

**REGIONAL STUDIES ASSOCIATION ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE 2010 –
REGIONAL RESPONSES AND GLOBAL SHIFTS: ACTORS, INSTITUTIONS AND
ORGANISATIONS**

Do not quote without author's permission

Flo Bell and Frank Peck
Centre for Regional Economic Development
University of Cumbria

**Facilitating Innovation and Knowledge Sharing in the regeneration sector: the impact
of Fusion Cumbria Learning Lab**

This paper addresses the issues related to facilitating knowledge sharing through an innovative programme delivered in Cumbria to raise the capacity of organisations engaged in delivering sustainable communities and regeneration by providing training opportunities to relevant professionals across the public, private and third sectors. Sharing knowledge is identified as being a crucial aspect of the 'new' strategic leadership of place and networking is a key part of this process. However, how does this knowledge exchange occur across sectors and professions which until relatively recently have been accustomed to working in 'silos'? In Cumbria, the Fusion Cumbria Learning Lab was developed to address these issues. The paper examines evidence from two evaluations of this programme to identify its impact in facilitating knowledge sharing across and between organisations. Results demonstrate that the programme has made a contribution towards developing new networks between individuals working for organisations delivering sustainable communities and regeneration. However, the findings also show that the dissemination of ideas and application of new learning within organisations has been limited due to a variety of institutional barriers and inflexibilities. The paper concludes by considering the implications of the findings for collaborative learning and the nature of these institutional barriers that appear to inhibit the transfer of innovation. The likely effect of the current changing resource environment within which public authorities operate is also considered.

Flo Bell – Biography

Flo is a Research Fellow at the Centre for Regional Economic Development (CRED) at the University of Cumbria in Carlisle. Since joining CRED in 2001 Flo has been involved in many projects related to partnership working and regeneration as well as other projects related to mapping of public sector expenditure and the support needs of business and she has jointly published some papers in relation to these issues. She has recently managed projects related to raising the knowledge and skills of individuals engaged in delivering sustainable communities and regeneration and also facilitates Action Learning Sets and Learning and Reflection Days as part of the LEAD programme, which is funded by the North West Development Agency and aims to raise the leadership skills of SME owners and managers. Flo's current personal research interests are related to innovation and enterprise in the public sector.

Frank Peck – Biography

Frank is Research Director at the Centre for Regional Economic Development (CRED) at the University of Cumbria in Carlisle. He has conducted previous research on the impacts of inward investment and disinvestment on regional economies. Research outputs have also covered policy-related issues including critiques of cluster strategies, the development of microbusiness in rural areas and the impacts of public procurement on SMEs in UK regions. Frank has considerable experience of working with local partnerships and was involved in conducting an audit of skills in economic development and regeneration in Cumbria in 2008. This was followed by the delivery of a learning programme dedicated to raising the knowledge and skills of individuals engaged in delivering sustainable communities and regeneration working with Fusion Cumbria Learning Lab. Frank is the current Editor of Regions, Newsletter of the RSA.

Introduction

In recent years, debates have emerged regarding 'leadership of place' in contrast to more traditional leadership models. Attention has also been given to the skills which are required to deliver sustainable communities in local areas. Being able to network effectively, exchange knowledge and identify innovative solutions to problems are key skills in leadership of place. A number of factors add complexity to the process of leadership, including the drive for value for money, the requirement for cross-sector delivery of services, evaluation and exchange of good practice. In the current economic environment, these factors may become even more significant, as efficiencies are sought to achieve savings across the public sector. This paper briefly examines the debates regarding leadership of place and how knowledge exchange, innovation and networking can be facilitated to contribute towards more efficient service delivery. It then considers what a social theory of learning can contribute to these issues by examining a number of collaborative learning programmes which have been delivered in Cumbria. Data from evaluations is used to identify how different groups of individuals have participated leading to development of networks, innovative thinking and knowledge exchange. This includes the identification of institutional barriers and inflexibilities which have acted as barriers to these activities. The paper concludes by considering the implications of the findings for leadership of place and collaborative learning, particularly in the context of the new political landscape in the UK.

The 'new' leadership of place

Van Wort¹ highlighted in 2003 that leadership is difficult in whatever era it is being implemented, however "today's leaders face additional challenges". Seven years on, in an environment in which the UK is addressing the issues arising from the global recession and adjusting to operating in a period of decline rather than a 'period of plenty' this statement can only be more true. In recent years, leadership has changed into a role which Gibney and Collinge² describe as operating in a "fuzzy decentred world of partnerships and networking", which consists of a wide range of organisations, partnerships and communities both of place and interest. This is termed as "the 'new' leadership of place" which has emerged from the requirement that policy is "joined-up' across boundaries within and between different geographies, agencies and sectors" in order to be effective.

Although there is a considerable literature on the meaning of "place", the term is used in this paper to refer to specific geographically defined areas such as neighbourhoods, cities, sub-regions and regions within which state policies are customarily designed and delivered through coalitions of partners working together. Although Gibney and Collinge specifically discuss these issues in the context of the knowledge-based economy, they emphasise the importance of linking these theories with the wider leadership of place, particularly in relation to regeneration agendas and the "difficult period of economic and social transition that will follow" the economic recession. They draw attention to their work with the knowledge-based economy and how it focuses on how different places are able to "facilitate inter-disciplinarity across institutional boundaries, technology themes, sub-territories and professional cultures to promote the development of sustainable local economies".

