Putting people first – exploring place leadership for improving life-chances in a deprived neighbourhood

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Abstract
In this paper we aim to provide new insights into the notion of the ‘new’ leadership for place, bringing together published and primary research to provide some initial answers. As we will argue, existing literatures on leadership that may provide a theoretical underpinning of place leadership on a general note connect back to a three components of leadership: traits, leadership behaviours/styles and contingency or situational factors. As we will demonstrate, the central elements of place-shaping agendas – cross-boundary working, community engagement and a focus on outcomes – in conjuncture create a unique context that imposes various challenges to effective place leadership. Further, we will argue that street level leadership offers additional insights to the notion of place leadership. Based on our empirical research we will flesh out what place leadership constitutes in an operational context, which helps us to arrive at a better understanding of what leadership in inter-organizational, multi-sector settings amounts to and how it affects the behaviours of leaders of place and ultimately the outcomes of their interventions.

1. Introduction
Neighbourhood revitalisation has been on the Dutch urban agenda for more than fifty years. Over the years the emphasis in neighbourhood policies has shifted from an approach that one-sidedly focussed on investments in the physical infrastructure (initially demolition and reconstruction of housing estates or renovations; later also investments in physical quality of the neighbourhood) and investments in the social infrastructure (aimed at improving neighbourhood facilities, social cohesion and public safety). But evaluations of these various policy initiatives invariably have demonstrated that these infrastructural approaches failed because they did not structurally improve the individual life-chances of the residents of deprived urban neighbourhoods. The challenges and difficulties involved in neighbourhood revitalisation are not unique for the Netherlands. Collinge (2010: 368), for example, refers in a general sense to the fundamental change in the urban and regional policy over the last two decades, meaning that the policy focus of the 1970s and 1980s on infrastructure and inward investment has largely given way to ‘softer’ measures to support more integrative policies.
He states that the idea of sustainable place-shaping – albeit that it is given different emphasis and expression around the world – is influencing the debate on the governance of integrated (economic development, planning and regeneration, housing, education, transport, health and security) policy for neighbourhoods, towns, cities and regions. However, he goes on, “success in crossing boundaries to achieve effective integrated development remains elusive and the research literature consistently indicates that it is difficult to work across administrative, territorial, thematic, community and professional boundaries.” A variety of responses to this problem can be and are developed. In the Netherlands an experimental programme in the Velve-Lindenhof neighbourhood in the Dutch city of Enschede tries out a rather unique solution. This programme aims at improving the life-chances of over 600 residents of one of the most deprived Dutch urban neighbourhoods by providing for the appointment of coaches, each of whom will act as an individual counsellor for a limited number of residents. They replace the common system where typically residents with multiple social problems are catered for by a small army of highly specialised social workers working for a host of public or third sector welfare providers.

As we will demonstrate in this paper, the central elements of this experimental programme resonate with the requirements of place leadership. In modern times the value of place has increased, since ‘the sense of place is based on the need to belong not to “society” in the abstract, but to somewhere in particular’ (Sennett 2000, p. 56). As Trickett and Lee (2010: 430) point out, place has a fundamental impact upon an individuals' identity, value set and life experience and is critical in defining experiences of social exclusion, poverty and socio-economic outcomes. As such, an important task of urban leadership is to create liveable cities that respond to the needs and aspirations of all inhabitants. With Hambleton (2008: 28) we therefore start from the proposition that strengthening the power of place in a world increasingly dominated by “placeless” forces is essential to create a city that serves the interests of the people who live there. In the academic literature this view relates to the “place-based approach to city leadership” or “place leadership”. Though in some countries, such as the Netherlands, this new notion has not (yet) entered academic or policy debates, in other countries, most particularly in the UK, it is considered a promising concept. As Collinge and Gibney (2010: 385) point out, the propositions at the heart of the contemporary place-based development paradigm have come to prominence most recently in the public policy conversation in England re-invigorated by the Lyons (2007) report, and have now fed into the European Commission’s thinking about the future of sub-national development in an enlarged Europe (CEC 2009).1 The Lyons report argued the need to strengthen the focus on place and emphasised the role that local government could play in joining together a range of policy streams to create ‘effective’ places, suggesting that the attractiveness of neighbourhoods, cities and sub-regions should be seen as a key outcome of policy processes (Trickett et al. 2008). This recognition of the need for an active approach to place-shaping, Mullins and Van Bortel (2010: 414) assert, has led to consideration of the leadership tasks required to bring together and coordinate multiple activities such as economic development, planning, housing, regeneration, sustainable communities and health to effect more satisfactory place-based outcomes (Gibney and Murie 2008, Gibney et al. 2009). As such, the ‘new’ leadership of place connects with government agendas about cross-boundary working in public services (Sullivan and Skelcher 2002) and in place-shaping in particular (Collinge and Gibney, 2010: 385).

1 Earlier the Commission has called for an ‘integrated place-based approach’ to territorial development (Danuta Hübner, European Commissioner for Regions, CEC 2008).
It seems generally agreed that ‘something new’ is occurring in the wider leadership environment (Trickett et al. 2008). Recent research in the UK reveals that place leadership invariably is conducted from three specific elements of the place-shaping agenda: cross-boundary working, community engagement and a focus on outcomes (Gibney and Murie, 2008; Gibney et al., 2009). Yet, the notion of place leadership in its current state is under-theorized in two respects. First, with diverse roots in thinking about collaborative planning, competitive cities and regions, and the knowledge-based economy (Mullins and Van Bortel, 2010), leadership for place mainly focuses on joined efforts to create attractive places. These approaches to place leadership start from the premise that local political leaders and civic elites can have a considerable impact on the fortunes of their city by taking advantage of the strengths of the local population and the distinctive history and characteristics of their city. We will argue that in deprived neighbourhoods a somewhat different approach to leadership for place is required. Here place leadership calls for an integrated place-based approach that aims at ‘social recovery’ through the socio-economic emancipation of local residents to accompany familiar strategies of neighbourhood revitalization at the collective level, such as the provision of high quality housing, public space and community facilities. Second, the theoretical underpinning of the concept of place leadership seems to focus on cross-boundary working and community involvement at the level of strategic planning. We will argue that successful place shaping also depends on leadership activities performed at the operational level. Drawing upon research on street level leaders in the public sector we will explore what competencies and behaviours have an effect on the effectiveness of street level leadership for place.

The general purpose of this paper is to contribute to the debate on place leadership by giving more thought to exactly what constitutes place leadership and how it manifests itself. We are mainly in the dark what place leadership is comprised of and how it affects the achievement of desired place-based outcomes. With Gibney et al (2009: 13) we agree that “[i]n order to move this debate about the leadership of place forward it is important to engage directly with evidence related to leadership in real policy and practice environments.” We will draw upon empirical findings of our research on experimental programme that we mentioned above. As it is a single case study we will be able to provide a preliminary view only; however, we hope it will enable us to indicate some areas of importance. Against this background the central question reads: “What are the specific elements of place leadership and what are the actual manifestations of these elements for street level leaders?”

We have organized this paper into seven sections. In the second section we describe how the concepts of place and place shaping have fed interest in leadership of place among policy makers and scholars. The third section discusses existing literatures on leadership to clarify their possible contribution to building a theory of place leadership. The fourth section of this paper introduces the concept of street level leadership. The fifth section describes the general outline of the our case and the methods we used to gather empirical data. In the sixth section we discuss our empirical findings and in the final section we draw conclusions on the essence of street level leadership for place and discusses some preliminary implications.

