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Bristol's inclusive growth strategy: excavating the discourse of the One City Plan

Over the last twenty years, particularly since the publication of the Barca report (2009) and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2014) report, a new 'conventional wisdom'/paradigm has emerged for local development – the place-based approach. This entails a commitment to inclusive growth and productivity-driven growth. However, two key issues remain: what does inclusive growth mean and how can it be reconciled with productivity-driven growth? This article provides a discourse analysis of one such attempt – Bristol's inclusive growth strategy and the associated One City Plan, a place-based approach. Our aim is to excavate and scrutinise the discourse(s) that have shaped the strategy to provide a better understanding of its origins and possible future development (i.e. its sustainability) and how it seeks to discursively reconcile these two key issues whilst taking into account the 'structural limitations' it faces. Finally we seek to briefly draw out the wider implications of this for the place-based approach.

Keywords: Bristol, One City Plan, inclusive growth, discourse analysis, strategic vision

Introduction

Since the late 2000s the place-based approach (Barca, 2009; OECD, 2014) has become the conventional wisdom/paradigm for local economic development. This approach entails not simply economic development per se but also addressing social cohesion. In order to address these 'social issues' local inclusive growth strategies have attracted growing attention as they appear to offer a way of reconciling economic development and social cohesion (i.e. in terms of social and spatial inequalities in places). It is recognised that simultaneously governance, planning and service delivery have to be restructured in ways that make them both more flexible and inclusive. In the UK, and internationally, a number of cities have attempted to develop this approach. However, these attempts have taken place during a prolonged period of 'austerity regimes' and more recently in the context of the impacts of Covid-19, both place considerable limits on what places can achieve. Here we focus on one relatively recent attempt at developing such a strategy – that of the City of Bristol.

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In this article we provide a discourse analysis of Bristol's inclusive growth strategy (BCC, 2019a) and its manifestation in the city's One City Plan (BCC, 2019b; 2020; 2021). We do not seek to provide an evaluation of the 'success' of the strategy given its recent origins and the fact that the One City Plan is a fifty-year strategic vision for the city's future and is iterative in design and implementation. The article excavates and examines the discourse(s) that have shaped the strategy in order to provide a better understanding of its origins and possible future development, including the 'structural limitations' the approach faces which goes to the issue of its sustainability.

We first outline our methods, including our approach to discourse analysis, then provide a discussion of the inclusive growth approach both nationally and internationally to situate the Bristol strategy. Then we turn to the Bristol case study and analyse its inclusive growth strategy as articulated in the One City Plan. In the conclusion we pull together the strands from the above and reflect on the implications for the strategy's future development and the wider implications of the 'Bristol experience'.

Methods

Our research was based on an analysis of key policy documents and key actor interviews related to a case study of Bristol's inclusive growth strategy (BCC, 2019a) and the associated One City Plan (BCC, 2019b; 2020; 2021). When the research was carried out the documents were only relatively recently produced. Nevertheless, many interviewees were familiar with them. Moreover, they provide examples of documents which aspire to provide a strategic and planned, albeit flexible, approach to the problems of the city. It is also worth pointing out that these documents, particularly the One City Plan, seek to define 'desired futures' that are set out in general terms. Twenty key actor interviews, each lasting an hour or more, from public, private and voluntary/community organisations allowed us to burrow deeper into the meaning and implications of these documents and identify particular discourses and policy narratives. Following Flyvbjerg (2021, chapter 6) we view this as an information-based/rich case study based on narrative inquiry, but one which relates to wider debates on the place-based approach and thus can feed into and contribute to those debates.

