

**KNOWLEDGE IN A ‘SHARED AND INTERDEPENDENT WORLD’: IMPLICATIONS  
FOR A PROGRESSIVE LEADERSHIP OF CITIES AND REGIONS**

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**This is now an accepted and peer reviewed article for European Planning Studies.**

**Subject to final proofing. Forthcoming April/May 2011**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This paper suggests the need for a more penetrating research agenda around the theme of leadership for progressive urban and regional development. Whilst a much improved understanding of the leadership contribution is emerging in the urban and regional studies context, no strong organising discourse has yet surfaced in the debate around the economic and social well-being of cities and regions that might serve as a guide to the development of a more critical research and leadership development agenda going forward. This paper seeks to contribute to debate around theory and practice by exploring the idea that it is *knowledge* ‘writ large’ – how it is created, nurtured, combined and deployed - that lies at the heart of a progressive transformation of cities and regions. And that consequently, we need to think of how leadership works in, for and through these settings alongside a broader understanding of the dynamics of knowledge. The paper draws on recent research and policy literature to present an argument for a re-framed leadership practice across European cities and regions and concludes with suggestions for a new combined and underpinning research agenda.

## **KEY WORDS**

Knowledge; Leadership; Cities and Regions

## INTRODUCTION

Over the last two decades a wide body of research literature across a number of academic disciplines, including geography, economics, business and organisational studies as well as in education and public policy, has served to emphasise that knowledge is an important explanatory feature in the story of social and economic progress – and has been so since our deep history. At the same time there is a renewed and growing interest in the role that leadership plays in the continuing shaping and re-shaping of competitive and yet fair and sustainable places. In attempting to better conceptualise and explain the contribution of (formal) leadership in the transformation of cities and regions – and particularly in the context of the contemporary circumstances of cities and regions experiencing complex social, economic and technological transition - this paper contributes to the discussion around the so-called *leadership of place* by incorporating an account of the dynamics of knowledge.

The paper begins by reflecting on the current state of the leadership and place agenda – and considers the relationship between leadership and knowledge. It moves on to draw on recent contributions across the leadership literature and economic geography to explore the key features and dynamics of knowledge in the context of the shaping and re-shaping of cities and regions. The article does not presume to offer a full explanation but looks to highlight the significance of incorporating the broad knowledge discourse into the argument for a more progressive leadership of cities and regions going forward. The discussion concludes by setting out some thoughts on a new ‘combining’ research agenda going forward around knowledge, place and leadership.

## LEADERSHIP AND PLACE

We live in a shared and interdependent world - where the transformation of modern economy and society associated with globalization, climate change, shifting patterns of demography, and the pace and scale of scientific and technological progress is taking us far beyond previous 'wisdoms' that sought to explain the developmental dynamics of cities and regions in earlier eras (Crosby and Bryson, 2005; Buck et al, 2005; Daniels et al, 2007; Musterd and Murie, 2010). Whilst it is important to avoid an obsession with bounded locale – identified by some researchers as “spatial fetishization” from the analytical perspective (Lewis et al, 2002; Hess, 2004:174) - we nevertheless still remain profoundly attached to place in economic, social, cultural and emotional terms (Beatley and Manning, 1997; Cresswell, 2004; Healey, 2010). At the same time, it is important when attempting to re-frame the leadership debate so that it accommodates the new and emerging developmental conditions that prevail in early 21<sup>st</sup> Century cities and regions, to recognise that 'traditional' leadership research and subsequent practice prescriptions need ultimately to incorporate a broader (geographical) understanding of the dynamics of 'space' and 'place' (see debates for example in, Cresswell, 2004; Meusbürger *et al*, 2008). Since, whilst 'place' differs from the organizational locus for research, and is in many ways a unique setting for leadership (Collinge *et al*, 2010), the danger in seeking to uncover the contribution of leadership within the particular (even if highly differentiated) context of bounded territories such as cities and regions, is that we are led to offer 'place constrained' insights. Clearly, leadership is also observed (and is performed) in spatially unbounded and highly mobile forms in the context, for example, of global knowledge networking. However, for the purpose of making a

workable contribution to re-framed theory and practice, it is sensible to pin down leadership somewhere, even if only briefly – and cities and regions seem a reasonable place to start.