Policy research undertaken for the Academy for Sustainable Communities³ has focused upon the generic skills which are necessary to deliver sustainable communities, which encompasses "A flourishing and diverse local economy"⁴. These are additional to professional and technical knowledge and include activities such as leadership, inspiring others at all levels to contribute, leading change, coaching and mentoring, developing future leaders, effective networking, creative and innovative thinking. Although the professions engaged in delivering sustainable communities are mainly related to the built environment e.g. town planners, architects, these generic skills are required to join up the work of different professions and organisations engaged in delivering projects and programmes.

Creativity and Innovation in regeneration

As noted above, creative and innovative thinking is one of the skills identified as being crucial in the delivery of sustainable communities³. As in the context of "place", there is also a vast

literature on creativity and innovation that spans virtually all disciplines. At the broadest level, the term “creativity” has been used by researchers to describe “the creation of an original and useful project”⁵. However, this “emphasizes the idea generation and selection stages of creativity”¹⁶. In terms of public policy, creativity is inseparable from definitions of “innovation” which refer to “idea development, the overall innovation climate within the community, and factors related to implementation”^{6,7}. Policy statements related to these concepts clearly indicate that creativity and innovation are, in part, defined by the impacts of any changes on the efficiency or effectiveness of public policies. Innovation, therefore, refers to “an idea applied successfully” that “must add either producer or customer value”⁸. The Innovation Nation White Paper highlights that “Innovation is ... not restricted to the private sector – increasingly the public sector is called upon (often in partnership with the private and third sectors) to innovate in the design and delivery of public services”⁹. In addition, it is recognised that an innovation is not necessarily a completely new idea, but is “something which is sufficiently new to the authority that it represents a break with established practice, and demonstrates a willingness to experiment and take risks in the pursuit of a performance breakthrough”¹⁰.

However, there are a number of barriers to innovation in the public sector which can present challenges when delivering services with organisations from other sectors. For example, the public sector is widely recognised as being risk averse, and there are also issues related to the short-term nature of funding which can present barriers to innovation. These are in addition to the lack of reward for finding creative solutions to problems which contrasts with the private sector, and organisational cultures which focus on delivery and administrative procedures, consequently reducing space for thinking. A number of factors have been identified for innovation in the public sector, including establishing effective linkages between innovators and the end-users, and between elements of the ‘supply chain’¹¹, identifying a champion for innovation at a senior-level, patience and time to fine-tune the service or product and the existence of parallel developments in related areas.

In generating possible innovative ideas, it is important to recognise that only half of innovations are initiated at the top of organisations¹², and that staff throughout organisations are valuable sources of ideas. Key messages are that creativity can be developed – there are creative thinking tools and techniques which can be learnt and also it is important to give workers space in which to be creative and think. Wood highlights that “the end result of this theoretical movement was an appreciation of creativity as something that all could develop”. It is also important to learn from others, as Wenger argues “learning involves much more than knowledge acquisition because it engages the whole person in a co-constructive, interactive process oriented towards developing the expertise of people as they integrate into a professional community”¹⁶.

Networking

Peck et al (forthcoming)¹³ have summarised some of the debates regarding the sharing of tacit knowledge which exists within the pool of practitioners working in regeneration in local areas, and this emphasises that networking is a crucial activity in sharing knowledge and in generating creative and innovative thinking¹⁴. Previously many of the professions engaged in delivering sustainable communities worked in silos, and therefore knowledge was retained within a particular department or organisation.

A social theory of learning: communities of practice?

It is widely acknowledged that learning can be interpreted as a social process and that interaction between individuals and organisations within particular socio-spatial settings provides a vital arena within which learning takes place. What is less clear is the extent to which such learning process can be facilitated through public policy intervention. In the context of local regeneration, a social theory of learning can provide a framework within which to consider how the development of skills such as leadership and innovative thinking, tacit knowledge of practitioners and sharing of learning can be facilitated. Wenger¹⁵ outlines the social theory of learning, and “place[s] learning in the context of ... lived experience of participation in the world”. In other words, “social participation is the critical requirement for

Please do not quote without author's permission

learning"¹⁶. Participation in this instance "refers not just to local events of engagement in certain activities with certain people, but to a more encompassing process of being active participants in the practices of social communities and constructing identities in relation to these communities ... such participation shapes not only what we do, but also who we are and how we interpret what we do". The constituent parts of learning have been categorised as *meaning* (learning as experience), *practice* (learning as doing), *community* (learning as belonging) and *identity* (learning as becoming)¹⁵.

Wenger argues that everyone belongs to a number of communities of practice and consequently it is possible to theorise that practitioners involved in the delivery of sustainable communities and regeneration also belong in communities of practice which are separate from their professional communities of practice (i.e. professional bodies such as Royal Town Planning Institute, Institute of Civil Engineers – practitioners are members of these bodies and a condition of membership is that professionals undertake a specified amount of annual Continuous Professional Practice). If practitioners addressing sustainable communities and regeneration are a 'community of practice' (or of interest?), how do they learn as a member of this community of practice? What opportunities are available for them to learn as participants in this community and to share their learning with others in the community?

