

# 7 Neighbourhood regeneration and place leadership: lessons from Groningen and Birmingham

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## § 7.1 Introduction

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The concept of place leadership is new and relatively untheorised in England (but see Gibney & Murie, 2008; Gibney, Copeland & Murie, 2009; Mabey & Freeman, 2010), and has not been explicitly formulated in the Netherlands. However, a related stream of practice and analysis around partnerships (Sullivan & Skelcher, 2002) and network governance (Kickert, Klijn & Koppenjan, 1997; Rhodes, 1997; Koppenjan & Klijn, 2004) is already well-established in both countries and has framed our earlier work on neighbourhood regeneration and housing (Mullins & Rhodes, 2007; Van Bortel and Mullins, 2009; Van Bortel, Mullins & Rhodes, 2009).

This article explores connections between place leadership and network governance concepts to identify a set of themes that are then used to explore research evidence on neighbourhood regeneration and the role played by third- sector housing organisations in two cities: Groningen in the north of the Netherlands and Birmingham in the English Midlands. While our research has a particular focus on the housing sector and the role of housing associations (HAs), the regeneration task that our case study organisations set themselves has taken them well beyond 'bricks-and-mortar'. This requires them to collaborate with municipal authorities and a wide range of partners who contribute to the wellbeing of places and people. We explore the role played by HAs in regeneration partnerships and the implications of place-shaping and network governance.

## § 7.2 Why place leadership and network governance? - Conceptual mapping

Over the past few years the idea of sustainable place-shaping has made its way to the heart of the debate on urban development and integrated policies for European regions, towns, cities and neighbourhoods. This has implications for the public and private sectors, third-sector organisations such as HAs and for local communities and governance arrangements.

### § 7.2.1 Origins and purposes

With diverse roots in thinking about collaborative planning (Healey, 2006), competitive cities and regions (Florida, 1995), the impact of economic change and the knowledge-based economy on different types of places (Gibney & Murie, 2008), ideas about place-shaping have been further stimulated by public policy agendas. In England, a strong policy impetus was provided by the Lyons report (2007) which argued the need to strengthen the focus on place and emphasised the role that local government could play in joining together a range of policy streams to create 'effective' places. This suggested that the attractiveness of neighbourhoods, cities and subregions should be seen as a key outcome of policy processes (Trickett et al., 2008).

This recognition of the need for an active approach to place-shaping has led to consideration of the leadership tasks required to bring together and coordinate multiple activities such as economic development, planning, housing, regeneration, sustainable communities and health to effect more satisfactory place-based outcomes (Gibney & Murie, 2008; Gibney et al., 2009).

There are very close parallels between the drivers for recent exploration of place leadership and longer-standing work on network governance. To orient our work in this article, [Table 7.1](#) sets out our understanding of the contextual drivers, intellectual origins, disciplinary roots and problem focus of the two approaches.

Both place leadership and network governance respond to shifts from government to governance (Rhodes, 1997), from hierarchies to networks (Powell, 1990) and the normative search for new approaches to manage complexity and the 'wicked issues' at the interstices of sector-based policy silos (Klijn, 2008). The need for network management is most pronounced in situations where essential resources are dispersed between several actors and hierarchical steering is ineffective. A good example of this is provided by Dutch neighbourhood regeneration policies where HAs have a high degree of independence from local government and have the resources needed for such

interventions (van Bortel and Mullins, 2009). In contrast resources are less dispersed in the UK, with resulting stronger hierarchical steering of local 'partnerships' by the state (Davies, 2002).

A strong normative strand is shared by the 'governance club' originators of the network governance school (Rhodes, 1997) and recent place-shaping work at the University of Birmingham (Gibney & Murie, 2008). The former has been described by a key proponent as 'the search for good, socially relevant outcomes' (Klijn, 2008, p. 14). The latter began in collaboration with the Academy of Sustainable Communities to influence practice across many disciplines to create more sustainable places. Both approaches blend several academic disciplines. While the former draws mainly on public management, political science, and cognitive and behavioural research, the latter brings perspectives from planning and economic development and third-sector research as well as leadership and management studies.

