The Greater London Authority - a Clash of Organisational Cultures

Yvonne Rydin, Andy Thornley
Kath Scanlon and Karen West

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Yvonne Rydin[1], Andy Thornley[2], Kath Scanlon[3] and Karen West[4]

Department of Geography and Environment
London School of Economics
Houghton Street
London
WC2 2AE

Abstract

The creation of the new Greater London Authority, with effect from June 2000, has provoked considerable interest in policy and academic circles. It stands as an innovation in London governance, an experiment with the mayoral system in British politics and yet another example of the New Labour programme of modernisation and constitutional reform. For all these reasons, the GLA provides an interesting focus of study. We choose to analyse the first year of the GLA's operation from the perspective of cultural theory, emphasising the nature of the GLA as a set of overlapping institutions. Developing Hood's and Coyle's applications of cultural theory enables us to comment on the tensions within and the prospects for integration across the GLA. It also enables a reassessment of the value of such a cultural theory framework in contexts of institutional evolution.

[1] Y.Rydin@lse.ac.uk
[2] A.Thornley@lse.ac.uk
[3] K.Scanlon@lse.ac.uk
[4] K.West@lse.ac.uk

The GLA: a new institution

The year 2000 saw the creation of a new institution of local democracy, 'a constitutional experiment' as one of its senior officers has dubbed it – the Greater London Authority (GLA). This was the end of a period of 14 years in which a major world city lived without a metro-level government. Since the demise of the Greater London Council (GLC), the 32 London boroughs and the Corporation of the City of London had been left to deal with strategic urban issues of waste management, transport policy and urban development planning, to name but a few. These tasks they undertook alongside the regional office of central government, the Government Office for London, agencies such as London Transport and the London Ecology Unit, and a variety of boards and committees dealing with, for example, the fire and emergency services or advice on London planning from the boroughs. It was broadly accepted that the resulting 'structure' was a uncoordinated mess, which left some issues under-considered (for example, air quality), left others to central government management (such as public transport) and created a space that business interests rapidly sought to fill by a variety of mechanisms such as London First (Newman and Thornley 1997). The replacement of metro-level government, in the form of the GLC, by a mixture of organisations and networks can be considered part of the rise of urban governance (Stoker 2000a and b) but it was hardly a triumph.

Much was, therefore, expected of the new GLA and, indeed, much was promised. It would create a voice for London on the world and national stages; it would provide democracy for Londoners; it would generate strategic action on pan-London issues and solve problems of co-ordination across the capital. The organisational mechanism for achieving this is summarised in Figure 1. As can be seen, there are a number of key elements; the Mayor, the Assembly and the Functional Bodies. Of these, the Mayor and the Assembly are directly elected: the Mayor by a vote for a named person; and the Assembly through two sets of votes, one for the 14 constituency members and one for the 11 members from a list, a system designed to achieve some degree of proportionality in the make-up of the Assembly. In May 2000, the votes cast gave the Mayoralty to Ken Livingstone (ex-Labour MP and ex-Leader of the GLC, standing as an Independent) and led to the Assembly being hung, with 9 Conservative, 9 Labour, 4 Liberal-Democrat and 3 Green members.

The four functional bodies are arm's length agencies, which run important pan-London services:

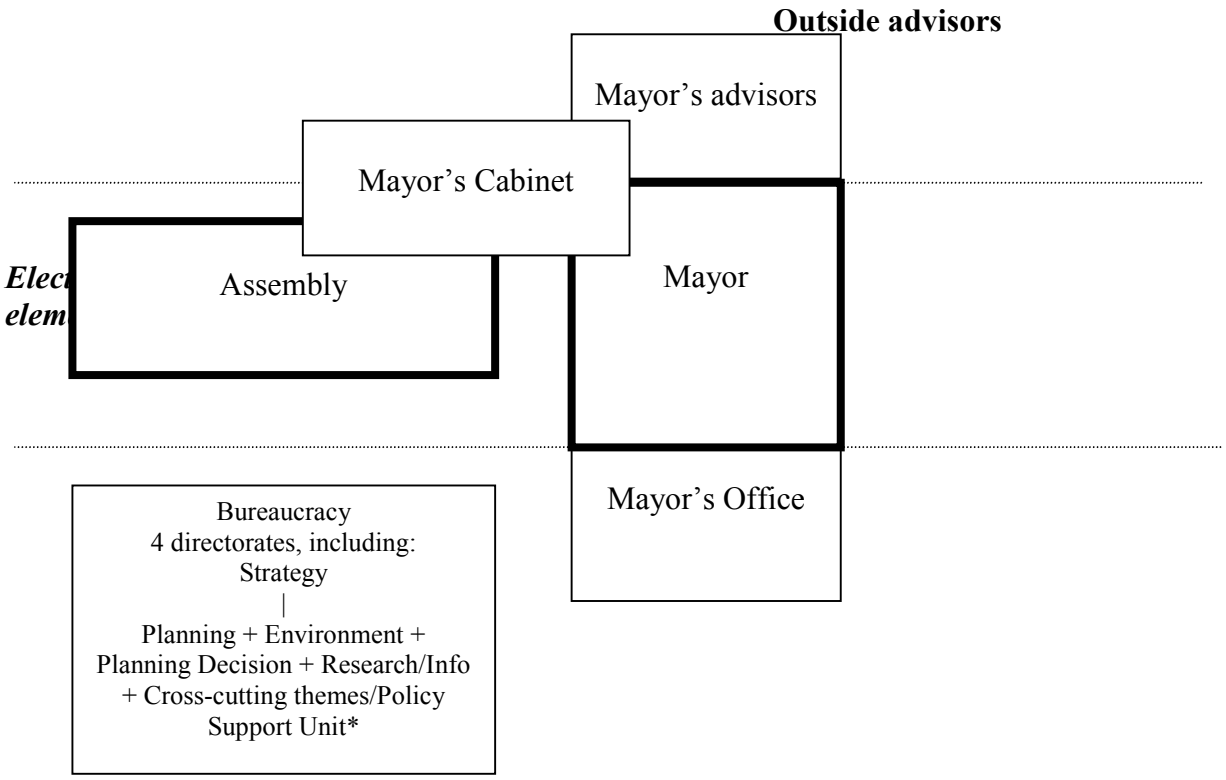
- Transport for London (much in the news for the appointment of a high profile American director and for clashes with central government over financial and legal arrangements);