In his discussion of another type of community, Communities of Innovation (COI), West¹⁶ highlights that "social learning theories are key to understanding because they help us understand the nature of collaborative work and learning, and collaboration is a key element of innovation". In addition, Wenger "describes social learning as mutual engagement with others and participation in communities of practice which have a common enterprise or purpose and which negotiate their own meanings and repertoires. He also argues that taking part in a learning community of practice involves identity transformation when members move from peripheral to full membership of the learning community"¹⁷. In addition, Hughes¹⁷ highlights that "belonging to a community of physicists inevitably means identifying as a physicist. But, any group or community does not operate in isolation from other groups, and to engage fully individuals must reconcile learning group or cohort identities with wider social identities from other community memberships". She also notes, in relation to types of knowledge (and in the context of Higher Education), that "there are many forms of knowledge circulating ..., including formal disciplinary knowledge, locally established disciplinary knowledge¹⁸ and tacit personal and professional knowledge^{19, 20}".

Embedding networking, innovative thinking and sharing of knowledge in Cumbria

An opportunity to explore the potential of public policy interventions designed to nurture the range of skills and abilities encapsulated within the concept of "place leadership" is provided by recent learning programmes delivered within the County of Cumbria in North-West England. The authors have been involved in evaluation of a series of such interventions aimed at individuals, professions and organisations involved in delivering the sustainable communities agenda^{24,25,28,29}. The data from these evaluations is used to show the value that participants place on collaborative learning and the extent to which they have been able to share or apply new ideas within their own workplace. This section firstly summarises the different delivery structures for sustainable communities and regeneration in Cumbria and is followed by a summary of a number of programmes which have been delivered in Cumbria aimed at raising the knowledge and skills of participants. The findings of the evaluations of these projects are then discussed in the context of networking, sharing learning and innovation.

Cumbria: Geography and Governance

Figure 1 shows both a map of the 6 district authorities in Cumbria and also a map of England in order to demonstrate the peripherality of the area in comparison to other areas of England. Cumbria covers an area of 676,700 ha in which 498,800 people reside²¹. East Cumbria is relatively rural although it contains the only city in Cumbria, Carlisle, to the North and has good communications both North and South with the West Coast Main Line and the M6. West Cumbria has a long industrial history, although much of the heavy industry has now declined and the area is currently dependent on Sellafield and the nuclear industry.

Please do not quote without author's permission

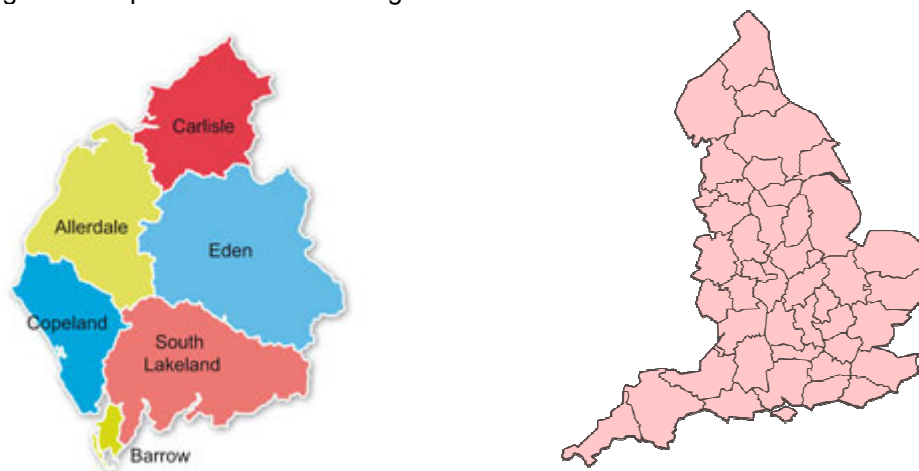
The County has a two-tier local government structure, with Cumbria County Council and 6 local authorities: Allerdale Borough Council, Copeland Borough Council, Carlisle City Council, Barrow-in-Furness Borough Council, South Lakeland District Council and Eden District Council. In addition, the Lake District National Park Authority (LDNPA) straddles Allerdale, Eden, Copeland and South Lakeland.

Partnership working has a long history in Cumbria, as the West Cumbria Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), covering both Allerdale and Copeland and which received Neighbourhood Renewal Funding (NRF), was based on a previously existing partnership. Furness Partnership also received NRF. Carlisle and Eden formed a joint LSP following joint working to address the Foot and Mouth Disease Outbreak in 2001, however following the flood event in Carlisle in 2005 it became apparent that Carlisle required a partnership to specifically address its issues. Finally, South Lakeland also has its own LSP.

