

Impact case study (REF3b)

Institution: Edge Hill University
Unit of Assessment: 22 - Social Work and Social Policy
Title of case study: Influencing the practice and policy of collaborative working of leaders across the not-for-profit and local government sector
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Diamond's research paper (Diamond 2001) on the management of change within major urban regeneration programmes directly led to him working with Voluntary and Community Sector organisations in South London (2003 – 08); regional VCS networks in the North West (2008 – present); the Leadership and Development group of VCS leaders in the North West (2010 – present) and national VCS organisations (2005 – present). The impact (as set out below) can be seen in terms of the number of key leaders and activists supported and facilitated by Diamond to reflect upon their work, their learning and, as a consequence, their strategic goals.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>The research underpinning this case study is based on Diamond (who joined Edge Hill in 1990 and is currently Professor of Urban Policy Studies). Diamond's original work, which was a critical examination of the claims that multi-agency working and collaborative working could both improve the quality of public services delivered to vulnerable groups, began in the mid-1980s and was based in Manchester. The idea that the 'decentralisation' of services plus 'cross boundary' working by practitioners and professionals would lead to the 'democratisation' of services was contested by Diamond in field work in Manchester in the late 1980s (Diamond 2001). From 2001 he set out his critique of such approaches and the case for change and innovation in professional education and training (Diamond 2007). In subsequent primary research (Diamond 2012), he has examined models of leadership and leadership education present within the VCS. This empirical work was influenced by his extensive experience of undertaking funded evaluations of regeneration initiatives and the setting up of the Community Empowerment Networks from 2002 onwards. His involvement as an external, independent and critical friend to a number of local, regional and national networks is evidence of his reputation and the importance he attaches to personal and professional education and learning (local networks, regional ones – Voluntary Sector North West, North West Regional Youth Work Unit – and national ones such as the National Coalition for Independent Action, Voluntary Sector Studies Network). Through these different networks he has worked with over 800 practitioners / activists from the VCS and public agencies.</p> <p>Diamond's work explored the ways in which public policy initiatives were often seen as attempts to develop 'joined-up' working at the planning stage but became discrete or competing projects at the implementation phase. He has argued that public policy initiatives failed to take account of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The skills and knowledge gap of professionals (Diamond 2007) • The power imbalances in terms of status and authority between different professional groups and between service users and residents (Diamond 2007; 2010) • The need for investment in the professional and personal development of professionals and practitioners – and, in particular, the need for support in terms of developing their capacity for critical reflection (Diamond 2012) • The local political context within which initiatives are situated and the impact this has for professionals and practitioners (Diamond and Pearce 2010) • The short term cycle of decision making by political elites (Diamond 2007; Diamond and Pearce 2010; Liddle and Diamond 2014) <p>These developments and the recommendations that informed his analysis were situated in policy terms during New Labour's period in office. Diamond's work contains within it a critique of New Labour's model of social democracy shaped by neo-liberalism. In particular, he was very critical of the New Labour model of 'partnership' and the incorporation of the VCS into the role or place of state funded agencies (Diamond 2010 and Diamond and Pearce 2010). This critique and its ability to connect with the diverse audiences that he works with illustrates his ability to work successfully and with credibility with different interest groups (these include chief officers, senior managers, leaders from Third Sector organisations, front line staff, community activists and national voluntary sector organisations).</p>
<p>3. References to the research</p> <p>All the work cited below are peer reviewed and several appear in prestigious Routledge book</p>

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series. All outputs available on request.

1 - Journal Article: Diamond, J. (2001) Managing Change or Coping with Conflict *Local Economy* 16.3 (pp 272 – 285) doi: 10.1080/02690940110078274 (47 citations) Awarded Sam Aaronovitch Prize for Best Paper 2001

2 - Chapter in Book: Diamond, J. (2007) Community Networks in the New Local Governance in Purdue, D. (ed.) *Civil Societies and Social Movements: Potentials and Problems* London: Routledge/ECPR Studies in European Political Science (pp 53 – 67)

3 - Chapter in Book: Diamond, J. and Pearce, J. (2010) Manchester: Between the grassroots and City Hall: participation in the global city in Pearce, J. (ed.) *Participation and Democracy in the Twenty-First Century City* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan (pp 154 – 199) *This is an edited collection in the Non-Government Public Action series published by Palgrave and for which the primary research was funded through the ESRC (PI: Jenny Pearce; Title: Municipal Innovations in Non-Governmental Public Participation: UK/Latin America £253,821; 01.01.2006-30.06.2008)*

4 - Chapter in Book: Diamond, J. (2010) Context to globalisation and regeneration management in Diamond, J., Liddle, J., Southern, A., and Osei, P. (eds) *Urban Regeneration Management: International Perspectives* London: Routledge Advances in Management and Business Studies (pp 13 - 30)

