and we need to be positive about that” (Political Leader, 2015), but agreeing that a culture of shared accountability will be more effective when leading cities particularly in a period of change:

This city will succeed or fail because of us; are we leading it well, are we being ambitious enough, are we working together as well as we should do? We are all responsible” (Third Sector leader 2015)

9. Emotional intelligence and empathy

Interestingly, in this era of metro mayors and a focus on charismatic leaders, the issue of personality did not feature large in this research, other than a concern about the potential

rise in populist politics. Yet all those interviewed emphasised the need for leaders to be seen to believe in their city;

You have an emotional connection to your place....how we frame issues and our place is really important....it about how leaders sustain support for themselves while having a broader vision (Chief Executive, 2015).

Research also tends to find that the best leaders are those who have a strong attachment to their place and their people, and according to Sotarauta & Beer (2015), being a long term resident of a place is an important factor in being able to lead it well. Reasons for this include having a good understanding of a locality's needs as well as being personally impassioned for achieving its success (OECD, 2015). In a similar vein, it has been suggested that leaders need to develop a form of 'passionate reason' (Hoggett, 2009, Hambleton, 2013), referring not only to having a strong personal connection with their place but also forging similar affiliations for the place amongst residents.

Hambleton (2014, p.6) speaks of the need for brave leaders':

The civic leader interested in creating an inclusive city will welcome social and economic enterprises that enhance the quality of life of local residents. But they will also stand firm against those power economic interests – what I describe as place-less leaders – that are more than ready to exploit local people.

Female leaders interviewed were more likely to talk about leadership cultures, the dangers of 'group think' and the need for empathy and emotional intelligence in building coalitions, collaborations and innovation.

Summary

In answering the question, *what does effective city leadership look like?* This research identified nine key characteristics, which are the ability to:

1. Mobilise local assets
2. Perform effectively on the global and national stage
3. Create local platforms for insight dialogue and collaboration
4. Create a shared vision for the city
5. Articulate a compelling local narrative focused on ambitions and assets

6. Tackle the 'wicked issues' together, in a culture which is outward looking, future focused and committed to integrated planning and delivery
7. Value and facilitate disruption and innovation, operate as a catalyst for change,
8. Create a culture of shared visibility and accountability
9. Demonstrate emotional intelligence and empathy

The research also found many examples of these characteristics being utilised to develop effective and innovative approaches to city leadership. These include:

- Greater collaboration between city leaders, particular as a consequence of the devolution agenda, with politicians, business leaders, NHS , council, third and faith sectors and other public sector leaders exploring new approaches to economic growth and public sector reform.
- Greater recognition of the role of local Mayors and city democratic leaders as city/place leaders, with politicians developing their skills in partnering with and other institutions.
- The increased use of deliberative forums for complex issues, such as Fairness Commissions, Smart City commissions and Green Commissions.
- New structures for local dialogue arising out of, for example, the Cooperative Council movement in London, community Connectors in Sunderland, *Our Fair City campaign* in Sheffield and Poverty Truth Commission in Leeds.
- Greater recognition and involvement of local civic capacity and commitment, including the third and faith sector and citizen groups such as citizens UK.
- Greater involvement of social innovators, through initiatives such as Smart City Labs.
- Greater use of online forums for communication and dialogue.

The research does also, however, identified significant gaps and risks in current approaches to city leadership.

Section 4: The risk of absent and poor city leadership

Beer and Clower talk about the risks of absent or poor place based leadership, stating:

...the available evidence can lead us to conclude that places with good leadership are likely to be more successful economically than those where leadership is not developed, and...the failure to create leadership opportunities locally will impede the development of many communities (2015).

They go on to identify seven key characteristics of 'miscued leadership', ranging from no attempt to engage with change or poorly conceived change; a failure to exhibit task or achievement orientation; leadership roles filled by a small group with narrow interests or conversely a leadership group that is too diffuse; no attempt to build relationships and maintain the emotional side of community engagement, and a lack of local resources focused on driving change.

This research shares some of the concerns that Beer and Clower raise. These concerns focus around the role and abilities of local politicians; the reluctance of many organisational leaders to consider themselves as city/place leaders; concerns about diversity and the risk of populist politicians. The impact of devolution is also explored.

