

Total Place: Interim Research Report

Purpose, Power, Knowledge, Time & Space

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This interim report draws some provisional conclusions from the Total Place Initiative established in 2009. It is based on a reading of documents and interviews with key stakeholders and participants, and locates the initiative within a wider body of academic literature on leadership and change. At this point (December 2009) the empirical data is illustrative rather than definitive and more data will be available, reported and evaluated for the final report due in April 2010

What is it?

The Total Place Initiatives (TPIs) are a series of pilot schemes from 13 different areas in England aimed at mapping the total public spending in these areas and changing the way services are provided by devolving control to those on the ground who actually deliver the services.¹ The origins of the programme derive from a variety of sources and a constellation of events, including some of the early work undertaken in Cumbria and Norfolk with the help of the Leadership Centre for Local Government (LCLG), the influence of the Gershon Report on efficiency and improvements, the move to Director of Public Services at the Treasury by ex- Islington CEO Helen Bailey, the semi-independent positioning of Michael Bichard as Director of the Institute for Government and his work with the Treasury for the 2009 budget, as well as the effects of the Credit Crunch on the public purse. The actual choice of the pilots was relatively informal, primarily because of the time frame imposed prevented the usual bidding processes, but it has resulted in a wide variety of places and projects.

Sponsored by the Communities and Local Government (CLG) department, with the backing of the Cabinet Office and the Treasury, the total place initiatives cost £5 million in total and are chosen, designed and delivered by the local authorities themselves. The pilots were announced in the budget on 22 April 2009 and each area has chosen their own pilot, mapping the total expenditure in their region and beginning the projects without the usual blue-print from the centre – because it probably would not work and the costs of business as usual are enormous. For example, several pilots are considering children's services against an expenditure map that suggests each child with untreated behavioural problems costs £70,000 – ten times the cost of children without behavioural problems (that's more than twice the cost of sending a child to Eton). And some problem families cost almost £250,000 a year to service with as many as seven agencies involved. Moreover the investment/return ration for early intervention data in the US suggests that £40 million invested in positive parenting interventions could save £400 million over a fifteen year period. In effect, and against the backdrop of potentially radical cuts in budgets, this kind of approach may be critical to preserving an effective and efficient public service.

Why now?

In the second week in November 2009 the then Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, and the leader of the opposition (David Cameron) both began the first salvoes of the pre-election phoney-war by enunciating a shift from centralized to decentralized control of public services. Cameron for the Conservatives talked about the model of EasyJet – a no-frills ‘easyCouncil’ service that would require customers to ‘top up’ their requirements in line with their preferences and resources. Brown was linked to a ‘John Lewis’ style public services rooted in the devolved community model of public services that predated the rise of the centralized state. Neither designs had much detail at the time of writing (early December 2009) but the message of both major parties was clear: we cannot go on with the current system in the context of falling tax revenues, increased public debt, and an increasingly demanding population.

The origins of the existing system of centralized control through targets and audits, according to Power (1997), can be seen in the early 1980s as the shift from a risk society to an audit society took hold through the ideology of New Public Management. Indeed, Power insists that what auditors generally do is make organizations auditable, rather than ensure enhanced quality or Value-for-Money. In effect, they ensure ‘compliance’ in the same way that IQ tests measure our ability to do IQ tests rather than some objective measure that we all recognize as ‘Intelligence’. This also means that the performance management systems often operate in support of departmental targets and hence often militate against the priorities set by the local agencies, never mind the priorities of the service users themselves. But the credit crunch of 2008/9 has provided the trigger to rethink public services in the light of both the failing orthodoxy and one of its aspects that has not been considered critical until now – its cost. Thus, rather providing an array of centralized targets and holding local authorities to account through these, supported by an extraordinarily detailed and therefore expensive auditing system, the shifting political sands indicate a move towards both decentralized control and locally determined priorities and accountabilities. Of course, cost cutting and efficiency improvements have long been part of the public service arena: the Gershon report suggested that £9 billion could be saved – including 70,000 – 80,000 civil servants that were surplus to requirements but the report itself cost £43 million according to Jenkins (2009: 31). And each time a new report emerges figures are suggested that seem impossible to verify. Indeed, each new report usually requires a new Quango (current total 750+) that spawns its own self-protection mechanism to ensure that cutting bureaucracy can only occur through the proliferation of bureaucracy cutting bureaucracies. Indeed, an ever-expanding universe of provision and regulation is no longer financially viable, never mind politically acceptable and the budget crisis now approaching is actually an ideal opportunity to think differently about public services, to consider not how we provide more but what we should be providing. In fact the ‘opportunity’ provided by the financial crisis is also a very real danger – if organizations and departments start to protect their own budgets at the expense of others the situation will actually be worse than it need be if the same groups collaborate to provide more efficient and effective public services.

