City Leadership and the New Public Management
– a Cross National Analysis

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Introduction

‘If only we had real leadership – then things would improve’. How often have we heard this cry not just in the context of government and public service, but also in the corridors of private companies and not-for-profit agencies?

‘Leadership’ is widely touted as a panacea for organisational and societal failings – particularly if it is ‘real leadership’. Sometimes the rhetoric about leadership has a negative ‘blame the boss’ spin. It suits those who are not performing their jobs very well to develop an explanation that attempts to locate the blame for their ineffectiveness elsewhere. More positively the plea for leadership can represent a genuine desire to see a clear vision articulated for the organisation – one that can shape clear standards for performance and as well as inspire collective commitment to shared values and aspirations. Rhetoric aside – and despite the widespread agreement that leadership is very important - there is a startling degree of confusion over what leadership actually means.

This paper attempts to map the broad contours of the leadership agenda now facing those involved in leading cities and localities in western democracies. (1) It will be suggested that successful city leadership needs to promote innovation in the politics of place as well as innovation in public service management. Recent moves to improve government on both sides of the Atlantic have, it will be suggested, given welcome attention to the importance of modernizing public management. But the importance of democratic renewal has been neglected. Thus, efforts to ‘reinvent government’ in the USA have spurred management change but democratic accountability has been downplayed (Goodsell 1993; Brudney et al 1999). Likewise most of the efforts to develop ‘new public management’ in Europe, Australia and New Zealand have contributed relatively little to understanding how to strengthen political accountability and democratic influence in public policy (Pollitt and Bouckaert 2000, Christensen and Laegrid 2001).
The first section of the paper discusses theories and concepts relating to leadership by drawing on various disciplines. This discussion suggests that there are very different ways of conceptualising leadership and that much of the thinking relating to leadership is impaired by attachment to out of date models. One point, given emphasis here, is that effective leadership is situational – that successful leadership is shaped by and responds to the context within which leadership is exercised. The next two sections outline two shifts that are reshaping the context for the exercise of local leadership – the move from local government to local governance and the shift from public administration to ‘new public management’. These two shifts are not uniform across all countries but they do appear to have some kind of momentum in most OECD countries. It follows that forward-looking leadership needs to respond to these changes.

‘Who are local leaders?’ and ‘How is local leadership exercised in practice?’ are questions addressed in the next two sections. Here the argument draws on recent research in the fields of urban politics and public management. Local leadership takes place in particular places and in the context of local power structures that have been built up over a long period. It will be suggested that leadership ideas derived from advances in management theory need to be adapted and tuned to these local power systems.

Understanding leadership

Leadership is widely studied in psychology, sociology, and political science as well as organisation theory. While there is disagreement about what constitutes good leadership there is widespread agreement on two points. First, the personal characteristics of individual leaders matter. Qualities like vision, strength, stamina, energy, and commitment are associated with successful leadership. As Jones (1989) observes the biographical, or case study, approach to the study of leadership can, by examining the conduct and behaviour of known leaders, provide valuable insights on the exercise of leadership. Burns rightly argues in his classic book that: ‘The study of leadership in general will be advanced by looking at leaders in particular’ (Burns 1978, p27). In the field of urban politics there is, in fact, a considerable body of literature built around this approach. For example, the ‘fly on the wall’ study of Ed Rendell when he was Mayor of Philadelphia in the period 1992 to 1997 provides an excellent, albeit journalistic, picture of personal emotion and energy in city leadership (Bissinger 1997). Other more academic studies of US city leaders include books on Robert Moses of New York City (Caro 1975), Mayor Richard J. Daley of Chicago (Cohen and Taylor 2000) and Mayor Harold Washington also of Chicago (Rivlin 1992). A similar tradition exists in Europe with, for example, studies of Joseph Chamberlain, the Mayor of Birmingham (Garvin 1932).
The second point of agreement in the leadership literature is that context matters. An effective approach to leadership in one setting might not be appropriate in another. On this analysis the accomplishments of individual leaders may be less important than forces - economic, political, institutional and cultural - shaping the context within which they exercise leadership. Sometimes called situational leadership, at other times contingent leadership, this approach has become popular within the field of management studies as well as political science.

If we take the management literature first, it is clear, for example, that leadership is different for first-level supervisors in an organisation than for chief executives. To illustrate the situational leadership approach in a management context we can refer to the model developed by Hersey (1984). This uses two dimensions of leadership, essentially the two familiar dimensions of management - the task dimension and the people (or relationship) dimension. The task dimension refers to the extent to which the leader engages in spelling out the duties and responsibilities of an individual or group. The people dimension concerns the extent to which the leader engages in two-way or multi-way communication. Hersey combines task and people into a two-by-two chart to generate four possible ‘leadership styles’: telling, selling, participating, and delegating – see Figure 1.