5 - Chapter in Book: Diamond, J. (2012) Learning about Leadership in the Third Sector: From Activist Grassroots to Managerial Conformity in Sotarauta, M. et al *Leadership and Change in Sustainable Regional Development* London: Routledge (pp 80 – 102)

6 - Chapter in Book: Liddle, J and Diamond, J. (2014) Partnership Across Boundaries in England in O'Flynn, J., Blackman, D. and Halligan, J. (eds) *Crossing Boundaries in Public Management and Policy: The International Experience* London: Routledge Critical Studies in Public Management (pp 263 – 279) (NB: published 18 July 2013)

4. Details of the impact

The impact and regional / national reputation of Diamond's work can be seen in a number of ways in addition to published work: for example, conference presentations, invitations to present and being asked to act as external advisor or critical friend/mentor. The following illustrate his standing with peers, practitioners and policy makers:

- 2009 – 2010 one of four HEI chairs acting as members of Expert Panel for the National Audit Office's evaluation of the Coalfields Regeneration Initiative
- 2009 –2010 adviser to the Community Sector Coalition's Leadership Training Programme
- 2010 –major contributor to CLPS blog on the VCS/Big Society and now invited to contribute to other VCS led blogs (estimated traffic to the blog between 2010 – 2012 over 10,000 visits (Other Source (OS) 1).
- 2010 – present: facilitator to the North West VCS senior leadership group (invitation only)
- 2010 – present: facilitator / critical friend to North West Regional Youth Work Unit
- 2011 – appointed co-editor *Teaching Public Administration* (Sage)
- 2012 – present: external facilitator for VCS Leadership and Learning Development Programme in Lancashire supported through the Transforming Local Infrastructure initiative
- 2013 – present: commissioned by an urban metropolitan authority to provide leadership and professional development for over 40 community residents as part of a deliberate strategy to involve local people working with public services and to work with senior managers and leaders to reflect on the practice implications of such innovation
- 2013 – invited to facilitate the VSSN Annual Research Day (Manchester, 28 November).

Impact 1a: Influencing the actions of key VCS regional leaders in times of austerity 2008 - present

Diamond was asked by the North West Regional Lead for the VCS to act as a facilitator for a series of themed (invitation only) discussion groups after the 2010 General Election. Over 45 people participated during which a number of key strategic and policy questions and options for the Sector were examined. These included: the consequences of the Comprehensive Spending Review in the autumn of 2010; the implications of the Big Society initiative; the closures within the sector and the political options as the preparation for the 2015 General Election were underway. Diamond's use of a participatory approach to the process during the negotiations for the event

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provided a clear and systematic framework for a critical reflection by the participants on the changing political context and its implications for them professionally and personally.

Specifically, the impact of his work on local, regional and national civil society agencies and leaders can be evidenced in the following ways: the regional lead for the VCS in the North West describes Diamond's work thus: "This collaboration (between VSNW and Diamond) is, perhaps, better illustrated in a series of invitation-only round table events VSNW and the University have convened since 2010. The economic crisis, the outcome of the General Election and the impact of the spending cuts on the sector led us to think about organising a series of structured events in which leading members of the sector could meet to reflect on what the scale of the changes were... These roundtable events have played an important part in my (and our) critical reflection on the strategic objectives of the sector in a real time of change and where we have been able to draw on the skills of someone who... understands our needs." (FS 1; additional material FS 4).

Impact 2: Setting up, organising, convening and leading a Leadership and Development Group for managers in the VCS across the North West (2010 – present)

Diamond seeks to make connections between his research and his analysis of the nature of how professional power is constructed and enacted in practice and the experiential learning and analysis undertaken by professionals and practitioners themselves. These relationships are, often, contested and demonstrate sites of conflict within professional agencies and between different professional agencies. His work in setting up a Leadership Group in 2012, funded partly through the TLI, with managers and practitioners in Lancashire and from across the North West provided an opportunity for personal and professional learning and development. His approach was, also, to place their work in the context of their organisations so that there were explicit attempts to link their personal learning with the changing needs of their agencies. The agencies included county-wide infrastructure organisations, domestic violence services, equality & diversity agencies, networks to support social enterprises, trustees and management committee members (FS 1).

Impact 3: Impact on the development of services for children and young people

In 2011 and 2012 Diamond was asked by the North West Regional Youth Work Unit (NWRWU) to facilitate a day's reflection for senior managers following the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) and to participate in the NWRWU's regional parliament for young people on the theme of the cuts and austerity. An indicator of his reputation and credibility is reflected in his being asked to provide a summing up of the day for participants. These invitations followed his involvement in 2006 with the writing of "Words Matter: A Glossary for Practitioners" which he undertook in cooperation with a group of senior practitioners from across the North West. These relationships, which led to publications referenced above and informed practice, were only possible because of the levels of trust and confidence he had established with these professional networks. The NWRWU noted "(we) drew on John's experience and understanding of what it meant to work 'in partnership' with different professional bodies who had little or no understanding of the needs of young people. It is difficult, perhaps, to recognise the dramatic changes in the way services for children and young people were being organised nearly a decade ago.... In our work with John we were able to develop a clearer sense of how to frame our conversations with other key agencies and there is no doubt that members of our network gained from their involvement too." (FS 2).

