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Place Leadership and Governance of Rural Areas: Facing the Brexit Challenge

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Place Leadership and Governance of Rural Areas

- Place Leadership
- Territorial Governance
- “Shaping” the “rural” – leadership and governance
- The Brexit challenge for rural leadership
- Discussion

Place Leadership

Place Leadership

- Leadership – pervasive across many disciplines
- Now significance theme in economic geography / regional economics (recent special issue in *Regional Studies* (2017, Vol 51,2) – *Leadership in city and regional development*)
- Little discussed prior to 2000 – but now a major point of debate
- Agreement that it is an important debate – but disagreement over its definition and significance
- Literature is generally empirical (case studies) and some would say “under-theorised”

Leadership in local and regional development

1980s/90s dominant regional development paradigm
focus on the role of institutions in shaping places:

- Firms
- National and local government
- Other public sector bodies
- Financial institutions
- Regional development agencies

Regional development policies dominated by

- National government incentives (grants, tax incentives)
- Creation of regional institutional capacity
- Managing regional economic change
- Partnership – in its various forms

Leadership in Local and Regional Development?

- Since at least 2005, rapid growth in publications on regional leadership.....
- A trend perhaps – regional studies absorbing ideas pioneered in other disciplines (especially business and management)
- A recognition of gaps in our understanding of why some places thrive and others do not.....

–.... *Leadership is the missing variable in understanding why some places grow and others languish.....*
(Rodriguez-Pose 2013, Beer and Clower 2014)

Beer A, Clower T (2014) Mobilising leadership in cities and regions Regional Studies, Regional Science, 1.1 5-20

Leadership in Local and Regional Development?

- Early emphasis on case studies of cities and regional thought to be “successful” in the global economy (e.g. Montpellier; Austin Texas; Special issue Policy Studies 2010 - Barcelona, Groningen, Styria, Oresund (Denmark-Sweden)).
- In each case, undoubted geographic / competitive advantages – but someone / something needs to make it happen – leadership?
- Attempts to “theorise” about the nature of this leadership problematic – existing models in Business and Management Studies inappropriate
- Assumptions in a “place” context are very different
- “Theory” of place leadership driven by critique - What is different about “leadership of place”?

So what is involved in place leadership?

- Leading or “shaping” place – orchestrating social interaction, influencing attitudes, building consensus in a very open and fluid system
 - Open spatially - fuzzy spatial boundaries
 - Open socially – diverse opinions of different people that is also changeable
 - Open temporally - hard to see “the end” of a process....

Leadership as “place-shaping” (Gibney and Collinge 2008)

Interactive

a “....fluid relational process where association, interaction and collaboration between individuals, institutions, firms and community groups are what make things happen....”

Complex

Where leadership involves “...navigating complex relationships between agencies, firms and communities that operate interdependently at different spatial scales.....”

Leadership as “place-shaping”

Nurturing consensus

Where leadership involves working with organisations and individuals who are “*not directly controlled by each other*”...

Dealing with shifts in opinion

Where “different internal and external pressures will *constantly change the basis upon which agreements are reached*...”

Leadership as “place-shaping”

Working across boundaries

Where leaders are often outside their own comfort zone –

- Crossing organisational boundaries
- Crossing sector boundaries
- Crossing professional boundaries
- Managing social divides

What *particular* skills and knowledge do “leaders of place” require?

- How to be a “leader” where:
 - You lack formal powers over institutions or groups
 - You cannot easily see the whole picture
 - You are often not the expert
 - You do not control circumstances that are changeable and uncertain

Place Leadership and Rural Governance

- Question - How and why might leadership vary in different types of places?
- One difference – Urban and Rural.....
- So, why might “place leadership” vary in character in Urban and Rural Areas?