The Cumbria Strategic Partnership was established in 2001 and brings together organisations from the public, private and third sectors working in the county. In addition, to the local authorities and partnerships, there are a number of other agencies and public sector bodies working to deliver government services. These include the NWDA and its delivery arm Cumbria Vision, which brought together all agencies engaged in delivering projects related to economic development in the county. West Lakes Renaissance, an Urban Regeneration Company was responsible for developing and delivering major regeneration projects in Barrow-in-Furness and West Cumbria, while Carlisle Renaissance is a partnership between Carlisle City Council, Cumbria County Council and NWDA and is responsible for developing and implementing a future strategy for the regeneration of Carlisle.

In recent months however these structures have undergone significant changes. Cumbria Vision has become part of the County Council, and the West Cumbria LSP has been dissolved. Four new regeneration delivery boards have been established to oversee regeneration in the individual areas of the County: Carlisle Renaissance, Britain's Energy Coast West Cumbria, Barrow Regeneration and Eden and South Lakeland Delivery Board. These Boards operate under the strategic guidance of Cumbria Vision, and are responsible for delivering the goals set out within the Cumbria Economic Strategy 2009-2012 and the Cumbria Sub-Regional Action Plan 2009-2012 in their geographical areas of responsibility²². In addition, Britain's Energy Coast Masterplan aims to build on the existing expertise within West Cumbria's world-renowned nuclear industry to deliver regeneration projects in Allerdale, Copeland and Barrow-in-Furness, transforming them into "a thriving centre of excellence for energy technologies ranging from off-shore wind, tidal and wave to biomass, anaerobic digestion and energy from waste"²³.

Figure 1: Maps of Cumbria and England



Source: Cumbria County Council
www.cumbria.gov.uk accessed
18/05/10

Source:
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Ceremonial_counties_of_England.svg accessed 18/05/10

It is clear from the description of the governance structures above that Cumbria has a wide range of different organisations and partnerships operating to deliver sustainable communities and regeneration. It is also evident that expertise from a wide range of professions is required to deliver the type of projects which are required to deliver the visions for Cumbria and that these visions cannot be delivered by one organisation alone, successful delivery depends on effective working at different levels within organisations as well as across organisations and partnerships. However, questions arise as to how the range of organisations and partnerships will work together, how can a series of relatively small organisations deliver such huge aspirations while still trying to operate as an entity e.g. with HR, staff development etc. Once answer may be to provide learning opportunities on a joint basis addressing common areas of interest.

Achieving Cumbrian Excellence

In recent years a number of programmes have been delivered in Cumbria which aimed to enable participants to learn about issues of common interest. However, these programmes are fairly innovative, in that they enable collaborative learning between individuals working for different organisations and at different levels. In addition, some of the events enabled individuals from different sectors to learn together.

The first of these was the Achieving Cumbrian Excellence Programme (ACE). Funded by the ODPM and LGA Capacity Building Fund and supported by the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) ACE provided opportunities for Elected Members and officers of the seven Cumbrian Local Authorities and the LDNPA to learn about a range of issues together. A baseline was developed for the ACE Programme in order that progress against a range of outcomes could be monitored²⁴. One of these was "For strong and sustainable networks to be developed at member and manager level which support the drive to improve services across Cumbria".

The baseline survey (conducted in 2004) showed that many networks and partnerships existed across and within Cumbria, particularly for officers engaged in particular areas of responsibility. Interview evidence suggested, however, that there had been unhelpful pressures placed upon these relationships by debates over regional assemblies and unitary local government in 2003/4, which particularly affected relationships between the two tiers of local government. However, the changing climate later in 2004 was more conducive to greater levels of co-operation and exchange of ideas, information and good practice. Levels of attendance by officers and members at ACE events supported this conclusion.

Despite the many networks and partnerships across and within the County, the data showed that gaps existed, particularly at a county-wide level. For instance, replies from officers showed that only 29 out of 63 respondents had met face-to-face with their counterparts in all other authorities (excluding LDNPA). Opportunities for networking between members in different authorities were also less common. However, the data picked up some obvious 'pairings' between authorities (e.g. Carlisle and Eden), where proximity and common interests facilitated more intensive contact.

Fusion Cumbria Learning Lab

Fusion Cumbria Learning Lab (Fusion) was a skills development programme which aimed to raise the knowledge and skills of regeneration and sustainable communities professionals and consequently the capacity of organisations in Cumbria to deliver sustainable communities. It achieved this by providing a range of learning opportunities for practitioners addressing these issues across the public, private and third sectors in Cumbria. Programme outcomes included the sharing of information gained by individuals through participation in Fusion with colleagues across their organisations and partnerships, and that Fusion should contribute towards strengthened collaborative and partnership activity which occurs to address regeneration and sustainable communities.

Please do not quote without author's permission

Delivery of Fusion commenced in 2007. It was delivered as part of a pilot funded by RENEW, the North West Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Communities and supported by NWIN, the North West Improvement Network. In Cumbria, it was managed by the ACE Programme Board and a Fusion Steering Group was set up to implement the programme and was therefore embedded into an environment in which collaborative learning had already been tested with some success.

The learning opportunities included workshops addressing "Design and the Built Environment", "Creative and Innovative Thinking", "How to ...", "Introduction to Sustainable Communities" and funding to enable individuals to participate in two courses delivered through the Academy for Sustainable Communities (Raising Our Game Level 7 Certificate in Leading Sustainable Communities and Level 5 Short Award in Project Management).