- the London Development Agency (the London equivalent of the Regional Development Agencies, responsible for economic promotion, urban regeneration budgets and some important sites previously owned by the LDDC/English Partnership);

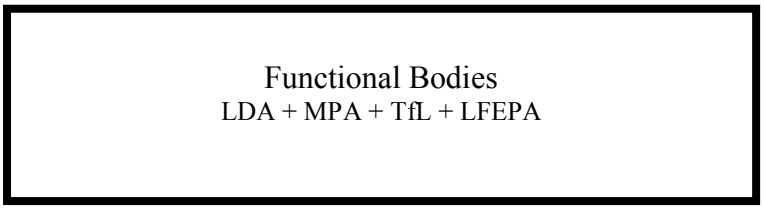
- the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority (handling issues previously covered by an ad-hoc board); and

- the Metropolitan Policy Authority (for the first time, shifting control of London's police from the Home Office to local government).

Figure 1
The GLA Organisation



Related bodies



* As from 1st April 2001, the system of co-ordinators for the cross-cutting themes of sustainability, equality and health was replaced by a Policy Support Unit covering housing, health, social exclusion and integration and sustainability.

All these functional bodies are effectively under the direction of the Mayor. In each case he formally appoints the members of the Boards, including those that have to be drawn from the Assembly. He also sets the budget for TfL, MPA and LFEPA, subject to Assembly approval. In the case of TfL, Ken Livingstone has wide powers of direction and has also chosen to sit personally as Chair of the Board.

The directed elected elements are supported by two bureaucracies: the Mayor's Office of some 30 staff (about a dozen of whom are policy advisors), who report directly to the Mayor, and the GLA bureaucracy, currently about 250 but eventually comprising some 400 staff. This bureaucracy incorporated certain pre-existing bodies, which had developed a role during the *inter regnum*: the London Ecology Unit, the London Planning Advisory Committee and the London Research Centre. Originally, this bureaucracy had to serve both the Mayor and the Assembly and this dual role for the bureaucracy created some tensions. The Assembly does have a budget to appoint its own consultants and support staff and this has now been increased to resolve these tensions. Finally, Figure 1 identifies two other bodies: the set of Mayor's advisors both paid and unpaid who work directly to him; and the Mayor's Cabinet comprising members from the Assembly as well as the Mayor and some of his appointees. In addition, there are a number of *ad hoc* bodies, such as the Policy Commissions, which have been set up by the Mayor to investigate specific issues and report to him. These have a limited life and are not part of the formal organisation of the GLA.

There are a number of reasons why a new body such as the GLA is interesting to study. First, from the perspective of London, it is important to understand how the new arrangements are working: are they living up to expectations? Are there problems with this 'constitutional experiment'? Ultimately, are Londoners experiencing an improvement in their lives? Even the casual observer will have noticed that the GLA's first year has seen significant tensions arise, tensions which are not threatening the institution but are certainly absorbing considerable energy and possibly reducing its effectiveness in terms of policy delivery and democratic accountability. One important focus of research is, therefore, why this is happening.

But the GLA has significance for more than just London and Londoners. The creation of the GLA is one element in the broader New Labour programme of constitutional reform and modernization, which has involved a range of activity from devolution in Scotland and, to a lesser extent, in Wales, down to modifications of the detail of service delivery within local government, as with the Best Value initiative. The overall thrust of this programme has sometimes been difficult to discern. Stoker has described it as 'government by lottery' (2000c) and Brooks has shown how it involves elements of managerialism, centralism and localism all at the same time (2000). As part of this programme, the GLA can provide more evidence of how reform and modernization is working out on the ground.

And, further, there is one aspect of the GLA which may have specific relevance for other localities outside London. This concerns the role that an elected mayor can play. At the time of writing, 6 cities in England had voted through a local plebiscite for elected mayors, although several others had rejected such a change. While these city mayors will command a greater range of powers and resources than does the London Mayor, the London case can provide interesting initial evidence of the implications of a mayoral system within Britain (whereas most evidence to

date has come from abroad). Given these arguments for the significance of the GLA case, how should such a new institution be studied?

How should new institutions of governance be analysed?

It is now widely accepted that we need to be studying systems of governance and not just government (Rhodes 1997, Stoker 2000a and b). The hierarchical patterns of organisations can only tell us so much, given that many of the significant relationships are between state and non-state or quasi-state actors. It is these networks of relationships that we need to consider. And this involves thinking differently about the actors within state organisations. For they too need to be seen as involved in networks, not just networks with outside actors but internal networks too. These networks, both internal and external, don't depend on hierarchical authority alone to work. Rather the emphasis needs to be on how multiple resources are exercised by actors within networks to achieve their goals, in collaboration with others. Single actors are no longer seen as having the 'capacity to act' (Stone 1989) on their own. So governance involves networks of relationships, collaborative action and multiple resources.

Just as this involves a shift in focus from government to governance, it implies a shift from considering organisations to analysing institutions. These words require a little more definition. An organisation is defined by its internal divisions and structure, as revealed diagrammatically through an organogram (as in Figure 1). This will tell us the elements that constitute the organisation and the way that they nest into each other or are related by lines of authority and accountability. It provides a first stage to understanding a new structure and, in a world where traditional hierarchical lines of authority predominated, the organisational structure would pretty much have defined the GLA. But if we need to understand more complex patterns of relationships then the institutional structure is more relevant. Institutions are defined in terms of their routine patterns of working and the way that these routines encapsulate common norms, values and understandings of behavioural rules. Drawing from anthropology, the institutional approach looks for the attitudes that are held in common and sees these as acting as a kind of 'glue', holding the institution together (Douglas 1986). Furthermore, this glue helps explain the behaviour of actors and, in particular, helps explain how actors work together (or cannot work together) to achieve their goals.