COME BACK TO THIS LATER

Territorial Governance

Place Leadership and Governance

- Place leadership in variably occurs in the context of place-based partnerships that involve a range of actors representing:
 - The State (local, regional, sometimes national and international)
 - The Market (international businesses alongside national and local firms that depend on local resources of land, labour, skills and knowledge)
 - Civil Society (a range of non-government, community organisations and groups)

Place Leadership and Governance

- Place leadership needs to be understood in the context of forms of **place governance**
- Governance – shift from administering places using formal structures of government towards a wider range of interests in decision-making.
- Governance – shift from coercive powers of the State towards partnership between a range of actors.
- Governance – complex form of interaction with high potential for devolution of powers as well as supra-national entities.

Place Leadership and Governance

- Current debates about governance part of a very long and complex debate about the changing role of the State in the economy.
- Origins in economic crisis of the 1970s – collapse of Fordist mode of production – Role of State to “manage” demand to stimulate mass markets for mass producers. Welfare State.
- Since 1970s, Nation-States under pressure and “experimenting” with different forms of governance – shifting scales of powers and interventions in response to globalisation

Place Leadership and Governance

- Since 1970s – rescaling the State – different interpretations and bases of understanding
 - Nation-States “hollowed out” – varying levels of devolution to sub-national scale; growth in importance of supra-national state institutions
 - Borderless world – demise of Nation-states as arbiters of economy. Global networks.
 - Global regions – industrial districts, flexible spaces, networks of global cities
 - New Regionalism – knowledge economies and learning regions – regional innovation strategies (RIS)
 - Multi-layered governance – complex and constant negotiation, competing interests, tensions between scales

Place Leadership and Governance

- Emergence of the “City-Region” as a unit of study, policy delivery and also policy design and accountability
- Much discussion of the nature of City-Regions – international comparisons –
 - Polycentric versus monocentric
 - Unitary versus federal
 - Single tier versus multi-tier
 - Centralised versus decentralised powers
- Evident association between devolution debates and the “urban” in academia as well as policy

Shaping the “Rural” - Leadership and Governance

Place Leadership and Rural Governance

How and why might place leadership vary in character in urban and rural settings?

Beer A. (2014) "Leadership and Governance in Rural Communities" *Journal of Rural Studies* Vol 34, pp. 254-262

Need to understand how the nature of *leadership* might be affected by differences in the way urban and rural areas are *governed*.

Leadership and Governance of Rural Communities

- Place leadership therefore varies because decisions affecting places (how they are governed) vary in relation to **geographical scale**
- ***Leadership in urban places*** characterised by partnerships between national government, local/city-region government, corporate sector and larger regional institutions
- ***Leadership in rural places*** more often characterised by interactions between a powerful Nation-State and regional elites and often subordinate community representatives

Leadership and Governance of Rural Communities

- Place leadership in urban and rural settings varies because political processes are affected by scale. In particular:

“Centralisation of power in metropolitan regions rules out a voice for rural and regional towns” (Andrew Beer, 2014, p.256)

Leadership and Governance of Rural Communities

- Rural communities are less able to influence government policy design, therefore -
 - Rural Leadership tends to be marked by the need to respond to choices made externally –
 - Often faced with the decision to accept, reject or reinterpret decisions already made
 - Less power, but greater need to resist, subvert and challenge government policy
 - Significant challenge for those involved in leading rural communities

Leadership and Governance of Rural Communities

- What is distinctive about rural place leadership?
 - Rural areas physically and cognitively distanced from political centres – interests can become peripheral to government and the economy;
 - Political elites in metropolitan cores adopt a “government-at-a-distance” approach
 - Rural actors less able to influence policy design, so often forced to be “defensive” and “reactive” to decisions made elsewhere

Leadership and Governance of Rural Communities

- Ideas developed in context of case study of specialist fruit and wine-growing region in South Australia: challenge to remain competitive
- Two different attempts to lead change and address the power deficit mediated through complex layers via local government
- Forms of organisation and styles of leadership can make a difference
- Understanding where powers lie – knowing when to endorse or challenge policy – subversive leadership

Rural Leadership and the Brexit Challenge

Rural Leadership and the Brexit Challenge

- Understand the risks and uncertainties
 - Hard or soft BREXIT: *tariffs and trade* within Europe and rest of world;
 - Impacts of *non-tariff barriers* on producers of goods and services operating in rural areas;
 - Repatriation of EU legislation and associated powers and policies to the UK – where is the “rural debate” taking place? How can it be influenced?
 - Ongoing process of devolution in the UK – how does this interact with the Brexit process?