**Figure 1. A situational leadership model**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Leadership through participation</th>
<th>Leadership through selling</th>
<th>Leadership through delegation</th>
<th>Leadership through telling</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Use when followers are able but unwilling</td>
<td>Use when followers are unable but willing</td>
<td>Use when followers are able and willing</td>
<td>Use when followers are unable and unwilling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Leadership through delegation</td>
<td>Leadership through telling</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Hersey (1984)
When is each style appropriate? The model says it depends on the subordinates’ ‘readiness level’. This readiness level stems from subordinate attitudes (how willing are they to do a good job) and level of skill (how able are they to do the job well). The model envisages four levels of subordinate readiness and argues that different styles are appropriate for different situations. Sometimes it is appropriate to delegate, sometimes not and so on. This is not to suggest that this is a flawless model. Indeed, as noted by Bolman and Deal (1997), research has suggested that leadership by ‘telling’ is likely to demotivate staff. The more general lesson to draw from Figure 1, however, is that the approach to leadership needs to be tuned to the particular situation.

A similar conclusion emerges from research on local leadership in urban politics. A recent UK study of leadership in urban governance, built around an examination of approaches to leadership in three localities, highlights the impact of contextual factors (Sweeting et al 2004). By comparing experience in different parts of the country this study shows that the institutional design of the governance system of a city can be critical in shaping the leadership approach. The research shows, for example, that the constitution of the Greater London Authority provides a platform for high profile, outgoing leadership by the directly elected mayor of London (Sweeting 2002). This institutional design provides both a strong legitimacy for leadership and a clear focus for leadership – the mayor enjoys a mandate from the citizens of the entire metropolis and is recognised by all concerned as the leader of the capital. This design contrasts with the governance arrangements in Bristol, England where confusion reigns - hardly anybody knows who the political leader of any of the local authorities is. The poor institutional design of the governance of Bristol – a fragmented city region with confusing municipal boundaries and a proliferation of complex partnerships with overlapping responsibilities – constrains leaders. They are forced into an endless process of negotiation with diverse stake-holders. Nobody has the legitimacy to exercise strong leadership for the locality as a whole with the result that even modest changes require leaders to participate in a delicate dance.

So far so good – leaders matter and context matters. But what is the nature of the leadership task? Burns (1978) draws a very helpful distinction between transactional and transformational approaches to leadership. Stated simply the old paradigm has defined leadership as a ‘transaction’ between a leader – often described as the ‘boss’ – and a follower, or ‘subordinate’. A typical exchange is pay for doing a job but other exchanges can take place – such as the favours and feelings psychologists suggest are traded in social exchange theory. Transformational leadership is different in nature from transactional leadership. It has been described as a process of ‘bonding’ rather than ‘bartering’ (Sergiovanni 2000). Burns argues that leadership is about transforming social organisations, not about motivating employees to exchange work efforts for pay. Sashkin and Sashkin (2003), in their excellent articulation of transformational
leadership, build on the argument advanced by Burns and suggest that a shared approach to vision building is crucial. In addition transformational leaders couple self-confidence with an orientation toward the empowerment of others and recognise the importance of building a caring organisational culture.

Sashkin and Sashkin (2003) also take the analysis of leadership a step further by unpacking the personal characteristics dimension outlined earlier into two parts - personality and behaviour. Thus, they outline research that suggests that leaders tend to have certain traits or personality characteristics – for example, they are often described as confident, persistent, patient, creative, intelligent, friendly and so on. Max Weber was the first social scientist to explore a trait that has been widely associated with leadership – charisma. This is an illusive concept but research by McClelland and others has shown that charisma often derives from a desire to have an impact on others. On this analysis the desire to gain and use power underpins the motivation of many leaders (McClelland 1987).

Turning to leadership behaviour Sashkin and Sashkin (2003) have, over a period of twenty years and through a variety of studies, articulated four transformational behaviours: communication leadership (focussing attention and making complex ideas clear by using metaphors), credible leadership (keeping promises and fulfilling commitments), caring leadership (valuing individual’s special skills and abilities), and creating opportunities (producing empowered followers who become self-assured and confident of their own abilities).

Lastly, and it is a point we return to later as it is central to local government leadership, it is useful to consider the distinction that is now often made between ‘leadership’ and ‘management’. As Bennis and Nanus (1985) put it ‘managers do things right, and leaders do the right thing’. Kotter (1988) sees managers planning, organising and controlling while leaders focus on the change-oriented process of visioning, networking and building relationships. But Gardner counsels against contrasting management and leadership too much: ‘Every time I encounter utterly first-class managers they turn out to have quite a lot of the leader in them. Even the most visionary leader is faced on occasion with decisions that every manager faces: when to take a short-term loss to achieve a long-term gain, how to allocate scarce resources, whom to trust with a delicate assignment’. (Gardner 1990, p4). This interplay between leadership and management is vital in local government. It is, as we shall see later, misguided to claim that politicians ‘lead’ and officers ‘manage’. Both have roles in leadership and management but the received models of political/administrative relations fail to recognise this. It has reached the point where these out of date models are impairing the development of effective local leadership in many countries. We return to this theme shortly but first we review two shifts that are reshaping the context within which local leadership takes place.
From local government to local governance

