

## **The Compass of Collaboration: a model to guide the leadership of sub-national spaces**

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### **Abstract**

In the pursuit of economic growth, England has historically retained a level of central control and dependence, but as modern globalisation accelerated from the 1980s creating a fast-paced, interconnected world, these centralised systems have struggled. Accordingly, local development policy has shifted to take greater account of place (Dicken 2003, Amin 2004). In the UK, various governments have sought to decentralise and devolve power although devolution to the Celtic States has been more pronounced than to the regions. Further, the move towards greater decentralisation is not unique to the UK but is an international phenomenon and a clear shift towards place-based policies can be traced across most European Union (EU) member countries encouraged in part by broader processes of globalisation (Barca, 2009; Garcilazo, 2011).

By working in collaboration partners should expect to achieve synergistic benefits beyond their own reach and capability (Huxham, 2003; Hemphill *et al.*, 2006). As a result, partnership has become a popular form of governance and is a preferred model of the delivery for economic development policy in England where 38 Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), created in 2010, draw together the public and private sector to deliver local economic priorities and lead local economic growth. The LEPs were set up by government with few parameters and limited formal guidance has followed. Policy has shifted since their creation and a number of Combined Authorities have joined the increasingly complex landscape leading to calls for a greater level and consistency of guidance to guide the leadership of place-based partnerships (Bentley *et al.* 2017, Pike *et al.* 2018).

This paper seeks to address the gap in guidance and draws on the existing literature of partnership collaboration and innovation and entrepreneurial ecosystems to propose a conceptual model of place-based partnership. The model has formed the framework for an empirical qualitative study comprising 10 LEPs and one Combined Authority. A Soft Systems Methodology was adopted to understand the factors that helped and hindered place-based partnerships and the findings suggested that path-breaking behaviour was difficult to achieve. As a result the English form of governance remains one of conditional localism (Hildreth, 2011) which places these sub national partnerships in a weak position of dependency on central and locally established governance institutions to function and achieve legitimacy. The conceptual model, validated by policy makers and practitioners, offers guidance to the leaders of place-based partnership to enable them to

resist the coercive and mimetic forces of central and local government and chart a path based on shared values towards a transformative strategy.