2. Place leadership: an integrated approach to shaping places
Place leadership is a concept that, albeit it is rather new to the academic field studying leadership, quickly gains attention. This is exemplified by the recent special issue of Political
Studies on this topic, though demonstrations of interest can also be found in earlier contributions to the academic literature (see for example Stough 2003, Sotaruata 2005, Gains et al. 2009, Gibney et al. 2009, Stimson et al. 2009) and recent leadership-oriented research completed for NESTA (UK; Benneworth 2007) and the Academy for Sustainable Communities (Gibney and Murie 2008). In policy circles the notion of place leadership also has been enthusiastically hailed, as Collinge and Gibney (2010: 385, 386) have described in their scene-setting contribution to the above mentioned special issue. They even state that “[t]he idea of place-based integrated development has become the new conventional wisdom in the practice of economic development, planning and regeneration” (original italics).

The notion of place-shaping is rooted thinking about collaborative planning and integrated approaches to improve quality of life in spatial planning (Healey, 2006), in cities and regions competing for would-be investors (Peterson, 1981; Florida 1995) and more recently in the knowledge-based economy (Gibney and Murie 2008; Gibney et al. 2009). Place-shaping debates initially tended to focus on attempts to preserve and improve a city’s attractiveness through investments in the physical infrastructure. For instance, Barber and Eastaway (2010: 394 – 396) discuss how in the 1980s and through much of the 1990s the prevailing approach to city centre regeneration in major European cities was bound up in the transition to urban entrepreneurialism. Ambitious re-making of urban space generally occurred in the form of one-off flagship projects, and the leadership approach that drove such interventions was typically characterized by tight-knit coalitions of political and business interests that typically prioritised property and physical development skills and aptitudes, with less consideration for the wider economic and social/community dimensions of regeneration (Marshall 1996, Vicario and Martinez Monje 2003, Ward 2003, Moulaert et al. 2005). In the current decade, however, the initial emphasis on high-profile flagship projects has given way to a broader range of ambitions in the re-making of central urban space with a diverse and interrelated set of functions underpinned by sustainability ambitions. The ambitions for such areas typically encompass spaces for firms in the new economy, housing and community infrastructure, public space and cultural amenities. This contemporary thinking is not confined to inner-city regeneration. Present-day regeneration in its broadest sense demands that social/community issues and skills and aptitudes relating to bottom-up economic development and business growth are considered equally important.

The complexity of present-day place shaping efforts poses severe challenges on leadership for place. Collinge and Gibney (2010: 385, 386) recall that “[i]n the England of the 1970s and 1980s the key tasks in economic development, planning and regeneration policy were led by different departments and professions within local government. The leadership of these policies relied heavily upon expertise within particular professional ‘silos’ within each local authority area […]. Policies tended to be developed and delivered within a linear project management view and the leadership requirements and skills were disciplinary and departmental: leading and managing in-house teams (Gibney et al. 2009).” In recent decades a less hierarchical, more inclusive model of local leadership has come to the fore, emphasizing a need for ‘joined-up’, holistic and integrated policy and service delivery to attain outcomes for vulnerable groups and for the places where people live and work (Mawson and Hall 2000, Trickett et al. 2008). Increasingly, local leaders are seen as bearing a responsibility for an integrated approach to create attractive places that serve the interest of inhabitants. The high impact Lyons report in its executive summary states: “As our understanding of the multi-faceted nature of social and economic problems grows, and as
our aspirations to solve them and to govern uncertainty and diversity increase, the
arguments for a local role in determining the actions of government and the provision of
public services are becoming stronger (2007: 2)."

From the above we conclude that in the current decade the idea of place-shaping calls for an
integrated approach to the governance of neighbourhoods, towns, cities and regions. To
quote Collinge, Gibney and Mabey (2010: 367) on this subject: “there is now a requirement
for a refreshed approach to our understanding of the leadership dynamics at play in relation
to the development of cooperative endeavour across and between localities”. Recent
debates point to the need for a fluid approach that embraces cross-boundary working and a
genuine understanding of urban conditions to create attractive places. Generally the latter is
conceived of a seizing opportunities after careful examination of the forces creating the
particularities of a specific place, that is its economic base, its social make-up, its
constellation of political interests and so on. It presumes that local political leaders and civic
elites can have a considerable impact on the fortunes of their city by taking advantage of the
strengths of the local population and the distinctive history and characteristics of their city.
The focus on opportunity driven action is consistent with the origins and purposes of the
various approaches from which the concept of place leadership has derived. In the context of
deprived neighbourhoods, however, opportunity driven strategies need to be preceded or
accompanied by strategies aiming for ‘social recovery’.
This involves engagement of local leaders with a variety of themes, such as economic
development, planning and regeneration, housing, education, health, security employment
and welfare policy. Leadership for deprived neighbourhood thus like any other
neighbourhood requires cross-boundary working. Yet, the report ‘Trust in the
Neighbourhood’ (2005) by the Dutch Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR) has
drawn attention to differences between deprived and more privileged neighbourhoods that
call for different policy strategies. The report introduces a policy paradigm that stresses the
importance of place and place-shaping, contending that in the past urban regeneration
approaches have not been able to create sustainable improvements. While arguing that
‘place matters’ the report urges to pay attention to differences in meaning of place between
citizens, advising to respond to these different meanings by leadership strategies that are
tailored to a place’s state of deprivation. These place leader strategies include:
- top-down ‘social recovery’ strategies to address problems of deprivation and social
  cohesion; and
- bottom-up ‘opportunity-driven’ approaches in more stable and cohesive neighbourhoods
  (WRR, 2005; Mullins and Van Bortel, 2010).

The importance of place-shaping is also addressed in a recent report by the VROM-council
(Vrom-raad), the Ministry of Housing’s official advice counsel. This report triggered a shift of
policy, arguing that in policy programmes the social mobility of residents requires more
emphasis. The council urges policymakers to create more stepping stones for poorer and
less educated residents on the societal ladder. According to the VORM-council problems
need to be addressed on the level where they are most persistent: by providing labour
market en educational opportunities for less fortunate residents and by providing and
orchestrating contact possibilities with middle class groups. The report has strengthened the
spatial-social strategy by housing associations and city councils, although the tone is slightly
different. To retain ‘capital rich’ middle and higher income groups for deprived city
neighbourhoods, the housing stock needs to be diversified to cater for their needs and as
such, for the needs of poor people. Recent research reveals the social mobility of the ‘capital
poor’ is not only helped by the presence of middle class. Consequently, investments in human capital and skills become increasingly important (van der Graaf, 2009). This calls for a place leadership aiming for ‘social recovery’ through the social-economic emancipation of individual local residents rather than investments in the physical and social infrastructure of deprived neighbourhoods.

