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The role of civic leadership in fostering economic resilience in City Regions

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Abstract

This paper examines the role of civic leadership in fostering economic resilience in City Regions. Extant research on resilience has examined 'economic' factors. This paper adds to the academic discourse by considering how effective leadership shapes economic development within sub-national economies. Through a case study of the Sheffield City Region, UK, the paper considers the role of civic leadership in enabling Local Enterprise Partnerships to work collaboratively to foster resilience. The paper finds that while civic leadership is emergent in the Sheffield City Region, it holds potential to foster economic resilience by bringing together the public, private and third sectors to develop locally-informed strategies. The paper concludes with implications for governance issues in City Regions and how the challenges and impacts of civic leadership may be assessed over time.

Keywords: civic leadership, resilience, City Regions, governance

INTRODUCTION

Despite a growing interest in the concept of economic resilience over recent years, it remains a somewhat fuzzy concept (Dawley et al, 2010; Pendall et al, 2010; Williams et al, 2013). In the wake of the recent economic crisis, the concept has gained traction among academics and policymakers alike as a framework to analyse the causes and effects of uneven development of regional economies (Simmie and Martin, 2009; Dawley et al, 2010). Economic resilience research is primarily concerned with how regions adapt to exogenous shocks, with Martin (2012, 13) asserting that a region's

"economic governance arrangements shape the resistance and response of a region's economy to, and its recovery from, a shock". However, despite this growing interest there remains a lack of research on the importance of governance for creating and managing more resilient localities, despite the recognition that leadership is shaped by, and shapes, how are places and policies are made through governance and leadership (Collinge et al, 2010).

As a 2010 Special Issue of *Policy Studies* on 'Leadership and Place' made clear, different types of leadership within localities are instrumental in shaping the capabilities of a place to withstand and thrive within changing economic and social contexts. Within this context, our paper examines how the governance arrangements of the Sheffield City Region (SCR), UK present a response to shape regional economic resilience through civic leadership and how this provides lessons for other City Regions in the UK and beyond. Where stakeholders come together in order to develop locally-informed policies and strategies, they are more able to respond to external shocks such as recession (Pendall et al., 2010; Simmie and Martin, 2009). Indeed, Dawley et al. (2010) state that such 'intelligent institutional leadership' can bring together local stakeholders to share a strategy and that as a consequence (more) resilient local economies are fostered. To examine the relationship between governance and resilience, we draw on Hambleton and Howard's (2013) conceptualisation of 'civic leadership' to examine how governance arrangements shape economic resilience within subnational economies. Civic leadership in this context refers to the combined connections between political, bureaucratic and business leaders in shaping regional economic policy and the strategic goals of social and economic development. We seek to address the question of how civic leaders articulate, mediate, negotiate and communicate the interactions between the

community initiatives where leadership is being enacted through broader government and economic processes (Porteous, 2013; Kroehn et al, 2010). Whereas governance structures and functions have historically been viewed in terms of discrete policy domains, stakeholders are being increasingly required to work together in smarter, more flexible and collaborative ways at the local level (Feser, 2014).

Within England Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) have been given the responsibility of local level economic development policy through joint local authority-business co-operation, and the Sheffield City Region (SCR) provides a useful focal point as it seeks to emerge from the recent recession by developing a more diverse economy (Williams and Vorley, 2014). Through much of the twentieth century, the SCR was at the fore of British industry as a centre for coal, steel and manufacturing (Jones and Etherington, 2009). However, the 1970s and 1980s saw a period of deindustrialisation, and the City Region has since struggled to restructure its economy (Dabinett and Ramsden, 1999; Crouch and Hill, 2004). The paper addresses how the LEP is aiming to create a more resilient, diverse City Region economy, as it is being challenged by national government, like the thirty-eight other City Region LEPS, to work collaboratively across the public, private and third sectors working to create greater economic resilience.

Dawley et al (2010) state that old industrial areas can experience weaker and slower restructuring, and given the history of the SCR it provides an interesting case to examine how civic leadership can foster economic resilience and growth. The SCR has experienced a revival in its economic growth in recent years, but this is largely due a growth in the public sector (Sheffield City Region, 2006, 2010). By contrast the private sector remains fragile, as Sheffield has become seen as one of the least

competitive city economies in the UK with the number of new businesses created between 2004 and 2011 remained below the national average (Williams and Vorley, 2014). The key governance challenge facing the SCR is how the LEP has sought to develop a cross sector business-led approach to economic development. For Bailey et al (2010, 460) leadership is integral to such processes and can be defined by 'the ability of the local agencies to proactively identify, coordinate and deliver initiatives that are the result of a collective system of actions and that will produce a collective benefit'. Through this system civic leadership has the capacity to play a significant strategic role in promoting local economic resilience and growth (Trickett and Lee, 2010). However, the capacity to do this depends on the extent to which the realms of civic leadership are effective in operating in a joined-up and coordinated manner. The challenge for civic leadership is therefore in bringing coherence to a diverse portfolio of public, private and third sector interests, so that (more) resilient economies, able to withstand and/or respond shocks such as recession, can be fostered.