The term ‘governance’ is used in a variety of ways (Rhodes 1997; Andrew and Goldsmith 1998; Pierre and Peters 2000). For the purpose of this discussion it is sufficient to use these words in the way they are commonly used in practitioner as well as academic debates. *Government* refers to the formal institutions of the state. Government makes decisions within specific administrative and legal frameworks and uses public resources in a financially accountable way. Most important, government decisions are backed up by the legitimate hierarchical power of the state. *Governance*, on the other hand, involves government plus the looser processes of influencing and negotiating with a range of public and private sector agencies to achieve desired outcomes. A governance perspective encourages collaboration between the public, private and non-profit sectors to achieve mutual goals. Whilst the hierarchical power of the state does not vanish, the emphasis in governance is on steering, influencing and co-ordinating the actions of others. There is recognition here that government can’t go it alone. In governance relationships no one organisation can exercise hierarchical power over the others. The process is interactive because no single agency, public or private, has the knowledge and resource capacity to tackle the key problems unilaterally (Kooiman 1993).

Moving to the local level *local government* refers to democratically elected councils. *Local governance* is broader – it refers to the processes and structures of a variety of public, private and voluntary sector bodies at the local level. It acknowledges the diffusion of responsibility for collective provision and recognises the contribution of different levels and sectors (Andrew and Goldsmith 1998; Wilson 1998; John 2001). In most situations the elected local council is the only directly elected body in the local governance system and this is of critical importance. The rhetoric about governance can be viewed as a way of shifting responsibility from the state onto the private and voluntary sectors and civil society in general. This displacement of responsibility can also obscure lines of accountability to the citizen and the shift to governance certainly poses a major challenge to local democracy (Kearns and Paddison 2000). The movement to local governance can, however, be welcomed as an overdue shift from a perspective which sees local government simply as a vehicle for providing a range of important public services to a new emphasis on community leadership. This interpretation envisages the role of the local authority being extended beyond the tasks of service provision to embrace a concern for the overall well being of an area (Clarke and Stewart 1998). This shift from government to governance is striking in the UK but it is also visible in other countries, for example Germany (Banner 1999, Hambleton, Savitch and Stewart 2002).

This shift from government to governance has profound implications for the exercise of local leadership. Out goes the old hierarchical model of the city ‘boss’ determining policy for city council services and imposing it on the bureaucracy, and in comes the facilitative leader reaching out to other stakeholders in efforts to influence decisions in other agencies that affect the local
quality of life. Recognition of the shift from government to governance requires leading politicians and senior managers to adopt an outward looking approach and, crucially, to engage with the economic and other interests which influence the current and future well being of the locality. Clarence Stone argued in 1980 that local politicians operate ‘under dual pressures – one set based in electoral accountability and the other based in the hierarchical distribution of economic, organisational and cultural resources’ (Stone 1980, p984, emphasis in original). Stephen Elkin refined this approach arguing that the division of roles between the state and the economy means that government must continually deal with the mandates of popular control and economic well-being. The way the division of roles develops and is handled gives rise to specific ‘regimes’ (Elkin 1987). These depend, basically, on the strength of political elites relative to economic elites. Modern approaches to local leadership need to understand these local power structures and use the unique positional power of local government to intervene in these processes.

The academic study of urban politics and local power structures has benefited in recent years from valuable research on ‘urban regimes’ carried out, initially, by scholars in the USA (Stone 1989a; Lauria 1997). The regime approach, and Stone’s work in particular, suggests that the power to command or dominate over others under modern conditions of social complexity in cities and communities is illusive: ‘The power struggle concerns, not control and resistance, but gaining and fusing a capacity to act – power to, not power over’ (Stone 1989a, p229; emphasis in original). In other words, power is structured and exercised in an effort to obtain results through cooperation, not to gain control over other agencies. This implies a very different approach to local leadership than top down command and control.