In order to monitor the achievement of programme outcomes and outputs, an evaluation²⁵ of the programme was undertaken. This comprised an e-survey of participants and semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders.

Cumbria Improvement and Efficiency Partnership: Fusion

Following a restructuring within the region, in which activity relating to skills for sustainable communities was redistributed to the new North West Improvement and Efficiency Partnership (NWIEP), responsibility for Fusion was delegated to the Cumbria Improvement and Efficiency Partnership (CIEP). Economic Development and Regeneration was one of four key themes upon which CIEP focused in Year 1 (2008/9). In Year 1, CIEP used existing programmes wherever possible to minimise disruption and capitalise on achievements. Consequently, Fusion (CIEP Fusion) constituted the Economic Development and Regeneration theme. However NWIEP and therefore CIEP have a strong focus on delivering targets related to National Indicators as specified in the Cumbria LAA²⁶, and in the case of CIEP's Economic Development and Regeneration theme these are linked to addressing worklessness, supporting business, and improving skills¹. However, as the Fusion programme had not previously focused on delivery of particular LAA targets, a way in which to link Fusion activities with these was required. The solution identified was to focus the CIEP Fusion programme on providing learning opportunities to individuals working for organisations delivering activities which contribute towards the achievement of the LAA in order to improve their skills and knowledge and subsequently their organisation's capacity to achieve the targets. This aim was expressed through the outcomes developed for CIEP Fusion, which also encompassed the recommendations identified for the previous Fusion programme discussed above. The outcomes included:

- Raise the knowledge and skills of key change agents to enable them to contribute towards improved performance in the National Indicators addressing worklessness, business and skills (153, 171, 163 and 165) as specified in the Cumbria Local Area Agreement.
- Provide opportunities for key change agents within all levels of local government and across other organisations engaged in delivering economic development and regeneration in Cumbria to come together in order to facilitate collaboration / partnership working and sharing of knowledge, skills and ideas.
- Enable key change agents to share information gained through CIEP Fusion with colleagues both within and across organisations.

¹ The National Indicators are:

- The reduction in working age people claiming out of work benefits within the worst performing neighbourhoods (NI 153),
- Improving business growth (NI 171 – New business registration rate)
- Ensuring the population have the correct skills to meet business needs:
 - NI 163 (Proportion of population aged 19-64 for males and 19-59 for females qualified to at least Level 2 or higher)
 - NI 165 (Proportion of population aged 19-64 for males and 19-59 for females qualified to at least Level 4 or higher)

Please do not quote without author's permission

Previous work²⁷ identified a number of areas related to the skills of professionals involved in economic development and regeneration which could be improved and better co-ordinated and this informed the development of the CIEP Fusion Programme. As a result, a Leadership Programme was developed for individuals involved in leading programmes and projects addressing the Cumbria LAA targets. This Programme included theoretical sessions related to leadership and leadership of place, but also included more practical elements related to evaluation, creative and innovative thinking and community engagement. Other learning opportunities offered through CIEP Fusion included further Sustainable Communities workshops which focused on specific topics e.g. business, a mentoring workshop, more Design and the Built Environment workshops, and a new Design and Planning series of workshops. Throughout all of these activities, local expertise was utilised where possible to deliver the events, ensuring that tacit knowledge of relevant issues within the local area was disseminated over a wider range of individuals than would have been the case if external providers were commissioned. Subsidies were also available to fund individuals to do the Raising Our Game Certificate in Leading Sustainable Communities, and learning materials were also developed to assist people in sharing information gained through participation in the programme. This programme was also evaluated²⁸ using an e-survey.

Findings

The findings from the evaluations of all three of the projects described above are discussed in this section. Firstly, in respect of ACE, it emerged from the final evaluation of the Programme²⁹ that the majority of respondents felt that they could apply the lessons learnt from ACE particularly in relation to their work with other authorities and a variety of examples of collaboration arose from ACE including facilitation of countywide groups. In addition, less specific benefits emerged, for example Elected Members particularly felt that they had benefited from networking with representatives of other authorities. Findings indicated a widespread belief that communication had improved between District authorities and the County Council in particular, although less improvement was evident between the districts and the LDNPA.

Fusion Cumbria Learning Lab: Participants

For the first Fusion programme, 252 individuals from 62 organisations engaged in delivering sustainable communities across Cumbria participated in Fusion. The majority of participants (55%) worked in local government, 12% worked in other public sector organisations such as the North West Development Agency, 10% were employed by private sector businesses and 9% worked in the third sector. With regard to levels within organisations, participants were mainly officers or equivalent (48%), managers (34%) or Elected Members (5%).

The CIEP Fusion programme attracted 156 individuals from 47 organisations engaged in delivering sustainable communities, regeneration and economic development across Cumbria to participate. Again, the majority of these individuals work in the public sector (135) however another 17 are employed by private sector businesses. Although the largest group of participants were employed in planning or economic development roles, others work in health, education, housing and community safety. Nearly half of the participants in the programme were officers or equivalent (46.8%), however over 30% were managers or directors, and 16% were Elected Members.

