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U.S.-Style Leadership for English Local Government?

Significant changes in the political management of local authorities in the United Kingdom are now taking place as a result of legislation passed by the Labour government since 1997. The new political management models aim to modernize local governance by strengthening local leadership, streamlining decision making, and enhancing local accountability. These changes owe much to U.S. experience: They involve the introduction of a separation of powers between an executive and an assembly, and they allow local authorities to introduce directly elected mayors for the first time ever. Is U.K. local government beginning to adopt what might be described as U.S.-style approaches to local governance? The evidence suggests the new institutional designs for U.K. local authorities represent a radical shift toward U.S.-style local leadership and decision making. However, the U.K. central state remains heavily involved in the details of local decision making, to an extent that would be unthinkable in the United States.

Reforming the political management of local government has been central to the U.K. Labour government's approach to local democracy. This drive to modernize local government decision making has been spearheaded by the prime minister. Within a year of being elected in 1997, Tony Blair set out his own vision for the future of local government in a booklet entitled *Leading the Way: A New Vision for Local Government* (Blair 1998). In this document, he argued that the way local government was operating was inefficient, opaque, and out of date. He suggested that elected councilors spent many hours working hard on civic business, but much of their energy and enthusiasm was dissipated in unproductive committee meetings. The prime minister argued that committees do have their place, but, as a way of providing community leadership, they are weak vessels: "The heart of the problem is that local government needs recognized leaders if it is to fulfill the community leadership role. People and outside organizations need to know who is politically responsible for running the council" (Blair 1998, 16).

It is no secret that the bold proposals for change in U.K. local government, which have been set out by the prime minister and introduced into law for England, have been influenced by U.S. experience. In this article, we outline the origins of the new approach to local political management in the United Kingdom and describe the institutional models that have been introduced to meet the requirements of the new U.K. local government legislation.[1] We examine the progress to date in implementing the changes, and, by drawing on new research on local leadership, we offer a preliminary assessment of the United Kingdom's reforms and discuss the extent to which leadership in local government in England resembles that of the United States.

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Modernizing Local Political Leadership in the United Kingdom: Origins and Momentum

The idea of introducing directly elected mayors into U.K. local government is not a New Labour idea. As Game (2002a) observes, academics suggested more than 20 years ago that U.K. local government needed more visible leadership and that overseas experience was worthy of study. For example, the late Professor David Regan, in his 1980 inaugural professorial lecture at the University of Nottingham, argued the absence of a discrete and individually accountable executive constituted "a serious structural flaw in British local government," making the local authority in effect "a headless state" (Regan 1980, 8).

It was not until the late 1990s, however, that senior U.K. politicians became interested in the idea of redesigning local government institutions to support stronger local leadership. In 1991, Michael Heseltine, then secretary of state for the environment in the Conservative government led by John Major, floated the idea of introducing directly elected mayors in a government consultation paper (U.K. Department of the Environment 1991). There was some coverage of U.S. experience with elected mayors and city managers in the U.K. local government press (Hambleton 1990), but the proposal did not receive much serious consideration at the time. The whole idea of introducing new models of local leadership was viewed as threatening by established local authority leaders. The Heseltine proposal was also opposed by Tory members of Parliament, who feared the new mayors could become leadership rivals in their constituencies. Not surprisingly, the government quietly dropped the idea—but it did not disappear for long.

In 1995, Tony Blair, then leader of the opposition, reinvigorated the elected mayor debate. As part of a package of constitutional reforms announced in December of that year, he suggested that new forms of political leadership, including the idea of directly elected mayors, could inject new life into local government. In 1996, he made several important speeches that pushed local government leadership further up on the national political agenda. For example, in a speech on the future of London, after arguing the case for "a lean strategic organization" to handle issues such as transport, economic development, and public safety on a London-wide basis, he said: "I believe there is a strong case for making a further change—to give the people of London, for the first time ever, the chance to vote for their own elected mayor for the city" (Blair 1996).

The governance of London, following the abolition of the Greater London Council by the Thatcher government in 1986, was ripe for reform (Travers et al. 1991). The sprawling London-wide joint committees, the demands for a "voice" for the capital, and popular support for some kind of elected London body—plus the experience of comparable international cities—all suggested a new London authority should be created.

While in opposition, the Labour Party developed radical proposals for the governance of London. It was not surprising, therefore, that, once elected in 1997, Labour pressed ahead very quickly with the London changes. The Greater London Authority Act of 1999 created the position of mayor of London, the United Kingdom's first directly elected political executive (Sweeting 2002). Alongside the London changes, ministers moved ahead with the task of developing new legislation designed to transform political management in local government throughout England. In 1997, soon after the general election, ministers created an Academic Advisory Panel to provide advice on local democracy. This panel assisted the government in producing six linked consultation papers on aspects of local government in a period of a few months in 1997–98 (Hambleton 2000a). It was at this time that ministers showed particular interest in learning about local political management in other countries, including the United States.[2] The ministers responsible for local government—Hilary Armstrong and Nick Raynsford—worked hard, not only to understand the different models found abroad, but also to respond to the views expressed in response to the consultation papers. The government did not, however, commission any new research on local political management in other countries.[3] Critics can, with some justification, claim the detailed proposals that emerged in the legislation were not based on a detailed evaluation of the evidence about the performance of these models in other countries.

A striking feature of the U.K. local government modernization debate has been the personal involvement of the prime minister. His booklet, *Leading the Way* (Blair 1998), shaped the content of a 1998 white paper, *Modern Local Government: In Touch with the People*, as well as subsequent legislation (DETR 1998). The role of the prime minister in both initiating and driving forward new thinking in relation to local government leadership in the United Kingdom should not be underestimated. The rapid shelving of the Heseltine proposal for elected mayors only a few years earlier had already demonstrated that an innovation of this kind would run into strong opposition from existing power holders. If new legislation were to succeed, it would need strong backing from the top. Tony Blair provided that backing, particularly during his first two years in office. He made several speeches in support of directly elected mayors and praised the idea in his dealings with the media.

Why was the prime minister so keen on directly elected mayors? First, the idea of a visible, high-profile approach to executive leadership resonates with Blair's own approach to political leadership. Some commentators have even sug-

gested he is likely to be the last prime minister, given that his own approach to national leadership now verges on the presidential. It has been argued that, while traditional cabinet government has been in retreat for many years, Blair has accelerated the trend (Hennessy 1998). Blair's cabinet meetings are noted for their lack of formal agenda and tendency not to last longer than one hour (Holliday 2002). James Naughtie, a leading BBC political commentator and journalist, in his intimate analysis of the relationship between Tony Blair and Chancellor Gordon Brown, shows how the idea of collective decision making involving a group of leaders is not Blair's style: "No Prime Minister since the nineteenth century has spent more time avoiding formal meetings with Cabinet colleagues than Tony Blair.… The real deals are done elsewhere" (Naughtie 2001, 104). It is clear, then, that the prime minister places emphasis on the value of individual leadership, and there is clear evidence of this sentiment in the reform of U.K. local political management.