	NETWORK GOVERNANCE	PLACE LEADERSHIP
Context	Complexity From hierarchy to network governance (NG) fragmentation Resource dispersion between actors	As NG + economic change, knowledge-based economy, competitive cities and regions, shifting policy paradigms, 'place-shaping' agenda (Lyons)
Origins	The Netherlands. Erasmus 'governance club'	UK, Birmingham CURS/CLUB, building on place-shaping policy paradigm and collaborative planning tradition
Disciplines	Public management, politics, cognitive and behavioural dimensions	Planning, economic development, leadership and management, third- sector studies
Problems addressed	Normative - search for 'good socially relevant outcomes', tackling 'wicked issues', complex policy coordination and steering without hierarchy	Normative - 'successful places as outcomes' and collaborative planning 'from sectors and functions to places'

TABLE 7.1 Context, origins and problems addressed

## § 7.2.2 Content and approaches

Gibney and Murie (2008) and Gibney et al. (2009) identify three specific elements of the place-shaping agenda requiring different leadership responses to those found in traditional hierarchies. These are cross-boundary working, community engagement and a focus on outcomes.

Table 7.2 compares the content, core approaches and competences required for network governance and place leadership. In both cases these include cross-boundary working and community engagement. Slightly different repertoires of competences are suggested in relation to management and leadership.

	NETWORK GOVERNANCE	PLACE LEADERSHIP
Cross-boundary working	Key focus on actors, games and arenas	Multidisciplinary and multilevel actor networks with strong place focus
Community engagement	Activation of communities within networks	Community leadership links to collaborative planning
Leadership/ management	Techniques for game management and actor selection to avoid 'closedness'	Focus on leadership styles and techniques, and dilemmas and challenges

TABLE 7.2 Content, approaches and key competences associated with network governance and place leadership.

The need for public managers to move out of service-specific silos to provide 'joined-up local services' has been a long-standing mantra of public management and is shared by network governance and place leadership. Sullivan and Skelcher (2002) have identified the 'reticulist' skills that managers require for working across boundaries. Meanwhile Healey (2006) outlined the need for 'collaborative planning' and integrated approaches to improve quality of life in spatial planning. She advocated a shift from sectoral and functional approaches to service planning to a place-based approach with more fluid boundaries between public and private actors. Like Sullivan and Skelcher, Healey identified special skills such as joint visioning and consensus-building. The network governance literature elaborates the cognitive adjustments such as 'covenanting' required to share frames of reference between actors from different backgrounds (Klijn & Teisman, 1997).

Community engagement is the second main focus for place leadership identified by Gibney et al. (2009) and again there is long history of practice to draw upon. The continuum of options for levels of engagement of citizens and communities in decision-making and policy is well-known (Arnstein, 1969). Community leadership may intertwine with place leadership. Community engagement is important in network governance, but community actors may be less activated in networks that do not focus on place. Key decisions may be negotiated between powerful national or regional actors with limited reference to place-based community actors.

The greatest divergence between place leadership and network governance is probably in relation to management and leadership techniques and approaches. Network management is concerned with games, actors and arenas (Koppenjan & Klijn, 2004) and intervenes in network behaviour through process management and institutional

design. The repertoire of interventions considered by the place leadership school may in theory range from functionalist responses to the move from hierarchy to network, constructivist responses associated with dispersed boundary-spanning and critical discourses associated with the promotion of social justice (Mabey & Freeman, 2010). Case studies are required to understand how leadership is enacted in practice in different places.

Network governance research has developed beyond case studies to include comparisons of strategies and outcomes (Klijn, Steijn & Edelenbos, 2010). This has required common descriptors of network management strategies to enable survey-based comparisons of actors' experience and perceptions. Klijn et al. (2010) identify four types of management strategies: arranging, process, connecting and exploring to develop 16 survey questions relating strategies to outcomes. Similar developments could occur in the next generation of place leadership research.

### § 7.2.3 Key challenges

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Table 7.3 identifies some challenges faced by the two approaches, and it is these challenges that we intend to explore in our case studies of two neighbourhoods with a history of area-based interventions.