The *leadership of place* question is currently being addressed in part through a re-energised interest in the urban and regional studies research literature in the role that leadership plays in the continuing shaping and re-shaping of neighbourhoods, towns, cities, sub-regions and regions (Stough, 2003; Sotarauta, 2005; Hambleton and Gross, 2007; Gibney et al, 2009; Stimson et al, 2009; Collinge et al, 2010). Whilst there are many factors that need to be taken into account when analysing the development of place(s) – this recent work confirms that the leadership contribution matters and cannot be ignored. At the most general level, it recognises that effective leadership is one of the factors that explains how and why some places are able to adapt to and exploit the opportunities afforded by the complex and rapidly changing social and economic circumstances of the modern world – and also (partly) explains why some places seem better able than others to minimise the disruption that change brings. Moreover, the behavioural tradition(s) in human geography and economics suggest that economic and social outcomes are influenced in a variety of ways and sometimes ‘irrationally’ by individual(s) or group behaviours(s) and motivations(s) – and hence urban and regional systems cannot be considered as ‘people-free zones’. This wider debate is ongoing but the implication here is that the human dimension in urban and regional development cannot be ignored – and so leadership in one sense can be considered as playing through context-specific behavioural and process features of the wider relational phenomenon that is place (see the discussion in Collinge and Gibney, 2010).

In terms of addressing economic and social disparity at sub-national level, late 20<sup>th</sup> century policy approaches in local and regional development proved problematic across the board in terms of their outcomes. The academic and policy literatures point up the various ‘deficits’ and unintended consequences that have occurred and that continue to occur. There is now a heightening concern, for example, that the development of the knowledge-based economy (KBE) across Europe may leave ‘gaps’ - in essence certain industries, certain places and certain communities are in danger of being left behind as they seek to engage with the rapid process of economic change (Hutton, 2004; Burfitt and Ferrari, 2008; Chapain et al, 2009; Gibney et al, 2009a). The continuing shift in policy towards public/private sector partnerships and joint ventures, changes in the nature and emphasis of national and local KBE policies across Europe (high technology corridors, competitiveness poles, Science Cities, Digital Cities, creative knowledge-regions and so on) and in approaches to participation, citizenship and accountability have also radically altered the environment for knowledge creation and its exploitation in Europe.

At the city and regional level there is evidence of a generalised misalignment between so-called ‘new’ economy employment being generated and the capacity of local communities to exploit these new opportunities (Amin et al, 2000; Marcuse and Van Kempen, 2002; Perrons, 2004 and 2007; Burfitt and Ferrari, 2008; Musterd and Murie, 2010). And in the UK, for example, a body of recent work across the social sciences suggests that there is a question mark hanging over whether the last decade or more of ‘Third Way’ political leadership has had any sustainable impact upon the levels of social and economic disadvantage that are still found across UK cities and regions – in terms, for example, of whether it has managed to effectively address

worklessness and poverty, limited social mobility, the longstanding issues around poor levels of secondary level educational attainment and access to Higher Education in some parts of the UK and the broader question of the economic (dis)-empowerment of some communities (Buck et al, 2005; Jackson et al, 2007; Brewer et al, 2008; Gibney et al, 2009b; Haddad and Bance, 2009). The effectiveness of leadership approaches are of course only a partial explanation for any of this – but these inconsistencies in regard to policy impacts over the last decade, combined with the 2008/2009 international credit crisis (Parkinson, 2009), have served to put formal political and executive leadership and informal leadership at all levels under the spotlight.

Moving on from the generalised leadership experience of economic development, planning and regeneration of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, recent contributions in the academic literature (see for example, Stough, 2003; Gains, 2009; Gibney et al., 2009a; Stimson et al 2009) and recent policy oriented research and reflection around local and regional leadership in the UK (Benneworth, 2007; CEL, 2007; Thomson, 2007; Gibney and Murie, 2008; Trickett et al, 2008) have begun to develop a perspective on sub-national leadership that differs from traditional organizational or firm leadership. This has been termed a ‘new’ leadership of place associated with debates about economic, social and political change in the UK and other advanced economies. It connects with government agendas about cross boundary working in public services (Huxham and Vangen, 2000; Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002; Vangen and Huxham, 2003; Sullivan et al, 2009), the debate around the criticality (or otherwise) of relational interdependencies where place meets economy (Cooke and Morgan, 1998; Healey, 2007 and 2010) and the ‘new’ place-shaping role of local government and the European Commission (Lyons, 2007; CEC, 2009b).