A second point is that the directly elected mayor proposals formed a key part of New Labour's "modernization" project. Ministers, as well key advisers in the prime minister's policy unit, wanted to transform the inward-looking cultures they encountered in many town halls and encourage new forms of partnership among the public, private, and voluntary sectors (Blair 1998; Bevir and O'Brien 2001). Less obviously, the proposals for innovation in local political management can be seen as part of a strategy to modernize not just the institutions of local government, but also the Labour Party itself. Some of the leading "modernizers" believed that opponents of the New Labour policy agenda, built around "third-way" politics, were as likely to be found within the Labour Party as within the opposition parties. For example, one of Blair's senior advisers talked—albeit before the 1997 election—of saving Labour from the "insane extremism" of its local councils (Gould 1998, 71). Because they introduced the possibility of direct election of local leaders, the new arrangements for local democracy posed a clear challenge to more than a few traditional local Labour leaders.

In summary, the proposals for introducing directly elected mayors and new forms of political leadership into U.K. local government were *not* originally a New Labour idea. They did, however, fit rather well with the New Labour modernization agenda. The idea enjoyed the personal support of the prime minister, and he gave the policy a high profile as well as momentum, particularly in 1997–98. A potential snag was that the modernizers had not really thought through the implications of the new arrangements. In particular, they had not considered where the new elected mayors would come from: "Quite who these latter-day Joseph Chamberlains would be remained vague and Blair, typically, had not involved the Labour Party at large, the putative source of renewed local leadership" (Toynbee and Walker 2001, 219). As we shall see, the first elected mayors in England—including a football team mascot in Hartlepool known as "H'Angus the monkey"—were not what the architects of the legislation had intended. First, however, we need to outline the political management models introduced by the new legislation.

Institutional Design for Local Leadership: U.K. Models

The Local Government Act of 2000 required all major local authorities in England to introduce a separation of powers between an executive and an assembly (or council). This idea of separation of powers, while familiar in the United States, was entirely new to the United Kingdom. Supporters of this model argue that separating the political executive from the political assembly has three main benefits:

- The executive has the legitimacy to exercise bold outgoing political leadership.
- It is clear where power lies—the curtain comes down on "buck passing" between faceless officers and committees.
- It enhances accountability, as those exercising power can be held to account.

Contrary to a popular misconception—in the United Kingdom at least—the separation of powers does not imply a fixed way of working. There is considerable scope for varying the balance of power between the executive and the assembly.

Figure 1 illustrates one possible balance of powers. In this example, the executive is charged with:
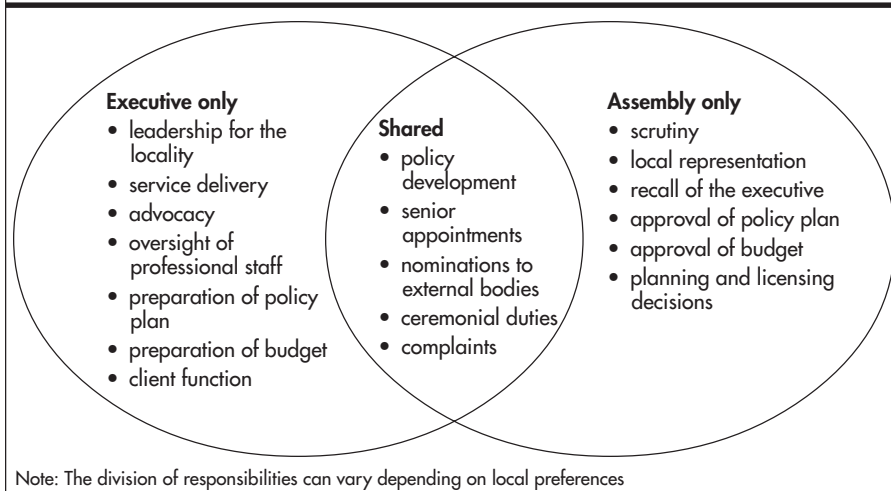
- Providing leadership for the wider community and building partnerships to develop the locality
- Securing the delivery of services that meet the needs of the community
- Acting as advocate for the locality
- Overseeing professional staff
- Preparing the policy plan and budget
- Exercising the client function when services are under contract

The key responsibilities of the assembly could be:

- Scrutiny and review not just of the executive, but also of the work of other agencies in the area
- Representation of the views and concerns of area-based communities and communities of interest
- Recall of the executive—the ultimate check on the abuse of power by the executive
- Approval of the policy plan and budget
- Planning and licensing functions

Other functions might be shared. For example, the assembly may wish to initiate discussion of particular policy

Figure 1 Illustrative Responsibilities of the Executive and the Assembly

Executive only
- leadership for the locality
- service delivery
- advocacy
- oversight of professional staff
- preparation of policy plan
- preparation of budget
- client function

Shared
- policy development
- senior appointments
- nominations to external bodies
- ceremonial duties
- complaints

Assembly only
- scrutiny
- local representation
- recall of the executive
- approval of policy plan
- approval of budget
- planning and licensing decisions

Note: The division of responsibilities can vary depending on local preferences

matters itself, in addition to debating proposals from the executive.

The balance of powers has been the subject of extensive urban research in the United States, and the distinction between "strong" mayor forms of government (where the mayor has substantial administrative powers compared to those of the council) and "weak" mayor forms of government (where the mayor has comparatively few formal powers) is well established (Ferman 1985; Svara 1990, 1994). Cross-national research also suggests there is a considerable amount of choice available to councils wishing to reconsider how to structure power relations in their particular authority (Batley and Campbell 1992; Borraz et al. 1994; Clarke et al. 1996; Howell, McDermott, and Forgie 1995; Hambleton 1996, 1998a, 1998b; Stoker 1996).

The U.K. central government drew on the diversity of approaches to local political management found in other countries and offered councils four options in the Local Government Act of 2000:
- Directly elected mayor and cabinet, with an assembly (mayor/cabinet model)
- Directly elected mayor and council manager, with an assembly (mayor/council manager model)
- Cabinet and leader, with an assembly (cabinet model)
- Modified committee system (normally only available to a small number of councils with populations under 85,000).

The fourth model was a concession given to opponents of the legislation in July 2000 in order to get the bill through Parliament. While some councils have adopted this fourth model, most have chosen one of the first three models, and we concentrate our discussion on these three options.

The two directly elected mayor options will be very familiar to U.S. public administrators. Their enshrinement in U.K. legislation provides clear evidence of U.S. influence. The models, as we shall see, are not exact replicas of the elected mayor and council manager models found in
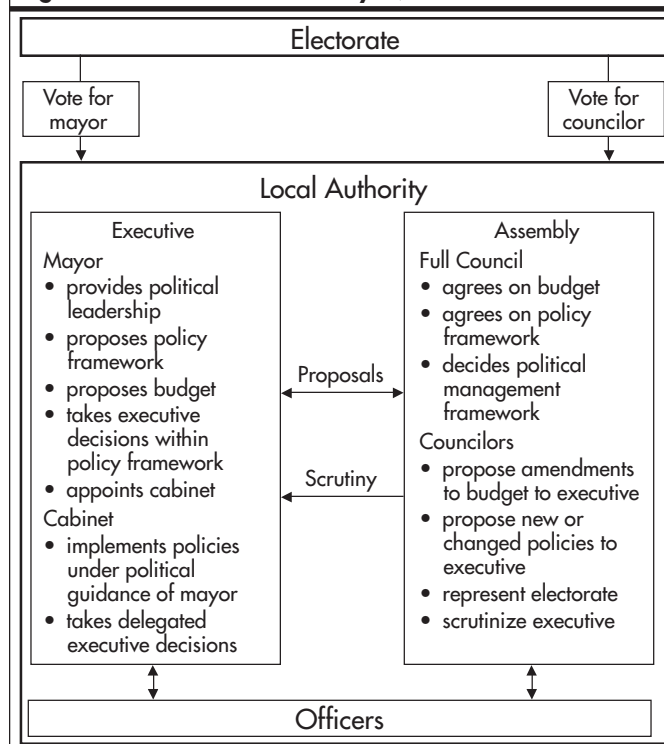
the United States, but it is clear that those drafting the legislation have drawn directly on U.S. experience. The third option—the cabinet model—resembles the arrangements found in Oslo and one or two other Norwegian local authorities. This suggests that experience in European countries as well as the United States has been influential.