Earlier generations of interventions in these areas were informed by hierarchical planning and often failed to activate key local actors. Place leadership aims to avoid repeating these experiences by introducing more inclusive forms of policy-making and implementation in partnership with residents and communities. Network governance has also faced criticisms associated with selective activation of actors, within the field of neighbourhood regeneration there are numerous examples of weak engagement of residents at limited points of the process (van Bortel & Mullins, 2009). Other critiques of partnership take the opposite line that inclusive network negotiations and involvement in each stage in decision-making can be cumbersome and fail to add value, with dissatisfied actors failing to accept joint or shared outcomes. In between are critiques suggesting imbalance between discussion and action and recognising inequalities in influence of different actors. Our case studies address these issues by considering the history or interventions in each case study, the extent of explicit focus on place-shaping and the leadership styles and dilemmas encountered.

There is considerable discussion in the network governance literature on the relationship between networks and democracy (Sørensen & Torfing, 2007). Again there are a variety of views, some seeing network management as reducing political issues to technocratic ones, others maintaining that all decisions are political and the

shift of decisions away from democratically-mandated partners is the key critique (Klijn & Skelcher, 2007). The policy stance of place leadership in the UK is interesting in this regard, asserting the role of elected municipal authorities as key actors. Our case studies pay particular attention to questions of legitimacy and anchorage and the mandate place leaders and network managers have for their actions.

	NETWORK GOVERNANCE	PLACE LEADERSHIP
Key challenges	Perils of partnership activation often too selective	History of unsuccessful area-based interventions and top-down master-planning
Democratic anchorage	Problematic relationship between networks and democracy	Links to political leadership of place
Process/outcomes	Strong focus on process; emergent and joint outcomes; success judged through mutual satisfaction of actors	Successful places as outcomes and challenges output focus of silos

TABLE 7.3 Key challenges.

The third core dimension of the place leadership perspective is a focus on place-based outcomes as the main test of effectiveness of interventions (Gibney & Murie, 2008). For hierarchically-governed public services this is a major shift from outputs of individual players to joint impacts on places. More radically it suggests connections with community engagement in governance, and service delivery through co-production. However, the process focus of network governance can make it hard to identify external outcomes. Place leadership's insistence on 'places as outcomes' adds a distinctive dimension. Our case studies, therefore, pay particular attention to the role played by community engagement and area-based outcomes.

### § 7.3 Why compare Birmingham and Groningen?

Place-shaping activity is necessarily responsive to context, and Collinge and Gibney (2010) have specified 'regenerating places' (such as those places going through a post-industrial transition) as one category of place where the impact of place leadership can be explored. In their different ways Groningen and North West Birmingham provide good examples of such places that have needed to respond to structural changes that have affected their position in the economy and housing market. The research focuses on two specific neighbourhoods, both facing long-standing issues of deprivation: Lozells in Birmingham (England) and De Hoogte in Groningen (The Netherlands). Research data have been gathered by conducting in-depth interviews, observation of

meetings involving key actors engaged in regeneration interventions and desk research to track and corroborate these interventions over a period of several years. This data is part of a doctoral research project on shifts in governance and the changing roles of HAs in complex urban regeneration decision-making processes (Van Bortel, 2009). The research has a longitudinal focus tracking neighbourhood interventions spanning the eras referred to by Collinge and Gibney (2010).

The comparison between Birmingham and Groningen is valuable in highlighting the impact of differences in institutional structures, resources and incentives (HAs are more prominent and powerful in the Netherlands and central and local government has less hierarchical leverage on their activities than England). It captures different national approaches to partnership working, with a dominance of resource-led, hierarchically-driven arrangements in England and a greater need for collaboration in the Dutch case, reflecting the wider dispersion of resources.

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## § 7.4 Place leadership and network governance in Birmingham and Groningen?

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In this section we explore the experience of neighbourhood regeneration in the two case study areas based on seven themes developed from our review of place leadership and network governance concepts [see section § 7.2]:

- 1 History of area-based interventions;
- 2 Explicit focus on place-shaping;
- 3 Impact of national policy paradigms;
- 4 Leadership styles;
- 5 Leadership dilemmas and challenges;
- 6 Community engagement;
- 7 Impacts on democracy and anchorage.