Whilst the academic and policy debates continue, formal leaders operating ‘on the ground’ in this new context are reporting through the recent research literature that they are faced with a range of unfamiliar challenges. It seems to be generally agreed that something new is occurring in the wider leadership environment; and whilst at one level differences in leadership style, tone and approach are observable across European cities and regions, (and may be different again across Asia, the US and so on), leaders in many places appear increasingly stretched in terms of their capabilities across a variety of sub-national settings (Trickett et al, 2008; Collinge et al, 2010).

This recent research literature further suggests that there are modern complexities being encountered by leaders outside the single organisational context; formal leaders find themselves representing places as well as/rather than organisations; there are more uncertainties to be accommodated as outcomes are difficult to pin down and there are more unknowns (for example, around the medium term environmental, social and economic impacts of climate change); leaders are increasingly required to stimulate and lead change agendas without formal power but with responsibility; they must accommodate the views of organisations, groups and communities historically excluded or marginalised from the city and regional development debate (consider for example, the role of the National Health Service in the UK in medical technology innovation and in generating improved local public health outcomes; or the engagement of social enterprises with science and technology investment agendas). To illustrate through the lens of the knowledge-based economy, formal leaders dealing with local and regional policy agendas report that they are now faced with, amongst other factors, a range of challenges including increased organisational complexity (new mixes of new global and new national and new local players);



increased technical complexity (working across value chains, supply chains and differentiated innovation models); and involving knowledge that is dispersed and disparate across partners and rivals; scientific and non-scientific actors; customers and non-customers; individuals and organisations (Collinge and Staines, 2009; Gibney et al, 2009a; Macneill and Steiner, 2010). This degree of complexity also seems to echo with the experience of *emergent* or *developmental* public policy challenges that Crosby and Bryson (2005) (drawing on Drath, 2001 amongst others) identify within their ‘shared-power’ world-view. Whilst acknowledging that this is only one view of leadership and that it may be highly context specific, here, the suggestion is that the interrelatedness of complex public policy tasks in a globalised world questions rational hierarchical planning models and requires “actors acting jointly exercising their capabilities related to a problem in order to further their separate and joint aims” (ibid: 18).

Currently, the leadership question is being re-addressed in the urban and regional studies literature that is concerned with explaining the policy ‘deficits’ and ‘missing links’ of the last decade (see overview in Sirak, 2009 amongst others). This work recognises that economic development, planning and regeneration activity is not a precise science and that we need to move beyond the ‘dogma of outputs’ and short term performance obsessed policy ‘turns’.<sup>1</sup> It implies that we need to understand the rationale and effectiveness or otherwise of policy interventions in different terms – and critically through an examination of the role of softer relational interactions in economic development and the power of human agency. And it is here that leadership begins to matter in terms of how some localities appear better able than others to exploit the sometimes chaotic and uncertain processes of social and economic transition and change. Although this discussion is currently somewhat fragmented and is being developed from

different perspectives including around the exploitation of the knowledge-based economy and endogenous growth for competitive advantage (Stough, 2003; Gibney et al, 2009a; Stimson et al, 2009), the relevance of the network paradigm for regional and local leadership (Harmaakorpi and Niukkanen, 2007; Mullins and Van Bortel, 2010), or is concerned with how power and influence play through regional leadership (Sotarauta, 2005; 2009) - it is nevertheless building the evidence base and moving the debate forward. The core message is that in the context of economies and societies trying to make sense of new global economic, social and environmental conditions, and adapt to them, local and regional institutions, wider economic processes, regimes and systems are ultimately conceived of, adapted to, transformed and driven by people and so leadership at all levels – both formal and informal leadership - is part of the story going forward. For as van Winden observes, although bundles of physical assets are important in explaining uneven spatial economic outcomes in the knowledge economy, for example, “Cities are not passive ‘receivers’ of global trends: they can take action to make themselves ‘fit’... through the initiatives of local leaders or coalitions” (van Winden, 2008:198).

