

Accelerating the Shift to a Low Carbon Economy: What Kind of Local Leadership do we Need?

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The Centre for Cities report *Delivering Change* (Clarke, Wilcox, & Nohrova, 2013) shows how cities across the globe are taking a lead role in creating a sustainable future, driven by their efforts to tackle the environmental and economic challenges familiar to us all. This paper considers the question: 'What kind of local leadership is needed to help us make the shift to a low carbon economy?' It does this by reviewing the literature in three discrete fields; system innovation, systems leadership and place-based leadership and argues that shifting to a sustainable/low carbon economy is an adaptive challenge that will be better addressed by taking a systems approach to the leadership of change.

The paper contends that making this 'big shift' (Draper, 2013) requires a strategic approach to building leadership capacity in cities (and across regions) that embraces political, public service, community and business interests (Hambleton & Howard, 2012, 2013). It also argues that system wide innovation benefits from a particular style of leadership that requires bespoke forms of leadership development to ensure there are sufficient leaders with the right qualities, in the right places to speed our way to a more sustainable future (Muligan & Leadbetter, 2013; Uhl-Bien, M., Marion, R., & McKelvey, 2007; van den Belt et al., 2010; Welbourn, Ghate, & Lewis, 2013).

Ultimately, the paper provides a conceptual framework for understanding 'systems leadership', how it differs from more conventional and common forms of leadership and offers recommendations about how it can be developed and deployed to accelerate the shift towards a more sustainable, low-carbon economy in specific localities. This is illustrated with reference to work the Centre for Leadership Development at Derby Business School is doing in collaboration with two local city authorities to de-carbonise their school estates.