### § 7.4.1 History of area-based interventions

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Both neighbourhoods have experienced long-term shifts in their structural position and economic function, resulting in changes in employment, housing demand, migration, crime and community safety. Consequently, both neighbourhoods have been subject to a succession of area-based interventions which have changed in content and approach over a 30-40-year period. We can contrast these initiatives in

the extent to which they were subject to vertical and horizontal influences, the mix of actors involved and the extent of community engagement.

In Groningen, a regeneration programme similar to the current initiative was undertaken in the 1980s to tackle deprivation in the area (especially worklessness and social exclusion of the immigrant population). This intervention was called the Problem Accumulation Area Policy. This involved the same leading partners (e.g. the local authority and HAs), but with a different allocation of tasks. Back then, the local authority was leading the project, and the HAs were mainly involved in the refurbishment and renewal of the housing stock and far less in improving the personal situation of residents. Local and central government provided the financial resources. In 2007, a new initiative started to tackle deprivation in the same area. The local authority is still the leading actor, but is working in close partnership with HAs. The municipality and HAs provide financial resources on an equal basis for social investment.

Lozells in Birmingham has been subject to a similar series of area-based interventions, involving many of the same actors. In the 1970s as part of the shift from clearance to area-based housing improvement, the predecessors of the current lead HA actor, Midland Heart, were involved in the conversion of large houses formerly in private ownership into social rented flats accessible to new migrants and others seeking homes in the area. Now, 30 years later, Midland Heart is involved in a programme including de-conversion of some of the same properties into larger family homes for sale in an attempt to broaden the range of housing options that can be met within the area and to generate receipts to fund other regeneration activities in the neighbourhood.

## § 7.4.2 Explicit place-shaping

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In both neighbourhoods, recent regeneration initiatives contain clear 'place-shaping' elements. This is symbolised by the mottos given to the interventions in the area. In Birmingham, the title of the masterplan is 'Making Lozells a place of choice' and in Groningen the plan bears the title: 'Ensuring that De Hoogte stays an attractive place to live' (in Dutch: 'Mooi blijven wonen in De Hoogte'). But the concept of place-shaping is found not only in slogans, but also in spatial concepts. Both intervention areas have explicit place-shaping dimensions in symbolic - but very diverse - locations. In Lozells place-shaping interventions are aimed at creating several high-profile gateways along busy routes through the area. These gateways will combine community and commercial facilities. In De Hoogte the place-shaping interventions have a more internal focus, namely the creations of a 'vibrant heart for the neighbourhood'.



This 'vibrant heart' will be a new 'hub' at the centre of the neighbourhood including community facilities such as a school and Child and Family Care Centre.

### § 7.4.3 The impact of national policy paradigms

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In both the Netherlands and England, local practice has been strongly affected by national policy paradigms, usually transmitted from policy reports, governmental programmes or voluntary and professional bodies. These influences have been filtered by key actors involved in the interventions in the two case study neighbourhoods.

In the Netherlands at least two important national policy paradigms can be identified. The first one is the targeted intervention of a limited number of neighbourhoods selected by the central government. The Problem Accumulation Area Programme in the 1980s was followed by a series of similar programmes targeting a selection of deprived areas. The latest programme started in 2007 and contains 40 priority areas, including De Hoogte. The big difference from previous interventions is that HAs are now expected to pay for a large proportion of the intervention, but in turn are given a major say in policy development.

A key policy shift was triggered by the 'Trust in the Neighbourhood' report by the Dutch Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR, 2005). This report contended that in the past urban regeneration approaches have not been able to create sustainable improvements. While arguing that 'place matters' and that vibrant neighbourhoods can prevent school drop-outs and anti-social behaviour, the WRR also recognised that the meaning of place differs between citizens and advised that place leadership strategies should respond to these distinct groups with tailored strategies:

- top-down 'social reconquering' strategies led by government and third sectors to address problems of deprivation and social cohesion; and
- bottom-up 'opportunity-driven' approaches in more stable and cohesive neighbourhoods.