From public administration to new public management

In parallel, and overlapping with, the movement from government to governance there has been a significant shift in the way public services are organised and run. In the UK context it is possible to discern two overlapping phases of change in local government: from public administration to corporate management (Hambleton 1978); and from corporate management to ‘new public management’ (Hoggett 1991; Dunleavy and Hood 1994; Pollitt and Bouckaert 2000). There is a good deal of rhetoric about these changes. Bold claims have been made about the virtues of private management practice and about the desirability of developing a more businesslike approach to the running of public services. But there is considerable confusion in the debate. In particular, the phrase ‘new public management’ has several meanings (Heinelt 1998; Wollman 2003). Because of the confusion, there is a risk that management-led reforms may come to lose sight of the underlying social purpose of public services. Researchers have also shown that ‘new public management’ is taking different forms in different countries – see, for example, a recent analysis of public service reform comparing Norway, Sweden, New Zealand and Australia (Christensen and Laegreid 2001).
Figure 2 provides a way of unpacking the rhetoric surrounding ‘new public management’. It identifies the three currents of change that have characterised public service reform strategies in the last twenty years or so (2). The first broad alternative, associated in the 1980s with the radical right, seeks to challenge the very notion of collective and non-market provision for public need (Walsh 1995). Centring on the notion of privatisation it seeks to replace public provision with private. The second alternative, shown on the right of Figure 2, aims to preserve the notion of public provision, but seeks a radical reform of the manner in which this provision is undertaken. Thus, it seeks to replace the old, bureaucratic paternalistic model with a much more democratic model, often involving radical decentralisation to the neighbourhood level (Burns, Hambleton and Hoggett 1994). The market approach treats people as consumers and the democratic approach treats people as citizens.

**Figure 2. Public service reform strategies**

In Hirschman’s terms the political right sought to give individuals the power of exit and the political left sought to give citizens the power of voice (Hirschman 1970). In the market model the consumer, dissatisfied with the product of one supplier of a service, can shift to another. The democratic model recognises that many public services cannot be individualised – they relate to groups of service users or citizens at large. Such collective interests can only be protected through
enhanced participation and strengthened political accountability (Barber 1984). Hirschman is at pains to point out that, while exit and voice may be strongly contrasting empowerment mechanisms, they are not mutually exclusive.

The third broad strategy for public service reform shown in Figure 2 – and this is particularly important for the emerging leadership agenda for local government - attempts to distinguish a managerial as opposed to a political response to the problems confronting public service bureaucracies. This response borrows from the competing political models in a way that simulates radical methods but in a form that preserves existing power relations between the producers and users of services. Citizens are redefined as customers. In place of the sometimes violent and unpredictable signals of exit and voice the model introduces a variety of managerial techniques (market research, user satisfaction surveys, complaints procedures, customer care programmes, focus groups, call centres, interactive websites etc.) to provide more gentle and manageable ‘feedback’.

On this analysis the ‘new public management’ can be seen to be associated with two of the strands in Figure 2 – the market and managerialist reform strategies. This interpretation is consistent with the analysis put forward by Hood (1991) who suggests that ‘new public management’ involves a marriage of two streams of ideas: the new institutional economics and business-type managerialism. But this is a narrow agenda for public management reform as it fails to recognise the vital importance of the third strand in Figure 2. Enhancing democratic vitality is also part of the management task in modern local government. Democratic renewal requires managers as well as politicians to focus on people as citizens, not just customers or consumers. Recognition of the importance of active citizen participation in local governance has profound implications for the managerial leadership as well as political leadership of local government. Elsewhere I have named this broader approach the ‘new city management’ and explained how it can bring about a new and more sophisticated level of interaction between politicians, managers and citizens (Hambleton 2002).

Who are the local leaders?

It is a simple question to ask ‘Who are the local leaders?’ but answers will vary depending on country and context. At a conceptual level it is possible to distinguish between three sets of institutions which, together, provide the capacity to govern any given city or locality: 1) government itself, 2) corporate business and 3) the network of civic organisations which can be very influential in shaping public debate on policy issues and spurring voluntary activity in the community (Stone 1989b, p147). All three sectors can provide platforms for the emergence of local leaders. The relative power and influence of leaders based in these various sectors varies from country to country and city to city. For example, the power of elected politicians to effect change might be expected to be greater in countries with a strong welfare state and a long established commitment to public service – say Norway – as compared with countries where the role of government is seen as less important and is less well funded – say the USA. Conversely, and not surprisingly, we can expect that the power of business
elites in the city leadership of, say, Dallas to be greater than in Oslo. Context, traditions, public expectations, culture – these all have a bearing on who is in a position to exercise local leadership. The variation in the balance of power between the three sets of institutions is shaped not just by the national context, but also by regional economic factors. Thus, city leadership in a declining region can be expected to have a different configuration from leadership in an area experiencing an economic boom, not least because the private sector enthusiasm to invest in the area will vary.

As noted earlier research comparing different ‘urban regimes’ throws light on these issues – this research maps the way power is configured in different localities. Building on earlier approaches to the study of ‘community power’ (Dahl 1961, Hunter 1963, Bachrach and Baratz 1970, Stone 1989a) DiGaetano and Klemanski (1999) compared the governance of Birmingham and Bristol in England with Detroit and Boston in the USA. From this and other urban research they identify four ‘modes of governance’: 1) pro-growth, 2) growth management, 3) social reform and 4) caretaker. These are not watertight categories but it is clear that different kinds of leaders tend to move to the fore depending on which mode of governance has dominance. Thus, for example, in a caretaker regime, where the governing strategy is limited to routine service provision, the leaders are likely to be fiscally conservative politicians and officials partnering with small property owners. In a social reform regime, where the focus is on community development rather than business development, elected politicians, progressive development and planning professionals and lower class community activists are likely to be the significant players.