It is worth beginning by pointing out that 'discourse analysis' is by no means a unified notion (see Bacchi, 2000; Atkinson et al., 2011); most variants draw on the work of Foucault to a greater or lesser extent. Here we broadly follow the work of Atkinson (1999; 2000), which while based primarily on a Foucauldian approach also draws on Jameson's (1989) work on narrative analysis and Bourdieu's (1991) work on language. Essentially we use discourse here to refer to 'a group of statements which provide a language for talking about a way of representing the knowledge about a particular topic at a particular historical moment. Discourse is about the production of knowledge through language'

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(Hall, 1997, 44). However, Foucault was not entirely consistent in his use of 'discourse', particularly the relationship between the discursive and non-discursive (i.e. the Real, Atkinson, 2000) realms. In his earlier work, discourse operates as if it entirely determines the non-discursive realm, whereas in his later work he acknowledges a disjunction and inconsistency between the two (see Caldwell, 2007). Moreover, 'although political discourse constitutes its own objects, knowledge of those objects and "truth", reality remains resolutely unprogrammable constantly eluding the grasp of discourse and frustrating its objectives' (Atkinson, 2003, 105).

In Bristol we first identified what economic, social and spatial problems existed, including how they were defined and what 'solutions' and associated policies (if any) were articulated in the relevant documents. We supplemented this analysis by drawing on key actor interviews from the case study to provide additional evidence of how the issues/problems facing the city were understood and how the relevant organisations producing the document(s) were perceived by key actors in the locality. The interviews were semi-structured drawing on a list of topics and specific questions that were adapted for interviews with actors from different sectors. All interviews were recorded and transcribed with the consent of participants.

We used a general framework for the discourse analysis of the relevant policy documents which entailed identifying:

- inequalities in the city
- forms of territorial capital identified (in terms of strengths and weaknesses)
- relevant policy audiences
- how the documents were produced
- who produced them
- who defined the dominant policy narrative.

Our interviewees explicitly discussed and commented on the documents and some were involved in their development. Moreover, most interviewees provided their views on key issues relevant to the ability/capacity of the lead organisation to understand key problems and policy issues relevant to the area, develop a strategic approach to the problems, engage in partnership working (including planning and territorial governance), work collaboratively and engage with various audiences.

Situating the inclusive economic growth discourse: a wider perspective – international and domestic

The place-based approach has become a 'new conventional wisdom'/paradigm for local development based on a mix of endogenous use of territorial capital and exogenous support. These two sets of factors are to be integrated and utilised by a restructured local governance system that combines vertical, horizontal and territorial dimensions. This requires a local governance system capable of promoting

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policy integration and institutional co-operation, engaging with new stakeholders and encouraging the dissemination and transfer of knowledge. Another distinguishing aspect of the place-based approach is that unlike traditional area-based initiatives the focus is not on places demarcated by existing administrative boundaries but on 'meaningful' functional spaces. As the Barca report (2009, xi) points out: 'Places are defined through the policy process from a functional perspective as regions in which a set of conditions conducive to development apply more than they do in larger or smaller areas'.

The inclusive growth discourse has rather different origins as it is 'global', originating in the global South (see Lee, 2019). From the late 2000s it was taken up and articulated by organisations such as the OECD (2014; 2017; 2018) and European Union (European Commission, 2010) in relation to the global North and the issues these societies faced as a result of the ongoing processes of globalisation and the impacts of the 2007–2008 crash. It has also been taken up by a number of cities within the UK (see Beel et al., 2017; Green et al., 2017; Sissons et al., 2019), such as Manchester (Lupton et al., 2019), as well as by cities in the US (e.g. New York, Lee, 2019) and Australia (Smyth and Buchanan, 2013).