This approach inspired urban regeneration professionals in Groningen - in particular the need to include residents in regenerating their neighbourhoods, even where residents are already active, talented and motivated. Groningen is now one of four 'front-runner' municipalities in the Netherlands actively implementing the 'Trust in the Neighbourhood' principles.

In England there were a number of neighbourhood-based initiatives in the late 1990s and early 2000s (e.g. New Deal for Communities, guide neighbourhoods) and neighbourhood regeneration became a central role for some HAs such as Midland Heart (Mullins &

Murie, 2006). The Housing Market Renewal Pathfinders programme (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2009) had a direct impact on our case study, which is located in part of the Urban Living pathfinder area. In the early 2000s a campaign by the representative body for HAs, iN Business for Neighbourhoods was another influence. In the last year or so the transfer of functions from Housing Corporation and English partnerships to the new Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) has had important impacts in strengthening the place-shaping agenda, and expectations of closer working between local government and HAs in regeneration areas.

Midland Heart has adopted iN Business for Neighbourhoods, and promises to put neighbourhoods at the centre of their activities and strive to create places where people want to live. This is communicated in Midland Heart's corporate motto 'passionate about communities'. Part of the motivation for Midland Heart to lead the partnership with Urban Living and Birmingham City Council to develop the regeneration plan for North Lozells, was the ambition to demonstrate that the merger that formed Midland Heart in 2006 enhanced the organisation's resources, thereby meeting regulatory expectations that mergers should add value for tenants and communities.

The shift of responsibility for housing development from the Housing Corporation to the HCA led Midland Heart and Birmingham City Council to integrate regeneration plans for North Lozells and South Lozells, doubling the size of the plan area from 2000 to 4000 properties. Thus the definition of place was amended in order to have a stronger position in future tenders for development funds with the HCA.

#### § 7.4.4 Leadership styles

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Leadership in contemporary urban regeneration processes does not resemble the traditional 1970s and 1980s hierarchical leadership model, but instead adopts a more distributed approach, based on the development of common understandings and joint outcomes as envisaged by the network governance paradigm (Klijn & Teisman, 1997; Mabey & Freeman, 2010).

What we see in Groningen and Birmingham are collaborations between a range of agencies and municipal authorities, recognising the need for social and economic interventions that go beyond a bricks-and-mortar view of regeneration. The impacts of regeneration activities on specific places are increasingly taken into account.

In Groningen, urban regeneration leadership is devolved to Neighbourhood Teams that are the main driving force to deliver outcomes for communities. These teams consist of frontline staff from public and third-sector organisations and coordinate activities

to increase social cohesion and the quality of the public realm. The philosophy underpinning the Groningen Neighbourhood Teams is that housing professionals and local authority officers should shape local neighbourhood responses rather than following what 'city hall' or HA headquarters demand.

Top-level officials are expected to support the frontline. In order to get things done and deliver results for communities, top-level officials of both HAs and local authorities aim to empower the Neighbourhood Teams to cut through the red tape and to show stamina and strong leadership.

In Birmingham, the Lozells Neighbourhood Management Board has developed a Neighbourhood Management Plan that contains actions focused on issues such as health, young people, safety and the environment. Investments in the housing stock and plans to invest in the public realm and community facilities are specified in the North Lozells Masterplan. This plan was later developed through a series of engagements with stakeholders and community actors.

#### § 7.4.5 Leadership dilemmas and challenges

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The position of the Neighbourhood Teams in Groningen is not uncontested. Some participants in Groningen find that the teams do not have a mandate to take decisions because they have no statutory position. They contend that the teams are arenas where actors meet, share information and coordinate actions, but not a place for shared decision-making. Decisions are made individually by the organisations participating in the Neighbourhood Teams: the respective municipal departments, HAs and other third-sector organisations. Opponents contend that the Neighbourhood Teams in Groningen are part of the New Local Area Covenant that has been approved and thereby legitimised by the City Council. But there are no terms of reference guiding the working of the Neighbourhood Teams.