Seeing the GLA as an institution involves understanding these norms, values and rules-in-use (Ostrom 1999). To use an institutional framework to understand a new body, such as the GLA, is to see these institutional variables as central to the way in which the GLA is being established and will evolve. Such a task is not necessarily easy for an institutionalist perspective, as it is generally better at understanding stability and gradual change than radical breaks with prevailing behaviour. This is because institutions are viewed as self-regulating, through the simple mechanism of actors judging their own behaviour in terms of appropriateness within the particular context (Lowndes 2000). Actors look to the prevailing norms, etc. in order to judge the appropriateness of their intended behaviour and then modify it accordingly. In this way, the prevailing norms, etc. get reproduced through repeated rounds of appropriate behaviour. Change tends to be marginal as outright conflict with prevailing norms is usually rejected; often the exercise of sanctions prevents such conflict, as inappropriate behaviour is sanctioned to bring actors in line with the prevailing institutional bias.

But with a new institution, such as the GLA, all these aspects of appropriate behaviour, norms, values, routines and rules-in-use are being actively established. There is, therefore, a need for a framework which can explore this dynamic process and understand the tensions involved in establishing a new institutional culture, as well as a set of organizational arrangements. Here, we use cultural theory to provide such a framework. After briefly setting out the main features of cultural theory, we return to the detail of the GLA in its first year of operation. In particular, we have focused on the work of the GLA in preparing spatial development and environmental strategies. This provides a practical empirical window for watching the complexities of the GLA's activities; however, this focus does mean that we have not examined the internal workings of the functional bodies, as none of the bodies are directly responsible for these policy areas.

Using cultural theory as an analytic framework

Cultural theory (of the variety being used here) derives from the work of Mary Douglas within anthropology, as extended by her collaboration with Aaron Wildavsky into policy contexts (Douglas and Wildavsky 1982). The basic tool of the theory is the 2x2 matrix. On the 'grid' axis is measured the extent to which actors' lives are circumscribed by convention or rules; a high grid view proposes that such rules and conventions should dominate individuals' lives, while a low grid view proposes the opposite. On the 'group' axis is measured the extent to which individual choice is constrained by group choice; thus, a high group view proposes that choices made by individuals should be subordinate to group decisions. Clearly both of these dimensions relate to spectrums of change but for the sake of simplicity, they are reduced to polar opposites; combining these two dimensions produces a four-fold typology, as in Figure 2.

Figure 2
The Basic Typology of Cultural Theory

	Group	
Grid	Low	High
High	THE FATALIST	THE HIERARCHIST
Low	THE INDIVIDUALIST	THE EGALITARIAN

Grid refers to the extent to which lives are circumscribed by convention or rules.
Group refers to the extent to which individual choice is constrained by group choice.

The four categories so derived are 'myths' of human nature or worldviews. That is, they describe narratives or storylines that people and institutions use to simplify their views of reality and to tie up values and norms with such views. They are not myths in the sense of being untrue or fictions, but rather myths in the sense of being social constructions, value-laden and normative as well as descriptive. Briefly, these four worldviews are as follows:

- **Fatalist** This describes a position in which there is little scope for active management of lives or life chances. Fate and chance rule outcomes and there is little individuals or their institutions can do; therefore, the group dimension is low. However, the grid dimension remains high since such a society or group will co-operate by means of relatively rigid

conventions in the absence of any other more proactive mechanism for giving meaning to social action and being.

- **Individualist** The individualist position stresses both the significance of individual choice and the unimportance of social conventions and rules in circumscribing behaviour. This is a view in which there are significant opportunities for everyone, if only they will take them.

- **Hierarchist** This is the pre-eminently modern worldview in which group conventions and control dominate. Individuals are subordinated to the collective, in the name of a greater good, a public interest. It is, however, an optimistic worldview since the belief in attaining the public interest through group decisions is maintained.

- **Egalitarian** Finally, in this view the importance of group decision-making over the individual is maintained but there is openness with regard to the operation of rules and conventions as they affect individual behaviour.

While it is clearly a simplification, this framework can help clarify complex reality and form a basis for comparison and classification. It can also be elaborated to fit with specific situations. This is the approach that Hood has taken in trying to apply cultural theory to public management (1998; see also Adams' work applying cultural theory to risk management, 1995). Hood has used the framework to argue that there are different types of contemporary public management, in opposition to the commonly held view that there is one dominant form of new public management (NPM). In elaborating this, he has proposed a model of four different types of public management, each associated with one of these worldviews. This is summarised in Figure 3.

How useful is this typology in helping us classify and understand the emerging institutions of the GLA?

Understanding the evolution of the GLA in terms of cultural theory

The starting point for applying cultural theory is to consider the way in which values, norms and working practices have been developing within the GLA. Our research has indicated that separate working patterns have already built up around the organisational structures, in effect creating three distinct institutions within the GLA that have to co-exist and try to work together. These institutional, as opposed to organisational arrangements are summarised in Figure 4.

Taking the **Mayor and his office** first, our research has identified a very distinctive mode of operation. There is a relatively small team of people working with and around the Mayor, determining his agenda and working practices. The core of the Mayoral Office comprises the campaign team for Ken Livingstone, Mayoral candidate. This has ensured continuity in the close working relationships built up during the campaign and before the election. While this small team does not necessarily seek to work in a very secretive and exclusionary manner, it is nevertheless clear that benefits of common thinking and mutual knowledge make this a very difficult institution to join from the outside. This is accentuated by the explicit attempts to maintain close,

even personal control of the work of this team by the Mayor. One senior officer described it as 'quite a corporate body'.

Figure 3

Hood's Development of Cultural Theory for Public Management

FATALIST	**INDIVIDUALIST**	**HIERARCHIST**	**EGALITARIAN**
Low co-operation Rule-bound approach to organisations	Atomized approach Stress on negotiation and bargaining	Socially cohesive Rule bound approach to organizations	High-participation structures Every decision 'up for grabs'
Ad hoc, minimalist response to crises **Watchword**: resilience	Responds to crisis through resort to competition and self-interest **Watchword**; enlightened self-interest	Relies on expertise and tighter procedures in response to crises **Watchword**: steering	Based on participation and whistle-blowing **Watchword**: community participation
Weakness: Excessive inertia or passivity	**Weakness**: Individual put before collective benefit; lack of co-operation and corruption	**Weakness**: Tendency towards over-ambitious projects; misplaced trust in expertise	**Weakness**: Unwilling to accept higher authority; can lead to unresolved feuds, degenerating into co-existence
Control Approach 'Chancism' Organisation as gaming machine	**Control Approach** 'Choicism' Organisation as arena	**Control Approach** 'Bossism' Organisation as a ladder of authority	**Control Approach** 'Groupism' Organisation as collegial
Prone to a vicious cycle whereby public cynicism, rejection of public participation, lack of checks on office holders and inefficiency/ corruption of office holders reinforce each other	Prone to rivalry and competition, plus the problems of relying on market-mechanisms for policy delivery	Prone to prioritising the interests of the organisation above all; needs well-understood rules; and tends to blame deviants in case of problems, not the organisation	Four alternative modes: - traditional collegia - transformational - radical alternative - elite democratic community