Within government there are two main sets of players – elected politicians and appointed officers. It is normally the elected politicians who are seen as the main leadership figures in a locality. They enjoy a political mandate from local citizens and, even if voter turnout in local elections is not very high, their legitimacy to speak out on behalf of local people is difficult to challenge. In practice, elected politicians take on a variety of roles ranging from voicing local concerns and responding to the grievances of constituents through to major leadership responsibilities as, say, a committee chair, cabinet member or directly elected mayor. All elected politicians exercise leadership roles in their locality but the nature of this leadership varies considerably – from representation of a neighbourhood through leadership on a key topic to leadership of the whole local authority (Audit Commission 1997). The nature of party politics can have a profound impact on local political leadership. In some situations most of the important public policy decisions are taken in secretive party group meetings, in others the conflict between parties can lead to a kind of ‘points scoring’ approach to local debate and discussion. Discussions with leading councillors in UK local government in the mid 1990s revealed growing recognition of the governance dimension of local leadership referred to earlier (Hambleton and Holder 1995). Thus, many local authority leaders felt that strengthening civic leadership and promoting the image of the area to outsiders deserved more attention.

A long-standing myth in local government is that there is a sharp separation of roles between politicians and officers. The old adage that politicians decide on
policy and officers implement it was challenged over twenty years ago by research on policy implementation. This showed that implementation is an interactive and negotiative process between those seeking to put policy into effect and those upon whom action depends (Barrett and Fudge 1981). More recently Svara (2001) has demonstrated how early contributors to the field of public administration acknowledged a policy role for administrators that has often been ignored partly because, over the years, the dichotomy became a ‘useful myth’ (Miller 2000, 314-5). The dichotomy idea shields administrators from scrutiny and serves the interest of politicians who can pass responsibility for unpopular decisions to administrators (Peters 1995, 177-8). A more sophisticated conceptualisation of the politician/officer interface recognises that both groups contribute to both policy development and local leadership.

Mouritzen and Svara (2002) provide a valuable cross-national analysis of ‘leadership at the apex’ of local government in fourteen countries. The authors do not examine the role of leaders outside the institution of local government, rather they provide a detailed and fascinating picture of the roles of mayors (and other leading politicians) and the way they interface with their Chief Executive Officers (CEOs). This research, as well as showing that overlapping leadership roles between senior politicians and CEOs is the norm, categorises different ways of pairing the leadership roles: 1) CEO as dependent political agent, 2) CEO as dependent professional agent, 3) CEO as interdependent and 4) CEO as independent (Mouritzen and Svara 2002, 248-253).

A study of managerial leadership for the UK Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) suggested that chief executives have a key role in leading change and developing the organisation of the authority (Hambleton 1999). Four leadership roles were identified: providing strategic advice to politicians; managing processes relating to decisions; taking decisions on behalf of the council; and influencing other agencies. Chief executives interviewed for the research suggested that the fourth role was expanding quite quickly and this chimes with the shift from government to governance discussed earlier (Travers, Jones and Burnham 1997). The development of continuous learning opportunities for chief executives has identified five key capacities: working with the political dimension; leading the organisation; developing self knowledge; developing effective external relationships; and maintaining a focus on strategic and long term issues (Broussine 1998).

Moving outside local government attention needs to be given not just to the business interests highlighted by urban regime theory but also to a variety of other players who may, depending on the local context, be in a position to exercise decisive leadership. Sometimes these figures are to be found outside local government but inside other organs of the state. It may be, for example, that regional state bodies contain key actors who play a significant local leadership role. Certainly, as it becomes clearer that regions form the effective spatial unit in an era of global economic competition, leadership for relatively large metropolitan regions is now receiving increased attention in many countries (Jouve and Lefevre 2002).
In some countries the non-profit (or third sector) plays a vital role in local leadership. Religious groups, trade unions and, at times, universities as well as charitable foundations can make a significant contribution in helping to set the local agenda as well as in relation to specific community projects. At the local level community based leaders can come to play a particularly important role, not least in situations where higher levels of government – perhaps national government, perhaps the European Community – have chosen to target regeneration or neighbourhood renewal funds on particular localities. Research on community leaders in area regeneration partnerships in the UK suggests, however, that state agencies are still not that skilled at working with local people in ways which support their neighbourhood leadership role (Purdue et al 2000). Taylor (2003, 132-4) also shows how community based leaders can be caught in a kind of no man’s land between their communities and the decision makers, accused on the one hand of failing to deliver and on the other of being unrepresentative.

