

Smart Leadership for Smart Cities: Leadership Foundations for Smart City Practitioners

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Smart Leadership for Smart Cities

Leadership Foundations for Smart City Practitioners

Background and Context

Advocates of the Smart Cities movement argue that important advantages for cities can be secured through a digitally-enabled integration of their physical, social and other technological assets. At the same time, knowledge-oriented leadership approaches are influencing the design and delivery of urban policy innovations.

Many 'smart' projects aspire to generate new knowledge and exploit and spread knowledge across cities for improved local economic development, social and environmental outcomes.

Aiming to fill some gaps in our understanding of how Smart Cities can work to their full potential - our research has examined the leadership dynamics in four cities in England - and has surfaced fresh learning about the ways in which effective knowledge-oriented leadership is enacted in these places.



About the Research

- Our research into Smart City leadership was jointly funded by the University of Birmingham Business School and Middlesex University Business School;
- The project has examined leadership in action in four Smart Cities in England; we interviewed forty key individuals who were involved in the design and delivery of Smart City projects, and gathered their experience of local knowledge generation, sharing and spread;
- The cities were selected based on their declared intention to develop Smart Cities initiatives, their urban scale and geographical coverage;
- Based on analysis of the findings and by using an analytical device known as ideal types, we have identified fresh leadership learning about the variety of approaches being adopted across these cities.

The Case Studies

The four Smart Cities and the local smart initiatives we examined were:

- Birmingham – the Birmingham Smart City Vision has stimulated a radical re-think around the provision of smart health and social care in the context of public service budget reductions and the demands this is placing on the delivery of quality health care, community and other related local services.
- Manchester - the Manchester Smart-ip project is testing smart working around mobility, engagement and the environment. By developing a web app to enable 'community reporting' and a crowd-sourcing device called 'green energy watch', the project is now allowing members of the public to share feedback on their experience of new energy saving devices.
- Bristol – the Sola Bristol project involves the application of new digitally integrated energy management technologies that are being developed by the private sector in partnership with social housing residents and local regeneration organisations and schools.

- Peterborough - the Peterborough DNA project brings together innovation, skills and environmental resources from across the city to take advantage of new 'green markets' and to develop and grow new and more environmentally sustainable local businesses.

The four case studies represent very different types of active Smart City projects. Whilst each case city is unique - in terms of urban scale and economy, local social mix, organisational arrangements, technology mix and strategic aspirations - taken together their experiences nevertheless reveal a number of foundational leadership insights.

Key Leadership Learning

The 'good practice' learning we have gathered from the four case cities suggests that knowledge-oriented leadership appears to work best where there is evidence of:

- **Blending** – where it is understood that solutions to complex economic, social and technological challenges in Smart Cities require knowledge, expertise and experience to be gathered and combined from across the public, private and third sector;