The focus of the paper is on how collaborative forms of governance, which we term civic leadership, are being used to develop locally-informed economic development strategies, which in turn aim to create a more resilient and diverse City Region economy. The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. Section 2 introduces debates on regional economic resilience, before outlining the literature on civic leadership and considers how it relates to economic resilience. Section 3 presents the methodology and research framework. Section 4 analyses the findings of the study by considering the emergence of civic leadership in the SCR and how it has affected the economic resilience of the City-Region. The paper concludes by considering the prospects of civic leadership for the future of resilience, and reflects

the implications for policymaking and outlines directions for further academic research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Resilience at the City Region level

The concept of resilience has been applied in a wide range of disciplines on different geographical and organisational contexts, from countries and regions to firms and individuals. Common across all of these different approaches is how the concept seeks to understand different responses to exogenous changes and shocks (Bharma et al, 2011; Sullivan-Taylor and Branicki, 2011). Dawley et al (2010) find that the exogenous shock at the core of recent research and policy debates has understandably been the recent economic crisis. Martin (2012) describes recessions as 'system-wide' shocks that periodically interrupt and disrupt the process of economic growth and development. The impact of the recession, and the consequent financial austerity programme launched by the UK government, will clearly impact on economic development and demonstrate the continued importance of national government policy on shaping spatial disparities in economic growth and recovery (Pike et al, 2012).

The focus of economic development debates has broadened from a preoccupation with growth to one which captures the notion of resilience (Dawley et al, 2010, 650). The resilience of a region and its capacity to 'bounce back' or 'bounce forward' is contingent on its economic trajectory and ability to adapt over time (Simmie and Martin, 2009; Martin, 2012). The resilience of region's has been widely attributed to the competitiveness of the business base (Ponomarov and Holcomb, 2009; Demmer et al, 2011), although Pendall et al (2010) also identifies the

importance of a series factors including the presence of a highly skilled and mobile labour force, formal and informal business (support) associations, and local inter-firm networks and knowledge spillovers.

In the UK, the political frameworks and structures utilised to support economic resilience at the regional level have changed. The abolition of Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) and creation of LEPs represented a shift towards what have been described as more functional economic areas (Huggins and Williams, 2011). Consequently, there has been a redefining of policy, both spatially and ideologically, in the UK, which has sought to increase the intensity of economic development within LEP regions as the scale of competitive advantage. This rescaling from RDAs to LEPs has also seen a recasting of governance to support partnership working that was intended to foster local approaches to economic development in England. Paradoxically, Bentley et al (2010) assert that there is a simultaneous and underlying re-centralisation of government with national agendas shaping local strategy. LEPs are under resourced in comparison to the RDAs (Rossiter and Price, 2013: 855) and as Huggins and Thompson (2013: 892) state LEPs "have lacked the funding power of the RDAs, and do not appear to have taken forward some of the improvements in regional economic capacity and capability that were beginning to become apparent prior to the demise of the RDAs".

The role of civic leadership

The on-going reorganisation of government has seen a wider network of actors drawn into a more collaborative system of governance at the local level (Roberts and Baker, 2004; Feser, 2014). Increasingly this has come to entail sharing power in the design and delivery of policies and programs (Callahan, 2007; Page 2010), but also in terms

of taking responsibility and accountability (Romzek, 1998; Behn, 2001). In this emerging model of governance, civic leadership is established through the participation individuals from the public, private, and third sectors at the local scale (Jones and MacLeod, 2004; MacLeod and Jones, 2007; Pike and Tomaney, 2009).

Despite an economic policy focused on a new localism (Goodwin et al 2012), many LEPs have retained the older industrial and metropolitan geographies, based on the notion of a 'functional economic area' with politics as an added afterthought (Rees and Lord 2013). Indeed, a focus on city-regionalism can accentuate regional 'lag' and undermine local development if deeper social issues relating to employment and social aspiration are ignored (Etherington and Jones, 2006). Given these geographical and political contours, civic leadership is bound in the articulations of formal and informal networks which coalesce to shape responses to local as well as national demands (Collinge and Gibney 2010; Considine and Lewis, 2007). In other words, civic leadership works within the arbitrary constructs of city-regionalism and serves to privilege the city-region as the driver of growth and local economic development (Harrison, 2010).

In this respect leadership represents an important endogenous factor in the economic development of regions and localities. Pike et al (2010) note that political concerns have been largely neglected in existing work on resilience, with little research on how governance arrangements such as LEPs affects regional resilience. The role of LEP in fostering resilience is to bring together the public, private and third sectors to support economic growth in new spatially organized alliances. Moreover, and given the emerging importance attributed to LEP leadership, there is a need to understand how leadership dynamics of these emerging governance arrangements can

affect and shape resilience. Rossiter and Price (2013) describe how developing solutions to local economic challenges are dependent on the crossover of knowledge and practice from myriad organizations. While this crossover is often characterised by fuzziness and shaped by contingency, we argue that civic leadership can provide a mechanism to inform decision making and deliver local economic strategies.