3. Theoretical underpinning of leadership for place

Having established the relevance of leadership for place, our next challenge is to explore how this concept manifests itself. Prior to doing so, it is important to establish a working definition of leadership. With Mau (2007) we agree this is no easy task, considering the fact that Rost (1991: 44) in his comprehensive examination of existing definitions of leadership in the 20th century found 221 definitions of the term. From a general point of view definitions of leadership may address two dimensions: a focus on ends, means or contingencies and the spirit with which leadership is conducted (van Wart, 2003: 221). In this paper we consider place leadership to be concerned with the process of convening, energizing, facilitating, and sustaining others to work in collaborative networks or partnerships across multiple-borders to effect more satisfactory place-based outcomes. Effective leadership for place thus goes beyond the general conception of effectiveness describing consideration of the needs of both the leader and followers (Bass, 1960; Vinzant and Crothers, 1998: 81).

Through an extensive review of three dominant streams of literature on leadership we have made an effort to gain insight in what is new in the place leadership approach and where it may draw on existing literatures. These literatures involve mainstream leadership literature, that tend to focus on the private sector. A second stream deals with literature on public-sector or administrative leadership and the third stream also include literature on leadership in the extra-organizational context. Following Sullivan et al (2009) this ‘stream’ of literature may be loosely grouped under the banner of ‘leadership for collaboration’, and is made up of emerging literature on collaborative leadership, leadership for inter-organizational contexts, and leadership in the context of multi-sectoral partnerships.² By revising the different strands of literature we have identified three key issues that are used to explain leadership effectiveness in the public and the private sector and in the context of networks. These three issues include traits and competencies of leaders, leadership behaviour and critical contingencies.

Trait theory is the oldest approach to the study of leadership (Carlyle, 1840; Galton, 1869; Argyris, 1955; Sank 1974; Stogdill, 1974). Typical of this view of leadership is the assumption that leaders trough their individual traits inspire others and cause them to follow the leader’s agenda (Bass 1990; Stogdill, 1974; Kirkpatrick and Locke 1991; Nahavandi 1997). Trait based leadership assumes that leaders are ‘born rather than made’, though in present-day debates the question is no longer in framed in terms of strict dichotomy. Rather the question is to what extent and how leadership competencies and skills can be developed. There is some research that suggests that certain traits increase the likelihood of leadership effectiveness (Yukl 1994; Bennis, 1984; Mills and Bohannan 1980, Kirkpatrick and Locke,

² It should be noted that the three streams of literature to be reviewed differ in quantity and theoretical. The mainstream leadership literature is an accumulation of theoretical and empirical research built up more than a century, whereas literature for public-sector leadership and the emerging literature loosely grouped under the banner of ‘cross boundary leadership’ is recent and fragmented, drawing on the traditional literature in different ways and to different degrees.
but as Van Wart (2003:216) comments: "without situational specificity, the endless list of traits offers little prescriptive assistance and descriptively becomes little more than a laundry list".

Partly as a response to criticisms of trait theory, a later generation of scholars studied leadership as a set of behaviors that are either people-oriented (showing "consideration" for subordinates, building and fostering interpersonal relationships, and behaving in a supportive manner) or task-oriented ("initiating structure" by spelling out the duties and responsibilities of an individual or group, structuring everyone's role in accomplishing a task) (Van Wart, 2003; McGuire and Silvia, 2009: 4; Vinzant and Crothers, 1998: 77). In 1978 Burns introduced the notion of transformational leadership to draw attention to the mutual relationship between leaders and their subordinates ("followers"). It led to a reinvigoration of academic and non-academic studies of leadership, infusing several sub-schools (Bryman 1992; Bass 1990; Avolio and Bass 1988; Kouzes and Posner 1997; Kotter 1988; Peters and Austin, 1985; Hammer and Champy, 1993: Champy, 1995). These sub-schools share a view of leadership as the ability to inspire others to higher moral conduct through visioning, meaning making and trust building behaviours.

Contingency or situational approaches to the study of leadership focus on relational and situational factors that may affect the effectiveness of leadership behaviours in an organizational context (Fiedler 1967; Hughes et al 1996; Vroom and Yetton 1973). One of the best known contingency models is developed by Hersey and Blanchard (1988), who distinguish four possible 'leadership styles': telling, selling, participating and delegating. In this model, it is assumed that the readiness of followers to achieve the leader's goal(s) should shape the leader's actions in order to be effective. In recent years academic and public scholars have begun to explore the relationship between leadership and collaboration (e.g. Armistead et al 2007; Connelly 2007; Crosby and Bryson 2005b; and Peck and Dickinson 2008). However, as Sullivan et al (2009) contend, these explorations remain relatively undeveloped and fragmented and vary in their empirical bases.

Focusing on the simple question of what leadership is for collaboration, Sullivan et al (2009) recently have reviewed existing literature to identify key issues and questions for further exploration. As Sullivan et al (2009: 13) note, authors offer rather different insights into what is required of leadership and leaders. The contributions share a focus on process and the role of the leader in creating and supporting a 'good' process, but again there is variation in identifying the key elements of a 'good' process. The contributions also look into the traits and behaviours of leaders and the roles and tasks associated with leadership for collaboration. Here contributors not only differ in their view of what core 'competencies' are demanded in leadership for collaboration, but also tend to significant breadth in their coverage of these core 'competencies'. In addition to the considerable variation regarding the traits, behaviours and contingency or situational factors, the literature on leadership for collaboration is also inconclusive about whether all collaborative contexts generate the same requirements for leaders and leadership. However, on a general note the review suggests agreement that traits, behaviour and contingency or situational factors are important in shaping leadership in networks. In the remaining part we will explore these general themes with respect to leadership at the street level.
4. Street level leadership