An alternative is to decentralize the provision of services so that those at the local level – providers and users - can map the existing provision and then direct and control a cheaper and more efficient alternative. Often the costs of the existing service are hidden, not through some conspiratorial

process but simply through the proliferation of providers and what Clausewitz (albeit in another context) called 'the fog of war' – the confusion that necessarily prevails on the battlefield and which automatically inhibits the attempt by the centre to control events at the front. In some ways the Total Place Initiative mirrors the attempts by some contemporary military forces to shift from Command and Control to Mission Control. The former assumes the chaos of the battle can only be controlled through 'tight reins' from the top where every single action must be planned and monitored through an army of controllers. The latter assumes two things: first that it is practically impossible to control events as they unfold in battle – especially from a command centre miles from the front line – and second that the attempt to control from the centre positive inhibits the degree of initiative that is essential if you want to take advantage of events as they unravel. Thus, by the time a local commander has reported a change in circumstance, and sought and received permission to do what is self-evidently required, the circumstance has changed and the opportunity has been lost.

So, the initiatives have been chosen by the localities themselves and involve a counting exercise to evaluate the total cost of particular services in the area and an experiment to provide some form of better and cheaper alternative. For example, one of the Leicester/Leicestershire Leadership in Partnership Programme (LIPP) themes is Drugs and Alcohol Misuse and draws together ten partner organizations. Its premise is that the providers and users of alcohol should be held responsible for the consequences of their actions. This approach can be mirrored by considering the difference between a National Health Service (NHS) and a National Illness Service (NIS). Nationally over 850,000 people end up in hospital through alcohol related problems. The NIS then puts these people back together and absorbs the costs. If we really operated as an NHS we should focus not on putting people back together but stopping them going to hospital in the first place, but the 'illness' focus actually prevents us from standing back and assessing what we are doing, what it is costing tax payers and what an alternative might be. The LIPP initiative assesses that £120 million is spent on alcohol annually in the region and that £16 million is spent by the health services in dealing with alcohol related problems. The LIPP alternative is based on a more integrative approach for all the services involved that includes both personalized support and recovering the costs from the offenders.

Among other things the London borough of Lewisham is looking at the Services, Interventions and Management of Offenders, approximately half of whom will reoffend if the national figures are reproduced in the Lewisham count. At present the borough spends £149 million on community safety, enforcement and intervention and, as a single example, the estimated cost of an offender in rehabilitation (based on a 12 week intervention programme) is £1,250 – a sum that could be reduced if the support services were better aligned with each other. Similarly, Central Bedfordshire and Luton have Offender Management as one of their projects in its 'From Dependence to Self-Reliance' pilot and is working at breaking the 'self-perpetuating process' that see offenders passing from agency to agency with little positive effect and at great cost.

The Total Place Initiative in Manchester City Region and Warrington has adopted Early Years as a key theme based on the links between early years and productive adults. In fact the data has proved difficult to construct – an inevitable problem when dealing with longitudinal problems in a very short time frame – but the idea that services need to be reconfigured around communities (and not providers), that 'whole families' not individuals are the key target, and that single key-workers (one

family one liaison) not multiple liaison officers are critical. Croydon's take on a similar problem is to map the costs involved in reactive response to children and young people and reconfigure the system to facilitate greater emphasis on early intervention. But part of the problem is recognizing that simply concentrating on children misses the importance of dealing with the context that children live in – their families - that often need significant support too if the resources invested on their children are not to be wasted. Thus the shift from organizational to place leadership requires 'a different kind of conversation' rooted in truth and trust. Children and young people are also the focus of the Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire pilot and here the budget constraints have been taken as a 'once in a lifetime opportunity' for facing up to a significant aspect of the problems: the existing system and the garnering of sufficient support to change it.