We will now outline the three main options provided by the Local Government Act and provide an outline of the political structure of the new Greater London Authority.

Mayor/Cabinet Model

Figure 2 illustrates the mayor/cabinet plus assembly model. Citizens vote for both the directly elected mayor and their local councilor(s). There is a separation of powers between the executive and the assembly, with proposals flowing between the two and the assembly scrutinizing the work of the executive. Officers provide support to both the executive and the assembly. In this model, the mayor and individual members of the cabinet have considerable executive power.
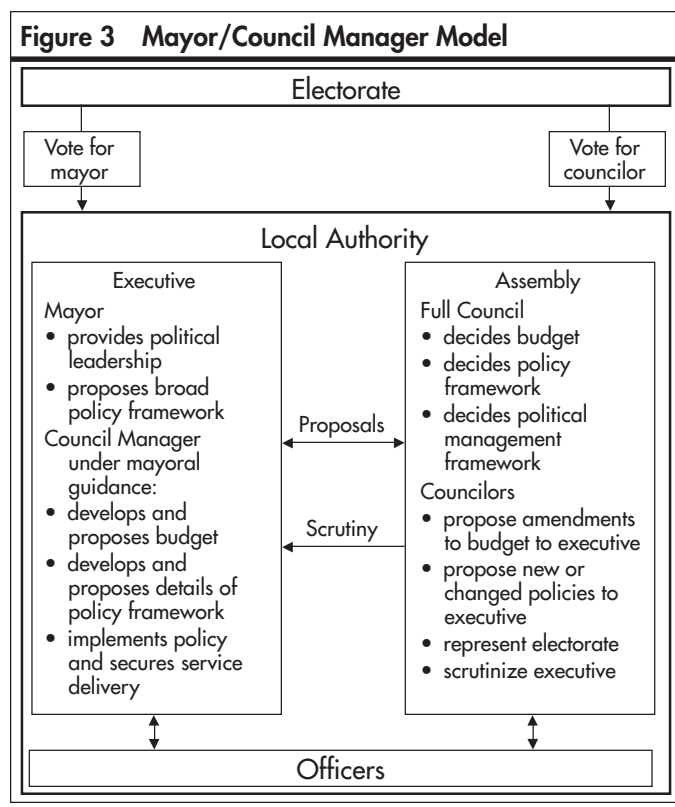
Figure 2 Illustration of a Mayor/Cabinet Model

Electorate

Vote for mayor

Vote for councilor

Local Authority

Executive

Mayor
- provides political leadership
- proposes policy framework
- proposes budget
- takes executive decisions within policy framework
- appoints cabinet

Cabinet
- implements policies under political guidance of mayor
- takes delegated executive decisions

Proposals

Scrutiny

Assembly

Full Council
- agrees on budget
- agrees on policy framework
- decides political management framework

Councilors
- propose amendments to budget to executive
- propose new or changed policies to executive
- represent electorate
- scrutinize executive
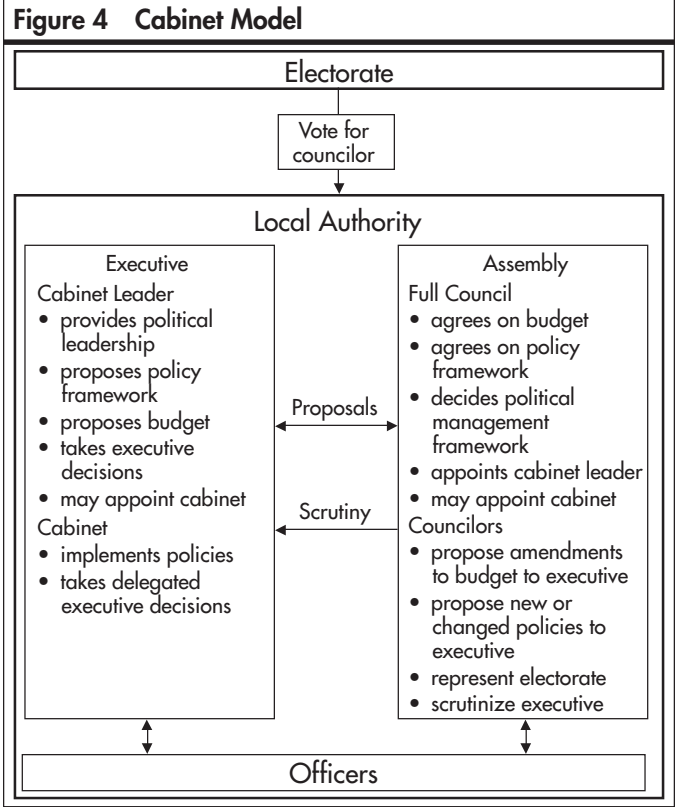
Officers

Mayor/Council Manager Model

Figure 3 illustrates the mayor/council manager plus assembly model. Again, citizens vote for the directly elected

mayor and their local councilor(s), and again, there is a clear separation of powers. In this model, the executive role is explicitly shared between a politician (the mayor) and an officer (the council manager). As in the mayor/cabinet model, proposals flow between the executive and the assembly. The assembly scrutinizes the executive, and officers serve both the executive and the assembly. The council manager (often called the city manager in the United States) is given more authority than a typical U.K. chief executive to get on and manage the authority (Hambleton 2000b).

Figure 3   Mayor/Council Manager Model

Electorate

Vote for mayor | Vote for councilor

Local Authority

Executive

Mayor
- provides political leadership
- proposes broad policy framework

Council Manager under mayoral guidance:
- develops and proposes budget
- develops and proposes details of policy framework
- implements policy and secures service delivery

Proposals

Scrutiny

Assembly

Full Council
- decides budget
- decides policy framework
- decides political management framework

Councilors
- propose amendments to budget to executive
- propose new or changed policies to executive
- represent electorate
- scrutinize executive

Officers

Cabinet Model

Figure 4 illustrates the cabinet (with a leader) plus assembly model. Unlike the other two models, citizens do not vote directly for the leader. Rather, they elect the council and the council appoints the cabinet leader and may appoint the cabinet. As we shall see, it is this option that has, so far, been most attractive to local councils in the United Kingdom, perhaps because it appears to offer least challenge to established ways of structuring power. It would be misguided, however, to view the cabinet model as a minor change from current arrangements. True, there is no directly elected mayor with this form of government. But the model enables individual councilors to take on personal responsibility for specific portfolios, along the lines of the ministers in Westminster, and this represents a radical change.