Although it emerged as a key theme in the literature on leadership for collaboration, place leadership literature seems to be primarily concerned with officials (elected or appointed) at the executive level (chief executives, top, and senior managers), which may be explained by the focus on strategic leadership for place. However, in the context of organizational leadership Mau (2007: 275 - 277) mentions a trend both in the private and the public sector to speak of the need to identify and nurture leadership at all levels. He notes that often scholars merely offer platitudes that leadership at all levels is essential; “scholarly analyses at the lower levels of the public service, however, are conspicuously lacking”. One of the key questions that have yet to be addressed refers to what leadership is when viewed from the perspective of a street level bureaucrat”. Taking a critical stance towards the idea of leadership at all levels, Mau argues it is time to explore what is expected from the front line officers when they are required to demonstrate leadership in the performance of their duties. In this section we will present a theoretical framework to engage in such exploration, developed by Vinzant and Crothers (1998). Their framework deals with “leadership as practised by line-level public servants – i.e. those public employees who serve at the relative bottoms of their organizations and physically deliver services to the public (p.5; original italics)”. These public servants are active participants in the governance system; rather than serving as neutral funnels through which policies are implemented, they deliver public services as they find appropriate, given the circumstances at hand. As such, street level workers are meaningful actors in the governance process (p. 10, 11). Vinzant and Crothers distinguish a number of situational factors that to a certain degree have direct or indirect influence on the choices that street level workers make. These include influences imposed by: agency/employers, clients, co-workers, community, courts, law, media, other service or provider agencies, supervisors, and situational variables (p. 11 - 17). Cumulatively, these influences can be seen to regularly shape what workers do and how they do it. However, they may have greater or lesser influence in different circumstances and may vary in importance for different workers (p.17). The decision-making environment “provides the stuff with which workers work, from which they have to make choices and construct solutions as they do their job (p.19)”. In balancing the multiple, and sometimes conflicting variables which can influence their choices, workers exercise discretion (p.35). From direct observations of street level workers in action, Vinzant and Crothers have derived that “[d]iscretion manifests itself in two somewhat distinct dimensions: process (the means or how a goal is to be accomplished) and outcome (the ends or what goal is to be sought) (p. 38; original italics). Under influence of NPM philosophy and practices “more and more agencies are placing discretion in the hands of the workers, who are expected to be innovative and responsive in meeting “customer” wants and demands (p. 43)”. As the opportunity and need to exercise discretion have increased, so too has the potential for multiple sources of challenge to worker decisions (p.47). Interpretations of the appropriateness of workers actions are concerned with the legitimacy of worker choice making (p.48). To translate roles and expectations into legitimate action frontline employees must exercise street level leadership in a complex organizational, community and political environment (p.52). Street level workers, just like other public leaders, exercise power. In order to make normative claims about the legitimacy of this use of power, situational leadership models can be used to address the legitimacy of choices of process, whereas transformational leadership models can be used to address the legitimacy of choices about goals or outcomes (p.88, 89). As Vinzant and Crothers point out, leaders must find ways to balance competing needs and wants (process), and to build on shared values (ends) to be both effective and legitimate. As
such, the heart of street level leadership is the relationship that leaders have with followers, with followers conceived of as “not only those to whom the leader seeks to influence, but also to whom the leader is accountable. It is based on their values, their wants, and their preferences that leadership is established and legitimated (p.89).” This is as mutual relationship as workers “in making discretionary choices in a potentially conflicting environment, [...] are effectively leading others at the same time they are influenced by and accountable to them”. Legitimacy of action thus may derive from everyone and everything that has influence over street level workers, i.e. agency/employers, clients, co-workers, community, courts, law, media, other service or provider agencies, supervisors, and situational variables”. Depending on the circumstances and the types of choices workers are called upon to make, Vinzant and Crothers argue, different types of street level leadership are needed. The different types arise as a result of the interplay between the degree of discretion being exercised on the one hand, and its interplay with the variables of process and outcome, on the other. The resulting model is a two dimensional matrix divided into four quadrants representing four different types of leadership. However, as the first type involves no substantial or limited discretion it does not qualify as leadership. The actual leadership types refer to situations involving choices about process (situational leadership), requiring decisions about outcomes (transformational leadership, or demanding choices about process and outcomes (situational and transformational leadership).

We started this section with the observation that little is known about the requirements for leadership at the street level, with the exception of Vinzant and Crothers’ model of street level leadership. We will now turn to the question how well this model fits street level leadership for place. Gibney and Murie (2008: 36), drawing together the lessons learned from a number of case studies note that there are some common challenges to strategic leadership, including: leading without ‘formal’ power; leading the leaders; leading complexity; leading where outcomes are uncertain/unpredictable; having sufficient resources to make things happen; crossing the public/private (and sometimes community) divide effectively; maintaining commitment over time; and involving local communities and addressing local community benefits. Based on ongoing research and engagement with the field, Trickett and Lee (2010: 434), suggest six key requirements for leaders of place, including: leadership for co-operative advantage; lead by a process of influence - reconciling competing and conflicting interests; lead without formal power - leading the leaders; a capacity to bend mainstream resources and attract benefits in kind - to draw in sufficient resources to ‘make it happen’; asking the questions without the certainty of a clear answer.”

Various aspects of the work of street-level public servant resonate the complexities and difficulties of leadership for place: there is great variation and unpredictability in the problems these workers face; the problems themselves are multifaceted, intractable, and emotionally laden, so-called ‘wicked problems’; street-level public servants confront a decision-making context that is complicated, fluid and politically charged; in the middle of these pressures, they are expected to take decisions that will achieve the agency’s, the community’s and the broader society’s goals (Vinzant and Crother, 1998: 3, 4). Moreover, the legitimacy of the outcomes being sought is open to question. As such, place leadership typically involves street levels workers making choices regarding process and outcome (situational and transformational leadership).

In section six we will try to establish what traits and behaviours are important for effective street level place leadership based on empirical findings regarding the experimental
programme in the Velve-Lindenhof neighbourhood in the Dutch city of Enschede. Prior to doing so we will discuss the experimental programme in more detail.

5 General outline of the experimental programme
In the 1980s the Dutch central government established the Problem Accumulation Area Programme that targeted intervention of a limited number of neighbourhoods. This programme inspired a series of subsequent programmes, all targeting a selection of deprived areas, of which the latest programme started in 2007. The Velve-Lindenhof neighbourhood is one of the 40 priority areas that has been targeted by this programme because of problem accumulation. To address the problems of the neighbourhood and its residents the city of Enschede, as one of four ‘front-runner’ municipalities in the Netherlands, actively implements the ‘Trust in the Neighbourhood’ principles that have been mentioned earlier. In line with these principles a ‘social recovery’ strategy underpins various policy initiatives commenced in this neighbourhood. Velve-Lindenhof does not (yet) lend itself to community engagement in setting the place-shaping agenda, as residents tend to be too much absorbed by individual and household problems to be willing and able to participate in community leadership initiatives (cf. Mullins and Van Bortel, 2010: 419, 420). Instead place leadership involves a strategy towards cross-boundary working to improve individual life-chances of local residents, which on an aggregated level should amount to improvements of the neighbourhood. Policy initiatives pertain to a broad range of community issues, including (a) an improvement of the quality of the housing stock and the physical infrastructure in the neighborhood; (b) an improvement in the quality of the social infrastructure, the social cohesion and the (subjective) safety and livability of the area; and (c) an improvement of the socio-economic life chances of individual neighborhood residents.

Aiming for improvement of the life-chances of local residents, the neighbourhood coaches act as an individual counsellor. To advance this ambition a quite assertive institution-led ‘go for it’ approach is used; the neighbourhood coaches reach out to local residents by actively seeking contact with them to find out whether they can be of any help. After the neighbourhood coaches were introduced in the Velve-Lindenhof (through the media, brochures, and attending a meeting of the neighbourhood council), they actively approached local residents to find out if they could be of any help. They try to empower local residents by inspiring and assisting them to ‘climb the social ladder’ in one or more key spheres of their life (health, housing, education, security, welfare and/or employment). The project intends to orchestrate the service provision to people and households by entrusting neighbourhood coaches with time and resources across functional, professional and thematic boundaries. Using a metaphor, the neighbourhood coaches can be seen as acting as a general practitioners that administer first line, primary social services. It is they who decide whether clients need specialized help from professionals working for public or third sector welfare providers. The coaches thus decide whether to provide a number of cross-boundary services themselves or they decide to involve what specialised social workers are needed to deal with

3 Typical of common service provision is that people have to come forward with a problem; they need to formulate what question they have and address it to the proper organisation. The ‘go-for-it’ approach acknowledges this for various reasons stops people from asking for help. To make sure that people get the help they need and that they are entitled to, workers take initiative to get in contact with residents to find out if they have problems that they would like to solve with professional help (Van der Lans, …; cf. Brandsen and Cornelissen, …).
the multiple social problems at hand. The neighbourhood coaches are endowed with this
decision making capacity through a collaborative agreement signed by the strategic top of a
large number of organizations that provide services regarding education, healthcare, housing, security, welfare and/or employment. It may be conceived of as an empowerment of
the coaches to enable them to act as agents for change who mobilize social resources to
empower local residents, provide service and orchestrate service provision by other
agencies, and work to resolve the problems a community cares about.