Findings in relation to learning shared

Table 1 shows that the majority of respondents to the first Fusion evaluation e-survey indicated that they had few opportunities to share learning which they gained through participation in Fusion Cumbria Learning Lab within their own teams or organisations (63.5% and 55.1% respectively). More than half of respondents (51%) indicated that they had had no opportunities to share the learning gained through Fusion across partner organisations that they work with.

A variety of reasons were given for not being able to share the learning, many of which related to workload. It is also possible that the need to share the learning gained through Fusion was not made explicit at the events, and therefore participants may not have considered that this was one of the key outcomes of their experience (or the Fusion

Please do not quote without author's permission

programme). However, some respondents had managed to share some of the learning, identifying regular staff meetings as a good opportunity.

Table 1: Sharing Learning from Fusion Cumbria Learning Lab (n=98)

Opportunities to share what you have learnt through participation in Fusion Cumbria:	Number of opportunities							
	None		Few		Many		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Within own team at work	15	15.6	61	63.5	20	20.8	96	100
Within own organisation in general	36	36.7	54	55.1	8	8.2	98	100
Across the partner organisations that you work with	49	51.0	43	44.8	4	4.2	96	100

Source: CRED Fusion e-survey

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding

Table 2 shows the results of the CIEP Fusion evaluation in relation to the number of times that learning gained through participation in the programme was shared formally. As would be expected, a significant majority of respondents had shared their learning at least once with colleagues in their own team (78.7%). However, a majority of respondents had also managed to share learning across their organisations at least once (71.4%). A higher proportion of respondents had not managed to share any learning across partnerships that they worked across (38.1%), although encouragingly over 50% of respondents had shared their learning more than once.

Table 2: Learning shared formally (n=74)

Times learning shared formally with colleagues:	0		1-5		More than 6		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
In own team	13	21.3	34	55.7	14	23.0	61	100
In own organisation	18	28.6	35	55.6	10	15.9	63	100
Across partnerships	24	38.1	32	50.8	7	11.1	63	100

Source: CRED e-survey

The e-survey also asked respondents to relate occasions where they may have had opportunities to share the learning gained informally. This highlighted more sharing of learning at meetings both within teams and across partnerships, and therefore it is clear that individuals who have participated in CIEP Fusion are disseminating their learning widely when they are at work (and on some occasions in their personal time).

With regard to what learning was being shared, examples given include technical/professional skills such as "urban design skills" but also more generic skills such as "Project management techniques. However, knowledge regarding the activities of other organisations and the broader sustainability agenda were also shared:

"What other organisations are doing that we can link with to develop enterprise"

"Better understanding of the sustainable communities agenda, and the impact of council services across areas of the Egan wheel"

"... knowledge of partners in change"

Learning about wider issues was also shared:

"Need to cooperate, share knowledge / information"

"I would single out the importance of clear, honest, open, communications"

Please do not quote without author's permission

The e-survey also asked respondents the reasons they may not have been able to share the learning they gained through participation at CIEP Fusion learning activities. Some respondents noted that time and resources were a factor in this, although others commented that there was a lack of interest from colleagues. One respondent noted that "Due to the nature of the design course, it is less easy to share unless it relates to a specific site. Nonetheless there are few avenues to share these improved skills with Senior Managers/Heads/Directors", perhaps hinting that sharing the learning gained at external events needs to be 'pushed' from senior management teams.

Findings in relation to Networking

With regard to the contribution of the first Fusion programme towards increasing networking opportunities, a significant majority of respondents indicated that they "found it very useful to network with people involved in sustainable communities and regeneration in Cumbria" (88.6%). Turning to broader impacts of the networking in relation to strengthened collaborative and partnership activity, the majority of respondents at least partly agreed that "relationships with existing partners have been strengthened" (41.7%), "they have an increased understanding of what partner organisations do" (46.3%) and that "levels of trust between partner organisations have increased" (33.0%) as a result of participation in Fusion.

In relation to networking, 66.2% of respondents to the CIEP Fusion evaluation e-survey indicated that they considered that "Networking with others engaged in delivering regeneration programmes and projects in Cumbria" was an 'Important' or 'Very important' benefit. Consolidating this finding, 91.3% of respondents indicated that they had made new contacts through participation in CIEP Fusion and also, over half of respondents (56.7%) had followed these up. Turning to the broader impacts, 38.8% of respondents indicated at least Significantly "Strengthening working relationships with existing partners" and 47.8% significantly "Improving your understanding of other organisations engaged in delivering regeneration programmes and projects in Cumbria". However, only 34.9% at least Significantly "Improving levels of trust between partner organisations"

Innovation

Interestingly, although only two Creative and Innovative workshops in which 25 people participated were delivered during the first Fusion programme, 86 e-survey respondents (88.7%) indicated that they felt better equipped to look for creative and innovative solutions to problems. This indicates that participants in the other learning opportunities were being equipped with extra knowledge and skills which enabled them to look for creative and innovative solutions, even though they were not being equipped with specific frameworks within which to do this. In addition, creative and innovative solutions to problems may also be addressed by new ways of working and this may have been at least partially addressed by having the opportunity to network with colleagues addressing similar issues in other organisations.