In addition, critics point out that bold action assumes that everybody in the Neighbourhood Team has the same perspective on the actions to be taken, and that is often not the case. Actors involved in decision-making often do not have the same interests. They stress that it is often difficult and time-consuming to create consensus on interventions. Furthermore, this emphasis on delivering results favours a short-term over a long-term perspective. An informant from the Groningen municipality used the example of a playing area for kids: 'it is rather simple to place a new toboggan, but who is going maintain this, what about creating a precedent? If you give one community a new toboggan, what if another neighbourhood asks the same thing?'

In Birmingham the Lozells Neighbourhood Management Board is the equivalent of the Neighbourhood Teams in Groningen. But there are some differences. The Neighbourhood Management Board in Lozells has a statutory position and is led by a neighbourhood manager employed by the Birmingham city council. The terms of reference setting out who can participate in the board and how decisions are made has been approved by the Perry Barr Constituency Committee. Perry Barr is one of the 10 electoral constituencies in Birmingham, and is part of the local structure of representative democracy.

Another difference is that the Lozells Neighbourhood Management Board has almost no financial resources. The board is dependent on other organisations, municipal departments or HAs such as Midland Heart to supply resources. In contrast, the Neighbourhood Team in Groningen has considerable funds to allocate each year from the New Local Area Covenant.

#### § 7.4.6 Community engagement

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In Groningen, two different kinds of interventions have been developed for De Hoogte. First a collective track has been developed that will focus on improving the public realm, community safety and facilities for young people. A second track addresses individual issues such as health, unemployment, education and financial exclusion. This individual approach to regeneration is relatively new in the Netherlands. It comes in response to criticism levelled at the traditional 'bricks- and-mortar' regeneration. Rather than solving problems, earlier regeneration had simply displaced them by moving households facing multiple forms of deprivation to other neighbourhoods.

For the collective track professionals take a facilitating role with a heavy emphasis on community engagement, but for the individual track a more assertive institution-led 'go for it' approach is used and residents do not participate in decision-making on these issues. These different approaches reflect the neighbourhood strategies described by the WRR, i.e. 'social reconquering' and 'opportunity-driven'.

In Groningen, the Neighbourhood Action Plan is not very specific on actions that belong to the so-called collective track (e.g. safety environment, public realm and social cohesion). The plan only describes the intended outcomes and the budget available. Project proposals need to be developed and decided on by residents and selected during Neighbourhood Voting Days. These proposals have to contribute to the goals included in the Neighbourhood Action Plan. In De Hoogte the following goals have been selected: improve the quality of the public realm, create education and employment perspectives for young people and increase the feeling of security in the area.

In 2008, the first Neighbourhood Voting Day was organised. A special instrument, called the Value Sieve, was developed to support large scale and sophisticated decision-making by residents. Using an electronic voting system, residents can assess project proposals based on their perceived contribution to the goals included in the Neighbourhood Action Plan. Community engagement processes in the two parts of Lozells developed in parallel, reflecting contrasting actor strategies. In North Lozells, urban regeneration options were first discussed in a series of workshops attended by officers from several Birmingham City Council departments and staff members from Midland Heart. Only after these actors had reached consensus about the outlines of the regeneration options was a public consultation organised for residents to have their say. Midland Heart intentionally did not involve resident's groups in the first development stage because of the fragmented nature of communities and their representatives in the area and doubts about how representative these groups were for the larger resident population. Nevertheless, Midland Heart reports that resident involvement and public consultation are a key component in the regeneration of Lozells.

In South Lozells, a different approach was taken by the Birmingham City Council housing department and some resident groups were involved in the early development stages. Parallel to this a Lozells neighbourhood manager also conducted a consultation with residents to develop a Neighbourhood Management Plan.

All these community engagement initiatives appear to be duplicated by a new consultation process called the Community Dialogue Roadshow. This roadshow is organised by a Handsworth and Lozells CommUNITY Team, part of Birmingham City Council. The topics the CommUNITY team is exploring seem to overlap with the issues addressed in earlier consultations, namely environment, housing, transport, history and place, regeneration, health and community safety.

A process of 'joining up' has been required in the latest phase, not just to achieve cross-boundary links between the different agencies involved, but also to join up the parallel initiatives north and south of Lozells Road. This process is being consolidated through a single Masterplan based on extensive opportunities for stakeholder and community engagement.