Inclusive growth lacks a clear definition (see Lee, 2019). For instance, the OECD defines it as: 'economic growth that creates opportunity for all segments of the population and distributes the dividends of increased prosperity, both in monetary and non-monetary terms, fairly across society' (OECD, 2014, 80), while the European Commission defines it as:

> Inclusive growth means empowering people through high levels of employment, investing in skills, fighting poverty and modernising labour markets, training and social protection systems so as to help people anticipate and manage change, and build a cohesive society. (European Commission, 2010, 16)

It is also important to remember that the dominant discourse within the EU focuses on enhancing Europe's global competitiveness, thus the emphasis is on improvements in innovation and productivity to enhance competitiveness. Arguably this is an approach that deploys a variant of neoliberalism (see Olesen, 2013; Atkinson and Zimmermann, 2018), and notions such as inclusive growth are subordinate to and designed to support this overriding imperative. Inclusive growth is justified in terms of investments in human and social capital which are seen as long-term (economic) investments that will enhance economic growth and competitiveness and simultaneously address inequalities (Lee and Sissons, 2016; Pike et al., 2017). Similarly, the OECD approach emphasises the need to enhance competitiveness through improvements in innovation and productivity. Admittedly both acknowledge the tensions between competitiveness and inclusiveness and the need to reconcile the two, but as the last two decades have illustrated, this rarely happens as can be seen from the rise in inequality across Europe (see Pérez-Moreno and Angulo-Guerrero, 2016).

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In the UK there are a similar variety of definitions. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF, 2017) has supported the approach as part of the RSA Inclusive Growth Commission (see RSA, 2017) as has the Centre for Progressive Policy (2019a; 2019b). What all have in common is a desire to provide an alternative to that proposed by post-2010 UK governments when it comes to addressing issues of growth, inequality, well-being and cohesion at the local level. Overall the inclusive growth approach, whilst acknowledging the primacy of economic growth, accepts that in the past the benefits of growth have been unequally distributed and that this is a problem which requires a range of actions to redress this.

These approaches/agendas emphasise the importance of the involvement/engagement of public, private and voluntary/community stakeholders. Moreover, it should be multi-level, multi-dimensional and integrated. In this sense it is about enhancing collective action in order to deliver a strategy. It should also address issues such as well-being, distribution both between different groups and spatially, and integrate existing policies (e.g. on education, labour markets, training, social protection) into the agenda. By acknowledging the presence of spatial inequalities, the approach also implicitly addresses the need to ensure that not only is a place socially cohesive but also cohesive in a territorial sense. The Bristol One City Plan and inclusive growth strategy is situated in this wider context and acknowledges its existence and its rootedness in this wider context. What this article highlights is the inherent limitations such an approach faces, not merely in Bristol but more generally across the UK and Europe (see Atkinson and Pacchi, 2021 for an elaboration of these limitations). By doing this we help redress the 'uncritical' reception of the place-based approach that has characterised this approach.

The Bristol case study

Context

Bristol is considered to be a 'successful city' with a growing economy and high quality of life. It has high concentrations of employment in business and financial services as well as in health and education. It has many of the characteristics of a 'knowledge-based economy'. Nevertheless, it is also one of the most polarised cities in England with large areas of disadvantaged neighbourhoods (15 per cent of the population of the city lives in areas classified in the 10 per cent most disadvantaged in England; BCC, 2019c, 3).

The major change to the structures of local governance in the last decade has been the decision to have an elected mayor (city mayor) in the City of Bristol (see Hambleton and Sweeting, 2014; Sweeting, 2017; Sweeting and Hambleton, 2017) and to create a combined authority with an elected mayor (metro mayor) of which Bristol is part, along with South Gloucestershire and Bath & North East Somerset. In terms of Bristol, the city mayor does seem to have improved coordination within the city

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council and with other stakeholders in the public, private and voluntary/community sectors (Hambleton and Sweeting, 2015; Sweeting et al., 2020). Working relationships with surrounding authorities, which have not always been good in the past (Stewart, 1996), do seem to have improved (Hambleton, 2020a). With regard to the combined authority the jury is still out on its impact given it was only established in 2017 and is still 'finding its feet', its second metropolitan mayor being elected in 2021.

A recent innovation introduced by Bristol's city mayor was the setting up of a City Office charged with the elaboration of the One City Plan (Hambleton, 2019; 2020a). This Plan brings together different actors and interest groups in the city. This means supporting partners, organisations and citizens to help address key challenges such as driving economic growth for everyone – i.e. inclusive and sustainable growth.