In addition, 73.9% of respondents (48) to the CIEP Fusion e-survey considered being "Better equipped to look for creative and innovative solutions to problems" was an 'Important' or 'Very important' benefit of participating in the programme. Furthermore, 71.7% of respondents indicated that their organisation "being better equipped to look for creative and innovative solutions to problems" was an important or very important benefit of participating in the CIEP Fusion Cumbria programme.

Summary of findings

The analysis of data from the three evaluations has highlighted that the programmes have attracted a wide range of participants from organisations engaged in delivering sustainable communities and regeneration across Cumbria. In addition, the learning activities have provided opportunities for individuals at different levels and from varied technical and professional backgrounds to learn together. Survey respondents have indicated that they have found the development of new networks and contacts to be an important benefit of participation in the programmes and there appears to be wider benefits for partnership

Please do not quote without author's permission

working which are linked to this, such as having more knowledge about the activities of partners and having more trust in partners.

While individuals appear to place a high value on these collaborative learning experiences, the extent to which innovative ideas are taken and applied in their own workplace appears somewhat muted. There is certainly some evidence of effective dissemination. Although there are barriers to the sharing of knowledge and skills on return to work, this has occurred, mainly within teams but also across organisations and partnerships. In addition, the majority of participants feel that they are better equipped to look for creative and innovative solutions to problems. This may be because they have been equipped with some techniques and tools to help them do this, but may also be linked to new networks of contacts established by participants and also exposure to new knowledge and skills.

However, it has proved more difficult to identify examples where ideas have actually been applied, practices altered and cultures changed as a consequence. This may, in part, relate to the time required for such responses and the network gains may also come to fruition only after a longer period. The provision of collaborative learning opportunities are clearly not sufficient to induce such changes, but nonetheless can be regarded as a necessary component of any strategy designed to improve skills in economic development and regeneration.

Conclusions

This paper has presented theories regarding the 'new' leadership of place which requires networking and innovative thinking skills and also the sharing of knowledge between those working to deliver regeneration. Results from evaluations of three programmes which have been delivered in order to promote shared learning and networking have been presented and show that they have made contributions towards developing new networks between individuals working for organisations delivering sustainable communities and regeneration. By focusing on particular aspects such as creative and innovative thinking, skills in this activity have also added towards the capacity of organisations to deliver solutions to problems. Individuals working for a wide range of organisations engaged in delivering regeneration and sustainable communities in Cumbria participated in the events and they indicate that it has been useful to develop new networks at the events. However, although some of the learning gained through participation in the programmes has been shared, this is not routine and that there are some barriers to sharing such knowledge and skills. It is clear however, that by providing a framework of social learning that shared learning has occurred and that participants have more information regarding the activities of other organisations addressing similar issues.

However wider benefits of this social learning model are also important. The programmes allowed participants from different levels in organisations and varied professional and technical backgrounds to come together to share learning. Care was taken at the events to allow plenty of opportunity for participants to mix together, both informally at refreshment breaks but more importantly through the interactive design of the sessions within each individual event. These allowed participants to address problems together using their combined knowledge of the issues. Each series of workshops enabled a 'community' to begin to develop, in which participants experience shared learning together. As well as being part of their recognised communities, within their organisation and professional body, they become part of a new community of regeneration within Cumbria.

What do these findings mean for the current situation? The UK is currently emerging from an acute recession and a new Conservative / Liberal Democrat Government has been newly elected. It is facing significant challenges in reducing the national debt which has increased very significantly in the last few years, largely due to policies to rescue some of the UK's largest banks. It is expected that major cuts in public sector expenditure will be announced in the very near future, which will impact considerably upon how local authorities and their partners are able to deliver services in local communities. Many local authorities have been implementing restructures with a view to cutting costs, many of which have involved reducing the number of staff, and this has applied to those working within regeneration and economic

Please do not quote without author's permission

development departments of local government. As a consequence of this, significant amounts of tacit knowledge will have been lost from organisations within local areas.

It is important that organisations involved in regeneration and sustainable communities work together to provide shared learning opportunities based on networks of practitioners at different levels in organisations. There will be a requirement on organisations to continue to provide staff development for their staff, and consequently it makes sense to work within a social learning framework, enabling individuals to develop networks across a number of organisations who are involved in addressing similar issues. This should also have effect of increasing opportunities for innovation which occurs in groups and can subsequently have the potential to make scarce public resources stretch further.

Acknowledgements: The authors wish to thank Lucy Black, Program Manager for Cumbria Improvement and Efficiency Partnership for her support in writing this paper.