Council centric democratic leadership

The need for connected place-based democratic leadership has already been identified in this report. Yet many of those interviewed questioned the ability of local democratic leaders to undertake their role as democratic leaders of a city. These concerns were focused around time and resources: *"Historically, everyone will have looked to the democratically elected Councillors... because of the current context... they can't do everything anymore"* (Third Sector Leader, 2015) but interviewees also identified a culture of 'council centric leadership' with a tendency for democratic leaders to focus on running the council: being too inward looking; talking just to local authority staff or other local authorities (for example whilst forming Combined Authorities); lacking transparency and accountability; too focused on cuts to services; adopting tactical rather than strategic leadership roles and at their worst, primarily motivated by self-interest. As one interviewee stated: *"leaders can be too parochial and self-interested. We need to challenge this"*

(*Political Leader, 2015*). Another interviewee talked about the need to separate council and city leadership:

The right outcomes for an organisation, for example the Local Authority, might not be the right outcomes for a place. The thesis that if an organisation is successful then the place is successful is not true. (Chief Executive, 2015)

Standing on the side-lines

Another key finding relates to the role of other local leaders. The research shows local democratic leaders increasingly well supported by local business leaders (through Local Enterprise Partnerships and local business forums) , but less evidence of strong supportive relationships with other sectors, such as academia, NHS, police and voluntary, community and faith sectors. There appears to be a range of factors behind this. In some areas local democratic leadership have failed to invest in building relationships with some sectors (for example most cities have formal business forums but no such forum for the Third Sector). This research also identified a strong sense that many organisational and business leaders do not see themselves as city/place leaders. Many local leaders and organisations demonstrated a tendency to ‘*stand on the side-lines*’ as local politicians struggle to find new ideas and solutions to challenges such as economic productivity, public service reform and environment sustainability. This was evidenced by statements such as:

“My role is to listen and then whichever direction the city is going in, I then have to think what’s the implication for me?”(Public Sector Leader, 2016).

Big institutions in the city are almost always separated from each other. They collaborate on certain things but in the medium to long term future they haven’t included each other in their plans....the university is often doing what the university does, same for hospitals and police. (Academic Leader, 2015)

‘Police and health can seem very inward focused; looking at collaboration across their own systems rather than with partners in a place’ (Political Leader, 2015)

‘Schools, colleges and universities are focused on survival; they say they have enough to do’ (Chief Executive, 2015).

Diversity and challenge

Hambleton (2011) speaks of a new kind of 'civic leadership' which is both inspirational and collaborative and "*invites leaders to move outside of their organisation... to engage with the concerns of place*". This suggests that an effective place leader is someone who appreciates the value that diversity brings to place development by fostering dialogue and innovation (OECD, 2015). Similarly, Hambleton (2011) claims that diversity within local leadership "*can provide exciting opportunities for the new approaches of social discovery*".

The Warwick Commission (2012) emphasised that being an effective local leader is about having the 'right team' of people working alongside you and the need for leaders to value "*...the presence of those who challenge them and who are more likely to contribute towards transformational change*" (Warwick Commission, 2012).

Many of those interviewed for this research raised the issue of diversity, with statements such as: "*There is an over reliance on a small group of middle aged white men*" (Third Sector Leader, 2016) and "*I think there is a growing sense that leadership in the city is not a reflection of the make-up of the city because, of course, there's too many middle aged blokes like me*" (Chief Executive, 2015).

There is some evidence of initiatives to strengthen diversity in city leadership, encouraging greater representation from women, black and Asian communities and young people, for example in political roles or in young people's assemblies. However this was not systematic, and concerns were raised for example about issues of gender in economic growth, with women in Sheffield producing a report on '*Economic Growth, will women benefit?*' aiming to challenge current approaches from the LEP as lacking gender awareness.

Populist politics

"What connects many-not all- of these (populist) figures is a rejection on the political system as it currently stands. The new populists don't simply say that the ruling party has failed and now the opposition should have a turn. They insist that the entire system is broken" (Freedland, Guardian 2016).

In line with international debates on the rise of 'populist politics', some of those interviewed raised serious concerns about what they perceived as an increased risk of populist candidates and politicians, either through the metro-mayor route or because

devolution may create more remote and individualised roles such as Police and Crime and Schools Commissioners. The following statement is indicative of those concerns:

“I do worry about who is round the corner. I know people are fed up; they don’t trust us; they don’t believe us. You just need a clever operator to capitalise on that distrust” (Political Leader, 2015).

Devolution; unleashing potential or elite to elite leadership based on a culture of paternalism, deference and the pro-growth governance?

“My feeling is that devolution is bringing out the best and worse in us. I think people are passionate and genuine but they are also being elitist and patronising” (Third Sector Leader, 2015.)

Throughout this research devolution was seen by most of the participants as a positive development with enormous potential, but ironically most participants also used it as an example of poor city/place leadership.

A key criticism is that devolution has seriously lacked inclusive and deliberative dialogue, and many stated that Devolution feels like an ‘elite to elite’ conversation between a few local leaders and central government, resulting in a deal that is presented in ‘technocratic language’ overly focused on the economy:

“You aren’t allowed to question devolution. It’s the only way. But nobody seems to really understand it” (Business Leader 2015).