Figure 4

The Three Institutions of the GLA

	Mayor	**Bureaucracy**	**Assembly**
Key Actors	Mayor and his office	Policy officers	Elected representatives
Drivers	Personal agenda/ Manifesto	Statutory and national policy framework and timetable	Search for a role
Timescale	Short-term/electoral	Medium to long-term	Electoral/scrutiny cycle
Focus	Project-based	Strategy framework	Topics and issues
Concerns	Implementation barriers	Co-ordination	Accountability
Constraints	Access to resources	Conflicting interests/ priorities Statutory requirements	Lack of powers and budget
Interest Representation	By invitation + Very open forums	Based on legacy + Established networks	Electoral + By selection

Influence on the team, and therefore on the Mayor, is mainly by invitation. There is, of course, a huge amount of lobbying that occurs by outside interests, but the very volume of this lobbying means that only selected groups can have any influence and that selection is at the discretion of the team. Key interests that do appear to have some influence on the Mayoral agenda are those appointed to his group of policy advisors and (to a lesser extent) his Cabinet. Again, these appointments are by invitation. The variable but, at times, almost daily contact with these selected consultees make the widely publicised and much larger open events – such as the 'People's Question Time' open forums – pale into insignificance. In a similar vein the role of the various Policy Commissions, set up by the Mayor to investigate specific issues, have been seen by some as a controlled means of getting messages to the Mayor, rather than a really open consultative process. In terms of Mayoral agenda, it is equally clear that there is a fairly simple dynamic at work here and that is the pursuit of re-election in 2004. Hence the benchmark for the policy agenda is twofold: does it relate to the Manifesto on which Ken Livingstone was elected; and does it promote the chances of re-election?

Translating this political agenda into a policy agenda results in a very clear focus on a limited number of projects that are deemed salient with the electorate and where the results of the Mayoral system can be demonstrated. There is a concentration of policy effort within the Mayor's Office on overcoming the barriers to implementing these projects. Currently, this boils the agenda down to improvement of the public transport system and achieving congestion charging; the two are inter-related since the money raised by congestion charging will be a key source of funding for Mayoral projects. This emphasis on the demonstrable and the electorally-

salient has also led the Mayor to maintain close personal control over development control decisions, at least in the first period of the GLA, while his personal 'policy' on deciding planning applications is established and institutionalised. The Mayor is a statutory consultee on all applications of 'potential strategic importance' and has the power to direct refusals of permission. He has used this to promote the development of tall landmark buildings and affordable housing in pursuit of aesthetic, economic and social benefits, which would then be strongly associated with his personal influence.

This emphasis on the personal Mayoral agenda has meant that a premium is placed - by the Mayor's Office and others in the GLA - on establishing and clarifying Livingstone's vision. As we will explore below, this has not always been straight-forward in the context of the GLA. Initially the agenda was to be set in the form of a London Prospectus, due to be launched at a public forum in November 2000. This was delayed and now appears to have been shelved in favour of using the Spatial Development Strategy (now known as The London Plan) to convey the Mayor's vision. We also discuss this further below.

By contrast the policy officers within **the bureaucracy** are following a very different line. While they have all been newly appointed to the GLA, most of the key officers have a background in the organisations absorbed into the GLA – the London Planning Advisory Committee, the London Ecology Unit and the London Research Centre – or even in the old GLC. The current GLA group of policy officers, therefore, brings considerable expertise and knowledge to the task and, indeed in many cases, began back in July 2000 with drafts of the various strategies already on their desks. For example, LPAC had prepared their own 'legacy' or 'endowment' to the GLA which they hoped would set out the basic structure of the new Spatial Development Strategy. Both the GLA's Principal Planning Officer Martin Simmons (now semi-retired) and the current Deputy Mayor, Nicky Gavron were involved in preparing this legacy.

These officers also have long experience of local government policy systems and operate with a clear understanding of the statutory requirements on and duties of local government. They represent a professional commitment to medium/long term policy development through strategies and policy frameworks. This drives an agenda based around strategy development, strategy co-ordination and the attempt to impose a rational and holistic framework on the workings of the GLA. This is given organisational expression in various ways. There is the existence within the strategy directorate of a specific unit designed to pursue crosscutting themes, which run across the individual strategies. The GLA is committed to eight statutory strategies (transport, spatial development, economic development, culture, air quality, biodiversity, waste and noise) and two non-statutory strategies (energy and housing). These are supposed to be co-ordinated with reference to overriding themes such as equality/inclusion/social integration, sustainability and health. Co-ordination is also achieved through each strategy being examined within a strategy co-ordination group of lead officers, although the time available for this is limited and such examination can only occur on the basis of a fairly fully-developed draft.

Developing this number of strategies and attempting to ensure that they mesh together is a major call on officers' time and resources. The shift of organisations such as LPAC and LEU into the GLA, while appearing to enhance their power, in some cases led to a reallocation of staff away from previously core-functions. For example, the LEU has lost half its pre-GLA staff to other non-environmental tasks. GLA officers are also available to Assembly members for a certain

amount of their time and they have to work on the Mayor's agenda as well as their professionally-driven strategy framework. Indeed, in formal terms, the Mayor has priority in establishing the focus of their work.

Turning to **the Assembly**, most commentators on the proposals for the GLA argued that the role of the Assembly was anomalous. Indeed there was little in the way of a clear role set out for the Assembly in the White Paper or the legislation beyond a poorly-defined scrutiny role and an annual vote on the Mayor's budget (where a substantial majority is required to veto the Mayor's plans). Power was clearly vested in the Mayor, not the Assembly. Yet in the event, a number of well-known and well-connected people from the three main parties were elected to the Assembly along with three new and enthusiastic Green members. Such an Assembly was unlikely to accept a back-stop scrutiny role. Instead it has actively searched for a role, reinterpreting scrutiny to include 'pre-scrutiny' of Mayoral proposals before they are fully developed and implemented, as well as investigation after drafting through the mechanism of Investigation Committees comprising 5/6 Assembly members.