In summary, local leaders comprise a mixed bag. In some situations a powerful, directly elected mayor or council leader can give the impression of exercising decisive leadership of the locality with other actors having relatively minor roles. This discussion of ‘Who are the leaders?’ has suggested, however, that it is more than likely that, in any given locality, there is a pattern of dispersed leadership. In modern conditions of social complexity power is fragmented and this means that leadership involves a process of connecting the fragments. Elected politicians, appointed officers, business leaders, non-profit organisations, religious groups and community representatives and figures from higher education can all be found carrying out leadership roles in modern systems of urban governance. However, while all these players can make a significant contribution to local leadership, their legitimacy to exercise formal leadership varies. In democratic societies there can be no argument with the view that accountability to the citizens has to underpin the formal exercise of power by local leaders. It follows that elected politicians should be expected to play the decisive role.

**Locality leadership in action**

Borrowing from Fainstein (1990) it can be suggested that there are two ways of entering a discussion of locality (or city) leadership in action. The global approach scrutinises the wider context within which cities operate and draws attention to the constraints on local leadership. Some, but not all, commentaries adopting this approach conclude that the scope for local leadership is trivial. Thus, according to one influential study (Peterson 1981), cities are constrained by local and regional economic competition and must give priority to policies that promote economic growth. Cities that do not comply with these forces will be punished by loss of private investment, jobs, and tax revenue. The second approach, which works from the inside out, examines the forces creating the particularities of a specific place – its economic base, its social make up, its constellation of political interests and so on. In this formulation local political leaders and civic elites may turn out to have a considerable impact on the fortunes of the city and this is certainly the position adopted by Judd (2000). In
practice both perspectives are helpful. The same city can be regarded as part of a totality and as a unique outcome of its particular history. Comparative academic studies that combine both a global and a local perspective are now on the increase and this combination of perspectives is leading to a better understanding of the scope for and limits on local leadership (Savitch and Kantor 2002).

Recognising this wider context for the exercise of leadership what options for local leadership are available? The literature on mayoral leadership provides a starting point for this discussion, although a warning note is needed as much of this literature is based on analysis of US cities and, as mentioned earlier, the national context can have a profound effect on local leadership. Yates (1977) provides one formulation based on the argument that mayors differ along two central dimensions: 1) the amount of political and financial resources that they possess and 2) the degree of activism and innovation that they display in their daily work. This approach generates a two-by-two matrix envisaging four ‘leadership styles’: 1) crusader, 2) entrepreneur, 3) boss, and 4) broker - see Figure 3.

**Figure 3. Some possible mayoral leadership styles**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activism/innovation</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political power base</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crusader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrepreneur</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Yates (1977)

Crusaders lack resources and political clout but they want to make a difference. They rely heavily on dramatising issues and seeking to develop support through the force of principles and personality. Entrepreneurs are, for Yates, the strongest mayors – they have sufficient political and financial resources to allow them to
act decisively on substantive policy issues and usually give a high level of attention to economic development policy. They can push and deliver on big projects. Boss mayors also have substantial financial and political resources but they focus their efforts on maintaining control rather than on setting new policy agendas. Finally, broker mayors lack financial and political resources and limit their vision to mediating conflicts between various interest groups. This framework provides a helpful starting point but it should be noted that there is a substantial US literature on mayoral leadership (Kotter and Laurence 1974; Ferman 1985; Svara 1990). In particular, it should be noted that more recent research on US mayors has suggested a shift towards facilitative leadership (Svara 1994).

In the UK context the issue of local leadership started to attract serious interest in public policy circles in the mid 1990s. Tony Blair, as Leader of the Opposition made several speeches arguing that local authorities needed stronger and more outgoing leadership (Hambleton 1998). In 1996 I was commissioned to examine possible leadership models and I was fortunate to be able to carry out this study in partnership with one of the leading local authority politicians in the UK (Hambleton and Bullock 1996) (3). In carrying out this research we asked leading figures in UK local government what they thought constituted successful local authority leadership. The indicators of good leadership that emerged are summarised in Figure 4.
Figure 4. Indicators of good local political leadership

- **Articulating a clear vision for the area**
  Setting out an agenda of what the future of the area should be and developing strategic policy direction. Listening to local people and leadership.

- **Promoting the qualities of the area**
  Building civic pride, promoting the benefits of the locality and attracting inward investment

- **Winning resources**
  Winning power and funding from higher levels of government and maximizing income from a variety of sources.

- **Developing partnerships**
  Successful leadership is characterised by the existence of a range of partnerships, both internal and external, working to a shared view of the needs of the local community.

- **Addressing complex social issues**
  The increasingly fragmented nature of local government and the growing number of service providers active in a given locality means that complex issues which cross boundaries, or are seen to fall between areas of interest, need to be taken up by leaderships which have an over view and can bring together the right mix of agencies to tackle a particular problem.

- **Maintaining support and cohesion**
  Managing disparate interests and keeping people on board are essential if the leadership is to maintain authority.

Source: Adapted from Hambleton and Bullock (1996, 8-9)

More recently, a similar framework has been developed by Leach and Wilson (2002). Informal soundings with local leaders in other countries suggest that the indicators listed in Figure 4 are relevant to an international conversation about
local leadership. They provide the outlines of a set of aspirations for local leadership. Whether local leaders are able to deliver good performance as measured by these criteria is a question that can only be answered through empirical research.