Figure 4   Cabinet Model

Electorate

Vote for councilor

Local Authority

Executive

Cabinet Leader
- provides political leadership
- proposes policy framework
- proposes budget
- takes executive decisions
- may appoint cabinet

Cabinet
- implements policies
- takes delegated executive decisions

Proposals

Scrutiny

Assembly

Full Council
- agrees on budget
- agrees on policy framework
- decides political management framework
- appoints cabinet leader
- may appoint cabinet

Councilors
- propose amendments to budget to executive
- propose new or changed policies to executive
- represent electorate
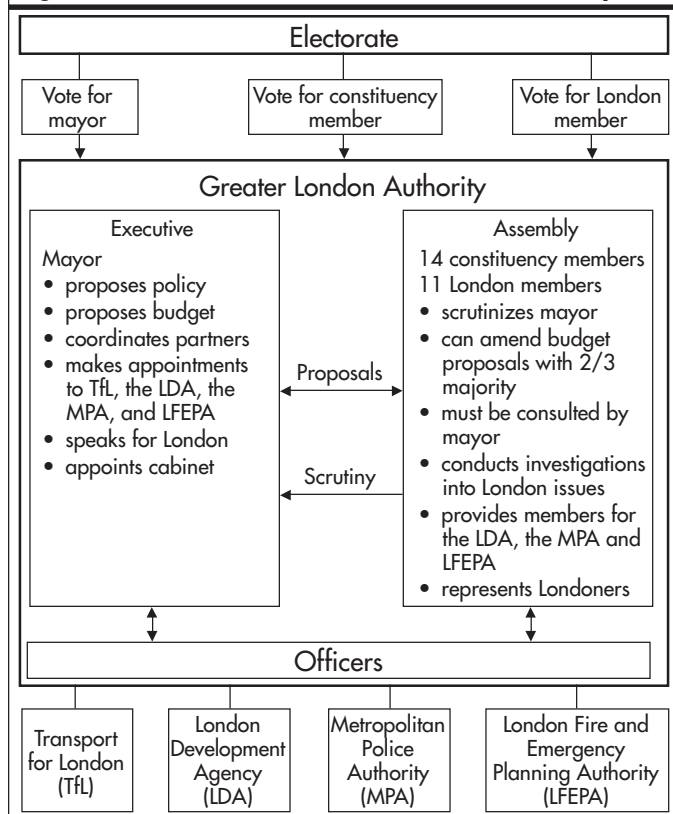- scrutinize executive

Officers

Structure of the Greater London Authority

Figure 5 depicts the structure of the Greater London Authority (GLA), how it is elected, the powers of the mayor and the assembly, and the new organizations for which the mayor is responsible. The nearest cousin to the GLA within the Local Government Act is the mayor/cabinet model (figure 2). There are, however, several important differences. First, Londoners have three votes, not two. This is because the elections to the 25-member assembly use the additional member system. This is entirely new to U.K. local government.[4] Second, the GLA has the strategic responsibilities that would normally be carried out by regional government in the United Kingdom. Thus, it has a relatively small staff (around 400 people), and the mainstream local government services continue to be delivered by the London boroughs. Third, the GLA oversees a number of agencies (figure 5). This portfolio of functions differs considerably from the typical U.K. authority. The rapid creation of an entirely new system of metropolitan government for a world city of more than seven million people is a significant achievement in itself—particularly when it is recognized internationally that gaining support for effective metropolitan government is far from easy (Jouve and Lefevre 2002).

Innovation in Local Leadership: Progress to Date

Political management reforms are still in the early stages. The Greater London Authority Act was only passed in 1999,

Figure 5   Structure of the Greater London Authority

Electorate

Vote for mayor | Vote for constituency member | Vote for London member

Greater London Authority

Executive

Mayor
- proposes policy
- proposes budget
- coordinates partners
- makes appointments to TfL, the LDA, the MPA, and LFEPA
- speaks for London
- appoints cabinet

Proposals

Scrutiny

Assembly

14 constituency members
11 London members
- scrutinizes mayor
- can amend budget proposals with 2/3 majority
- must be consulted by mayor
- conducts investigations into London issues
- provides members for the LDA, the MPA and LFEPA
- represents Londoners

Officers

Transport for London (TfL) | London Development Agency (LDA) | Metropolitan Police Authority (MPA) | London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA)

and the Local Government Act followed a year later. Bearing this in mind, what has happened so far?

First, the government created an entirely new metropolitan authority to govern the capital. The Greater London Authority Act established the first directly elected executive in the United Kingdom, as well as a new strategic authority. In addition, the act introduced—for the first time in U.K. local government—a separation of powers between the executive and the assembly. The act also created—as the modernizers intended—a political platform for a new kind of high-profile, local government leader.

Second, the Local Government Act has spurred constitutional change in all councils in England. A survey carried out in the summer of 2002 for the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister provides a snapshot of the progress at that time (Stoker et al. 2002):

- The vast majority of councils (83 percent) have adopted the cabinet model (figure 4).
- A comparatively small number of councils (3 percent) have opted for the mayor/cabinet model (figure 2).
- One council (Stoke-on-Trent) has

opted for the mayor/council manager model (figure 3).
- Many of the councils serving populations of less than 85,000 have adopted a system of alternative arrangements, although one-third have opted for the cabinet model.
- Around half of all local authorities have set up area committees for geographical parts of their area.
- All councils have set up overview and scrutiny committees to hold the executive to account.

Within this picture, what is the detail relating to "U.S.-style" directly elected mayors? Councils wishing to adopt either of the directly elected mayor models must hold a local referendum to endorse the decision. Referendums on whether to have an elected mayor may also be triggered by a petition signed by 5 percent of the local electorate. In certain circumstances, the secretary of state can require local authorities to hold a local referendum on introducing a directly elected mayor. At the time of writing, there have been 30 local mayoral referendums, resulting in 11 yes votes for mayors (Game 2002a, 16; Rallings, Thrasher, and Cowling 2002, 74). In 1999, a referendum was held in London that endorsed the government's proposals for the governance of London, including a directly elected mayor. Thus, at the time of writing, there are now 12 English directly elected mayors (table 1).