The Assembly has actively looked for issues it can investigate and has prioritised the theme of accountability of a Mayor-dominated GLA. Recently, the Assembly Planning Committee, which had not met between July 2000 and January 2001, has been reconvened and has requested the Mayor to invite contributions from them on planning applications of potential strategic importance; this circumlocution indicates the balance of power! This committee then censured the Mayor for refusing this request (Planning Committee meeting 28 February 2001). It has also sought to promote its own distinct views on the various Unitary Development Plans put forward to the GLA. In the case of the Westminster UDP, this meant that the Assembly committee found itself supporting the borough and opposing the Mayor on the issues of tall buildings and affordable housing (*Evening Standard* 5 March 2001 'Battle lines in sky as Mayor and assembly square up'). The Environment Committee has also not been shy to criticise the Mayor's strategies – such as the LDA strategy – for its lack of attention to sustainability principles (Environment Committee meeting 13 February 2001).

Comparing the framework of Figure 3 with these details of the early workings of the GLA summarised in Figure 4, suggests that there are indeed different cultures at work or, rather, that the categories of cultural theory may help us put some order on the evolving nature of the GLA. This can be explored by taking each institution in turn.

A strong fit can be discerned between the operation of **the bureaucracy** and the **hierarchist** culture. Indeed both Adams (1995) and Coyle (1997) identify the hierarchist approach as archetypal of classic Weberian bureaucracies. Within the GLA, this remains the case. The policy officers emphasise a way of working which is rule bound, socially cohesive, based on expertise and clearly identified 'ladders of authority'. They have devoted considerable time to developing strategies to steer and guide the actions of the GLA and are frustrated when the project-based electoral politics of the Mayor conflict with the development of such an holistic policy framework. There is also a clash of timetable involved since the project-based timetable of the Mayoral agenda pays little attention to the requirements for a fixed timetable for certain statutory strategies or the time implications of preparing such a package of inter-related strategies. And the officers feel aggrieved when their considerable expertise is not valued by the Mayoral team or bypassed by outside, invited advisors. With the Mayor having first call on the officers' time, the

remaining space for preparing strategies in line with professional expectations is severely curtailed. This is frustrating from the perspective of the hierarchist officer, although the statutory requirements within the legislation do provide some support for this hierarchical perspective.

Another dimension to this conflict between the Mayor and the bureaucracy is to be found in the differing view of the GLA's place within governmental structures. As mentioned above, most of the officers (except significantly the Chief Executive) come from local government and seem content to see the GLA retain a local government perspective within an overall hierarchy. From the Mayoral office, however, there seems to be a wish to see London in terms of regional government and as a major player on the European governmental and world economic scene – a world city. The attention to policy detail associated with the hierarchist view of those grounded in local government and used to fearing the *ultra vires* rule, contrasts with the view of a Mayor seeking to push at the boundaries of conventional sub-national government and create new opportunities.

Turning to **the Assembly**, this approximates closely to the **egalitarian** culture. Here is a forum which, in the absence of a clearly defined role and limited resources or powers, has defined itself in terms of maintaining the accountability of the GLA. As such it is drawing on its own accountability as an elected body, holding meetings in public and keeping a watching brief on the activities of the Mayor and bureaucracy. Despite the advice of officers, the Assembly decided to opt for early rather than late scrutiny, explicitly because they wished to reign in the Mayor. Officers were pushing for later scrutiny because of problems it might cause for strategy development in terms of officer workload, lack of clear policy direction and multiplicity of priorities.

In the face of the relatively closed world of the Mayor's Office and the bureaucracy, the Assembly is emphasising its role in maintaining community participation. The selective consultation that forms the basis of the Mayoral culture has already been explored. The attitude of the bureaucracy towards public consultation is also rather ambiguous. Such consultation tends to be professionalised; it is acceptable only through established conduits. Certainly the main focus of officers' strategy development work to date has been *internal* to the GLA. Hence an open approach to consultation is a 'gap' that the Assembly can step into in its search for a role.

There is an issue of how far party-alignments affect consultation via the Assembly. At the moment, the hung nature of the Assembly combined with an independent Mayor is restricting party-politics and opening up consultation. With an Assembly controlled by a party and/or a partisan – rather than independent – Mayor, parties may become more significant channels of influence. It is also unclear as yet how the non-constituency basis of some Assembly members will play out. Can they really be a conduit for London-wide interests? Certainly, boroughs have expressed disappointment at the way that the Assembly is representing their interests and have sought direct access to the Mayor instead. It may be that, whatever the role of the Assembly in involving outside interests, the relatively greater power of the Mayor means that outside interests will still seek direct access to the decision makers in the Mayor's Office and, to a lesser extent, the bureaucracy.

In any case, the Assembly-route to participation represents only one particular definition of participation. As Figure 3 makes clear there are four possible models of community participation

within the egalitarian worldview, some involving more direct citizen participation than others. The elected Assembly falls into the category of an elite electorally representative group. It claims legitimacy for its role through the direct election of its members. In this context, it is interesting to note the slightly different claims to legitimacy of the constituency-based members of the Assembly – who were elected directly on a named and party basis – and those elected from the list. Constituency members have been known to claim greater legitimacy, opening up the potential for a rift within the Assembly, which might undermine it. Political parties might play a role here in keeping groups within the Assembly together, but would do so, of course, at the cost of creating different lines of partisan cleavage.

This leaves the question of how the central institution of the Mayor should be interpreted. This is a slightly more complex task than for the Assembly and the bureaucracy. From some perspectives, it might appear that the **Mayor** is following a highly **individualist** agenda. This would predict his atomized approach, focused on specific projects and individuals. It fits with the heavy emphasis on negotiation and bargaining over these specific projects and the use of the GLA as an arena for promoting them. It also fits with the apparent desire of Ken Livingstone, that some have noted, to leave a long-term mark on London from his Mayoralty, a personal legacy. One area where this is particularly pronounced is in Livingstone's overt pursuit of a personal design policy on planning matters, with a preference for tall buildings and a willingness to state whether he finds a building ugly or not.