Civic leadership can be enabled and constrained in a given place, which can include the institutions and institutional arrangements. Stimson et al (2006) find this to include the structures and processes that determine what can be done and how, as well as the means that are provided or influenced by those structures and processes. In practice this means the legislative, regulatory and financial parameters of the national government, while historical place specific paths shapes and constrain economic development (Dawley et al, 2010). As such, Hambleton and Howard (2013) consider civic leadership to provide an explanative factor in regional economic performance, and also highlight the need to consider the impact of exogenous forces. This has considerable implications when considering how economic resilience is shaped by decisions made by 'local' actors such as the LEP and wider role of different forms of leadership in addressing path dependency (Goldfinch and Hart, 2014).. As collaborative governance has become a hallmark of LEPs (Liddle, 2012), civic leadership offers an alternative model to understand the practice of policy-making and policy-doing. However, the model is premised on the meaningful engagement and participation of the three realms of leadership to develop collaborative strategies for local economic resilience and growth.

As Trickett and Lee (2010) state, developing place-based civic leadership as a tool for economic development means that it must be understood as an iterative

process that needs to be built on 'real' economies. The nature of civic leadership within the LEPs, in particular as a form of place leadership, is therefore a critical issue that ties together public-private agglomeration across territorial boundaries. LEPs have frequently recruited diverse boards and as such have been challenged on their effectiveness as nodal sites of social networks (Deas et al 2013). Liddle (2012, 53) describes the composition of LEPs as voluntaristic, pragmatic arrangements that encourage locally contingent solutions for localised problems. The struggle to define the unique selling points of a locality mean that LEPs are essentially competing with each other for finite resources (Hickson, 2013; Finch, 2007; Tosics, 2007), as well as looking to attract inward investment (Huggins and Thompson 2013). In theory, this competition can be shaped and translated by civic leaders from both the public and private sectors, although LEPs have tended to repackage the strategies of the previous policies of regional development as old wine in new bottles with a thinner wedge of resources (Peck et al 2013; Pugalis and Bentley 2013).

In relation to the economic development of City Regions path dependency and theories of institutional change do not fully explain the differential nature of economic resilience which provides the rational for further theoretical development and empirical research (Trickett and Lee, 2010). Hambleton and Howard's (2013) framework provides a useful schema to understand how leadership affects local economic resilience and growth by emphasising the engagement of local stakeholders and importance of local economic knowledge.

EMPIRICAL FOCUS AND METHODS

The SCR encompasses the urban centres of Sheffield, Doncaster, Rotherham, Chesterfield and Barnsley, which have a collective population of approximately 1.7m

people although is considered to be mono-centric with Sheffield at the core (Sheffield City Region, 2006). The SCR was previously an internationally renowned centre for coal, steel and manufacturing (Jones and Etherington, 2009). The decline of the SCR as a centre of manufacturing and industry and the area during the 1970s meant that it experienced a prolonged period of decline and stagnation (Williams and Vorley, 2014). In subsequent decades, policy efforts had been made to generate sustained economic restructuring premised on changing the orientation of the economic base, with the SCR seeking to diversify and became more knowledge based while also securing substantial infrastructure investment (Sheffield City Region 2006, 2010). However, the private sector remained fragile, as Sheffield has become seen as one of the least competitive city economies in the UK and was impacted by the economic crisis through a decline in private sector activity and government austerity measures (Williams and Vorley, 2014). Previously sub-national economic development policy and strategy came under the control of the RDA, but is now managed and delivered by the LEP.

In order to understand the role of civic leadership in harnessing economic resilience and growth, the empirical method was two-fold. First, regional policy documents and reports relating to economic development were reviewed to identify themes relating to economic resilience. The review also captured secondary data to provide a more comprehensive portrait of the economic structure of the SCR. The themes identified also served as the basis of the interview schedule. Secondly, thirty-five semi-structured were conducted with key stakeholders in Sheffield City Region, including representatives from the LEP board, the LEP executive, LEP sector groups, constituent local authorities, chambers of commerce as well as consulting with a range of private businesses and third (voluntary) sector organisations directly and

indirectly involved with the LEP, as outlined in Table 1. The political stakeholder interviews provided representation across the geographical and policy areas of the LEP, while the business and third sector organisations were all in sectors identified as priorities for the future growth of the SCR by the LEP. Martin (2012) suggests engagement with local stakeholders and businesses can provide insights as to why some local economies are more resilient than others by actions of different stakeholder groups. Given the political sensitivity of the research and the position of many interviewees in or associated with public office, it was a stipulation of the research that the participating individuals remained anonymous. The quotations used in the findings section simply identify the geographical area of the SCR in which the respondent is based and the group they represent (political, business or community). The interviews were undertaken between January and April 2014. The use of in-depth interviews are suited to policy research as provided rich contextual and strategic insight about the nature of civic leadership (Silverman, 2000). In addition, the nature of semi-structured interviews meant that a number of issues not on the interview schedule were raised by some respondents, which where relevant were subsequently explored further. The interviews provided a broad and comprehensive overview of the governance arrangements in the SCR, to understand the extent to which civic leadership has been instrumental to improving economic resilience.

INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

The interviews were recorded with the consent of respondents and transcribed, before assuming a grounded approach towards thematically analysing and coding the data to explore emergent themes. This form of analytic induction involved continually identifying emergent themes against the interview data, and ensured that the nature of

civic leadership was understood as well as how civic leadership has shaped economic resilience. The coding was conducted independently, and where necessary discrepancies were recoded so that intra-coder reliability was consistent. The subsequent analysis of the data explored themes which emerged from the interviews and policy review, with the emerging narrative providing the story of civic leadership in the SCR.

FINDINGS

The focus on economic resilience and governance is drawn directly from the political stakeholder interviews, in which respondents reported that creating a more diverse, flexible and responsive economy was the key priority in terms of economic development and that in order to do this collaboration between different groups, which we describe as civic leadership, was of paramount importance. These twin key issues can therefore be considered to be driving economic development policy and strategy in the SCR. Table 2 summarises the responses of these stakeholders in relation to these two key issues.

INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

The emergence of civic leadership in the SCR

While Robson (2014) describes the formation of LEPs as offering a strategic framework developed on a bottom-up basis, created by local authorities willing to cooperate. RDAs were previously criticised for representing arbitrary administrative boundaries, and in response LEPs are intended to represent the reality of economic activity with locally-based and collaborative leadership (Williams and Vorley, 2014). In thinking through changes of governance, there was recognition among the

respondents that the SCR has historically been characterised by strong political leadership, and more recently by strong bureaucratic leadership. At a devolved scale governance has tended to be hierarchical, even under the existence of the RDAs with their remit premised on public private partnering. The private sector was largely absent in all but name in its representation. As one business respondent stated: "Previously we weren't listened to, we weren't asked what we needed … we were pretty much ignored" (Sheffield, Business Community). As such it is unsurprising that the political and bureaucratic realms of leadership have been viewed as dominant in shaping the economic resilience and growth trajectory of the SCR. When coupled with weak community leadership, or what Hanson (2009) refers to as 'business-civic leadership', governance arrangements can see political leaders and near-term political considerations hold sway. Perceptions that short-term political considerations characterised were found. For example, one political stakeholder stated that: "Previously local government didn't really listen or consult properly. Most political actors were interested in getting through their term of office and securing another term" (Sheffield, Political Stakeholder). However, the interviews also found evidence that under the new LEP arrangements "things were getting better, politics is more outward facing and collaborative" (Doncaster, Business Community).

The LEP has a complex organisational structure that distinguishes between different functions as shown in Figure 1. The SCR LEP Board is responsible for the strategic leadership, and is comprised 19 members – ten community leaders and nine political leaders. Since the LEP is not a legal entity, in April 2014 the SCR Combined Authority (CA) was established as a legal structure comprising the constituent local authorities. Similar arrangements also exist in the Greater Manchester City Region, neighbouring West Yorkshire, Liverpool City Region and the North East Combined

Authority. As is similar in each of these cases, the SCR CA serves as the statutory decision making body where decisions demand the use of public powers or assets. As strategic decision making bodies the LEP Board and SCR CA co-exist although are intended to operate in a complementary fashion, and receive guidance from a series of thematic boards.

INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

As Figure 1 shows there are a series of six boards that provide an advisory function to the LEP board and the CA. The boards are structured to reflect the priorities of the SCR set out in the strategic economic plan, and are comprised of community and political leaders. The other dominant activity is the management and implementation of strategy, which is delivered by local authority officer structure and the LEP executive team. Rossiter and Price (2013) note that in lieu of the limited executive support in LEPs that local authorities have seconded officers, and this has been the case in the SCR LEP. Delivery is also supported by a wider range of local delivery structures which sees responsibility for implementation further devolved. The complexity of these arrangements was clearly recognised by the businesses interviewed, many of whom described the structure of the LEP as complex and/or opaque: "It is difficult to know who to speak to, who is in charge of areas that might be relevant to us because it is complicated" (Doncaster, Business Community). However, there was consensus among the political stakeholders interviewed that the LEP governance arrangements provided a more effective vehicle for public-private partnering than in previous arrangements. As one noted: "It is more reflexive of the local economy now. There is more representation from different groups including businesses than there ever was under the RDA" (Sheffield, Political Stakeholder).