## **LEADERSHIP AND KNOWLEDGE IN URBAN AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

There is an ongoing scholarly interest in the nature of leadership. The leadership literature is vast and the definition(s) of leadership and the observations on what constitutes ‘good’ leadership are myriad (see reviews in Storey, 2011; Northouse, 2010). A discussion of competing and overlapping leadership theory, analyses and practice prescriptions offered (transactional, transformational, situational, charismatic and so on) is not the concern of this paper. Suffice to say at this point that to understand leadership is to situate its practice at all

levels within a particular era and context; to consider how it is influenced by the contingencies that pervade a given context – and to note that those in leadership roles (both formal and informal) bring their world-views and personal and professional biographies (and in some extreme cases their brain chemistry) to bear on the jobs that they do; and this mix informs their analysis of, and their approach to, the type of change they wish to effect, why and for whom. How ‘followers’ respond to all of this is also an important part of the equation. Although the measurable added-value of this ‘human touch’ can be difficult to pin down there are undeniable effects nevertheless. From the everyday anecdotal experience of leadership, as well as the deeper insights that are provided in the literature, it is possible to generalise and suggest that in the ‘right’ place at the ‘right’ time and given the ‘right’ conditions all of this mixture comes together to explain at least in part how ideas, projects and programmes as well as progressive policy agendas are conceived of, shaped and moved forward – albeit with variable and divergent outcomes (Grint, 2000; Storey, 2011; Northouse, 2010; Mabey and Finch-Lees, 2008)<sup>ii</sup>. From the urban and regional development perspective, none of this is (nor should it be) value free of course. Critically, for the purpose of the discussion presented in this paper, and from the perspective of offering up a proposition concerning future research that can inform leadership in and for urban and regional development, the philosophical ‘front-line’ is most easily identifiable at the frontier between the ‘shared world’ turn in leadership studies (Crosby and Bryson, 2005a; Crosby, 2005b; Waddock, 2007)<sup>iii</sup> - and the performance oriented approach to organisational leadership underpinned by what some have characterised as ‘under-socialised’ pseudo-Darwinian arguments that are too heavily focused on ‘efficient’ techno-economic outputs, the competitiveness of the firm and the pursuit of returns to shareholders (see for example the insights provided in Mangham, 2004)<sup>iv</sup>. At this point, it is helpful to consider briefly how

leadership, knowledge and urban and regional development discourses come together before returning to the question of what all of this might mean for the future leadership of cities and regions.

For shared cities and regions, leadership approaches are required that can think and move beyond the *'them versus us'* or *'me versus them'* leitmotifs that are embedded in competitively oriented leadership prescriptions. This 'new' argument emphasizes the importance of place and the importance of outcomes in terms of the sustainability of neighbourhoods, cities or sub-regions. It has given rise to the idea that the development of economically viable, sustainable and inclusive places needs to be underpinned by, for example, forms of cross-boundary relational leadership. In summary, this 'new' leadership of place is concerned with: facilitating interdisciplinary working across institutional boundaries, technology themes, sub-territories and professional cultures to promote the development of sustainable local economies; and ensuring the comprehensive engagement of local communities so that they can both contribute to and benefit more fully from the outcomes (avoiding the danger of exacerbating social polarization). In the challenging development context for cities and regions this means that leaders across various public organizations are now faced with a dual task of leading their own organization in achieving service delivery and effective performance whilst ensuring that good organizational performance translates into effective outcomes for places.

Living and working in shared places in an interdependent world is not easy. To effectively navigate the social and economic complexities and interdependencies that shape place(s) (Massey, 1993; Cresswell, 2004; Healey, 2007 and 2010) lends itself to a wider, more socially

responsible and more integrated view of the leadership mission that favours development for the many and not the few (Amin et al, 2000). It suggests a leadership that is able to think and operate beyond self-aggrandisement, the pursuit of personal reward or allows itself to be distracted by the various other privileges that come with (and after) formal office. This is not to idealise the leadership role – but to suggest that we need (re)-introduce a ‘bigger’ sense of generational endeavour for the common good that has perhaps been lacking or forgotten in some quarters of public service leadership (see also Morrell, 2009).

Given that leaders and policy makers involved in economic development, planning and regeneration activity in cities and regions are faced with mediating and adapting to the complex interplay of power, resources and people within a globalised market place for goods, services and ideas - it becomes increasingly difficult to sidestep the “What kind of local and regional development, why and for whom?” questions (Pike et al, 2006). In the search for a way forward the role of knowledge (how and why it is created, developed, combined and spread) is firmly on the policy makers agenda in the sense that at the most accessible level of analysis, it is knowledge that fuels economic and social change and we are required to re-frame both theory, contemporary ideas about the shaping and re-shaping of place(s) and the practice of leadership itself at all levels to accommodate the transformative power of knowledge ‘writ large’. Here, for some, the core assumption is that where leadership can harness the dynamics of knowledge then more sustainable and much fairer places will somehow ensue (Burrage, 2009). Whilst there are a number of obvious problems with any over-generalised notions of harmonious co-existence across cities and regions facilitated via the sharing of the benefits of knowledge ‘writ large’, this is an interesting working proposition and one that requires some further examination.