However, all these individualist aspects of the mayoral approach relate to the fact that this is an individually elected post and the holder has to seek personal re-election in 2004. Livingstone sees himself as an individual pursuing his political interests (and has always seen himself in this light, as his political autobiography makes clear, 1987). But the electoral nature of mayoral electoral does not just affect how the Mayor sees himself and his interests. It also imports a model of citizenship in which Londoners are seen in terms of individuals concerned with their own self-interest; the task of the Mayor is collectively to improve these individual lots. Given this, it is hardly surprising that there is congruence with an individualist worldview within the mayoral system.

But what of the other aspects of individualist public management? Much of Hood's analysis is drawn up in terms of classic Thatcherite NPM, based on contracts and price-based incentives. Clearly Livingstone's style cannot be reduced to this. Rather it is the **fatalist** approach that can offer clues to the overall management, as opposed to electoral style of the Mayor. As Coyle makes clear, the distinctive feature of a fatalist approach to organisations is the role of the leader (1997: 64). He chooses to label this style 'despotism' and draws his examples from the most extreme cases of fascist organisations. He describes the nature of such leadership as 'exceptional, arbitrary, and without limits in its exercise, except those deriving from his own will' (*op. cit*.). This is clearly an overstatement of the Mayor's position within the GLA, given the checks and balances of the Assembly and the bureaucracy. But it does identify a tendency within mayoral systems, one that led many to oppose the introduction of such systems. It also fits with the feelings of repression, coercion or, at least, alienation, that many officers and members within the GLA have felt as a result of the exercise of mayoral power.

However, there is another aspect of fatalism that is also applicable to role of the Mayor within the GLA. This is the emphasis on chance. Stoker (2000c) has characterised the whole of New

Labour's strategy towards units of devolved governance and administration as 'government by lottery' and an example of the fatalist frame. By this he means that the government is pursuing a strategy of contrived randomness, with inspection and audit systems that operate by surprise rather than on a regular cycle and multiple, overlapping systems of bidding for funds. This approach creates, and is intended to create, confusion among devolved units. One central reason that Stoker identifies for adopted 'government by lottery' is to hide or handle the tensions arising from other dimensions of the New Labour programme, which exhibit egalitarian and/or hierarchical approaches.

There are a number of ways in which such a fatalist approach can be seen at work within the Mayoral system. First, there is the *ad hoc* nature of the Mayor's approach by contrast with the bureaucracy pursuing a set of timetabled strategies. This is an alternative interpretation of the Mayor's preoccupation with projects and one-off opportunities for implementing his vision. Second, there is the possibility that the Mayor is deliberately generating or encouraging higher levels of uncertainty and lower levels of trust within the GLA in order to enhance his position *vis-à-vis* the Assembly and the bureaucracy. A relevant point here is that most of the GLA officers are appointed on temporary contracts, which may be made permanent; more senior officers are appointed by the Assembly. Third, there is a more positive interpretation that the Mayor is pursuing this fatalist approach (with a dash of individualism) because of the tensions between the egalitarian Assembly and the hierarchist bureaucracy. Here fatalism becomes a necessary evil rather than a Machiavellian strategy.

The limitations to a fatalist interpretation of the Mayor's role lie in the resources and powers that he has available. To generate uncertainty and reduce trust, the Mayor would need to manipulate other actors. Hood suggests four ways of doing this: offering rewards on an unpredictable basis; changing the composition of networks of influence; encouraging an exaggerated division of responsibilities; and encouraging turnover and variety in those overseeing the whole organisation. The London Mayor does not have significant resources available to do this. His budget is limited (at least until congestion charging starts to yield) and he does not control oversight of the GLA. But he can and does control, to some extent, the shape of the networks around him and access to decision-making influence. For example, the Mayor selectively offers the rewards of cabinet and advisory positions and seats on the Management Board. And he can exercise influence on the structure of the bureaucracy, an influence that Livingstone has used several times to restructure the organisation in detail. There appears to be evidence of some fatalism in Livingstone's approach to the mayoralty; research will be needed to see if this evolves further.

Whether one focuses on the individualist or fatalist aspects of the mayoral system, it is clear though that it is actively opposed to key elements of the hierarchist and egalitarian approaches. Our interview with Ken Livingstone confirmed his antipathy to strategies as opposed to specific projects since, in his view, strategies are unlikely to change anything overnight. This also fits with the view of a key advisor that the Mayor's Office is actually rather inexperienced in interfacing with or 'handling' a hierarchical bureaucracy. The Mayor is also not following an egalitarian consultative approach. When asked about whether public consultation would influence him, his reply was 'when my mind is made up, not a chance'. The reality of much consultation during the first year of the GLA has been a failure to live up to promises or expectations. Many of the larger events appear to have been window-dressing rather than a genuine input into decision-making. More recently, the Policy Commissions have been sidelined in favour of

internal discussion on policy priorities and details. It is to further exploration of these tensions and conflicts inside the GLA that the analysis now turns.

Tensions and conflicts: spatial and environmental planning

The cultural theory framework appears to have some value in clarifying the institutions associated with the GLA and distinguishing them. It can further help in understanding where conflicts and tensions might arise in the working practices of the GLA. The discussion has already highlighted how the hierarchist bureaucracy finds itself frustrated by the individualist/ fatalist politics of the Mayor; and the way that this expresses itself in terms of prioritising the staff's work and time. It has also been shown that both the Mayor and the bureaucracy find themselves having to defend themselves against the egalitarian approach of the Assembly with its emphasis on new lines of accountability. There are other specific examples of emerging conflicts of culture within the GLA, in the fields of spatial planning and environmental policy. Three of these will now be explored: the discussions around the sustainable development principles; the inter-relationship of different strategies; and the recent history of the Spatial Development Strategy.

While the Mayor ran a campaign with a distinctly 'greenish' tinge, the idea of a set of Sustainable Development Principles to run across all the policy work of the GLA appears to have come from within the bureaucracy. This is linked to the strong commitment to sustainable development of both LPAC and the LEU and their lead officers; it is also in line with the responsibilities of the GLA as set down in legislation and national policy. A first draft of these principles was appended to a report to the Mayor's Office in September 2000 and considerable effort expended in circulating these around the GLA, amending them in line with comment and discussion. They rapidly went through numerous revisions, ending with Draft 13 coming forward in February 2001.