Despite this, while the LEP structure brings together political, business and community leaders, the extent to which this is integrated as conceptualised by Hambleton and Howard (2013) is questionable. Different forms of leadership do not easily come together. Even at the scale of LEPs, in the SCR the creation of the CA shows the power of political leaders in making and signing off decisions. As one business respondent commented: "Although there are good intentions to involve business and the community, it is still the politicians who are driving decisions, whether they are locally-informed or not" (Sheffield, Business Community).

Despite such views from the business community, there was a consensus among the political stakeholders that a form of civic leadership was emerging, although that it is in its infancy in the SCR. A key challenge identified though was described as one of engaging leaders from businesses and the community, by suitably incentivising people to participate and maintain involvement. Part of this challenge is identifying the right individuals and organisations to be involved. For example, one respondent stated: "We want to get community involvement from the third sector but the question is who and why? We need to think about how the contribute to setting strategies and goals for the City Region" (Doncaster, Political Stakeholder). There was recognition among the political stakeholders that they wished to avoid engaging with the same organisations which have traditionally had closer relationships with the Council or RDA: "We have to sought to widen the net so we have got the 'usual suspects' involved because we need new voices and new ideas to contribute ... but identifying those people and explaining to them why they should be involved is not easy" (Sheffield, Political Stakeholder). As is clear, identifying appropriate business and third sector organisations and then explaining to them how they could benefit from being involved in developing local strategies has been a key challenge.

However, while third sector organisations are often clearly focused on specific social issues, their involvement has allowed those issues to be viewed in a more holistic way across policy areas. For example, one respondent stated: "We seek to alleviate housing issues and our involvement has meant that housing hasn't just been seen as a discrete policy area, but that it is something that crosses multiple strategies" (Sheffield, Third Sector Stakeholder).

Despite recognising the benefits of involvement from business and third sector organisations, several of the political stakeholders interviewed were doubtful that civic leadership as it is conceptualised could or would occur in practice any more than public private partnering did. As one respondent stated: "The good intentions are there … but does the new form of participation move us any further forward?" (Rotherham, Political Stakeholder). That said, they did regard civic leadership as a more pragmatic governance arrangement than public-private partnering. While the representation of community leadership on the LEP had been seen as positive, it is questionable whether it will result in a step change in local governance. Indeed the initial reaction among the interviewees was one of a perception gap on both sides about what could and should be done locally as well as what was possible under the parameters defined by central government.

Civic leadership and economic resilience

Shaw and Greenhalgh (2010) highlight how the inception of LEPs saw them assigned an extensive range of responsibilities, although with limited power. LEPs have been tasked with the demands of providing a 'glocal' form of leadership (Martins and Álvarez, 2007), catering for both local economic development whilst conterminously engaged with international markets to attract inward investment and to establish

export for local businesses. Since being established a central challenge for LEPs has been to foster economic growth amidst on-going public sector spending cuts. In addition to the question of stimulating growth, there has been a growing recognition as to the importance of LEPs in stewarding economic resilience (Ashby et al., 2009). Critically for the SCR, fostering economic resilience can be understood in terms of the re-orientation of the economy and fostering the resistance to exogenous shocks.

The political stakeholders reported that initially the emergence of LEPs did not represent a real departure in strategy from the RDAs that preceded them. However, as the organisational and governance arrangements of LEPs have evolved, providing the possibility for alternative governance to promote change in the economic strategy of the SCR. What is beginning to emerge are more democratic locally-based strategies, which a number of the interviewees regarded as a result of the input of the advisory boards into the SCR's Strategic Economic Plan. The shadow of hierarchy cast by Westminster, coupled with reductions in public spending has meant that LEPs have not been able to assume a transformative approach to economic development. However, the SCR has undergone and is continuing what Martin (2012) would describes as a reorientation. This has seen the SCR break from its historical path associated with heavy industry to become a more knowledge based economy and to create what Doyle (2013) refers to as a 'new economic narrative'. Several interviewees emphasised the changing economic structure of the region over the past three decades, which is consistent with Dawley et al (2010) who suggest developing economic resilience is a long-term project.

The 2014 Strategic Economic Plan of the SCR LEP is more *progressive* than *transformative*, but displays a confidence as the LEP has come to identify and

prioritise its focus. Notably whereas there were ten priority sectors formerly in the SCR, shown in Figure 2, which broadly reflected the priorities of the former RDA, there is recognition that not all sectors promote resilience and growth. As such there has been an emerging consensus that there is a need distinguish between 'market demand' and 'derived demand' in identifying priority sectors. More recently as well as identifying market demand-led sectors, the SCR has identified cross-sectoral strengths in digital technologies and material technologies, which provides an inclusive basis to target business support to foster resilience and growth. In order to enhance the resistance of SCR economy, the interviewees recognised need for a more targeted approach while avoiding over specialisation or picking winners.