## **HARNESSING THE POWER OF KNOWLEDGE FOR PROGRESSIVE CHANGE**

*Knowledge* has moved to the centre of the debate about the future competitiveness and sustainability of cities and regions in Europe – “This is a time of deep transformation for Europe” (CEC, 2009c). However, for the World Bank (1999), the power of knowledge to transform economy and society extends far beyond the purely capitalistic concerns of promoting economic growth through business innovation, technology and market efficiencies - but in a much broader developmental sense has the potential when deployed generously to improve health, education, environmental well-being and wealth spread more generally across communities and (global) society. Moreover, for Abel, “Different forms of knowledge play an important role in people’s lives. This is the case with everyday habits, customs, competencies, and practices as well as in science, technology, and institutions of the modern civilized world” (2008:11).

Across a number of academic disciplines there is a longstanding focus on understanding the role of knowledge as a driver of economic and social change. In particular, recent advances in the understanding of economic knowledge systems and their governance are providing a more complete analysis of knowledge for the purpose of the design and implementation of science and technology policy (see for example, Antonelli, 2005; 2006; Foray, 2006). These accounts remain largely limited to explaining the role of knowledge in economic performance and read across into policy for improving the effectiveness of science and technology investment - as opposed to being concerned with the dynamics of knowledge ‘writ large’ and for wider social

improvement (see further Hearn and Rooney, 2008; Meusbürger et al, 2008; Collinge and Staines, 2009). Nevertheless, they provide important and informative accounts of the dynamics of knowledge. In seeking to move the debate on to include a wider heterogeneous conception of knowledge that can inform leadership approaches across cities and regions, Abel (2008), in developing the idea of a broader *knowledge matrix*, offers a view of knowledge that takes inquiry beyond a focus on science and technology. Knowledge, Abel suggests, can take many forms as between everyday knowledge (knowing where things are); theoretical knowledge (the principles of geometry, for example); action knowledge (knowing how to do things); and moral or orientational knowledge (knowing what ought to be done) (ibid, 2008:13). Moreover, across these fields of knowledge other distinctions are to be made between codified and tacit knowledge; verbal and non-verbal knowledge; propositional and non-propositional knowledge; knowledge based on skills and abilities (ibid: 2008: 13). Here then knowledge is more broadly conceived of and its source(s) as well as its potential are spread much more widely across society (Hearn and Rooney, 2008).

In terms of ‘actioning’ this broader sense of knowledge, Waddock’s (2007:544) synthesis provides a number of insights regarding the role and nature of knowledge in economy and society by considering knowledge as information and ideas combined in meaningful ways - and so in this sense knowledge becomes a “foundational resource” in the economy; a fluid resource (a form of ‘currency’ for Burrage (2009) writing on regeneration policy) that does not act in the same way that physical resources such as land, capital and labour act. Drawing on Brown and Duguid (2000), Waddock argues that knowledge assets expand when they are shared; that the generative and transforming potential of knowledge works best when it is shared rather than

hoarded – so collaborative approaches are key; a great deal of knowledge about how, why, when and with whom to do things resides in people (tacit knowledge) as much as in codified form or physical assets; this type of experiential knowledge is globalised, boundary-less and consequently difficult at times to control; it responds well to inclusivity (many knowledge(s) need to be combined from many sources in order to achieve a greater integrated effect); and it moves rapidly around the world. Echoing the theoretical work of Abel (2008) and Meusburger (2008), for Burrage, it is knowledge beyond ‘big science’ that is equally important to uncover when thinking through regeneration policy options. This knowledge (what to do, why, where and how) can be found (say) where local communities interact with local professionals – in doctors’ surgeries, children’s centres, schools, across regeneration projects and so on – and it has the potential to transform the lives of local people where it can be harnessed and exploited (Burrage, 2009: 124-125).