Gateshead, South Tyneside and Sunderland TPI, amongst other things, looks at alcohol and drug misuse. The North East of England has the highest level of alcohol related hospital admissions in England, 50 per cent of domestic abuse cases handled by the police in the region are alcohol related, and almost a third of residents feel that drunk and rowdy behaviour is a problem in their area. This TPI is working with Birmingham and Leicester/Leicestershire who are dealing with the same issue. Again, the focus is on the person and prevention through partnership, rather than the service, the consequence and the silo response that has hitherto prevailed.

One of the elements of Worcestershire's pilot relates to its property assets because, like many local authorities, it is a significant property owner in its own right but the portfolio has often grown to suit the providers rather than the users and the opportunity is now being taken to relocate and co-late staff and services to facilitate the partnership working that will be critical to delivering improved services for lower costs. Kent also has a Single Asset Management Strategy and, like many of the pilot areas, Kent is not a novice at local experimentation but is taking this opportunity to refine and redefine some key practices and processes. In this case part of the pilot is not just to provide shared front office services but also to integrate some of the service facilities provided by the local authority and the National Health Service. The latter is something that concerns the Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole pilot which, amongst other things concerns the relationship between older people and health in the areas. Over 20 per cent of the total budget in the region is spent on health but given, for instance, the significant variations in attendance at A&E that seems to occur, the authority is seeking to shift investment to preventative care. The savings in this could be significant: for example, one estimate suggests that better preventative care to avoid so many falls by elderly people could save the NHS nationally as much as £1bn per annum (Lister, 2009).

Theoretical Reflections

This section reflects on the initial developments and findings of the TPI and sets the results in an academic context. This is not intended as an exercise in arcane theory but a way of ensuring that the learning can be 'copylefted' and not copyrighted – we can all learn something of value from this rather than only those with privileged theoretical or monetary resources. What follows is set out as a series of theoretical problems to be addressed.

1. The Problem of Purpose

One of the greatest challenges of the public services over the next few years is not simply going to be 'doing more with less' but working out the purpose of public services. In other words, to take

Moore's (1997) term, what is the 'public value' of all this activity? It may be, as Benington and Moore (2010) have suggested, that there are some things that the public services provide that the public don't actually want. For example, much has been made of the 'value' of providing NHS patients with 'choice' but most of the data suggests that the public would prefer a decent 'service' to a choice, and that the latter does not necessarily enhance the former. So the kinds of questions that many of the Total Place initiatives have used as a framing device are 'what does the public value?' and 'what would add most value to the public?' In short, 'what is the purpose of this public service?'

In some ways this refracts a more universal question: who are we? For Durkheim, writing in the early twentieth century, the question could be reframed as one close to the spiritual identity of the inhabitants of a land – what was this tribe's totem and what did the totem represent about the nature of the indigenous population? One might dwell on this question in contemporary terms of 'place' through, for example, the role of a local football team in reflecting, and indeed constituting, the identity of a place. For dedicated fans of such a club, travel for hours to a game at the other end of the country in the middle of winter is taken for granted – indeed, part of the experience of identification. But for the very same individuals the thought of expending the equivalent energy and money for their employer – even if in a public service - is well beyond the call of duty. The implication of this is that identification with a place can be a radically motivating phenomenon compared to identification with an employer and in the face of severe financial problems such motivation may be crucial. Of course, no consensus on purpose or identity may emerge – though Anderson's (1983) work is a clear reminder that identity construction often requires a 'leap of faith' rather than objective similarity – the imaginary leap that persuades you that you have more in common with 'us' than 'them'. So, the questions are still worth asking because it's the subsequent debate about purpose and identity that can mobilize a 'coalition of the willing' into action.