INSERT FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE

The more focused strategic economic plan for the SCR is testament to the continued re-orientation of the region, yet in the wake of the crisis there is less public funding available to invoke change. While there was an optimism around the current 'Growth Deal' with Government among the interviewees, there was also a recognition that the growth needs to be private sector led, and a number of the political leaders emphasised how the role of the public sector has had to change and is set to change further. As opposed to being responsible for the delivery of interventions, the LEP and comprising local authorities have come to focus on enabling and facilitating growth as opposed to driving it.

It is in this respect that the civic leadership have come to play an important role in the SCR LEP, as representatives from public, private and third sector organisations have contributed to the development of the longer-term strategic plan. As one respondent noted: "It has been difficult the right people to involve, but after

some problems identifying them now we can say that the City Region is more informed by a broader base of local stakeholders than was previously the case" (Sheffield, Political Stakeholder). A central role of the LEP in fostering economic resilience and growth is about removing barriers and increasing the ambition of businesses. In the SCR the proposed 'Growth Hub' is anticipated to be at the heart of providing business support and serve as a catalyst for a step change in driving economic growth. The intention of the growth hubs was described by interviewees as to draw together business support from the public and private sectors, with a view to provide a sustainable support service to small and large businesses alike. The challenge will be ensure the relevance of support to avoid growth hubs suffering the same fate as previous business support arrangements (see Forte, 2011).

As well initiatives intended to provide support and reduce barriers to business development, there has been an increased emphasis on promoting economic resilience and growth by enhancing the networked capacity of the SCR. In this way there is potential for the SCR to develop resistance to exogenous shock and crisis by harnessing the distinctive properties of the institutional environment. This is fostered predominantly through the decision-making and advisory functions of the LEP, which in turn incorporates and consults a wider range of businesses and third sector organisations. In the context of the SCR this sees local knowledge threaded together to establish a strategic approach towards economic development. The strategy was repeatedly described during the interviews as the outcome of extensive consultation in order to be inclusive, but also secure the buy-in of a wide range of businesses and third sector organisations not involved in the LEP. As MacNeill and Steiner (2010, 442) have argued leadership needs to obtain involvement and 'buy-in' from a wide range economic actors. This collaborative approach represents an important

dimension of promoting economic adaptability and with it the resistance of the SCR to exogenous shocks. The overwhelming view of the stakeholders interviewed was that the SCR LEP had a critical role in bringing different groups together, and while responsible for developing a vision that the LEP was not responsible for delivery. As such civic leadership had played a role in developing a locally-informed strategy the success of this strategy over the long-term is uncertain. It was felt among all stakeholders that collaboration in the SCR had become more effective, but that more needs to be done to enrol others in delivering the shared economic strategy of the LEP. If the LEP is to ensure a more resilient economic future, this demands avoiding short-term political thinking and ensure that long-term needs of the SCR are considered.

CONCLUSION

Extant research into the resilience of sub-national economies has tended to either be conceptual or focus on 'traditional' economic factors such as levels of employment, quality of labour force, diversity of economic structure, level of infrastructure. While such debates are important, we argue that there is a need to understand economic resilience in the context of the 'agency' of governance arrangements and the shaping of place leadership half a decade on from the inception of the Coalition's push for a new localism. As the series of papers in the 2010 special issue of *Policy Studies* on place leadership stated, the arrangement and co-existence of different types of leaders within city-regions are instrumental in shaping the capabilities and capacities of a place to withstand and thrive within changing economic and social contexts.

As this paper has shown, new modes of governance require stakeholder collaborations which are flexible and smart so that generic diagnoses of local

economic development challenges can be avoided (Feser, 2014). This paper has identified how civic leadership in the SCR has sought to foster economic resilience, and thereby aims to bring clarity to this emerging yet currently fuzzy field of research and practice (Pendall et al, 2010; Williams et al, 2013). The LEPs provide an emergent case study to assess the effect of leadership on setting the regional agenda, in particular as they seek to define their own roles within wider regional growth (Pugalis and Townsend 2013) and the capacity to withstand and respond positively to external shocks. The changes in governance brought about by the abolition of the RDAs and subsequent introduction of LEPs has meant that long-term strategies have been disrupted and existing strategies re-formulated to reflect the discourse of localism. As a result of the changing geographic scales of local economic development 'policy patience' that is vital for economic development is lost in favour of a competitive struggle to access limited funds (Huggins and Williams, 2011).

However, the formation of LEPs has resulted in the former top-down public sector management of RDAs being challenged in an attempt to establish a new orthodoxy in governance, that resonate with Hambleton and Howard's (2013) framework of civic leadership. As the governance arrangements of the LEPs become more established, the intention is to develop what Dawley et al (2010) describe as 'intelligent institutional leadership'. The paper finds that bringing together different stakeholders to inform and develop a locally-based strategy has to some extent been successful. However, while political, business and community leaders are engaged, the functional areas of activity mean that there is no operational 'union' or coming together of leadership. As such, there are lessons from this which extend beyond the SCR in particular in the context of understanding how the legacy of public sector-led governance remains despite increased engagement from the private and third sectors.