The failure to involve others or tell the wider story of devolution is seen by many to have disempowered local people, and as Flinders (2016) highlighted in a recent talk, without local support, Devolution Deals are like *“boats leaving the harbour with big holes in the side”*. In the 2015/16 consultation on the Sheffield City Region Devolution Deal, only 245 people and organisations, out of a population of 1.8 million, responded and respondents were overwhelmingly male (73%), white (95%) with few under 25 year olds.

The concern about elite models of leadership is also mentioned in relation to the emerging city region governance structures, in particular Combined Authorities, City Region Mayors and LEPs. One interviewee talked about LEPs *“as self selected, self interested business and public sector leaders” (Business Leader, 2015)* and many expressed concern about the

narrow membership of Combined Authorities “*Am I right? It’s just the politicians? Couldn’t it involve other leaders from other sectors?*” (Business Leader, 2015). . Concern was also raised by interviewees that by concentrating on the city region, local government leaders have lost their connections with their cities and neighbourhoods , and that there has been a marginalisation of the third sector, faith sector, smaller public sector and less established business leaders, many of whom want to offer support and ideas to local leaders.

Issues of power and values underpin much of the research findings in regard to how a city is led. Many of the political and local government leaders interviewed for this research talked about deliberation and collaboration around devolution as “*time and energy consuming approaches that only a few wanted to participate in*”, or “*too slow for government ...jeopardising negotiations*” and the risk of “*the lowest common dominator solutions*” (Chief Executive, 2015). Behind some of these comments is a sense of city leadership as a model of representative leadership where a leader utilises their authoritative stance to “*demand from others the support we need to maximise the potential of our place*” (Schmuecker, 2012.). Flinders (2016) talks about devolution discussions being conducted with a ‘*paternalistic shadow*’ and some of those interviewed for this research raised concerns about devolution being conducted within a *culture of deference*, particularly in the north of England , where it was expected that established leaders knew best.

Wood, Bailey and Lyons (2015 p.1) in their review of devolution arguments found that;

The most common argument for devolution is that it will achieve greater economic growth, creating cities that will stimulate regional growth that contributes to the national purse. On average, this argument makes up 41.6 % of arguments in documents proposing devolution...discussion of other potential aims of devolution is much more limited. Making the UK a more democratic country is discussed in a smaller 12.9% of arguments and addressing inequalities in wealth and power between regions in only 7.45% of arguments... discussion of downsides and risks make up only 2.9% of arguments

The local government leaders interviewed for this research identified achieving economic growth through devolution and negotiation of devolution deals as their top priority. They

articulated the main purpose of devolution as having the 'levers of power' to ensure their place is able to succeed economically in a global world.

Political and local government leaders also articulated a strong commitment to trying to shape economic growth so that it benefits local people, with many (particularly leaders in London) expressing rising concern about the impact of income inequality on local people: *"The big issues in London are equality, the blight of foreign investment. Where property is seen as a liquid asset..." (Chief Executive, 2015)*. This concern about inequality is reflected in debates within the Core Cities group, focused on 'Good Growth' (defined as 'economically, socially and environmentally sustainable growth' (Core Cities 2016)) and the need to reform public services so that local people can access the opportunities presented by economic growth

Great cities must be empowered to design public service provision in accordance with their labour market influence- integrating services at scale around need and opportunity to deliver genuine economic inclusion. Core cities 'unique capacity to connect people to economic growth will ensure that public services move people's lives forward (Core Cities 2016).

Pro-growth led urban governance

A significant number of the civic and other public sector leaders interviewed for this research identified real concerns about the dominance of what one interviewee called *'traditional trickle down economic thinking'* (Third Sector Leader, 2015) on discussions and action related to devolution and city leadership. Pierre (2011) discusses the risks of what he terms pro-growth governance, stating:

Pro- growth governance is probably the easiest (governance model) and least challenging to understand. The simplicity of the model is to some extent the genius of it; economic growth is something which everyone in the community benefits from....At the same time, it is the governance model which has the biggest potential for entailing a loss of democracy in a city. This is because the pro-growth governance tends to bring the political elite close to the down-town (business) elite... (Pierre 2011).

Building on Stone's study of Atlanta, Georgia USA (1989), Pierre outlines the risk of business and political elites forming an 'urban regime' focused on generating wealth but not distributing it. Pierre consequently raises significant concerns about economic growth policy dominating urban policy and leadership.

The culture of growth-led governance was identified as a major challenge by interviewees in this research, in particular those leaders who hold a real desire to tackle the growing issues of inequality, poverty and lack of social mobility.

Section 5: Summary

Beer and Clower suggest that “...communities, can and should recognize leadership deficits and take action to redress the problem” (2015). This research found consistent concerns in regard to leadership deficits within cities, alongside an almost complete lack of awareness of some elements of effective city leadership. This raises significant concerns as devolution delegates’ greater responsibilities and roles to local city and city region leaders.