The most interesting and surprising feature of this first group of elected mayors is that half are "independent" candidates—that is, they are not attached to any of the established political parties. In the U.K. context, this is very unusual because party politics normally dominates local elections. Voters, it may be argued, are turning to independent candidates as a way of expressing dissatisfaction with the candidates put forward by the traditional parties. This development, unforeseen by the New Labour modernizers, has caused the government considerable embarrassment. The classic example is London, where the contest was tarnished by the Labour leadership's attempt to pre-

Table 1   Elected Mayor Referendum Results in England

Authority	Mayor	Party	Council control	Percent turnout	Citizen initiated referendum?
Bedford	Frank Branston	Independent	No overall control	25.3	Yes
Doncaster	Martin Winter	Labour	Labour	27.1	No
Greater London Authority	Ken Livingstone	Independent	No overall control	35.2	No
Hackney	Jules Pipe	Labour	Labour	25.2	No
Hartlepool	Stuart Drummond	Independent	No overall control	28.8	No
Lewisham	Steve Bullock	Labour	Labour	24.8	No
Mansfield	Tony Eggington	Independent	Labour	18.5	Yes
Middlesbrough	Ray Mallon	Independent	Labour	41.6	No
Newham	Sir Robin Wales	Labour	Labour	25.5	No
North Tyneside	Chris Morgan	Conservative	Labour	42.3	No
Stoke-on-Trent	Mike Wolfe	Independent	Labour	24.0	Yes
Watford	Dorothy Thornhill	Liberal Democrat	No overall control	36.1	No

Source: Game (2002a); Rallings, Thrasher, and Cowling (2002).

vent Ken Livingstone from gaining the Labour Party nomination for mayor.[5] This tactic proved to be totally misguided when, following his expulsion from the Labour Party, Livingstone went on to triumph as an independent candidate (Alderman 2000).

Another independent mayor is a football mascot, "H'Angus the monkey"—actually Stuart Drummond of the local football supporters club—who was elected by the citizens of Hartlepool after campaigning under the slogan "Vote H'Angus—he gives a monkey's." Parallels can be drawn with U.S. experience, where voters have also, on occasion, rejected the candidates put forward by the established parties in favor of populist figures. This has even happened at the state level in the United States—for example, in 1998, former professional wrestler Jesse "The Body" Ventura was elected governor of Minnesota. Voters, it seems, flocked to Ventura as much for what he wasn't—a veteran politician—as for his image as a truth-telling everyman.

It would be wrong, however, to take this argument too far. "Serious" and capable independent mayors have been elected—such as Ken Livingstone in London (who was previously the leader of the abolished Greater London Council) and Mike Wolfe in Stoke-on-Trent (who has long been active in local affairs). Also, the parties have not caved in. Two very experienced Labour politicians have been elected mayor in London boroughs—Steve Bullock in Lewisham and Sir Robin Wales in Newham—and the conservatives and the liberal democrats have had successes in North Tyneside and Watford respectively.

While much attention has focused on the success of unlikely candidates, perhaps more worrying for the government is that there are still comparatively few directly elected mayors—only 12 out of 389 English local authorities. Worse still, none of the authorities in the big cities outside London, such as Birmingham, Bristol, Leeds, Liverpool, or Manchester, has opted for a mayoral option. Indeed, the government itself seems to have become lukewarm toward promoting directly elected mayors. The turnout in mayoral elections has also been relatively low. Where mayors have been elected, the personality of the candidates has been a key factor. Some commentators have argued that the personalized approach to the mayoral office, which is apparent in the United States, is unlikely to develop in England (Leach and Norris 2002). The early results suggest this may turn out to be a misplaced view—a personalized approach to local leadership has been welcomed where mayors have been elected. Despite this evidence, skeptics continue to dismiss the mayoral option as a passing fad with no lasting consequences for the mainstream of U.K. local government.

In contrast to this position, we can note three reasons that more directly elected English mayors will emerge in the future. The first is that local councils themselves may come to see that the mayoral models work well in practice—until very recently, the English experience has been virtually nonexistent. Much will depend, however, on whether one or two of the big cities opt for an elected mayor. Second, the device of allowing a petition to trigger a referendum is likely to ensure that mayors will be selected, even in the face of opposition from local councils. As table 1 shows, this has already happened in Bedford, Mansfield, and Stoke-on-Trent. Third, existing political leaders themselves will come to realize the attractions of the model. Currently, leaders in the cabinet model rely on the support of the party group and can be ousted at any time if they lose the confidence of the party, or if their party loses overall control of the council. What the mayoral model offers is a guaranteed four-year term, where leadership can be exercised free from the day-to-day constraints of the party whip.

In summary, the Labour government has invested a considerable amount of time and effort on the design of new forms of local political management—not just for the capital, but for all localities in England. Ministers have examined the experience with local democratic processes and structures in other countries, and this experience has influenced not just strategic thinking and guidance, but also the nuts and bolts of what is now on the statute book. Aspects of practice in U.S. local government have clearly been influential. Interestingly—and this is also a feature of U.S. arrangements for city charter reform—the legislation requires councils to consult their local communities on the merits of the different models and to take notice of citizen views when they bring forward their proposals for new constitutional arrangements. The models are, of course, not just concerned with strengthening local leadership. Interesting innovation is taking place in U.K. local government which is designed, for example, to strengthen the representative role of local councilors, to enhance the arrangements for formal scrutiny of the executive, and to widen public participation in local affairs. However, a key aim of the whole local government modernization program is to strengthen local leadership. We will now examine the leadership challenge in more detail.

Dimensions of Local Political Leadership

Debates about local leadership in the United Kingdom and the United States revolve around similar themes. In the United States, Stone argues that local leaders must blend available resources to effect change or to prevent a certain course of events (Stone 1995, 98). Leaders set goals and persuade, cajole, or convince others to follow. This chimes with approaches to local leadership in the United Kingdom, where leadership has been defined as "the ability to overcome resistance to particular courses of action, nota-

bly, to cause others to agree to something they were not necessarily initially predisposed to" (Leach and Wilson 2000, 49). In a very important study of Atlanta, Stone makes the helpful distinction between "power over" and "power to" (Stone 1989, 229). The emphasis with "power over" is directing and controlling the behavior of others, while "power to" involves exercising power so that all actors can achieve their potential. Such a distinction is helpful when considering the actions of European local leaders (John and Cole 1999).

In both the United Kingdom and the United States, there is a recognizable system of local governance (as opposed to government) characterized by a variety of organizations at the local level, both public and semipublic, involved in local networks and partnerships (Pierre 1998). This mix has been conceived of in different ways. In the United States, the notion of the city as a "growth machine" has been influential (Logan and Molotch 1987), and urban regime theory has been used to shed new light on city politics and urban governance (Stone 1989; Lauria 1997). In the United Kingdom, the notion of policy networks and, more generally, the governance paradigm have informed the debate (Rhodes 1997; Collinge and Srbljanin 2002). Some efforts have been made to bridge these intellectual traditions, or at least to begin a transatlantic dialogue (Harding 1994; DiGaetano and Klemanski 1999). In any event, local political leadership in both environments is faced with the challenge of meeting more demands while having less direct control over resources and events.

The introduction of separation of powers into U.K. local government, coupled with the arrival of the directly elected mayor form of leadership, means that approaches to the study of U.S. urban political management can be drawn on to illuminate current U.K. experience. For example, Kotter and Lawrence, in their research on American urban leadership, identify five types of mayors: ceremonial, caretaker, personality/individualist, executive, and program entrepreneur (Kotter and Lawrence 1974, 105–21). Mayors can be either strong or weak in terms of their formal relationships with the council. Their strength varies according to their ability to control the budget and policy, their powers of appointment, the direction of lines of authority, and the existence of other elected officials (Svara 1990, 47–48; Svara 1994, xxi–xxiv; Hambleton 1998a, 3–5). Strong mayors have a high degree of control in their organizations, whereas weak mayors tend to share control with other actors, such as the council (Svara 1994, xxii).