However, the later revisions were not of an incremental nature implied by an evolving policy stance. Rather it appears that the Sustainable Development (SD) Principles developed within the bureaucracy and without the Mayor's Office giving them much weight. This became very apparent during the preparation of the Economic Development Strategy (EDS). The SD Principles were used in the first draft of the EDS, resulting in an approach that was not to the liking of the LDA Chief Executive. Later versions rather delinked the Strategy from the SD Principles, prompting criticism from the Assembly. As the EDS came under criticism from this perspective, the Mayor's Office focused attention directly on the SD Principles (for the first time perhaps) and promptly sought to revise them. Hence, the 13th version has had much of the socio-economic emphasis of earlier versions removed, so that it is much more environmental in nature, rather than attempting the social-economic-environmental synthesis that should lie at the heart of sustainable development. At the same time, the Sustainable Development Commission – promised in the Mayor's report to the Assembly on 15 November 2000 – has not materialised, so that the only vehicle for consulting stakeholders on sustainable development issues is a loose network known as the Sustainable GLA Coalition. This mechanism does not seem to have been much used to date.

Another story of conflict between a Mayoral approach and that of the bureaucracy can be told in respect of the relationships between the various strategies. The bureaucracy, as indicated above,

has been concerned with fulfilling the statutory requirements to produce a series of strategies and to ensure that these reinforce rather than contradict each other. The Mayor, however, has seen the transport strategy as key to his personal agenda. This has created two sets of problems.

First, the Mayoral view of a transport strategy was much more specific and focused than the bureaucracy's, with a much greater emphasis on providing an operational framework for the management of London's public transport. The initial version from the bureaucracy was replaced in Autumn 2000 with a version that was more 'on message' as far as the Mayor's agenda was concerned. Following this, 'whiteboarding' sessions between the Mayor's Office and the bureaucracy were introduced, as a way of ensuring that senior officers were appraised of the Mayor's views and did not develop strategies in an insulated professional context. These sessions have also effectively sidelined the more open-ended consultation of various Policy Commissions, which was originally supposed to feed into policy development.

Secondly, given the prioritisation of transport within the mayoral agenda, the timing of the preparation of different strategies has been amended to avoid political problems. This has particularly affected the air quality strategy, which proposes various traffic control measures to alleviate air pollution. The publication of the draft was delayed so that its measures were not seen as 'ratcheting up' the congestion charging measures already contained in the transport strategy, and thereby creating a political backlash. This way it was hoped that the two strategies would be clearly distanced from each other in the consultation process.

Finally, we turn to the story of the Spatial Development Strategy (SDS). In one sense, this has been in the pipeline for years. LPAC's endowment was clearly meant to establish a basis for the SDS and, therefore, officers within the bureaucracy hoped that work on the strategy could move ahead fairly quickly. From this perspective, the SDS could act as a horizontal strategy, linking all the others together through the spatial dimension. Some difficulties emerged during the first six months. The work within the bureaucracy on a plan which would fulfill certain statutory functions had to mesh with the 'Blue Skies' approach of the Deputy Mayor, as she sought to bring in new ideas and visions for London through the Spatial Development Policy Commission and various *ad hoc* meetings and workshops. It is reported that the SDS underwent 15 revisions over two months during this period, that it grew exponentially in size and had to be professionally rewritten to get it into coherent shape. In early February 2001, the senior officer in charge was reporting 40 separate projects inputting into the SDS proposals. Nevertheless, progress was made and, as at 18 November 2000, the Mayor's Management Board reported that an initial outline of the SDS – the SDS proposals – were expected on 5 December 2000 and would go to the Assembly on 29 January 2001. Thereafter, there would be a period of consultation and preparation of the final strategy, which would be subject to and Examination in Public, probably in Summer 2002.

Hearings by the Assembly's SDS Investigative Committee were set for March 2001 but, on the day of the first hearing on 1 March 2001, these were cancelled. The SDS proposals had been withdrawn by the Mayor who was concerned about their direction, particularly given that the SDS would become a material consideration for all planning decisions in the capital. Although it appears that the Mayor's Office had previously had little interest in the SDS (leaving it to the Deputy Mayor), it now sought to draw up a new alternative. This was dubbed The London Plan and was intended to convey more effectively the Mayor's vision. Indeed The London Plan now

became the main vehicle for expressing this vision, particularly given the cancellation of the Mayor's Prospectus. The new proposals were issued on 8.5.01 with a view to preparing a new draft SDS by the end of 2001.

This replacement of SDS Proposals (prepared within the bureaucracy) by *Towards The London Plan* (prepared by the Mayor's Office) is unlikely to be the end of this story. The tensions remain between:

- a plan which expresses a highly personalised vision for London, with a timescale driven by electoral politics and which is supposed to provide an innovative view of what the city could be like; and

- a statutory document with a role within the land use planning system, supposed to set a framework for up to 20 years of development in London and constrained by the need to take account of a whole raft of policy documentation, including regional planning guidance, planning policy guidance notes, EU directives, Government Office for London guidance and DETR White Papers; a count of these various documents suggests 18 other policy statements that need to be considered.

A clash between bureaucracy and Mayoralty, between hierarchalist and individualist/fatalist institutional cultures seems like to be a fairly persistent feature of the GLA in this area.

The Prospects for the GLA

All these examples show how the conflicts between different cultures within the GLA have severe implications for the organisation as it becomes established and evolves. They result in internal politics of conflict, which is demoralising for some staff and absorbs resources. Given the current strength of the Mayoralty under Ken Livingstone, with his undoubted energy and skills, these conflicts often result in the hierarchist approach being downgraded. This may have implications for the future working of the GLA given that an integrated, coordinated strategy framework may not be achieved. Where there are statutory functions and responsibilities involved, this will have future repercussions. The statutory inquiry into the SDS may be less satisfactorily concluded or other agencies and local authorities may find themselves in a situation of policy conflict or uncertainty as a result. Given this, what are the prospects for integration across cultures within the GLA? There are a number of different ways in which such integration may arise.