This research, alongside studies such as that by Beer and Clower and the OECD (2015), provides the beginnings of a framework by which to assess the strength of local leadership. This may help shape the approaches adopted by the first set of metro-mayors. Although there are many examples of real progress in developing local leadership skills and approaches, there are also too many examples of poor or absent leadership in cities. The participants in this research all agree that this presents a significant risk to those cities.

Conclusion

This research has brought together practitioner and academic knowledge to explore further the role and impact of local place based leaders, with a focus on city leadership in the current policy context of austerity and devolution.

The findings are challenging for local leaders. Local leadership is seen to be critical to the success of a city. This supports the academic work which argues that place based leadership is a critical factor in whether a place will ‘*flourish or languish*’ (Rodriquez-Pose, 2013) and that the absence of effective place based leadership is a critical risk to places (Beer and Clower, 2013). It also builds on the work of Hambleton (2015) who argues that local leaders can, and should, play a key role in shaping inclusive and sustainable cities.

The research demonstrates that real progress can be achieved in cities and regions where local leadership is:

- Collaborative, consisting of key formal and informal players in that city/, facilitated by a culture of democratic leadership of place.
- Seriously focused on mobilising local potential and assets.
- Able to perform on the global and national stage.
- Creates local platforms for dialogue and deliberation.
- Communicates a shared vision for the city, which guides and motivates.

- Articulates a strong and compelling local narrative.
- Tackles the 'wicked issues' together, in a culture which is outward looking and future focused, and committed to integrated planning.
- Operates as a catalyst for change, nurturing innovation and willing to challenge the status quo.
- Develops a culture of shared visibility and accountability
- Demonstrates emotional intelligence and empathy.

Demonstrating these leadership skills is not about personalities or even roles (for example, it's not dependant on implementation of the metro-mayor model) but is more about effective 21st century urban leadership and governance.

The research identifies some powerful examples of city leadership exhibiting some of these characteristics, in particular shaping new approaches to collaborative leadership, building new partnerships, creating new platforms for dialogue, utilising social and technical innovation, reshaping public services and creating new solutions to entrenched problems. Devolution has helped to energise these initiatives.

The research does however raise concerns about the amount of evidence that demonstrates poor or absent city leadership, in particular: a resistance to developing a local vision and narrative; a failure to understand and mobilise local resources; a lack of inclusivity and innovation; a failure to act effectively on the global stage and a lack of shared and visible accountability. Recent approaches to devolution appear to be having a damaging effect on city leadership, concentrating power into the hands of a few 'civic elites'; creating remote, poorly understood governance structures and overly focused on traditional approaches to economic growth, which are often presented in inaccessible and technocratic language. Additionally, too many local leaders appear to still see their role as leading their organisation (Councils, Universities, NHS, Police, Businesses, etc), remaining in their silos and cynical about the possibility of integrated, visionary and innovative place based leadership. Others within the civic elite (politicians, local government officers, business leaders) seem to rely still on notions of representative leadership where '*they know best*'.

A key suggestion is that a framework for assessing the quality of local leadership and providing the basis for taking action to rectify problems could be developed to help cities

develop good local leadership, utilising this research alongside the work of others. This seems particularly relevant as the first round of metro-mayors will be elected in 2017.

City leadership could, and should be behaving differently, and there is a sense that the public, civic society, the business community and academia are just waiting for this to happen. The view that emerges from this research is that city leadership has to facilitate new approaches to tackling the big issues facing Britain today (Brexit, population growth, the global economy, climate change, changes in the employment markets, ageing populations and rising inequalities), and that traditional approaches to designing public policy, within the corridors of Whitehall or local Town Halls , fails to undertake the core task of successful local leadership, which is to mobilise the resources, knowledge and civic commitment of local people and organisations. Finding new, inclusive, innovative and localised solutions which are based on deliberation, local insights and local assets requires politicians and government officers at all levels to act more effectively as facilitators, enablers and guardians.

Beer and Clower (2013 p.15) find, in their review of academic literature on place based leadership, that “*scholarship on the leadership of places remains an under developed field*”. They also state: “*There is increasing evidence that local leadership is fundamental to the success of cities, regions and communities*”. There is room for much more research on city/place based leadership, and in particular cross disciplinary research. Regular joint academic and practitioner conferences are needed to ensure learning and ideas are widely shared and developed, shaping public policy as devolution and austerity unfold and profound decisions about cities, city regions and their diverse communities are made.

Many thanks to those who agreed to be interviewed for this research. I hope you find the report useful. Special thanks to Professor Gordon Dabinett, Charlotte Hoole and Kay Kirk. This project was made possible through the Crook Public Service Fellowship scheme at the University of Sheffield, generously supported by Professor ADH Crook and the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Impact Accelerator Account.

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