The term "weak mayor" does not mean the existence of an impotent creature. In some cases, so-called weak mayors use their informal networks to augment their influence in impressive ways. The classic example of a powerful weak mayor is Richard J. Daley, mayor of Chicago from 1955 to 1976. His formal powers in relation to the council were weak, but a recent in-depth analysis suggests he was "the most powerful local politician America has ever produced" (Cohen and Taylor 2000, 7). Conversely, the mayor of London is strong in relation to the rest of the Greater London Authority, but relatively weak in London governance overall (Sweeting 2003).

In the U.S. context, "facilitative leadership" is a phrase that has been used to describe the leadership style exercised in successful council/manager systems of local government, where executive authority is delegated to an appointed officer (Svara 1994, 9). Echoing Stone, facilitative leadership is a move away from the power-oriented model of traditional leadership studies of mayors in local government. While leaders in the facilitative model focus on creating a vision and securing broad commitment and participation from organizational members, power-oriented leaders use formal powers and the resources of their office to achieve goals. The emphasis in the facilitative model is on cooperation rather than command, with leaders striving to secure broad, consensual participation rather than using formal powers of command to effect change.

Bearing in mind this shifting context for local leadership and drawing on a recent study of local leadership in the United Kingdom, we suggest that a comparison of local leadership should take three factors into account (Sweeting et al. 2004). There is no suggestion here that the three influences on local leadership outlined below are of equal weight or that there is a simple set of links between these factors and local leadership performance in any given area. We do suggest, however, that these factors all play a part, and this approach is useful in drawing attention to the contextual factors that shape and constrain the exercise of local leadership. We now consider each influence in turn.

- *Policy environment*: The rules established externally (often by central government in the U.K. context, but also by economic forces) determine the scope within which local leadership can be exercised. Local leaders must negotiate with the environment—the policy conditions that limit local discretion—or on occasion give local leadership the space to innovate and shape future local action. The academic literature recognizes this as contingent leadership, that is, leadership that depends on a given context (Bryman 1992; Chemers 1993).
- *Institutional arrangements*: The design of decision-making processes—the conceptualization of different roles, together with formal and informal networks and partnerships—has an impact on leadership effectiveness. Institutional design can impair or support the exercise of local leadership. Leaders are involved in negotiating the bureaucracy of contemporary urban governance, acting as brokers or catalysts. In particular, they need to negotiate the interorganizational setting to generate "col-

laborative advantage" (Huxham 1996). The complexity of interorganizational patterns of relationships and the multiplication of partnerships puts a premium on the capacity to negotiate or transact, and there are links here with theories of transactional leadership (Hollander 1993; Melucci 1996).

- *Relationship with followers*: Support from followers determines the legitimacy and influence that a leader can carry into the arenas of negotiation and bargaining in interorganizational relations. This aspect of the framework highlights, for example, the importance of party group relations for elected councilors in the United Kingdom (Jones 1978) and also fosters an appreciation of the broader relationships with constituents or local populations. The relationship with followers is, in part, a function of the role that leaders choose or are forced to play, but is also a function of their personal attributes and capacity to generate change by virtue of their own leadership. In this sense, there is a further link to the ideas of charisma generated by Weber (1968) and developed by Bryman (1992). Here, leaders can generate trust among their followers and give a forceful, transformational lead, leading from "in front" either to forge alliances or to impose through moral leadership a stance that brings a distinctive local response that is welcomed, supported, and sustained by local followers.

None of this discussion implies the personal qualities that individual leaders bring to the leadership task are unimportant. There are different styles of leadership—for example, champion, salesperson, interpreter, broker, coordinator, visionary, representative, agent provocateur, and so on. Leadership style does make a difference. In due course, it will be possible to carry out research comparing the individual leadership styles of particular English and American directly elected mayors. At this stage, however, it is productive to focus on the three factors we have identified because they shape and constrain the exercise of local leadership.

New Approaches to Local Leadership in U.K. Local Government?

In this section, we reflect on whether the United Kingdom is beginning to adopt U.S. styles of local leadership.[6] We structure this discussion using the three dimensions of leadership introduced previously.

Policy Environment

At first sight, it might appear that the policy environment in which U.K. local leaders operate is moving toward one that is familiar to U.S. mayors. For example, the shift from local government to local governance that has taken place in the United Kingdom has important implica-

tions for local leadership. In years gone by, the effective local leader in the United Kingdom focused his or her attention on the activities of government—that is, the delivery of high-quality public services by council departments. The attention of local leaders tended to be inward looking—overseeing the work of committees of councilors who concentrated on debating and deciding policies for particular services run by the council. Today, council services remain vital, but effective local leaders recognize there is great diffusion of responsibility for collective service provision. Effective collaboration with other agencies—public, private, and nonprofit—through various kinds of local partnerships to achieved shared ends is now a hallmark of successful local leadership in the United Kingdom. On this analysis, the leader needs to move from being "local authority" leader to a "community" leader. Likewise, the role of the local authority shifts beyond the tasks of service provision to embrace concern for the overall well-being of an area (Clarke and Stewart 1998). In short, an effective leader is not just the democratically elected leader of an important part of government, but also a leading player in the system of local governance.

American observers might respond by saying, "Welcome to the United States." Certainly, there is a well-established and sizable body of literature examining the ways that U.S. elected mayors are forced to negotiate with a variety of public and private interests to govern effectively (Hunter 1953; Dahl 1961; Stone 1989). This similarity, however, is superficial. There is a truly massive difference in the policy environment shaping the leadership potential of English local leaders compared to their U.S. counterparts, and this concerns the extraordinary centralization of power within the British state. Local leaders are hamstrung in the United Kingdom because they lack financial power.

While there is great variation across the United States—including variation within individual states—U.S. mayors clearly have far more financial power to take action in their local communities than English local leaders. U.S. mayors have a range of tax levers they can pull—for example, property tax, sales tax, hotel room tax, and business tax. On average, local taxes in the United States generate 41 percent of local revenue (Hollis et al. 1994). This gives U.S. mayors power when they negotiate with other interest groups, as well as a direct mechanism for improving the local quality of life. The financial clout of English local leaders could hardly be more different. The financial power of U.K. councils has been eroded over a period of more than 20 years, with the result that U.K. councils now have very little financial autonomy—they raise less than 20 percent of their revenue from the local council tax (their only local tax), and even this part of their financial decision making is subject to control by Whitehall.

So great has been the reduction in local discretion and accountability that local government has become, in many important respects, little more than a branch office of Whitehall. Councils now have to produce 70 different kinds of plans for central government, they are measured against hundreds of centrally defined performance indicators, and they are subject to a proliferation of ministerial area-based initiatives. There are now so many overlapping zones with conflicting objectives emanating from different Whitehall departments that "zonitis" is threatening to undermine the modernization agenda (Stewart et al. 2000). What does this obsession with centralized control mean for political management reform? Professor Michael Chisholm (1995, 16), a well-respected local government expert, puts it this way: "A mayor dancing to central government puppet strings will look remarkably like a council doing the same thing. To make local government more genuinely accountable to the local electorate, local authorities must have greater control over their finance."