Rural Leadership and the Brexit Challenge

- Understand the devolution landscape
- Devolution deals – devolved powers to (mainly) city-regions for housing, transport, development, planning, policing (variously).
- “Rural” sits uncomfortably with this approach and geographical scale
- “Deals” in place in North – Tees Valley, Manchester, Merseyside.
- “Deals” stalled – North East, West Yorkshire Combine Authority, Sheffield City-Region
- Deals in the pipeline??

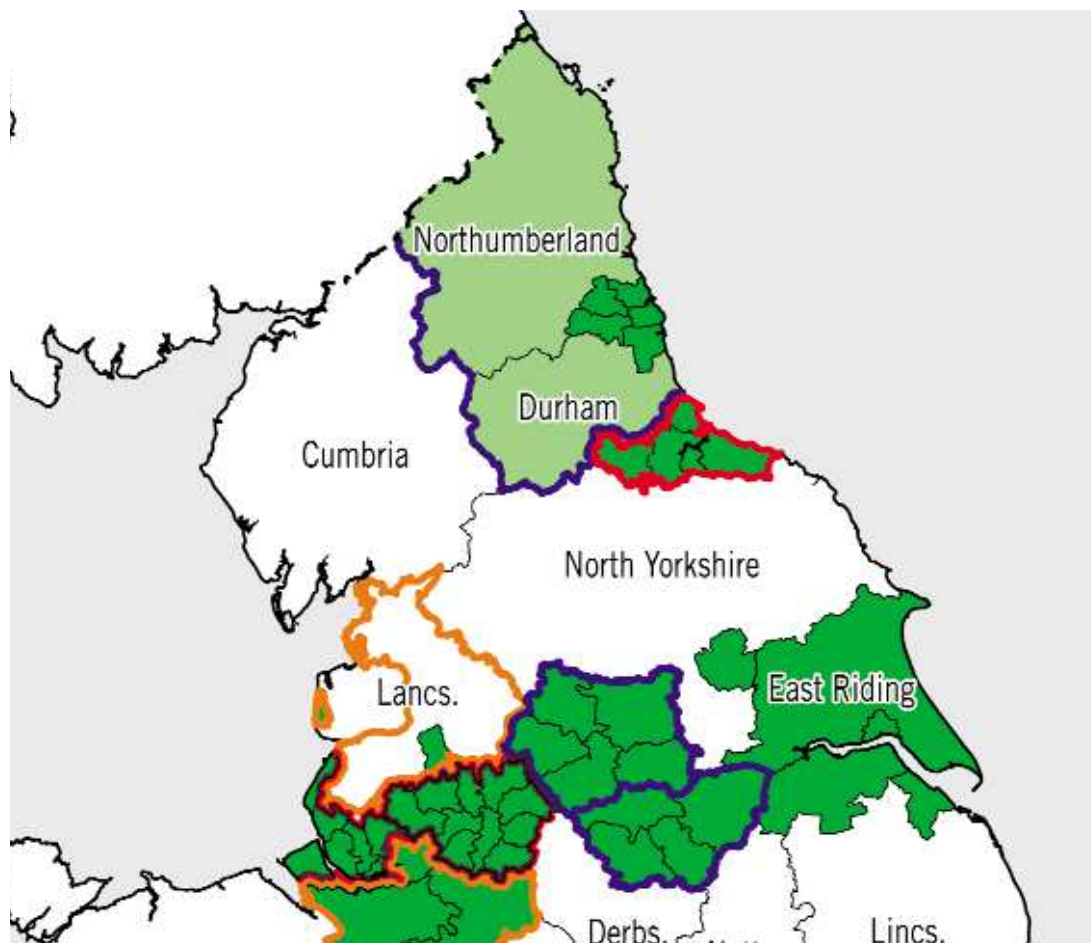


Fig. 1 Combined authorities as at May 2017 from the available building blocks - upper-tier local authorities