Impact 4: Working with one of the London Community Empowerment Networks (2003-08)

As his work with one of the London Community Empowerment Networks confirms, working with different professional groups as well as users and residents requires broad conceptual as well as people-based skills (his participation in the work in Lewisham directly followed a seminar at South Bank University where he drew on his 2001 research findings). The CEN lead has noted that "During his work with us he was asked to run a number of day events for practitioners across the Authority. These were successful and in them he focussed on engaging with participants to think about and to reflect on the values, aims and practice of community work. I would estimate that about 65 participants from across Lewisham took part in these sessions [...] We drew on his skills as an academic, a researcher and someone who was able to cut across the different professional boundaries between university and practice." (FS 3). The programme was organised as a way of enhancing the skills and capacities of both professionals and residents who were involved in some aspects of community development practice. The same lead observed, "As part of the formal LCN evaluation he made a number of specific recommendations. These included a much more explicit

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approach towards equality and diversity which led, amongst other things, to the creation of an Equalities Officer post within the LCN.”

Impact 5: Acting as a critical friend to senior policy makers (2012 and on-going)

Since autumn 2012, Diamond supported one of the senior policy leads in one of the North West's former police authorities. His work here which was asked for on the basis of reputation confirms his ability to work sensitively with colleagues in highly politically sensitive roles as well as his knowledge of and insights into the organisational and political context to the reforms introduced. He has the ability to develop confidence in him by those he works with and to work through difficult (sometimes on a personal basis) professional and organisationally challenging questions. The officer concerned acknowledges Diamond's role in “coaching and mentoring to me as a member of the Senior Management Team on: finding a new coping mechanism for significant change; a sounding board and reality check...; an exploration of the new operating context; understanding the change management process including readiness assessments; communication implication and planning; tackling resistance to change and confidence building, assertiveness and personal development.” (FS 5).

The opportunities for learning and for professional (and personal) development in such settings requires skilled and informed facilitation. Diamond's work with practitioners and professionals in a number of different contexts (from workshops to day schools) illustrate the level of confidence in his work by the practitioner communities/networks. His appointment in 2011 as joint editor of *Teaching Public Administration* (TPA) is further evidence of the recognition of his work with practitioners and professionals.

Impact 6: Improving VCS Leaders and Practitioners' understanding of the Big Society and its implications of the changing political context

The impact (especially in the North West) of his work can be seen in how it has enabled leaders and practitioners to make sense of the changed (and changing) relationships of the VCS to other public sector agencies and organisations; the changing political context and the restructuring of the market, state and role of civil society. His contribution is, also, about how to learn more systematically from these changes and so anticipate future developments and (where possible) influence the professional and practice informed discussions and reflections. Through his work with TPA, the blogs he contributes to, the national and international networks he is part of and the work he is engaged with to promote a more systematic approach to learning, Diamond makes connections between the local, the national and international. The blog Diamond contributed to during 2010 – 2012 was seen as significant by a number of professionals and practitioners in the VCS. (As one senior officer has noted: “His analysis of the Cameron concept of the Big Society just after the 2010 Election was very valuable. There were not that many academics writing about it in the way he did (critical of the idea but able to explain it to a wide and diverse audience) and which also spoke to the voluntary sector [...] His work represents an important resource for us” (FS 4)). In the autumn of 2010 he was one of 28 people invited to an invitation only event of opinion formers (including national press columnists) hosted by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (OS 2). Diamond was the only academic and the invitation came because of his blog. The purpose of the event was to provide the JRF's Chief Executive and her senior policy team with an analysis of the likely impact of the Cameron concept of the Big Society. JRF were then going to convene a panel of academics for a similar discussion.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

Factual statements (FS):

1. Chief Executive Voluntary Sector North West (Impact 1 and 3)
2. Chief Executive North West Regional Youth Work Unit (Impact 2)
3. Former Chief Executive Community Sector Coalition (Impact 4)
4. Policy Officer VSNW and CLES (Impact 1 and 6)
5. Member of Senior Management Team in former North West police authority Crime Commissioner (Impact 5).

Other Sources (OS):

1. Statistics for visitors and page views of CLPS website and CLPS blog, Aug 2010 – Jul 2013
2. Attendees at Joseph Rowntree Foundation's *Big Society* event, Autumn 2010.