The idea of harnessing the transformative power of knowledge is not new in the leadership discourse. The business leadership literature, however, has previously displayed a tendency to address the question of knowledge from the techno-economic perspective and essentially in terms of how it can be accessed, exploited and channelled as a “heavy weapon of competition” for firms and organisations (see for example, Zand’s perspective 1997:14). For some observers, the knowledge as a ‘heavy weapon of competition’ thesis has been associated with an over-emphasis on science and technological knowledge and how this can be exploited by business and industry (Collinge and Staines, 2009). Whilst the insights around the dynamics and benefits of knowledge sharing (for example, in technology transfer and innovation), for securing cost-efficiencies and performance gains across the management and organisational literature are



helpful (Bryant, 2003; Srivastava et al, 2006) and can read across into the continuing debate around how knowledge and place interrelate – it is important to move beyond these accounts and frame the ongoing leadership conversations in cities and regions within a more balanced understanding of the way in which knowledge can contribute to broader socio-economic improvements beyond the firm and the shareholder. More recent contributions in the leadership literature have begun to consider the dynamics of leadership in and for complex and adaptive challenges such as those that are faced in the knowledge era. Here, what has been termed complexity leadership theory, explored through study of the dynamic interplay between knowledge, learning and innovation, presents leadership approaches for the current era as informed by “adaptive challenges that are not amenable to authoritative flat or standard operating procedures, but rather require exploration, new discoveries, and adjustments” (Uhl-Bien et al, 2007:300; see also Lichtenstein et al, 2009). Again though insightful for those interested in exploring place-leadership, these approaches remain largely constrained by their focus on knowledge-producing organisation(s) as the setting for leadership inquiry – and do not easily align (at least as yet) with the more chaotic nature of place as a wider and perhaps more dynamic and problematic setting for leadership.

Although not without its critics, the ‘new’ economic geography has also produced a number of insights into how knowledge flows within and through the economies of cities and regions and these have implications for the contribution of formal leadership in this setting (see Cooke et al, 2007; Fu, 2007). Here, the role of knowledge is regarded as the most important competitive resource for cities and regions (Lundvall and Johnson, 1994). Based on a number of empirical studies of ‘effective’ places and couched essentially in the thesis of economic competitiveness

(Harris, 2001; Moulaert and Sekia, 2003; Cooke and Leydesdorff, 2006; Benneworth, 2007), knowledge dynamics in the urban and regional setting are characterised as interactive rather than linear processes where tacit knowledge in particular can combine to reinforce innovation and learning so that the outcomes of new and ground-breaking economic synergies appear in the form of the production of new goods and services that can be sold around the world. There is also a strong emphasis, however, in the analyses of ‘successful’ cities and regions on the significance and value of extensive and deep relational or ‘untraded interdependencies’ between firms, institutions and individuals that serve to act as the glue that underpins and enables trust and facilitates collaborative learning (Storper, 1995) (see also reviews in Mackinnon et al, 2002; Mackinnon and Cumbers, 2007). Moreover, investment in the ‘softer’ relational dynamics inherent in the creative process, in ingenuity and inventiveness and so on is considered as an essential complement to investment in the built environment (but see critique in Chapain et al, 2009). In this sense the power of knowledge - and how it is created, combined and deployed for developmental purposes - is framed as heavily dependent on messy social and relational interactions – rather than determined by economic imperatives alone (Musterd and Murie, 2010).

Whilst the debate around the relative weight that should be accorded to the ‘hard’ economic and ‘soft’ social features of knowledge creation and as it plays in and through cities and regions continues - this literature suggests that a virtuous and reinforcing cycle of beneficial development can be engendered where leadership is able to facilitate wider knowledge processes. Arguably, this puts a refreshed ‘mission’ at the heart of leadership; one that can better inform approaches to the leadership task itself as well as influence policy design and implementation and help to take formal leadership (across cities and regions at least) beyond the

focus on outputs to a focus on generational and generative outcomes for people and places. However, the policy literature on cities and regions pursuing formal knowledge-based economy policies suggests that the overall approach (and in spite of the best of individual intentions on the ground) still remains highly focused on the achievement of scientific or techno-economic objectives and does not yet pay sufficient attention (in terms of policy emphasis, time or resources allocated) to the broader social gains that can be engendered (Perrons, 2004; Hearn and Rooney, 2008; Gibney et al, 2009b). Clearly, knowledge cannot be thought of as either value or power free - how freely knowledge flows in and around cities and regions and ultimately how significant its impact is in terms of ensuring wealth spread, social inclusion and empowerment - is influenced by the interplay of a variety of factors including deeper power and resource dynamics. Meusburger underlines that it is unwise to ignore the spatial disparities that pervade knowledge, and the disparities that knowledge itself might generate or reinforce; as in its various forms (as described by Abel above) how it is accessed, by whom and for what end is governed by “power relations, and the ways in which social systems and networks are coordinated and governed in space” (2008: 35).