A major study of local and central relations in the United Kingdom reached the same conclusion—that the "freedom to do things differently" is a fundamental component of local democracy (Carter 1996). This view was accepted by a House of Commons committee that investigated local government finance in detail in 1998–99: "We reject the proposition that there is no link between the proportion of finance raised locally and democratic accountability/local autonomy. We believe that the latter determines the former" (U.K. Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs Committee 1999, xiii).

More recently, the House of Commons has become increasingly brutal in its criticism of the government. In its most recent report, after noting it had repeatedly stressed the need to give local authorities greater control over tax raising to make them less reliant on central grants, the parliamentary committee charged with overseeing local government in the country did not pull any punches: "Performance continues to fall woefully short of intention in this and other areas of local government finance" (U.K. Select Committee on the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister 2002, para. 12). The chairman of the Select Committee, Andrew Bennett, a long serving Labour MP, said: "The government says it believes in local government, but it has not given (local government) the powers to raise the money that it needs" (Perkins 2003, 3).

The writing was, in fact, on the wall within weeks of the election of the Labour government in 1997. Back in 1984, the Conservative government led by Prime Minister Thatcher shocked the U.K. local government world by introducing the power to cap the spending of local councils. The Rates Act gave ministers the power to limit the property tax levels imposed by individual local authorities—in other words, ministers took the power to decide local tax levels over the heads of local voters. This stunning centralization of power in Whitehall was vigorously opposed by those concerned with defending local democracy—including many local Conservative-controlled councils. The present government, having indicated before the 1997 election that it intended to get rid of capping, changed its position soon after the votes were counted. Tony Benn, the veteran Labour MP, recorded the following in his diary on July 17, 1997: "Believe it or not the Government has decided to continue the capping of three local authorities, having spent the last eighteen years denouncing capping as an infringement of local democracy" (Benn 2002, 428).

There is, then, a significant difference in the policy environment shaping the leadership agenda for English local leaders compared with U.S. elected mayors. The U.K. central government can choose to create new space for local leadership by reempowering local government. If the U.K. policy environment is not radically reconfigured by central government in a way that expands the financial autonomy of local councils, however, U.K. mayors will not be able to exercise the independent leadership that is an attractive feature of politics in many U.S. cities.

The Institutional Arrangements

In relation to the institutional-design aspect of the leadership agenda, there is strong evidence of U.S. influence. A glance at the figures presented previously is enough to show that the mayor/cabinet and mayor/council manager models draw directly on U.S. experience. But, the United Kingdom is not simply copying U.S. political management designs. Rather, as Rose (1993) advocates, the government has adapted U.S. models to respond to local requirements.

The mayor/cabinet model (figure 2) involves the mayor sharing leadership responsibilities with a group of senior politicians—the cabinet. This approach, which resonates with the use of deputy mayors in French local government, is not typical of strong mayor leadership in the United States, for example. The U.S. mayor does, of course, have a mayor's office and works with an inner group of trusted colleagues, but there is not usually a formal city cabinet in U.S. local governance. It can be suggested, therefore, that the U.K. arrangements for a mayor/cabinet form of leadership provide the platform for a more collective style of city leadership than the typical, individualistic U.S. mayor. Much depends on how the U.K. mayor chooses to behave, but the existence of a formal cabinet suggests the government is trying to recognize the tradition of group leadership and party political involvement that has grown up in U.K. local government over the years.

Turning to the mayor/council manager model (see figure 3), we see that the U.K. approach has been influenced not just by the United States, but also by New Zealand (Howell, McDermott, and Forgie 1995). The mayor/coun-

cil manager model is attractive to U.K. chief executives and local government officers partly because it appears to place a higher value on the managerial contribution to modernization and the improvement of public-service management than the other models. Cynics may argue that officers will naturally support this model because it gives more power to the manager at the expense of the politicians—that their attraction to the model is built on self-interest. This does a disservice to those who believe the model has much to contribute to U.K. local democracy. There has been interesting cross-national research on the role of chief executives in local government, and this has generated helpful insights into the alternative leadership roles for chief executives (Klausen and Magnier 1998). A recent analysis, which draws on the UDITE (Union of Local Authority Chief Executives of Europe) study as well as research on the mayor/council manager form in the United States and New Zealand, suggests the model can underpin outward-looking political leadership as well as create space for bold innovation by managers at all levels (Hambleton 2000b).

There are, however, several issues to address before the model can be implemented in the United Kingdom. In the U.K. context at least, there is still some uncertainty about the boundary between the political leader and the council manager *inside* the executive. Will there be difficulties for the council manager in distinguishing his or her on-the-record decisions from day-to-day operational management decisions? How can these be distinguished in a way that will assure adequate scrutiny? Also, can the council manager be expected to give independent and impartial advice to the council when he or she is actually a part of the executive?

At a more general level, we can conclude that the institutional designs introduced into English local government through the new legislation represent a radical shift toward U.S. models. The whole notion of the separation of powers between an executive and an assembly, the idea of direct election of the political leader, the creation of more visible leadership roles not just for politicians but also for city managers—all of these long-established features of U.S. local government are now available to English local government. Table 1 indicates that only 12 English authorities have opted for one of the elected mayor options at this stage. This may imply that U.S. influence has been peripheral and unimportant. It should be remembered, however, that virtually all English local authorities have introduced a separation of powers—and this, in itself, has far-reaching implications for local leadership and local democracy in England. Moreover, we have set out some reasons that we expect the number of English elected mayors to grow in the future.

Relationship with Followers

The relationship between leaders and followers is the third dimension of our leadership model. The suggestion here is that leaders who are alert to the importance of maintaining their constituency of support are more likely to last. There is, however, a tension. The leader who is forever looking over his or her shoulder to see whether the followers are still there is unlikely to provide the needed vision and inspiration. Equally, the leader who has a bold agenda, but neglects the important task of winning strong backing for the new vision, may soon come unstuck. The way local political leaders handle the relationship with followers has differed considerably between the United States and the United Kingdom.

Party politics is much more significant in U.K. local government than it is in the United States. Research on U.K. local leadership demonstrates how powerful the local party can be (Leach and Wilson 2000). In some urban authorities—and some London boroughs are notorious for this—the leader has to spend virtually all of his or her time dealing with infighting between factions within the ruling party. U.K. political leaders have little formal security of tenure. In a disciplined local party this may not matter too much, but in a party where there is internal conflict, it can mean the leader is forever watching his or her back. Needless to say, this does not provide a good platform for assured local leadership. More positively, it can be claimed that the political party can provide a source of ideas for local leaders as well as a helpful sounding board for new proposals.

In the United States the local party is less important, but it is not irrelevant (Wolman and Goldsmith 1992). Invariably, candidates for mayor stand on a party political platform, and party support is vital in getting out the vote. However, once in office, the power exercised by the party over the behavior of the mayor bears little comparison to the United Kingdom. First, the mayor, once elected, has the mandate of the population. This gives personal electoral legitimacy and political clout. Second, the mayor cannot be unseated, barring legal proceedings, before the end of his or her term of office. Typically, mayors have a four-year term, and this gives the mayor considerable space within which to act. A third factor concerns the role of the local media. In the United Kingdom, print and broadcast media are dominated by national papers and national television and radio stations. In the United States, the role of the local media is much more developed. Certainly, the typical U.S. mayor can be expected to have extensive media coverage of his or her activities on a daily basis.