As well needing to develop sustainable long-term local economic development strategies, LEPs across England, especially those seeking to redefine the functional economies of old industrial spaces, need to be able to make ad hoc decisions based on unplanned events. To this end civic leadership is mediated by immediate and long-term concerns for economic resilience and growth, but also by the realities of the economic, political and social context in which it is practised (Yamamoto 2011). If 'intelligent institutional leadership' is carried out, the dynamics of civic leadership are necessarily place-specific and should be developed with long-term ambitions in order to provide certainty and stability. As such, there is a need for further research to examine how exogenous dynamics affect civic leadership of local and regional economies in relation to economic resilience and understand the role of civic leadership in local governance in other socio-spatial contexts.

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Table 1: Profile of respondents

Location	Organisation/sector	No. of interviews
Public sector		
Sheffield City Region	Local Enterprise Partnership	4
Sheffield	Sheffield City Council Officer	3
	Elected Member	1
Doncaster	Doncaster MBC Officer	2
	Doncaster Chamber of Commerce	1
	Elected Member	2
Rotherham	Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council	2
Barnsley	Barnsley MBC Officer	2
	Elected Member	2
Private sector		
Sheffield	Advanced manufacturing	2
	Creative and Digital Industries	2
	Healthcare Technologies	1
Doncaster	Digital technologies	2
	Financial services	2
Rotherham	Financial services	1
Third sector		
Sheffield	Creative industries	2
	Sport, Leisure and Tourism	1
Doncaster	Sport, Leisure and Tourism	2
Total		**35**

Table 2: Priorities identified by political stakeholders and illustrative quotes

Key theme	Stakeholder consensus	Illustrative quotes
Economic resilience	Need to change industrial structure of SCR SCR overly reliant on public sector jobs; needs more diversity Need job creation in non-traditional industries Some success in diversifying the local economy but needs to go further	"SCR has been too reliant on public sector employment... We need to diversify our economic base." "Austerity has hit us hard. We need to generate private sector jobs to replace the public sector job losses." "We previously had a strong manufacturing base, but that is moving away ... We need to replace those jobs and businesses."
Civic leadership	Requirement for LEPS to work collaboratively Previous approaches to economic development have been overly top-down LEP provides opportunity to develop local strategies and solutions Collaboration is required to create a more resilient local economy	"We are required to work more collaboratively ... It is part of our remit." "In the past, strategies have come from local, national or regional government. Now we have an opportunity to make them more informed through a broader range of stakeholders." "Only by engaging with a broader range of stakeholders can we develop strategies which will be locally-owned and make the SCR more resilient."