To summarise, before offering up thoughts on models, ‘templates’ or approaches to the leadership of cities and regions, we should ask ourselves at the outset some fundamental questions “For what purpose knowledge?”. And “For whose purpose knowledge and why?”. Leadership for localised knowledge creation and spread cannot be considered as a value-free activity and it becomes therefore important to counter overly objectivist propositions around the idea that “leadership is leadership” irrespective of (say) a humanistic world-view of social and economic progress for the many. Neither, in the more pragmatic sense can we divorce local

knowledge agendas from changing national or global conditions that can derail the best of intentions if leadership thinking is constrained by short term concerns alone, is unable to challenge knowledge policy orthodoxies, or is unguided by any thought for the wider and longer term wealth spread effects at local level.

## **DISCUSSION: IMPLICATIONS FOR LEADERSHIP IN AND FOR EARLY 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY CITIES AND REGIONS**

An improved understanding of the broader relevance of knowledge is already beginning to change the way in which city and regional leaders think about how they stimulate and engage with agendas locally across economic development, planning and regeneration. Knowledge is no longer conceived as a linear, exclusive or wholly controllable asset that is the realm of traditional hierarchical CEO leadership or public service led project management or centralized policy leadership alone. Moreover, to consider knowledge as *the* resource that fuels progressive change in the ‘shared and interdependent world’ context of cities and regions obliges formal leaders to acknowledge the importance of more fluid relational processes that favour the inclusion of all knowledge(s) - and this means a non-prejudicial championing and ‘operationalising’ of mutually beneficial association, interaction and collaboration between individuals, institutions, firms, groups and communities.

From the practice perspective, there are a number of key features to be drawn from the broad knowledge discourse that can inform leadership in/for urban and regional development going

forward. Firstly, opportunities for social and economic change and improvement will come via the exploitation of new interdependencies between science, technology, place and community; Secondly, all knowledge(s) in the broadest sense across the private and public domain (and also present in a given place) should be considered as a potential asset that can enable progressive change; Thirdly, and consequently, knowledge needs to be shared and not hoarded; and this will involve facilitating more extensive and deeper forms of collaborative working; Fourthly, there should be an emphasis on combining the ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ relational dimensions of knowledge generation and spread across policy agendas; Fifthly, knowledge that is seen to be deployed for the purposes of more generalised wealth spread across cities and regions will reinforce motivation, inclusion and engagement by more groups; Finally, it is important to move beyond the purely scientific and techno-economic conceptions of knowledge to consider the dynamics of knowledge ‘writ large’ (for example, latent knowledge embedded in the experience of everyday living across neighbourhoods and communities around the localised experience of health, education, jobs, housing, environment, crime, security and so on) as valuable and worthy of attention and inclusion.

The discussion above further suggests that as a starting point in the context of cities and regions in change and transition, leaders at all levels, in formal and informal roles, might usefully address four basic questions: What (latent) knowledge(s) currently exist in this place that can be made something of for both social and economic improvement? What new knowledge(s) do we need to create, develop or attract in order to move beyond the present economic development model? How do we best release and combine all of the knowledge that we have across all social groups in ways that allows us to adapt effectively to changing circumstances and on a continuing

basis? How do we ensure that any unintended consequences of policy initiatives are minimised and the benefits of a more generalised exploitation of the collective knowledge embedded and developing in a given place are spread as fairly and widely as possible?