The overall aim of the experimental programme is to improve the life chances of local
residents, stimulating them to make an effort to climb the social ladder. The programme
starts from the assumption that improving the life chances of local residents requires a focus
on place. The neighbourhood coaches have an office in the neighbourhood centre, but spend
most of their time in the neighbourhood. Right from the start they actively approached
residents by paying visit, mostly in a random way. Their being out on the street makes it
easier for residents to access the coaches to share their thoughts about neighbours who are
in trouble or to discuss problems of their own. The neighbourhood coaches take time to get
acquainted with residents, investing time and energy in building relationships based on trust.
By putting their heart in the neighbourhood, they hear of problems that would otherwise go
unaddressed. Through the group interview with the neighbourhood coaches we learned that
the coaches often get in touch with people to help them with some minor problem, but soon
find out that these people have more pressing problems. Once they trust the coach they
have the courage to ask for help to address these severe problems as well.

In the Velve-Lindenhof neighbourhood a lot of residents deal with one or more problems.
About one-third of the residents has a job and can provide for themselves, one-third receives
a social security allowance from the Municipal Social Service and one-third from (working
disabled, unemployment benefit). A large part of the neighbourhood residents have debts.
Problem-solving in deprived neighbourhoods such as the Velve-Lindenhof places a
tremendous burden on workers of various provision and service agencies. They have to
design solutions, generate resources and provide the services that are needed. As these
problems often are multifaceted, intractable and entwined the workers need to work across
theme, professional and organizational border. In situations of multiple problems, local
agencies increasingly rely on assigning a case managers to a person or household to
coordinate action and to prevent clients from having to interact with a vast array of workers.
By participating in cooperative networks helps workers from different agencies to achieve the
individual goals of their clients more easily, which allowing the agencies to work more
effectively and efficiently. Prior to the experimental programme Enschede applied this
method by establishing a Neighbourhood Care Team. The team still is in place and has
improved the service provision in multi-problem situation. However, in spite of the strength it
has in terms of joined-up working, the method of assigning a case managers also has a
number of drawbacks (Weggemans, Jonker, Smits, 2010: 9). The most important one is that
case managers can coordinate action, but cannot decide about the actions that need to be
taken. Such decisions are to be taken by the team during meetings on a regular basis. These
decisions then have to be authorized in the back office of their organizations. As a
consequence, it takes time to draw up a plan of action. Team members have to balance
interests of the network, the organization and their clients. This slows down the decision
making process and diminishes an entrepreneurial attitude. Another drawback is that case
managers is in the position to build up a relation of trust with a client, but cannot seize
opportunities or take immediate action to new problems as these have to be discussed first with the team. The case manager coordinates actions, but the decision making and actual service delivery still occurs in organisational ‘silos’. In other words, in spite of its strength in terms of facilitating joined-up working, members of the team ultimately find themselves representing organisations rather than people. Drawing upon these experiences the experimental programme takes a different approach. In a general agreement to collaborate the executive top of a large number of organisations engaged in service provision to residents of the Velve-Lindenhof neighbourhood consented to provide for a limited number of neighbourhood coaches that are allowed to advice organizations about what courses of action are needed to improve the life chances of local residents. From a legal point of view the decision making authority remains within the organizations participating in the experimental programme. However, at the strategic level of these organizations it was agreed upon that their members (managers and professionals in the frontline) are allowed and expected to exchange information with the neighbourhood coaches to inform them about their clients situation. Moreover, the advice drawn up by the neighbourhood coaches is formalized by those authorities in the organization that bear legal responsibility for the choices made and action taken. It has been agreed upon that the formalization of the coaches’ advices is not subject to negotiation, which means that the coaches informally have power over choices and action of the participating organizations. Further, as the advices may include decision making about sanctioning local residents unwilling to cooperate, the neighbourhood coaches have power over these residents as well. By empowering the neighbourhood coaches, endowing them with informal decision making authority, they are expected to draw up plans of action that are characterized by an integrated, tailor-made, effective, flexible, activating approach, focusing on the needs of clients, and backed up with sanctions.

In close collaboration with the city of Enschede and two local housing associations the University of Twente monitors and evaluates the experimental programme. The questions addressed in this ongoing research pertain to three related issues. First, we examine whether the coaches will be able to act as intermediaries between the residents and the back-offices of the various traditional providers of social services. Second, we examine whether the project as such is successful in (gradually) improving the socio-economic position of these residents; are the personal coaches who are appointed to counsel these residents able to make a difference. Third, we are interested in the question of whether addressing the problems of individual neighbourhood residents also makes a difference at the level of the neighbourhood. Recently, we conducted a questionnaire survey to evaluate the implementation and progress of the programme. In a subsequent group interview with the neighbourhood coaches we discussed the main findings to gain a deeper understanding of the various topics addressed in the questionnaire.

In the next section we draw upon our empirical findings to provide insights on what exactly constitutes street level leadership for place. The experimental programme makes an interesting case for empirical research on street level place leadership. Not only provides the project for a rather unique way of organizing cross-boundary working, it also explicitly focuses on needs of a place. We try to take account of the contingencies of place leadership by focussing on what street level leaders do to meet the challenges involved in their
interactions with both clients and network partners. We will explore what traits and behaviours of neighbourhood coaches, acting as street level leaders for place, are effective in terms of improving life chances of local residents through cross-boundary working and through creating a focus on the needs and wants of people living in the Velve-Lindenhof neighbourhood.

6. Empirical analysis: street level leadership for improving life chances

Traits and competencies
The neighbourhood coaches personal traits to the job as well as competencies on ‘doing’ leadership and apply different behavioural styles. They have been selected according to a preset profile of required skills and competencies and have had a training on the job at the start of their job. In the questionnaire we asked the neighbourhood coaches about their self image. The general picture is that the coaches consider themselves being decisive and able to follow through, convincing, building shared effort, enabling empowerment, capable and knowledgeable. The neighbourhood coaches report they score high on the ability to set priorities and to handle uncertainties and score very low on the need for procedures and guidelines. They feel that these would limit their discretion, and would stall creative and innovative solutions. Through the group interview with the neighbourhood coaches we got the impression that another important quality is the ability to balance high self confidence with an open attitude towards the opinions of others. In this interview the neighbourhood coaches also expressed that their work requires that they are able to ‘speak the language of the neighbourhood’. In part this is meant literally; most residents speak in dialect. In the group interview the neighbourhood coaches mentioned it is for residents important that they understand the dialect in order to win their trust. The coaches not necessary are expected to speak dialect but most as long as the residents can express themselves in ways they feel comfortable with. Speaking the language of the neighbourhood is also used metaphorical, meaning that the coaches fit in with the local culture. The Velve-Lindenhof neighbourhood is a strong community where families live for generations. In summertime they sit outside at the porch, talking to the neighbours. They exchange small talk, gossip, or openly discuss personal problems or neighbourhood troubles. According to the neighbourhood coaches it is important to understand the neighbourhood relationships. Through the grapevine they receive a lot of important information that can be used in designing tailor-made plans of action.