Having agreed a purpose the next question from Moore's 'strategic triangle' is to ask whether the coalition has the authorization to achieve the outcomes agreed. Often these outcomes will depend upon people working and leading beyond their formal authority, hence the critical issue is 'how do we acquire authorization (from the public) to do this?', rather than 'do we have the formal authority (from government) to do this?' The final leg of the triangle concerns the operational capacity to achieve the outcomes, in particular the financial, organizational and human resources, and if they are not available how are these to be acquired? Durham, for example, is engaged on a Total Place pilot at the same time as it embarks on a move to unitary status with all the added structures and processes that such a shift requires. Nor is this the first time that Durham has been engaged in such an experiment, but, as the chief executive suggested, 'this time it feels different.' Many of these questions are actually about power.

2. The Problem of Power

Many change programmes (at all levels) fail – and the traditional assessment of failure is 75 per cent of the attempts – often because they do not take into account that they are working with a living system and not a machine (Grint, 2008). Several issues relate to this.

First, it doesn't matter how many 'levers of power' you pull or where you sit in the chain of command because there are no levers to pull. Just issuing a requirement, a target or an order does not ensure its success because the execution of demands depends upon the compliance of the

subordinate - and that is always conditional. This is not just a case of switching our attention from the Leader as a noun to Leadership as a verb because the act of leadership requires something to happen beyond simply announcing that 'the leader has ordered'. If the followers refuse to acquiesce, or appear to acquiesce but actively sabotage the intention, or appear to acquiesce but do nothing ('comply and evade' as the military call it) then nothing will happen because there is no lever to pull. Thus while a formal leader may demand obedience from his or her subordinates – and normally acquire it, among other things, because of the resource imbalance - that obedience is never guaranteed. In fact, one could suggest that power encompasses a counterfactual possibility, a subjunctivist verb tense rather than just a verb – it could have been otherwise. Indeed, one could well argue that power is not so much a cause of subordinate action but actually a consequence of it: if subordinates do as leaders demand then, and only then, are leaders powerful. If this was not the case then we could not explain mutinies – an act of insubordination in a military hierarchy that can only occur if the subordinate has the power to say 'no' – and the courage to face the consequences.

Second, if this is closer to a living (open) system than a machine then the density of relationships and connections is so complex that there are often multiple explanations for the failure of a change programme. Traditionally we search for a single causal agent to explain failure – whether that is poor local execution, weak local leadership, alienated middle management, overbearing central authority, a weak original plan, inadequate resources allocated, or a million and one other possible locations of blame. Oftentimes the scapegoat is located anywhere but within the body of the scapegoat hunters and this usually leads to mutual recriminations. However, it may be that we need to rethink the issue of responsibility and blame here if we really are working with complex systems.

Now this is the point: not that no-one can be held responsible or accountable for error or stupidity or criminality, but that many organizational failures are organizational in nature – there are multiple causes and it may be that we don't know what causes failure (or success) and that makes for very uncomfortable reading. This, of course, also means that we cannot guarantee that Total Place will work – but that is the point. If we were dealing with a mechanical structure – indeed a hierarchical structure – then power may be 'possessed' by those at the top of the hierarchy and we would just need to ensure the plan and the strategy were appropriate – because the possession of power by the formal leaders would guarantee success. When we are dealing with Wicked Problems (Grint, 2005; Rittel and Webber, 1973) – complex issues which we either have not faced before or have never been able to resolve - we cannot know what will work, otherwise they are not Wicked Problems. Thus conventional management techniques may be appropriate for Tame Problems but not all problems are Tame and thus to seek a technical solution is actually to compound the problem not resolve it. If they are Wicked problems then we need to find the right question rather than jump to the 'right' solution, and if they are Wicked Problems then we are in the experimental world of the *bricoleur* who will try and stitch together what looks like an appropriate response to the issue – but it may not work as intended. And if it doesn't then we need to try and learn as much as possible from the failure so as to place ourselves in a different position for the next attempt. Aristotle would conceive of this in terms of *Phronesis* or Wisdom – the skill acquired through reflecting on previous experiences (many of which would have been failures) and a practical understanding of what public good might be achieved in any particular situation (Grint, 2008).