- County councils (with complete lower tier, not shown)
- Unitary councils, including metropolitan councils (with no lower-tier authorities)
- Unitary councils, former counties with a lower tier until 2009
- ▨ County council areas with active proposals to become unitary in one or more councils in 2016, ministerial decisions awaited
- Combined authorities with mayoral election, May 2017, devolution agreement in operation
- Combined authorities with devolution agreement not currently proceeding
- Other areas with combined authority and devolution agreement reported recently as possible

Source: Townsend 2017 – new “larger than local” governance arrangements

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Rural Leadership and the Brexit Challenge

- Seek to influence debates on the “rural”
- Areas of North not part of City-Regions and Devolution
- Regarded as “rural” (popn density) but is non-metropolitan a better description?
 - *“The main difference between the rural economy and that of the economy as a whole is that the rural economy has a much higher proportion of businesses focusing on agriculture, forestry and fishing.....”*
 - *A higher proportion of employment is in small businesses in rural areas than in urban areas..... “Effects of the UK leaving the EU on the rural economy” House of Commons Library Debate Pack 16th January 2017*
- Urban-rural continuum – freestanding towns and smaller cities in “rural areas” – other prominent sectors with high productivity

Rural Leadership and the Brexit Challenge

- Seek to understand and influence rural policy design (useful paper from CRE, Newcastle – After Brexit, 10 key questions – can be re-interpreted as local leadership challenges)
- How can existing rural networks and institutional capacity be preserved and protected in the process of change?
- How can local rural leadership seek to influence decisions regarding emerging new governance regimes affecting rural areas?
- Could Brexit be seen as an opportunity for social innovation at the local level – more wide-ranging partnerships?
- Is this an opportunity for local community representatives to provoke a fresh look at “rural policy” in terms of skills, housing, employment ... in relation to City-regionalism
- How could intelligence gathering be improved – local business impacts, investment + skills decisions in non-metropolitan areas?

Rural Leadership and the Brexit Challenge

- Gather appropriate intelligence to inform future decisions: the Conventional view of “Rural”
- Food & Drink – Much regulation is currently from the EU. How is this going to be affected / replaced? How can producers overcome tariffs and non-tariff barriers in non-EU markets? Migrant workers are important – how are businesses responding?
- Tourism – Migrant workers are important – how are businesses responding? Will administration of travel and flights to the UK from EU and elsewhere become more complex and time-consuming? How can this be avoided?
- Agriculture – What is the future of UK farm regulation and funding for farm economy? How and where will these decisions be made?
- Forestry – The UK is a major timber importer.... if international trade falls following Brexit, what are the implications of increased demand for domestically produced timber?

Rural Leadership and the Brexit Challenge

- Gather appropriate intelligence to inform future decisions: other perspectives
- What are the commuting and trade flows between the non-metropolitan North and City Regions? What are the relationships and how can synergies be maximised?
- What prospects are there for decentralised or dispersed manufacturing activity across the “rural” North post-Brexit?
- Non-metropolitan North as an arena for innovation in housing and energy, healthcare delivery?

Conclusions

- *Place Leadership* – still a contested concept in regional studies but raises some significant questions about decision-making, governance and the distribution of power and influence in policymaking.
- *Governance* – understanding the process of “rescaling” is vital as demonstrated by recent events at supra-national and subnational levels.
- *Rural Leadership challenge* – understanding complexity, dealing with uncertainty and risk, forming new alliances, gathering intelligence.

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