## § 7.4.7 Impacts on democracy and anchorage

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Both case studies indicate the importance of contests over authority, legitimacy and mandate in setting the boundaries within which place leadership can take place and the roles of neighbourhood managers and political leaders in negotiating the terms on which interventions can proceed. The network governance concept of democratic

anchorage (Sørensen and Torfing 2007) provides an explicit framework in which such questions of legitimacy can be discussed.

In Groningen, Neighbourhood Teams are central to the delivery of the targets in the Regeneration Covenant. The philosophy underpinning the Groningen Neighbourhood Teams is that frontline staff should be focused on tackling problems in the neighbourhood and not on local politicians or managers in the headquarters of the HA. Top-level officials should support frontline staff and give them sufficient mandate.

In Dutch urban regeneration circles frontline staff displaying this 'can do' attitude are sometimes admiringly referred to as 'urban marines' emphasising the risk-taking behaviour and bold action expected from them to solve problems and advance the neighbourhood agenda further. In Groningen, the Neighbourhood Teams are the embodiment of these 'urban marines'.

Recent evaluation of the Neighbourhood Teams shows that strong leadership in neighbourhood is not as easy as it seems. Some members of Neighbourhood Teams emphasised that strong leadership and taking bold action in urban regeneration is problematic. They contend that municipal policies (e.g. policies on green areas, playing areas and architectural quality) are there for a reason, and the fact that their intentions are good does not mean that Neighbourhood Teams have the mandate to ignore policies and rules that have been approved by elected politicians of the city council.

Supporters of Neighbourhood Teams showing strong leadership contest that there is a strong democratic foundation because the brief of these teams is part of the urban regeneration covenant that has been approved by the city council. In addition, the Neighbourhood Action Plan for De Hoogte has been approved by the council and the national housing minister.

In Birmingham, HA Midland Heart is leading the partnership with Urban Living and Birmingham City Council to develop the regeneration options for the North Lozells. Interviewees regard it as rather unusual that Midland Heart as a non-state actor is taking the leading role but this is generally regarded as a pragmatic and non-problematic solution.

In England, resident consultation is a big issue for the government and an important part of performance inspections by the Audit Commission. In addition, close collaboration between local authorities and HAs in place-making is an important subject for public bodies funding urban regeneration. This appears to be even higher on the agenda of the new HCA, than for previous agencies. This development could have the added value of putting democratic accountability back at the centre of place leadership and urban regeneration.

## § 7.5 Conclusions

Based on our findings from Birmingham and Groningen we draw three interim conclusions. The first and second concern the analytical value added by each of the two paradigms discussed, the third concerns the practical contribution that place leadership and network governance can have on neighbourhood outcomes.

### What does the place leadership focus add to existing analysis within the network governance paradigm?

This article has considered the value added by the place leadership focus to existing knowledge on neighbourhood regeneration. Superficially, there would appear to be a quite limited added value for analyses that already recognise the importance of cross-boundary working and the engagement of residents and communities in influencing decisions on the future of the places that are important to them. However, one critique of the network governance paradigm that may be overcome by the overlaying of place leadership concepts is the putative tendency of the former to reduce political problems and conflicts to management questions that can be addressed by tools such as those used in the Groningen case study. The connections and tensions between networks and democracy have been explored by Klijn and Skelcher (2007) and Sørensen and Torfing (2007) and are directly confronted by place leadership. Policy-driven applications of place-shaping in England have tended to re-assert the authority of municipal government in relation to third-sector agencies such as HAs (e.g. the HCA's insistence on a 'single conversation' between local agencies involved in house-building, area regeneration and place-shaping and the earlier re-assertion by Lyons (2007) of the primary role played by local government in place-shaping).

However, in Birmingham urban regeneration plans are developed in partnerships that involve local authority departments, HAs and resident consultation, yet the position of local ward councillors in the decision-making process remains unclear. In Groningen, politicians have a more prominent and clearly defined role in urban regeneration decision-making. But there remain tensions between decisions made by Neighbourhood Teams and city council policies and priorities.