Of course, the complexity of the situation, and the knowledge that systems are often difficult to shift does not mean that no-one is ever responsible for action – though this can become an excuse for not

engaging with difficult issues. It is not until the Eureka moment when participants realize that ‘they’ are the ‘they’ in the conversation that ‘they’ have to do something and initiate the change. Indeed, recognizing that change only really comes about by those who engage in the work is part of the cognitive shift often necessary to start turning the oil tanker around. Moreover, the huge effort involved in turning a tanker/organization around is also reason to lock onto the locus of enthusiasm as the start point, rather than waiting for the top or the bottom or the whole organization to engage. As Rodgers (2008) suggests, we should ‘start anywhere and follow it everywhere.’

Wicked Problems are, by definition, beyond the conventional (Tame) improvements that can be delivered by simply starting with process improvements (see for example the work of John Seddon, 2008). These problems are the equivalent of realizing that you cannot jump beyond a certain height using a specific process (high jump technique) irrespective of how good you are or how much you practice. At some point you will need to invent a different technique – to shift, for example, from the Straddle and use the Fosbury Flop. This is the equivalent of realizing that constantly chipping away at medical budgets might get you minor cost reductions but it cannot deliver the radical improvements you might get if you were to switch from focusing on a National *Illness* Service and really shift towards a National *Health* Service. But how can the TPIs *know* what is possible?

3. The Problem of Knowledge

if we were to shift our focus and look hard at what the causes might be, we could get beyond the current financial mantra of ‘more for less’ by recognizing just how much some of our services cost us and through this establish what we get for the money and whether there is a better and a cheaper (the two are not necessarily connected) way to achieve our aims. Because we work in relatively isolated silos and are unsighted as to what others are doing we often misunderstand both the cost of public services and their efficacy. But if we take a systems approach to consider the connections between the silos and the services we might get a richer picture. However, while the national system of public provision is self-evidently too large and complex to map, let alone change, this is not necessarily the case at a local level: we could, in effect, get nearer a view of the ‘Total Place’ if we shifted to a local level.

What is the importance of local knowledge? Despite, or perhaps because of, all the information we have about organizational change we have yet to establish a model that can guarantee successful deployment. One reason might be that much of what makes change work is dependent upon tacit knowledge that, by definition, is difficult if not impossible to articulate, capture, model and repeat. In effect, the most complex and expensive change programme in the world cannot guarantee success because the people who made the model work before – if indeed they worked with an explicit model – are often unable to explain how they made the change effective. A well known example is the problem that Matsushita had in designing a bread maker without realizing that much of the skill involved is tacit and can only be acquired through a long apprenticeship – which is how the problem was eventually solved when a member of the design team (Ikuko Tanaka) volunteered to apprentice herself to the head baker of the Osaka International Hotel which was then renowned for its bread (Nonaka, I and Takeuchi, H. 1995). One implication of this is that the methodology that best suits an understanding of innovation is anthropology, not psychology or sociology because to understand how organizations work we need to become anthropologists – to visit our own tribes so

that we can see how work is actually accomplished – and this how it might be improved (see Jones, 2008). We cannot, then, understand how the system works at the front line from the centre.

Now the implication of this is that all successful change will, in some significant sense be 'local' because it relies upon tacit knowledge, and that often relates to the quality of the conversations generated by people. As one interviewee stated, 'yesterday we had a development session and they were saying that our relationships had completely changed since the start of Total Place and it was really interesting because they were having conversations they had never had before'. This can also be gleaned from the work of Alvesson and Svenningsson (2003) who focus on the 'extraordinarization of the mundane' as the key to explaining why some leaders appear more successful than others – because they engage in the relatively mundane activity of building and rebuilding personal relationships with others and through which the actual work of the organization occurs. In contrast to the grandiose claims of some change theorists, then, the practical skill of leadership is primarily rooted not in making great speeches or having great visions but in having the skill and resilience to keep plugging away at the building of strong local relationships through mundane activities in order to engage the enthusiasm and tacit knowledge of the workforce. Such actions, of course, take patience and time, and time plays a prominent role in Total Place.