This general picture is consistent with the image that professionals and managers have of the neighbourhood coaches. The general view derived from the questionnaire is that they perceive the neighbourhood coaches as well informed about both the situation in the Velve-Lindenhof and the situation of individual clients. They also consider the coaches capable of designing plans of action around the needs of clients. To a somewhat lesser extent the respondents think of the coaches as being experts across the full range of themes involved in the service provision, and to a much lesser extent they think that the coaches miss specific knowledge.

Leadership behaviours towards clients

4 This is a common approach in many of the more recent leadership theories (McGuire and Silvia, 2009: 5).
In their efforts to improve the quality of life of local residents the neighbourhood coaches engage in a problem-solving process. In a first step they try to establish contact. Next they try to identify whether a household has problems that it needs help with. After that the coaches establish a plan of action and then take action to achieve desired goals within this context. In practice each process has a different dynamic, but for analytical reasons we distinguish between the various steps. Each step involves different tasks the neighbourhood coaches have to attend to. In the group interview the neighbourhood coaches told us that they take as much time as is needed to make a good analysis of the situation people are in and what action is required to improve their life chances. It may take weeks before they have a clear picture of what is really going on. During this time they build a relationship with the members of a household by spending time at their place. They lend them a helping hand, for instance by doing the dishes together or sorting out unopened mail. They take immediate action on small problems that can be solved easily. All these activities help to build trust. The coaches use the information that the family members share with them to construe a picture of their problems and ambitions. The coaches then in a joint effort with one of the family members, usually the mother or the father, decide about what problems should be addressed and in what sequence. In drawing up the plans of action the neighbourhood coaches work according to the principle of ‘give and take’. That means that they help residents to improve their life chances but only on the condition that these residents spend time and energy to improve their situation. As the neighbourhood coaches told us they discuss at this stage their sanctioning power. If the clients refuse to act upon the actions that have been agreed upon, the coach will apply sanctions. These may be financial sanctions or the withdrawal of help in important matters.

Leadership behaviours towards partnering organizations

As we already mentioned the experimental programme it was agreed upon by the strategic top of a large number of service providers. The neighbourhood coaches thus were introduced in an existing network of organization who signed an agreement to participate in the project. One of the things that was agreed upon is the assignment of one or more contact persons in the partnering organizations. These persons are referred to as ‘buddies’, they are the persons to whom the neighbourhood can turn for advice. These ‘buddies’ are also the channel through with the decisions of the neighbourhood coaches are authorized. As such, the neighbourhood have not been involved in the creation of the network and can rely on ‘buddies’ to communicate on their behalf within the organizational contexts. However, the neighbourhood coaches do have some responsibility to sustain the network as they explained during the group interview. They invest in sustaining good working relations with important partners in the neighbourhood, such as headmasters, members of the neighbourhood council, volunteers of local playgrounds, community police-officers and workers from de Stadsbank, an organization that helps citizens to settle their debts. Further, the coaches bring to the job their own network, which is most relevant in situation where members of partnering organizations are hesitant or reluctant to cooperate. Moreover, in some situations the coaches need actions from organizations that did not (yet) sign the agreement. In these situations they look for workers that dare to take a risk to explore a different avenue.

In addition to the tasks involved in sustaining collaboration at the network-level, the neighbourhood coaches have a responsibility to coordinate the provision of services in concrete situations. The coaches are endowed with an informal decision making power
regarding what actions should be taken to improve the life chances of residents. Above we discussed important behavioural aspects in their contacts with local residents. We will now discuss their counterpart: the behaviours of the neighbourhood coaches towards members of organizations that participate in the experimental programme. As the coaches are meant to serve as a kind of general practitioner handling social problems, they in theory would handle the problems themselves unless help of a specialist is required. In practice the analogy goes awry; in various stages of the problem-solving process the neighbourhood coaches invoke the help of provision and service organizations.

In the stage in which the neighbourhood coaches try to identify problems, public servants, social workers and other street level professionals may contribute to this process by bringing problems they spot to the attention of the coaches. We learned from our questionnaire that the largest part of problems that were brought to the attention of the coaches came from partners in the experimental programme. However, the questionnaire also reveals that these organizations, asked what they do when they spot a problem in the Velve-Lindenhof, most often indicate to deal with these problem within their own organization. In other words, they to a large extent do not act upon the agreement to refer problems in the Velve-Lindenhof neighbourhood to neighbourhood coaches. In the group interview the coaches were surprised by this finding. They suggest this may be caused by the fact that some of the participating organizations so far have not been contacted by the neighbourhood coaches and therefore do not think of them when they spot a problem.

In the next stage when the coaches draw up plans of action some of the partnering organizations play an important role in the decision making about what to do and how to do it. Here the initiative lies with the neighbourhood coaches. They consult professionals in the partnering organization to exchange information about previous contacts with the client and to share ideas about what solutions would work. The organizations are consulted for their expertise, but the neighbourhood coaches take the decision as they are the only ones with an overall view. As this may cause tensions we asked whether the respondents experienced disagreement on the plans of action. The respondents of the partnering organizations mentioned less disagreements than the neighbourhood coaches did, which according to the coaches can be explained by the fact that the various organisations are involved in one plan of action. So if, for example, one out of four disagrees with the plan of action the coach will report this agreement, whereas three out of four will report there was no disagreement. In our questionnaire we inquired how disagreements about plans of action were dealt with. Interestingly, both parties held an opposite view. Members of the partnering organization thought that it was solved trough mutual consent, whereas the coaches claimed that they took a decision after consulting their partners. In the group interview the coaches reacted to this finding unanimously: if that is what they think we do a good job. This is an interesting reply that draws attention to behaviours applied by the coaches to treat partners as equals in decision making processes though they have a capacity to enforce their will on partners. That they indeed have this power over their partner was illustrated by the few examples that the coaches gave of how disagreements were handled if members of partnering organization refused to act upon a plan of action. In these cases the coaches first tried to reason, but in the end threatened to turn to the manager of the refusing professionals which solved the case. Reflecting on these incidents the neighbourhood coaches were very explicit about the fact that this solution was an ultimate resource. To sustain good working relationships they felt it is important to take advice seriously, but if it does not changes their view it is important to explain why they hold on to the plan.
Leadership effectiveness

Leadership of the neighbourhood coaches can be based on behaviors that deal with tasks involved in the actual service provision, those that address relationships with members of partnering organizations, and those that are dedicated to maintenance of the collaborative network. Consequently, the coaches are held accountable by stakeholders and members at all levels of partnering organization for the satisfactory design and delivery of services.