First, individuals may play an important role. There are some personnel who sit in more than one organisational seat and can straddle two cultures. Examples include Gavron (Labour party member of the Assembly and Deputy Mayor) and Johnson (Green party member of the Assembly and given the environment brief by the Mayor), both of whom are members of the Assembly and part of the Mayor's team. Gavron seems less likely to fulfil such a role as she appears to be trying to emulate the individualist politics of Livingstone and the position is in the gift of the Mayor. Johnson may be more pivotal but it is noteworthy that one senior Mayoral advisor saw his role as 'steering' Johnson to fit in with mayoral agenda.

Second, changes in organisational structure may occur, which remove some of the potential for conflict by giving more prominence to one culture. The Chief Executive of the GLA, Anthony Meyer has pursued a general restructuring of the GLA and the strategy directorate has also been restructured in an explicit attempt to make it clear that the officers are under Mayoral control. The 'whiteboarding' process, discussed above, is an unofficial way of achieving the same end, i.e. of getting the officers 'on message'.

Third, staff turnover may result in new officers being appointed who are more in keeping with the prevailing Mayoral approach, limiting the prospects for tension. Fourth, the priorities of the GLA may become more clearly established so that some strategies become prominent, while others tend to sit on the shelf. Because of its statutory role within the planning system, the SDS is probably the most hierarchical of the strategies and, therefore, attempts may be made to downgrade the SDS, for example by making it excessively general.

Fifth, it may be that strategies as a whole will be downgraded compared to a project-based focus, already favoured by the Mayor. This would leave policy areas, outside the favoured project of the moment, to be dealt with by officers (if it falls within their strategy framework) or even the Assembly (if they select an area for specific attention). The real policy action would, however, occur within these larger projects. The LDA, with its project-oriented Economic Development Strategy, may become the lead body in this case. Richard Rogers may also become a pivotal figure, with his emphasis on major urban projects promoted through non-statutory master plans.

If the tensions currently inherent within GLA are not resolved by some means, there are real dangers for the future of the organisation. Hood's cultural theory framework for public management also identifies the key weaknesses of each approach. In the worst case, the individualist is prone to corruption (as the Mayor himself recognised in our interview), but also more significantly to secrecy and 'behind closed doors' dealings. Fatalism can degenerate into cynicism and also corruption; hierarchical systems are susceptible to policy failure; and egalitarianism can become mere coexistence/internal feuding. This holds out the prospect of an overly powerful Mayor exerting undue influence while the bureaucracy fails to implement any of its strategies and the Assembly members squabble among themselves. This does not seem entirely unrealistic.

Conclusions

We have shown how the application of cultural theory to the case of the new GLA provides insights about the operation of this institution during its first year. The tensions between different emerging cultures within the GLA have been highlighted, as has the potential for overcoming these tensions through various means. However, at the start of the paper it was argued that this case study had more general relevance: first, to the assessment of the New Labour project of modernisation and constitutional reform and, second, to the judgements about the introduction of a mayoral system more generally within British local government.

On the issue of New Labour's programme, the analysis has emphasised that – whatever the government's claims – this programme is likely to generate significant tensions. This is because the many changes and innovations that result from the programme are creating new institutional arrangements. Therefore, the new and overlapping organisations, strategies, mechanisms of

service delivery and modes of participation carry with them new and overlapping norms, routines and rules-in-use. While the government may argue for 'joined up thinking', the programme of modernisation and constitutional reform has resulted in more complex patterns of governance, as Stoker also stresses (2000c). The cultural analysis shows that this is a problem for the successful operation of governance structures because complexity generates potentially competing cultures. The GLA is a paradigm case here.

The GLA case also suggests great caution in extending the mayoral innovation. Within the GLA, it has been shown that the mayoral culture can conflict with other cultures embedded in the elected Assembly and the bureaucracy. This split is important both from the perspective of service and strategy delivery (where the mayor and bureaucracy were often to be seen in conflict) and also from that of legitimacy (with competing claims to legitimacy from the Assembly – and even within the Assembly – and the Mayor). It does not seem, from this analysis, that the mayoral system is likely to lead to more effective or legitimate local government.

Perhaps even more worrying is the tendency noted in the GLA case for the mayoral system to tend towards an individualist and/or fatalist culture. Both of these cultural worldviews are associated with an excessive emphasis on the individual and are prone to corruption or cynicism. If this was the price for more effective service delivery, it might just be a price worth paying. However, the clash of cultures noted above means that is not a very likely outcome. It would seem, therefore, that the mayoral experiment carries with it significant and unacceptable dangers of undermining the legitimacy of local government and opening up opportunities for self-advancement, which have been relatively contained within the British system to date. This is clearly a danger that should be kept under review.

And what of the benefits of cultural theory itself? This discussion has suggested that cultural theory has some significant strengths for analysing an emergent institutional framework such as the GLA. It is clearly a descriptive heuristic that can be very useful, particularly in highly dynamic and complex situations such as the GLA in its early months. It is particularly useful because it does not just focus on the formal organisational structure and powers/resources of actors but goes beyond to look at the norms, values and working patterns that actually constitute the GLA. As we have seen, these aspects are the key to understanding the tensions that are becoming apparent in the operations of the authority. Cultural theory has also been able to suggest how such tensions might be resolved and the potential pathways if they are not. In this way, cultural theory can effectively offer a research agenda for future investigations into the GLA as it develops and, perhaps, becomes a more coherent, and unified body. The five possible modes of resolution of tensions identified in the last section provide an intriguing agenda for such future research.

However, there are clear limitations on cultural theory, particularly in terms of seeking an explanation of the patterns that it helps describe. There is no causal model of any significance at the root of cultural theory and, therefore, it would need to be supplemented if the basis of these tensions is to be fully understood. This would involve examining how the power and resources of different actors are involved in developing these distinct cultures within the different institutions of the GLA. Neither does cultural theory help anticipate the nature of the change that will actually occur. Rather it sets out some starting points and possibilities for future change. Again, one would need to go outside cultural theory – perhaps to exogenous factors operating outside the

local level – to understand how change will occur. But, as a first step towards understanding an emerging and still highly dynamic institutional arrangement that is struggling to develop working patterns and relationships between actors, cultural theory seems to have much to offer. In particular, it warns against taking an overly simple and unified view on the development of a complex body, such as the GLA, and primes researchers to look inside at the varieties of cultures that exist and interact.

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