4. The Problem of Time

There are several aspects to this. First, participants regularly noted the limited time available for starting the projects – and were concerned that the linkage to budget cutting meant that fundamentally the projects might be seen to be about cost savings rather than doing things differently and better. This also coincided with a fear that the very tight time scales effectively left the pilots open to political intervention when it became clear that the scale of change envisaged might take years rather than weeks to address. As Stephen Taylor, ex-CEO of the Leadership Centre for Local Government suggested, 'The danger is that the incoming government says there is no money and it has no choice but to start hacking.... There is always a danger that something becomes a fad because we think we should write it off if it doesn't deliver in three months' (quoted in *Civil Service World* 21/10/09 p. 7).

Second, and in contrast to the problem of vanishing time, the tight time table can also be seen to have energized the TPI participants and prevented them from delaying action. Indeed, the most striking thing about those not directly involved in the projects but on the periphery is their consternation at the 'impossible' time frames, yet Total Place participants seemed to view the same time scales as necessary motivators to instant action. That also accounts from a familiar complaint from the pilots: there are too many interested external people trying to get the participants to divulge information about the work but that actually diverts them from doing the work!

The third aspect of time is to consider the issue of achieving radical change in a very short period. To a large extent this implies that data concerning the success or failure of Total Place projects is likely to be scant at this point, especially if radical change is considered to require a time frame calibrated in years not weeks. But this is to assume that culture is the deep, underlying moral foundation that can only really be perceived through the surface level artefacts and social practices, and only altered through eons of change. If, on the other hand, one considered culture to be generated through the social practices – rather than the other way round – then altering the social practices would constitute a different culture (Grint, 1995). For example, if we change the architecture of a

classroom from serried rows facing the front to a circle then we encourage a more egalitarian educational process. The conventional cultural argument suggests the architecture is a reflection, a symptom, of the deeply held cultural norms of the institution – so we cannot alter the culture through altering the practice. But the alternative is to suggest we can actively reconfigure our culture through changing the pedagogical architecture and associated practice. Now if this latter approach to culture is adopted we could see that radically altering the practices of change might generate a radically different culture: we do not have to wait for the culture to change to try radical experimentation – it's the experimentation that constitutes a new culture. The problem remains though, that even radical and speedy restructuring may not bring immediate benefits, especially if the target for intervention is problem families for whom success needs to be measured in generations not months.

A final aspect of time that locks back into the systems approach is to recognize that public services are irredeemably linked into the political cycle of elections – with all that this implies, in particular the possibility that funding streams could be shut off or that priorities changed and support wither or grow as the political winds change. That, of course, operates in both directions: if the Total Place project is a resounding success, or at least is beginning to demonstrate its value for money, then political interventions become less, rather than more, likely. This suggests the participants of Total Place need an acute understanding of how leaders work, or rather, how leadership works: the difference is significant and resonates with the importance of space as well as time.

5. The Problem of Space

Many of our contemporary models of leadership are focused upon individuals as leaders. Thus we have personal competence lists, we spend a lot of time on 'knowing yourself', and we are evaluated on our authenticity – on being true to yourself. But this approach implies that we can evaluate leadership in abstract, in a world free of context and without followers, and is the equivalent of buying the best Koi Carp from the aquarium without recalling that you do not have a pond to put it in. What Total Place embeds from the beginning is the recognition that leadership can only ever be contextualized in time and space. Leadership does not occur 'in theory' but 'in practice' and that requires us to make great efforts to understand the importance of the particular frame of space that is the focus of the leadership work. Moreover, this does not mean that we can simply read off the correct leadership action from the 'objective' analysis of the situation because the actors are directly engaged in the (contested) interpretation of the situation (Grint, 2005).