Emerging academic perspectives on place leadership (e.g. Mabey & Freeman, 2010) may strengthen attention to political factors such as authority, legitimacy and power. This could occur through problematisation of the notion of leadership, recognition of the role of distributed leadership and the links between leadership and power.

### What added value can network governance bring to place leadership?

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Network governance can fill some of the conceptual gaps associated with the currently undertheorised stage of place leadership. In particular the consideration by network governance of cognitive processes and actor behaviour can begin to fill gaps concerning 'what leaders do' in their place-shaping and boundary-spanning roles. The introduction of new ideas and new actors (such as different types of local residents) may overcome 'closedness' in decision-making. The increasing recognition within Dutch neighbourhood regeneration practice of the different motivations and behaviour of different market segments within regeneration neighbourhoods is a good example.

The emphasis of network governance on process - for example, showing how actor behaviour evolves through a series of games played to a set of emergent rules - can add a dynamic perspective on the content of the activities of place leadership. In Birmingham new actors (such as the HCA) have entered the arena and changed the rules for subsequent games (the size of regeneration neighbourhoods and expected interactions between HAs and the local authority). In Groningen the paradigm of strong place leadership advocated by top-level local government and HA officials appears difficult to implement due to the large number of actors and fragmentation of resources. 'Trust in the Neighbourhood' requires a different approach to genuinely involve residents.

Another approach that place leadership might borrow from network governance is the development of research tools to enable comparisons between interventions and outcomes in different places. By developing typologies of place leadership tools similar to Klijn et al.'s (2010) typology of network management strategies, survey-based comparisons between places may be added to the intensive case studies of individual place leadership initiatives included in this special issue.

### What evidence is there that place leadership and network governance achieve better outcomes for places such as Lozells and De Hoogte that have been on the sharp end of structural economic and social change?

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Ultimately, the test of place leadership will be its ability to deliver better outcomes for the residents of neighbourhoods undergoing regeneration interventions. The history of areas such as Lozells and De Hoogte have been of a succession of interventions that have fitted the policy paradigms of the time but which have not fundamentally changed the position of the neighbourhood or the overall experience of the residents. The longitudinal perspective provided by our research has clarified the short-lived nature of some of the interventions, suggesting that outcomes are often transitory stages in a longer-term change process. The games metaphor used in network governance provides a helpful way of understanding the relationship between outcomes and



process. For example, the conversions of large houses into flats for social rent by HAs in Lozells in the 1970s were successful outcomes for policy then, but became part of the problem definition in later rounds of games in the 2000s when these flats were to be de-converted into housing for sale.

A key contribution of network governance is the recognition that successful neighbourhoods cannot be planned using traditional systems with a priori objectives. The need to engage with a wide range of actors and residents means that successful outcomes will usually be joint outcomes that are to some extent emergent rather than intended. In the early stages of the planning process an option to demolish some of 'the 'groves'<sup>19</sup> in North Lozells was considered. These areas were then perceived as badly-designed urban spaces causing problems with parking and litter. During the consultation process, the involvement of a new actor, English Heritage, reframed 'the groves' from a problem into a heritage asset. The demolition option was replaced by a strategy to improve the public realm and introduce intense management in close collaboration with residents.

Within network governance there is a tendency to define satisfactory outcomes as those which enjoy greatest joint support from actors involved in the process (Kickert et al., 1997). Consequently, there are dangers that more inclusive approaches that engage a wider range of actors including different market sectors of residents could appear to be less successful since the benchmark of satisfaction is raised to include a wider range of preferences and experience. Ultimately, in our view, more democratic and inclusive approaches to decision-making on neighbourhood regeneration are likely to result in better outcomes, but not necessarily in greater consensus. The focus of the place leadership paradigm on places as outcomes and local leadership and engagement needs to be matched by new evaluative approaches capable of providing a more nuanced picture of outcomes.

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## PART 3 Conclusions and Reflections

HOUSING HERO 3:

*[Neighbourhood regeneration] is a job that cannot begin too soon. But on the other hand it is also a job that is never over and done with, and never will be, in any given place.*

Jane Jacobs (1916-2006), American-Canadian journalist, author, and urban activist.