What about the role of the chief executive or city manager? Earlier it was suggested that it is misleading to believe that there is a sharp demarcation in roles between politicians and officers. Senior officers and particularly the CEO or city manager are not mere servants of the elected politicians. They have great professional skill and experience and exercise important leadership roles alongside the politicians. Cross-national research on local government CEOs has drawn a distinction between two approaches to leadership. These are the ‘classical’ and the ‘political’ bureaucrat (Klausen and Magnier 1998) – see Figure 5.

**Figure 5. The classical and the political bureaucrat**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>The classical bureaucrat</th>
<th>The political bureaucrat</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Guide subordinate staff in day-to-day handling of activities</td>
<td>• Formulate ideas and visions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Manage economic affairs, accounts and budgetary control</td>
<td>• Promote and encourage new projects in the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ensure that rules and regulations are followed</td>
<td>• Provide the mayor with political advice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Provide the mayor with legal, economic and other kinds of technical advice</td>
<td>• Be informed about citizens’ viewpoints</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>• Develop and implement norms concerning the proper roles of politicians vis-à-vis bureaucrats</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Influence decision-making processes in order to secure sensible and efficient solutions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Source: Adapted from Klausen and Magnier (1998, 13)

The classical bureaucrat is more of a background figure and, in terms of the distinction between management and leadership drawn earlier, they lie at the ‘management’ end of the spectrum – the classical CEO focuses on ‘doing things right’. The political bureaucrat has a more proactive style and is more towards the ‘leadership’ end of the spectrum – the political CEO is still concerned with ‘doing things right’ but she or he is even more concerned with ‘doing the right thing’. It would be unwise to suggest that features of the classical bureaucrat are simply old hat and can be discarded in favour of the more political approach.
Rather the fascinating challenge now confronting all local government leaders – whether they are politicians or officers – is how to strike the right balance in relation to their local situation. Having said that the idea of the town clerk ‘administering’ local authority services is now surely an out of date concept. The local government town clerk is, in most western democracies, being replaced by a CEO (or city manager). This person is appointed to ‘manage’, not administer, the local authority on behalf of the elected members. In the best local authorities the CEO is a dynamic executive leader who is capable of working closely with elected members and brokering community interests. The political CEO wants to work closely with the political leaders to help the politicians achieve high performance on the indicators of good political leadership set out in Figure 4.

How do local leaders relate to local citizens? Earlier it was suggested that the old, hierarchical models of leadership are out of date. A top-down approach in which the ‘boss’ hands down instructions to a grateful – or not so grateful – band of subordinates or followers is anachronistic. We have seen how the politician/officer relationship in modern local governance is better seen as a kind of partnership with benefits flowing from mutual respect and role sharing. The same is also true in relation to citizen involvement in decision-making. In all western democracies well-informed and confident citizens are putting new demands on local government, as well as other public agencies, to be more open, more responsive and more accountable. As Figure 2 makes clear the bureaucratic paternalism of the past – in which politicians and officers made decisions over the heads of local people - has been challenged by new approaches to user and citizen empowerment. These changes have profound implications for the exercise of local leadership. (4)

Three points stand out. The first need is for leaders to develop their listening and learning skills. In a complex and rapidly changing society it is essential for leaders to be really well tuned in to the concerns of all groups in society. The discussion above has suggested that good political leadership is associated with listening as well as leading – see Figure 4. And Figure 5 shows how the political bureaucrat is well informed about citizen’ viewpoints. Second, it is important to recognize the legitimacy of different viewpoints. Politicians, officers and citizens draw on different sources of legitimacy – elected members enjoy a political mandate from citizens, officers bring managerial and professional skills as well as impartiality, and citizens have a democratic right to be heard and to hold government to account. Much of the management literature on leadership is built around practice in the private sector and this limits its usefulness in the context of democratic institutions where citizen rights are altogether different from the rights of the consumer or customer (Marshall 1950). Acceptance of this argument means that leaders need to do much more than listen – they need to empower neglected voices in the democratic process if decisions are not to be dominated by the powerful and the connected. Third, it seems clear that local leaders should adopt a transformational rather than a transactional approach. As explained earlier this means, inter alia, developing credible leadership (keeping promises and fulfilling commitments) and creating opportunities for others to exercise power. Striving to gather all decision-making power to the centre merely creates an overloaded and ineffective centre. The effective modern leader
recognizes the value of decentralizing authority not just to officers but to citizens as well (Burns, Hambleton and Hoggett 1994).