¹ Van Wort M (2003) Public Sector Leadership Theory: An Assessment in *Public Administration Review* Vol. 63, No. 2 pp. 214 - 228

² Gibney J and Collinge C (2009) "Bridging together leadership, place and knowledge-based economy: developing the research and knowledge transfer agenda" *Regions* No. 275 Autumn pp. 18-19

³ ASC (2007) *Mind the Skills Gap* Academy for Sustainable Communities

⁴ ODPM (2004) *The Egan Review: Skills for Sustainable Communities* Office of the Deputy Prime Minister

⁵ Mayer R E (1999) Fifty years of creativity research. In R J Sternberg (Ed.), handbook of creativity (pp. 449-460 Cambridge: Cambridge University Press in West R. E. (2009) "What is shared? A framework for understanding shared innovation within communities" *Educational Technology Research & Development* Vol. 57 pp. 315-332

⁶ Amabile T M, Conti R, Coon H, Lazenby J and Herron M (1996) "Assessing the work environments for creativity" *Academy of Management Journal* Vol. 39, No. 5, pp. 1154-1184 in West R. E. (2009) "What is shared? A framework for understanding shared innovation within communities" *Educational Technology Research & Development* Vol. 57 pp. 315-332

⁷ West M A (2003) Innovation implementation in work teams. In P B Paulus and B A Nijstad (eds.) *Group creativity* pp. 245-276 Oxford: Oxford University Press in West R. E. (2009) "What is shared? A framework for understanding shared innovation within communities" *Educational Technology Research & Development* Vol. 57 pp. 315-332

⁸ McKeown, Max (2008). *The Truth About Innovation*. London, UK: Prentice Hall.
[ISBN 0273719122](https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118111111)

⁹ DIUS (2008) *Innovation Nation* Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills

¹⁰ Audit Commission & Improvement and Development Agency (2008) *Audit Commission and IDeA Competition: Innovation in local public services*, Audit Commission

¹¹ Clayton T. (2003) "Service innovation – Aiming to win" in Tidd J. (Ed.), *Service Innovation, Organizational Responses to Technological Opportunities* (Imperial College Press, London) in Albury D. (2005) "Fostering Innovation in Public Services", *Public Money and Management*, January, pp. 51-56

¹² Borins S. (2001) "Encouraging innovation in the public sector", *Journal of Intellectual Capital* Vol. 2, No. 3, pp. 310-319

¹³ Peck F, Bell F and Black L (forthcoming) "Addressing the Skills Gap in Regeneration and Economic Development in Cumbria" *Journal of Urban Regeneration and Renewal*

¹⁴ See also Hartley J and Benington J (2006) "Copy and paste, or graft and transplant? Knowledge sharing through inter-organisational networks" *Public Money and Management*, Vol. 26, No 2 April, pp. 1-8

¹⁵ Wenger E (1998) *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning and Identity* Cambridge University Press

¹⁶ West R. E. (2009) "What is shared? A framework for understanding shared innovation within communities" *Educational Technology Research & Development* Vol. 57 pp. 315-332

-
- ¹⁷ Hughes G (2010) "Identity and belonging in social learning groups: the importance of distinguishing social, operational and knowledge-related identity congruence" *British Educational Research Journal* Vol. 36, No. 1 pp. 47-63
- ¹⁸ Solomon Y (2007) "Not belonging? What makes a functional learner identify in undergraduate mathematics?" *Studies in Higher Education* Vol. 32, No. 1, pp. 79-96 in Hughes G (2010) "Identity and belonging in social learning groups: the importance of distinguishing social, operational and knowledge-related identity congruence" *British Educational Research Journal* Vol. 36, No. 1 pp. 47-63
- ¹⁹ Schon D (1986) *Educating the reflective practitioner* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass in Hughes G (2010) "Identity and belonging in social learning groups: the importance of distinguishing social, operational and knowledge-related identity congruence" *British Educational Research Journal* Vol. 36, No. 1 pp. 47-63
- ²⁰ Schon D (1991) *The reflective practitioner: how professionals think in action* (2nd Edition) Aldershot: Ashgate in Hughes G (2010) "Identity and belonging in social learning groups: the importance of distinguishing social, operational and knowledge-related identity congruence" *British Educational Research Journal* Vol. 36, No. 1 pp. 47-63
- ²¹ Office for National Statistics Mid-year population estimates 2007 www.statistics.gov.uk
- ²² www.cumbriavision.co.uk accessed 19/05/12
- ²³ www.britainsenergycoast.com accessed 19/05/12
- ²⁴ CRED (2004) *Achieving Cumbrian Excellence (ACE): Developing and Implementing a Framework for Evaluation*, Centre for Regional Economic Development, University of Central Lancashire
- ²⁵ CRED (2009) *Fusion Cumbria Learning Lab: Evaluation: Final Report*, Centre for Regional Economic Development, University of Cumbria
- ²⁶ Cumbria Local Area Agreement, www.cumbriaobservatory.org.uk/LAA/cumbriaagreement.asp
- ²⁷ CRED (2008) *Regeneration and Economic Development Skills Audit*, Centre for Regional Economic Development, University of Cumbria
- ²⁸ CRED (2009) *Cumbria Improvement and Efficiency Partnership Fusion Cumbria Learning Lab: Action Learning Programme Final Report*, Centre for Regional Economic Development, University of Cumbria
- ²⁹ CRED (2005) *Achieving Cumbrian Excellence (ACE): Post Evaluation Report*, Centre for Regional Economic Development, University of Central Lancashire