What then, to begin with, might an idealised leadership archetype look like going forward for cities and regions that are seeking to engender progressive social and economic change? We might reasonably expect this type of leadership to: Promote the creation and application of knowledge beyond the scientific and techno-economic domain – looking to harness the learning from new socio-economic synergies where, for example, localised knowledge-based economy policy is integrated with the local education, health or regeneration sectors; Challenge the legitimacy of knowledge hoarding, local knowledge ‘cabals’ and secrecy - and promote activities that ensure knowledge sharing; Focus on rewarding ‘behaviours’ and approaches (wherever they are expressed, irrespective of formal role, hierarchical level or constituency power) that seek out and stimulate combinatorial knowledge breakthroughs within and across the public and private domain; Demonstrate/evidence a commitment to securing a much wider (and motivating) spread of the social and economic gains that accrue.

## **CONCLUSION**

That there are challenging times ahead for cities and regions is not debatable. There is now an urgent need for research into leadership approaches that will minimise distress in these places and improve the odds of our progressing towards sustainable and equitable solutions to the new and emerging dilemmas of uneven development. Periodic economic and social disruption seem

an unavoidable evolutionary feature of the human condition - but all of this will take on added significance in the coming decades when the new interdependencies and unintended consequences of rapid scientific and technological advancement, changing demographic patterns, the impact of migration, climate change and the subsequent effects of global food, water and energy ‘stresses’ begin to kick-in. In recent times, the economic and social impact of uneven development in and between cities and regions around the world has been well-evidenced across the social sciences. The coal, steel, shipbuilding and textiles (heavy) industry closures of the 1950’s and 60’s in Europe; the demise of the UK machine tool industry through the 1970s and 1980s; the European car industry crises of the late 1990’s and early 2000s, and the most recent ‘meltdown’ of the global financial services industries – have all impacted (and continue to impact) on the well-being of localities (see also Vaitilingam, 2009). For a variety of reasons the public policy responses to these previous events have achieved only patchy success. Some places have made good recoveries – but at the time of writing others places and communities are struggling with managing ongoing disinvestment and decline. Given all of this evolutionary stress, through good times and bad, what is the guiding leadership ‘narrative’ that can be held on to and that might allow people and places to think beyond the classic short-term public policy responses – and address the more challenging medium to longer term dilemmas to come? At the most basic level it is a question of what we know, and can come to know, across cities and regions and what we manage to do with this knowledge ‘writ large’. In terms of a possible future research around the theme of leadership for early 21<sup>st</sup> Century cities and regions, it is important to improve our understanding of how knowledge, place and leadership can come together to improve economic and social outcomes for ‘the many’ rather than ‘the few’. And if it is the transformative power of knowledge ‘writ large’ that is to be placed at the heart of

developmental agendas for European cities and regions going forward, then for the improved practice of leadership at all levels a more critical research agenda needs to address some fundamental questions; What leadership approaches are most effective in mobilising and exploiting the power of knowledge that is dispersed across cities and regions? What is their rationale? And what difference do these approaches make – how, where and for whom? Here, and in the context of progressive policies for cities and regions, it is the foundational questions that leadership asks of itself at the outset – and reminds itself of on occasion throughout the leadership journey - that become more important than any advanced mastery of the ‘tricks’ and ‘turns’ of the leadership trade.

**Acknowledgments** – The author is grateful to an anonymous referee for helpful comments on an earlier draft of this paper; and would like to thank Kevin Morrell and Chris Mabey for discussions - as well as a number of colleagues at the Centre for Urban and Regional Studies working on the EC FP6 EURODITE and ACRE research projects. Any errors in interpretation are those of the author.

Draft version 21<sup>st</sup> October 2010



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## ENDNOTES

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<sup>i</sup> The author submits that the highly imaginative policy rhetoric of the last decade across the European urban and regional economic development scene offers up a seam of research material worthy of some critical socio-linguistic inquiry.

<sup>ii</sup> For thought-provoking reflections on the ‘accidental’ and ‘idiosyncratic’ human dimensions of urban development – see Storper, 2010, p. 2041.

<sup>iii</sup> Crosby and Bryson (2005: xix) in their practical guidance for leadership define leadership for a ‘shared-power world’ as concerned with “inspiring and mobilizing others to undertake collective action in pursuit of the common good”.

<sup>iv</sup> Mangham’s (2011:51) characterization of business leaders is insightful - “The picture of a late twentieth century business leader – ( ) is one of a personality: someone who is paid a great deal of money to advance the interests of a limited number of major shareholders, including himself or herself. He or she operates in a multinational structure and a cultural nexus that emphasizes individualism, aggression, ruthless behaviour, risk taking, competitiveness and the importance of short-term results, whilst paying lip service to the moral dimension of business”.