**Conclusion**

This paper has examined the nature of local leadership in conditions of modern social complexity. It has been suggested that a number of academic disciplines can throw light on the nature of the local leadership task. More than that it can be claimed that a multi-disciplinary approach is essential if we are to understand local leadership and, in the light of that understanding, develop advice for those involved in or aspiring to local leadership roles. The literature on leadership – in management studies, political science and psychology – suggests that both leaders and context matter. This is encouraging. Leaders can make a difference. But their success will, to a great extent, be determined by how well they adapt their approach to the local context. It follows that off-the-shelf advice on leadership from private sector management consultants is likely to miss the mark.

Two major trends have been outlined which are reshaping the context for local leadership – the shift from local government to local governance and the move from public administration to new city management. The former brings home the importance of recognising that government cannot go it alone. Leaders need to see themselves not as having power over events but as having power to influence events (Stone 1989a). This reframing puts a premium on partnership working and alliance building. Top down leadership does not work in a partnership setting – hence the need to rethink traditional models. The second shift – this one in the world of administration and management - takes thinking beyond the limiting concepts of the ‘new public management’ to open up a new set of possibilities for politicians and officers in the local governance system. Instead of trying to redefine local people as either consumers or customers the new city management puts democratic renewal high on the managerial, not just the political, agenda. In this model – which is being pioneered by some of the very best local authorities in the world – new and constructive relationships between politicians, officers and citizens are being created.

In any given city or locality there will be a range of local leaders – some will be elected politicians, others will be significant players in the business sector, yet others will be civic leaders based in non-profit organizations, trade unions, religious institutions and so on. The paper has suggested that appointed officers in local government constitute an important group of leaders who have been neglected in the literature. In particular, CEOs or city managers have a vital role to play not just in developing the organization of the authority but also in contributing to the overall leadership of the locality. It is a complete myth to suggest that politicians lead and officers follow. Officers, and particularly senior officers, are better seen as full partners with local politicians in the local leadership task. The paper has set out some indicators of good political leadership – as derived from the views of existing local leaders. There is no suggestion that these represent a definitive checklist, rather they are advanced to provoke fresh thinking about the local leadership agenda. In relation to officers it
has been suggested that values associated with the ‘classical bureaucrat’ need updating to accommodate ideas associated with what has been described as the ‘political bureaucrat’ (Klausen and Magnier 1998). The paper has examined various models of mayoral leadership and, while more collective approaches to leadership are common in some European countries, this largely US literature can pose helpful challenges and questions for local leaders in any context.

Arguably the most important message of this paper is that citizens – their needs, their aspirations, and their rights – should lie at the heart of the new local leadership agenda. At times it may be appropriate to treat public service users as consumers of products or customers of services but these conceptualisations of members of the public are profoundly limiting in the context of a democratic institution. This is because they are built around the notion that government should become more like a business when, in practice, this is a misguided view. Most of the important decisions in government involve complex trade-offs between competing interests – they have different impacts on different groups of citizens. Government is also required to regulate behaviour in society. A range of government activities – land use planning, social work, environmental health, safety standards, policing, the courts, the prison service - limit the freedom of the individual in order to achieve benefits for the community as a whole. These major choices relating to the distribution of benefits and control of behaviour in society can only be addressed through a political process. In his analysis of the role of business and management concepts in public service Mintzberg suggests that the current malaise about government stems from its being _too much_ like business rather than enough: ‘ I am not a mere customer of my government, thank you’ (Mintzberg, 1996, 77).

A prize to strive for – and this is where bold innovation in practice in particular cities is so important – is to blend managerial innovation with democratic revitalisation. Two flawed approaches to local government reform need to be challenged: first, the idea of enlightened politicians fighting to impose change on recalcitrant and incompetent city hall bureaucracies and, second, the reverse scenario of bright and able local government professionals striving to transform public services against the wishes of slow moving and out of touch elected officials. There may be localities where these stereotypes apply but they do not reflect the mainstream of local government in Europe and North America. The task of leading localities in the coming period should draw strength from being citizen focussed – from working with local communities in new and inventive ways. Old-style politics involving a politician-dominated approach to decision-making and new-style managerialism, which undervalues the political contribution to public service, are both past their ‘sell-by’ date. Creating new ways of combining political and managerial innovation to enhance responsiveness to citizen concerns is now the central challenge for all those concerned to improve city leadership.
Notes

1) I use the terms ‘city’ and ‘locality’ interchangeably in this paper as the leadership agenda for those leading cities, counties, towns and rural areas have much in common.

2) I would like to acknowledge the contributions of Danny Burns and Paul Hoggett in developing this framework in the early 1990s (Burns, Hambleton and Hoggett 1994, p22).

3) Steve Bullock was the leader of the London Borough of Lewisham in the early 1990s. He later became one of the very first directly elected mayors in UK history when he was elected as Mayor of Lewisham in 2002.

4) This idea that local leadership and community involvement are inextricably linked lies at the heart of the PLUS project. This EC-funded study of Participation, Leadership and Urban Sustainability (PLUS) in 18 cities in nine countries is examining the impact of alternative ‘combinations of urban leadership and community involvement’ (CULCI). See: www.plus-ura.org

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