As we already mentioned by empowering the neighbourhood coaches the organizations participating in the experimental programme, ultimately, expect the coaches to improve the socio-economic position of local resident through processes of empowerment. Towards that end the neighbourhood coaches have to draw up integrated, tailor-made, effective, flexible, activating plans of action that focus on the needs of clients, and are backed up with sanctions. In the questionnaire the respondents were asked to describe whether the plans of action meet these requirements and to compare these plans to the qualities of the regular approaches applied in the city of Enschede. To start with the latter, the partnering organizations consider the experimental approach to be better in each respect. They are particularly positive about its flexibility, efficiency and capacity for integrated and tailor-made service provision. Regarding the qualities of the plans of actions that have been established in the context of the experimental programme, the neighbourhood coaches and the members of partnering organizations have a similar perception of their qualities. The plans score high on each of the required qualities, except for two. The plans of action score are considered moderately high in activating residents and responding to their needs. In the group interview the coaches gave as an explanation for these findings that plans of action are dynamic; the objectives evolve and are determined interactively over time. Problem-solving processes tend to be reiterative processes, as typically after solving one problem new problems pop up. Since the project is in an early phase most residents are still struggling with severe problems, most often settling their debts. Only when residents feel in control of their financial situation, which affects all other aspects of their life, there is room for actions towards activation and participation. In explaining why plans of action so far is not focused on needs expressed by the residents the coaches point out that most residents have trouble to sort out what their needs and wants are. They have problems that need immediate action, but to get at the ‘question-behind-the-question’ is what is needed for structural improvement of their situation in life. An important aspect of the empowerment of the residents is to learn them to determine and to communicate their needs and wants, but again this is process that needs time. Interestingly, asked about their expectations about future plans of action the members of partnering organizations don’t foresee much change, while the neighbourhood coaches expect improvement, most particularly with the qualities of plans of actions becoming activating and focused on the needs of residents.

Designing satisfactory service provision not only depends on good quality plans of action but also proper organization and coordination of subsequent action taken to achieve the sought after goals. The findings of the questionnaire survey reveal that the neighbourhood coaches and members of partnering organizations characterize the cooperative processes surrounding the establishment and implementation of plans of action. These processes are scored relatively high on smoothness of information exchange, fast decision making, flexibility, and just above mediocre on efficiency, mutual adjustment and cutting red tape. The neighbourhood are less optimistic about the latter three qualities of the cooperative processes than are the members in the partnering organization, which they explain by the
different frame of reference. The coaches sometimes feel slowed down by processes taking place within the partnering organizations, whereas the members working in these organizations experiences these processes as an improvement to the bureaucratic environment they are used to work in.

*Situational and transformational leadership*
Starting from the premise that leadership and management at least to a large extend overlap, leaders are engaged in both task-oriented and people-oriented behaviors. This means that they are engaged in behaviors focused on deciding what to do and how to do it. From a contingency perspective the choices leaders make and the actions they take are affected by situational factors. It is contended that leadership effectiveness is determined by the ability of leaders to enact upon critical contingencies.

Leadership regarding process involves the different strategies that workers in a particular situation choose to achieve a desired outcome. Situational leadership models assume that a leader’s effectiveness depends on understanding the needs and preferences of the constituencies to which they are accountable.

Situational leadership towards residents is demonstrated when the neighbourhood coaches make decisions about the use of negative sanctions when clients do not take promised action in accordance with goal and service plans that the client and the coach in a joined-up effort have drawn up. In the group interview the neighbourhood coaches asserted that most clients are willing to cooperate, so negative nor positive sanctions are needed to stimulate clients to take action on their part. Under these circumstances the neighbourhood coaches provide the clients with some help to get them started. However, once the coach feels that clients regain their confidence to act, they leave it to the clients to take responsibility for their own lives. However, when clients are unwilling the coaches act differently. Using the terminology of the Hersey and Blanchard (1988) model they combine a “telling”, “selling” and “participating” strategies. They remind the client of the actions that he or she agreed to and of the possibility to impose sanctions if they break their promises, and simultaneously assist them by explaining or sharing ideas about the steps that he or she could take to act upon their promise. The neighbourhood coaches feel confident to concurrently apply directive and softer measures, dealing at the same time with unwillingness on the clients’ part as well as his or her hopes for a better life.

Neighbourhood coaches also demonstrate situational leadership towards professions working organizations that are needed to establish, authorize or implement a plan of action. In the group interview the neighbourhood gave various examples of how they apply different strategies according to the circumstances at hand. Most of the time the required information or action is provided without any problem often by the member of the organization that has been assigned to the coaches as contact person (“buddy”). In these situations the strategy chosen is “delegation”. However, some of the professionals working for organizations that signed the collaboration agreement, are hesitant or reluctant to share information with the neighbourhood coaches even though this is part of the agreement. Usually the coaches remind them of the agreed upon information exchange, and explain what they intend to do with the required information. They “participate” with these workers, by sharing ideas to win their support. However, some of the workers in the partnering organizations remain unwilling to provide the information asked for by the neighbourhood coaches. Under these circumstances the coaches change their strategy, trying to “sell” the importance of the
information exchange if that does not suffice they “tell” the workers to cooperate by threatening to get their manager involved. Similarly, the neighbourhood coaches are very careful when it comes to transformational leadership.

Transformational leadership pertains to a leader’s ability to inspire others to higher moral conduct through visioning, meaning making and trust building. It involves discretionary choice about what goals or outcomes will be sought. In the experimental programme the responsibility to balance the various values and ideals in a particular circumstance is ultimately a responsibility of the neighbourhood coaches. Sometimes the coaches determine what has to be done, but cannot decide upon the actions towards achieve this goal, because the process is set or structured most often trough law and regulations. In the group interview the neighbourhood coaches gave an illustration of this situation. One of the neighbourhood coaches, encountering a situation of systematic child abuse by the father, decided that the child needed to be taken into custody. Ideally the coach would have placed the child with the grandparents at the mother’s side, since they had a strong bond with the child and it would enable the mother, who tried her best to protect her child from the father, to stay in contact with her child on a daily basis. However, in discussing this preferred option with the worker of the local youth care agency, the coach found out this was no option. The Youth Care Act prescribes that a child which is taken into custody has to be taken in the care of an institute or an approved foster family. The coach therefore was forced to go along with the legal prescriptions.

Often the neighbourhood coaches can decide both what needs to be done and how. The coaches are very much aware of the multiple points of accountability they face; the steering board of the experimental programme, partnering and other organizations, the media, various municipalities across the country, all keep a keen eye to the performances of the neighbourhood coaches. The experimental programme is a rather unique project in the Dutch context and has raised high hopes. Though the coaches sincerely belief that the project does make a difference, they are afraid that it will go down under the weight of its success. Several municipalities have shown interest to copy the programme, paying the coaches a visit to find out what they do and how they do it. In February of this year a conference was organized to share the knowledge and experiences. The Dutch minister of WWI held an opening speech in was he was very enthusiastic about the preliminary outcomes. The media took their share of explosion as well. Right from the start the media portrayed them as heroes that would cut the red tape and would replace the vast number of too specialized professionals working in organizations that choose profit over the interests of their clients. This caused anger and anxiety on the part of the professionals, causing them to be very sceptical towards the neighbourhood coaches. Though the coaches by now maintain good relationships with members of partnering organizations, they still are very careful around them.

Conscious of the importance of both sound plans of action and maintaining good relationships for future endeavors, the neighbourhood coaches actively involve professionals in the decision making processes. The try to create a shared vision on the actions to be taken, by tapping the professional’s expertise, showing genuine concern for the individual or organizational stakes involved, and encouraging change. They actively seek to facilitate change sensitivity, by probing alternative solutions. In their contacts with residents the neighbourhood coaches take a positive, enabling attitude, believing their help can affect change for the better. The coaches feel that it is very important
to show concern for the residents, which they demonstrate by listening well to what residents say, paying attention to them as a whole person (rather than focusing on the problems). An essential capacity is to build a relationship based on trust. This requires open communication and being consistent. The coaches stress the importance to be honest about the fact that can and will impose sanctions if residents systematically fail to keep their promises. But if sanctions are applied, the coaches keep trying to maintain contact and to continue the effort for change.