Figure 1: Organisational structure of the SCR LEP

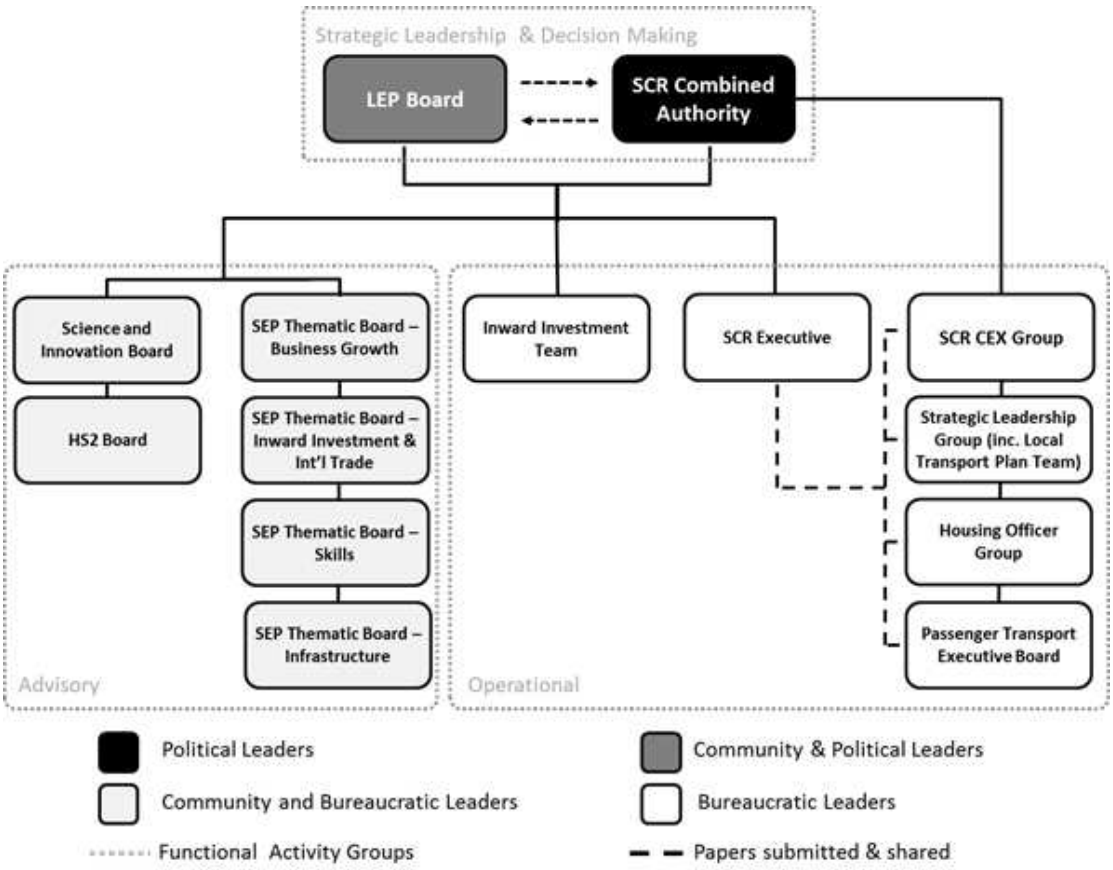
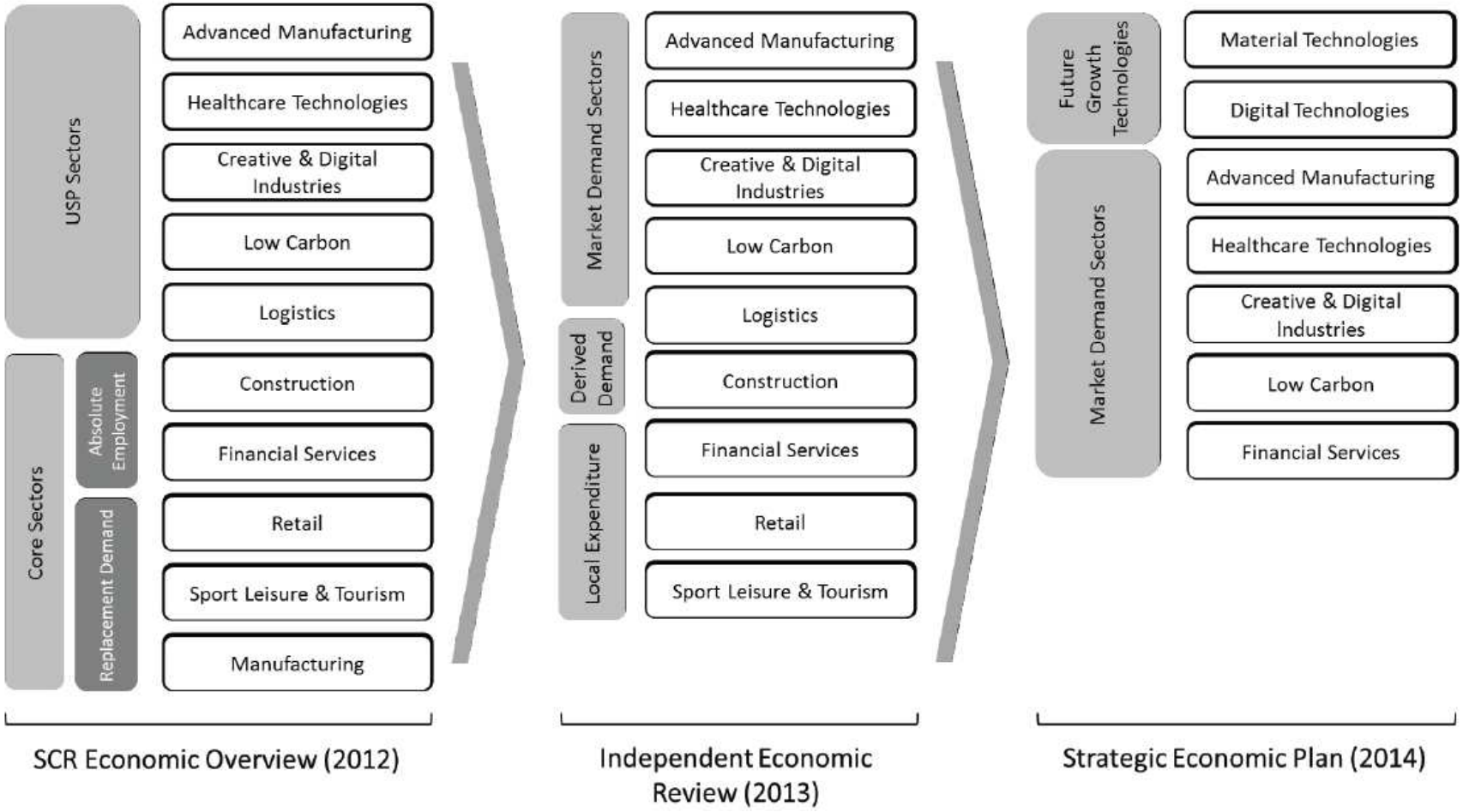
Figure 2: Emerging sector priorities of the LEP