As well as the public profile for citizens at large, U.S. mayors also have to give attention to the interests of other power holders in the city. There is a rich body of U.S.

urban political science literature investigating the degree to which U.S. mayors are able to step free from the constraints imposed on them by powerful economic interests (Judd and Swanstrom 1994). With the globalization of economic relations, there is evidence that local political leaders in all Western democracies are now having to be much more attentive to the needs of economic as well as social stakeholders (Hambleton, Savitch, and Stewart 2002). Stone (1995), in his analysis of local leadership in three U.S. cities, notes that the interaction with followers is complex. It is not just about whether the followers support the leader. Rather the interaction concerns "the scope of who is involved, the degree to which followers are actively engaged, and the extent to which they are moved by the leader to see themselves in a different and less narrow way" (Stone 1995, 106).

At one level, it can be suggested that the relationship between local leaders and their followers is totally different in the United Kingdom. Party politics is much more deeply embedded in U.K. local government, with parties being involved not just in electoral campaigns, but also in the ongoing management of the local council. In some councils, the party leader who strays too far from the local party line can be dismissed within days. However, times are changing. First, the legitimacy of secretive party groups has been called into question in the United Kingdom. As pressures for more open processes of decision making grow, the traditional exercise of power by local, invisible party groups is being called into question. Second, even within political parties, there is a growing recognition that effective leaders need space to lead. If a leader's legitimacy is called into question at every turn, it is impossible to lead effectively, resulting in a negative reaction from voters. Third, as we suggested previously, the New Labour modernization agenda set out not just to update the institutions of local government, but also—and this is crucial—the Labour Party itself. The changes are designed to bring about a new kind of relationship between the party and local leaders. Fourth, there is also the growth of independent mayors who owe no allegiance to a political party. These "new style" elected mayors have a different relationship with their followers. Unconstrained by party discipline, they nevertheless have to appeal to popular sentiment if they wish to be reelected.

Conclusion

This article has charted the remarkable changes that are taking place in the political management of U.K. local authorities. Ten years ago, it would have seemed far-fetched to suggest that U.K. councils would be required to do away with the old-style committee model of decision making and introduce a separation of powers between the execu-tive and the assembly. Indeed, many commentators and key local politicians argued that a separation of powers was irrelevant and that U.K. councils did not need radical institutional redesign. Despite this resistance, in the period since 1997 the Labour government has introduced legislation that is now spurring local authorities to transform themselves and, in particular, to develop new forms of community leadership.

We have shown how the prime minister was centrally involved in the development of the modernization agenda for U.K. local government. We have also shown how U.K. civil servants drew on U.S. experience with city government as they drafted the legislation for London and for England. There can be no denying that transatlantic policy transfer in relation to local political management took place. The impact of that transfer is less easy to assess at this early stage. By drawing on the U.S. as well as the U.K. literature on public administration and urban politics, we suggest the local leadership agenda in both countries is shaped by three key factors: (1) the policy environment, (2) institutional arrangements, and (3) the relationship with followers. These factors all play a part in shaping the quality and performance of local leadership.

The discussion of whether U.K. local government is beginning to adopt U.S.-style approaches to local leadership has identified areas of convergence and divergence. The analysis suggests the power of U.K. party political groups in controlling the behavior of local leaders seems to be declining. Directly elected mayors in the United Kingdom can be expected to exercise more independent leadership than the typical U.K. council leader. U.K. local leaders can also be expected to become more Americanized, in the sense they will need to give more attention to the presentation of their policies to the media and to the population at large. The media is likely to become more important, and politicians with flair and personal appeal can be expected to gain from this. In some cases, independent English mayors have been elected in the face of strong opposition from local parties, and this may imply a weakening of formal parties in local government. Without a doubt, the formal design of the structures and processes of decision making in U.K. local governance have already shifted toward U.S. models: There is now a separation of powers in most councils in England; there are 12 directly elected mayors; one of these has a mayor/council manager form; and the roles of nearly all councilors have moved toward the representative and scrutiny roles that are familiar to those serving on U.S. councils.

Set against these arguments pointing toward the adoption of U.S.-style local leadership is the fact that the United Kingdom is still one of the most centralized states in the Western world. The U.K. guidance on the new council constitutions illustrates the point—it is breathtakingly de-

tailed and complex and runs more than 700 pages (DETR 2000). It is impossible to prescribe all of these details in Whitehall because local circumstances vary. As a result, this guidance is constantly being changed and revised. Even more disturbing is the fact that elected councils in the United Kingdom enjoy very little autonomy in relation to tax-raising powers. The failure of the government to address this fundamental problem has been strongly criticized in a number of select committee reports prepared by Parliament. Not surprisingly, effective leaders who might consider standing for local office are discouraged from putting themselves forward when they discover that their ability to improve the local quality of life is heavily circumscribed by officials in Whitehall. The oppressive system of central control and regulation bears no resemblance to the United States, where the virtues of strong local self-government appear to be more widely appreciated.

Acknowledgments

Notes

1. Following the creation of the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly in 1999, the central government arrangements for overseeing local government in these parts of the United Kingdom was devolved to Edinburgh and Cardiff. This has resulted in some variations in the central government approach to local leadership in different parts of the United Kingdom and, for simplicity, this article concentrates on developments in England.

2. Hambleton served on the Academic Advisory Panel set up in 1997 to provide advice on local democracy to ministers. Members of the panel helped civil servants obtain U.S. city charters and similar documents on U.S. city institutions. These papers and related discussions directly influenced the drafting of the Greater London Authority Act and the Local Government Act. In March 1999, Hambleton organized, in close collaboration with the U.K. Local Government Association and the U.K. Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, an international seminar on local governance that brought together selected U.K. local government leaders and two leading directly elected mayors from the United States—Kurt Schmoke of Baltimore and Ed Rendell of Philadelphia. This seminar focused on detailed, practical experience with the elected mayor model in the U.S. context and how lessons might be transferred to the U.K. context.

3. The Scottish Office did, however, commission a small-scale examination of political management arrangements in other countries (Hambleton 1998b).

4. Fourteen of the 25 members of the Greater London Authority are elected from 14 geographical constituencies using the first-past-the-post system. The remaining 11 assembly members, known as "London members," are elected through a version of proportional representation. Voters, therefore, have three votes: one for the mayor, one for their constituency representative, and one "London vote."

5. The selection of the Labour candidate for mayor of London involved three constituencies: Labour Party members; affiliated trade unions; and members of Parliament, members of the European Parliament, and prospective members of the GLA. Livingstone won the support of the first two constituencies but lost the third constituency to Frank Dobson. The weighting of the constituencies meant that Mr. Dobson received the Labour Party nomination (White and Milne 2000).

6. We recognize there is no single U.S. style of local leadership. We use this phrase as shorthand to describe an approach to local governance that involves relatively autonomous local authorities being led by directly elected mayors who generally have a high public profile and place emphasis on partnership working alongside the delivery of public services by the local authority. There is no suggestion here that this is an accurate description of all U.S. local authorities.

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