In balancing the various values involved, the neighbourhood put people first. This, for instance, is illustrated by the fact that the steering board wants the coaches to push for more activating plans or action. But the coaches refuses to do so, because it is in the interest of the clients to get their debts settled and get some peace and quietness before they are stimulated to pursue interim steps towards a job, such as getting engaged in social participation, social activation or volunteering.

6. Conclusions and tentative reflections
In the emergent literature on place leadership it is claimed that leadership is “something new”. In this final section we will expand on this claim by making an effort to contribute to the four major debates that have shaped both leadership paradigms and research agenda. These include: the “proper” focus?; does it make a difference?; are leaders born or made?; and the best style? (Van Wart, 2003: 220-223).

What should leaders focus upon
A first major debate addresses the question of what leaders should focus upon. Should this be technical performance, development of people or organizational alignment? This question is related to the notions of situational and transformational leadership. Situational approaches distinguish between task-oriented and people-oriented behaviours. The transformational perspective draws attention to the responsibility and accountability of leaders towards followers and their ability to produce adaptive or useful change. Increasingly, leadership is seen as a composite of several or all of these notions. This certainly is true for leadership for place. This approach is named after is main focus: the values and needs of a place. Leaders should aim for adaptive or useful change to create livable regions, cities and neighbourhoods. This requires cross-boundary working, community engagement and a focus on place-based outcomes. To create and sustain networks across (thematic, professional, organizational, community, functional etc.) boundaries place leaders have to face challenges similar to those of leadership for collaboration in inter-organizational and/or multi-sectoral contexts. Leaders in such settings face several issues of concern, which relate to “the need to establish a common culture while not compromising the unique culture of each participating organization; the creation of a common vision or strategy with respect to the outcomes of the system; a need for open communications; the need for trust among all parties so as to maintain commitment from all participants; flexibility and an entrepreneurial outlook in terms of processes and in many cases final outcomes; and, finally, a belief that alliances/networks build alliances/networks (Connelly 2007: 1248).” Whereas leaders for collaboration must find a balance between the values and needs of the various network partners, place leaders face an extra challenge. They have to create a shared vision of what place-based outcomes will be sought. As Trickett and Lee (2010: 438) conclude on the basis of their early research: “we need leaders who will represent ‘place’ as whole - rather than solely their own organisational concerns. Different agencies and stakeholders have different
perspectives; the challenge is to apply this variety coherently for the betterment of place.” This also poses a challenge to keep partners committed to the values and needs of place when it is not in their direct (short-term) interest. Our empirical analysis underscores the difficulty of meeting this challenge, but also offers an interesting avenue for further exploration. Some findings suggest that a place-shaping agenda may benefit from a brokered form of governance (cf. Collinge and Gibney, 2010b). Emerging literature on the governance of networks is exploring similar ideas (Human and Provan 2000; Provan and Kenis,...; ...), however, the combination of a broker that is relatively independent from the network and capable of taking decisions with respect to content is new to these approaches.

To what degree does leadership makes a difference?
The largest part of the literature on leadership is devoted to the questions of how much difference leaders make, and under what conditions. The answers show great variety and point to different directions. Some scholars call attention to the limited impact of leadership behavior (e.g. Rainey, 2003), while others indicate that leadership does make a difference. The literature on leadership for collaboration tends to hold the latter view (Sullivan, 2009; McGuire and Silvia, 2009). Similarly, the emergent literature on place leadership starts from the premise that leadership matters. There is another dimension of the effect of leadership, one that according to Van Wart (2003: 222) is “particularly important”, relating to the levels at with leadership occurs. In spite of a keen practitioner interest leadership at all levels, scholars remain largely indifferent to this idea (Mau, 2007). This partly can be explained by the dominance of US research on the transformational paradigm that has been based, in the main, on observations of top managers in organizations, rather than middle and lower level managers (Alimo-Metcalfe and Alban-Metcalfe, 2005: 53; cf. Sullivan, 2009: 5). As Van Wart (2003: 222) notes, a few, especially the customer service and excellence literatures, emphasize the importance of frontline supervisors (Peter, 1994; Buckingham and Coffman 1999). Vinzant and Crothers (1998) have descend the organizational ladder all the way to the bottom, studying leadership as demonstrated by street level public agents. Our empirical analysis suggests that their framework is applicable in collaborative contexts as well. On the basis of our preliminary findings it might be suggested that street level leadership for place can make a difference for the satisfactory design and provision of services in a collaborative context. Further, many of the traits, competencies and behaviors depicted by the neighbourhood coaches resemble the dimensions of transformational leadership that Alimo-Metcalfe and Alban-Metcalfe (2005) identified in their study of ‘close’/’nearby’ leaders, and resonating the notion of ‘servant leadership’ (Greenleaf, 1970, 1996). To a large extend the qualities and competencies mirror the qualities and competencies of place leadership at the day-to-day level, as described by Trickett and Lee (2010: 438). As such, it does not confirm the idea emphasized in current leadership literature that different levels of leadership require differ types of skills.

Are leaders born or made?
The trait theory start from the assumption that leaders are born rather than made. However, as Van Wart (2003: 222) notes “[t]oday the question is generally framed as one of degree rather than as a strict dichotomy. To what degree can leaders be “made” and how?” He distinguishes two major strategies to develop leadership skills: formal training and learning on the job. Our empirical analysis reveals that these strategies also apply to street level leadership in a collaborative context. Since literature on place leadership is mainly concerned
with leadership behaviours, it might deepen by including research on how to develop qualities and competencies that facilitate leadership for place.

**What is the best leadership style**

According to Van Wart (2003: 222) “leadership style is really just an aggregation of traits, skills, and behaviours”. Nevertheless, he continues, “it has been an extremely popular topic of research and debate in its own right.” Some scholars describe leadership style as the accumulation of key aspects of leadership, whereas others define styles according to their function. The latter approach is characteristic of literature on situational leadership. In this paper we have taken this approach to style, using the Heynes and Blanchard’s model which distinguishes four styles: “telling, selling, participating and delegating”. We particularly focused on the ‘fit’ between the followers readiness in a particular circumstance to achieve the leader’s goal and the styles applied to influence the followers to act towards this goal. On the basis of our analysis it might be suggested that this model can be fruitfully applied to arrive at a better understanding of the effectiveness of leaders of place. However, on a more general note, it should be noted that situational approaches start from the assumption that leaders act in a context that is ‘given’. These approaches attempt to illuminate how leaders deal effectively respond to their environments. By contrast, leadership for place implicitly or explicitly presume that leaders can shape the contexts they work in. Leaders attempt to create and sustain networks that are favourable to inspire change.

In sum, we would argue that leadership for place to a large extend can draw upon existing literature, particularly the emergent literature on leadership for collaboration. However, in some respects the notion of leadership indeed seems to call for new or adjusted approaches to leadership. Considering the increasing importance of place, this inconclusiveness calls for further inquiry to explore whether place leadership is to be seen as an extension of basic competencies and behaviours required in collaborative contexts or invoke a new line of inquiry.

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