That space is also open to different opinions on the way it is subdivided. For example, while the financial space that Sir Steve Bullock (Mayor of Lewisham) controls appears significant – the total public spend is £2.5 billion – in reality only £815m sits within the council's budget and realistically only £100m is discretionary spend. In effect, only 4 per cent of the total public spend in Lewisham is within the council's direct control, the rest is ring fenced or beyond their control. In Bradford the total spend is £4.4bn but only 15 per cent is under control of the council. Unlocking these ring fences is one of the keys to success and another is to remind the public where the responsibility for the resources actually lies.

Space is also critical in understanding how it is controlled. That is to say, how social networks are created and recreated as a means of controlling space. This aspect locks directly into arguments about social capital, in contrast to the individual capital that conventional approaches to leaders

assume. In this case it is the relationships between individuals that constitute the social capital that ensures the organization actually does anything. Social network analyses, and the related arguments concerning social capital, are relatively novel academic ideas but our knowledge of how organizational change has occurred in the past has been radically changed through these kind of approaches. For example, the German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies (1995) argued that the move from *Gemeinschaft* (community) to *Gesellschaft* (society) through the industrialization and urbanization of the nineteenth century had disrupted the human bonds that sustained social relationships – hence the disintegration of moral life as perceived by many observers of European cities. In contrast, Durkheim (1933), insisted that the mutual dependence generated by the ‘modern’ extensive division of labour in what he called ‘Organic Society’ would actually recreate these bonds of community that previously existed in pre-industrial ‘Mechanical Society’. Since that time Bourdieu’s (1986) work is regarded as the primary (re)starting point with his concern that social capital could explain the inequalities in life - such that private education did not just buy a better chance to achieve a good education but it also bought you the social capital through which the middle class could defend itself from inroads from below by developing powerful social and cultural connections that remained impervious to those aspiring to upward social mobility. More recently Coleman (1994), and subsequently the work of Robert Putnam (2001), have reinvigorated the debate about the collapse of social capital, though Putnam’s approach usually implies social capital is a positive phenomena, rather than a mechanism that can also be deployed for retaining social exclusivity. However, the point is that these arguments reveal the importance of social relationships in garnering collective power and provide another explanation for why Total Place is essentially rooted in the local – because that’s where the social networks are usually strongest. This necessarily means that political ‘nous’ becomes a key ingredient for constructing the social networks through which activity is achieved (Hartley, 2010; Jones, 2009). That nous includes the ability to keep central government (especially the treasury) on board as the local ship begins to plot a new course, because without a central/local alignment the necessary political support easily dissipates. This also implies not just that organizational politics is the glue that holds a group together but that party Politics is the boundary device that keeps communities apart. Thus, rather than assuming with Putnam that social capital is the key to community success we should also acknowledge that the same phenomena can undermine communities. Moreover, when we add the personal interests of interested parties to the collective pot it becomes clear that success is a slippery concept. In this sense the notion of displacing the politics of organizations with the politics of place offers an alternative approach, for loyalty to a place may be able to overcome loyalty to an organization. Note here that both approaches are rooted in loyalty rather than rationality for, as Douglas (1992) insisted, if we persist in assuming that life is based in rationality we will be unable to explain most of organizational life.

That implies that we need to consider how the local ‘communities of practice’ (Wenger, 1998) work if we are to understand how Total Place works. According to Wenger (1998: 4), ‘engagement in social practice is the fundamental practice by which we learn’ and this implies that we can best learn to lead by doing leadership, when ‘we engage in and contribute to’ the practices of our communities. In effect, if Total Place is about anything it seems to be about creating a legacy, an increased capacity for local leadership through the provision of opportunities to do something differently – to learn to lead. In short, the fewer consultants are engaged the more likely will be the leadership legacy left behind because if we need to do leadership to learn leadership then local

engagement is not an advantage, it's a prerequisite. Another way to capture the importance of locality is to reframe the issue as what Jackson (2009) calls, 'the geography of leadership' – that literally brings the flighty realms of leadership theory down to earth and reminds us that local government is quintessentially about what it says on the tin: local.

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