Analysing the One City Plan and the inclusive growth strategy

What the Plan seeks to do

The One City Plan sets out the long-term (up to 2050) 'vision' while the Bristol Inclusive Growth Strategy elaborates the strategy to achieve it (BCC, 2019a, 5). The two should be read in tandem as they provide the basis for an approach to addressing economic development, inequalities and cohesion at the local level. The One City Plan claims to be a 'co-production' based on extensive consultations over an 18-month period with organisations from the private, community and third sector (Hambleton, 2019; 2020a). Thus the document(s) may be seen as attempting to engage with 'multiple audiences' and gain their consent for the One City Plan and ensure its longevity across political cycles, with the current city mayor stepping down in 2024. Both documents explicitly emphasise a place-based approach to territorial cohesion, territorial governance and collective action (see Hambleton, 2015a; 2015b).

The inclusive growth strategy notes: 'The focus in Bristol is on productivity-driven growth together with the fair distribution of economic contributions and benefits' (BCC, 2019a, 5), albeit that growth should not be a short-term rush for growth and/or at the expense of the environment, health and quality of place and life. Creativity and innovation are central to the productivity-driven growth strategy as is the need to ensure the maintenance and enhancement of Bristol's competitiveness vis-à-vis other cities in the UK and elsewhere.

Genesis of the One City Plan

The development of the One City Plan is intimately related to the city mayor, Marvin Rees (elected in May 2016 and re-elected in May 2021) (see Hambleton, 2019; 2020a). This was based on his interest in inclusive growth, civic leadership and the development of new ways of including 'core voices' in urban governance. One can also reasonably assume that Rees was influenced by a Master's in global economic development he

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did at Eastern University in the US which may partly account for the adoption of the 'inclusive growth' approach. Later he was at Yale University on a World Fellows Program. During his time in the US he was also able to observe the development and implementation of explicitly place-based policies and he also worked with community organisations.[1] Much of this type of intervention is funded by philanthropic bodies (see Pierson and Smith, 2001) and it is not unreasonable to argue Rees was both 'exposed' to and influenced by these forms of intervention.

In the US there is a long history of philanthropic activity by both wealthy individuals and businesses in the social field responding to a 'weak welfare state'. Many of these have engaged in 'innovative community-based' interventions in urban regeneration/development(s) (Pierson and Smith, 2001). While there have long been examples of this in the UK (e.g. the Quaker Cadbury family in Bournville) it has tended to be of a 'secondary nature' compared to the post-1945 welfare state. However, with the restructuring of the state (Jessop, 1993) and the subsequent 'restructuring and retrenchment' of the welfare state (see Ellison, 2017), such forms have begun to re-emerge.

Amongst public sector and business sector interviewees, virtually all mentions of the One City Plan and Inclusive Growth Strategy saw it as a progressive response to the previous fragmented governance structures and policy silos in the city. However, community representatives' attitudes towards the One City Plan may be related to 'methodological silence' in that the interview questions did not specifically ask about the One City Plan. Because of this we can draw no inferences regarding their attitudes towards the Plan, though it was recognised by respondents that 'the jury's still out on how effective it's been because it's very much in the storming phase' (a councillor) and 'I think it still has fairly low levels of awareness certainly … the One City Plan isn't really public yet' (a university partnership officer).

Factors shaping the One City and Inclusive Growth approach

More generally we would argue that what the One City Plan and the inclusive growth strategy are attempting to achieve is to develop and establish a particular discourse, or what might be termed a 'political rationality' which aims to:

> conceptualise and justify goals as well as the means to achieve them, thus defining the proper parameters of political action and the institutional framework appropriate to those limits. They do so through discourses that make it seem as if techniques are addressing a common problem through shared logic and principles. (Simons, 1995, 38)

Furthermore, 'the radical changes in the behavior of actors and organizations in Britain result from a state-imposed bureaucratic revolution that … profoundly transformed institutions, then behavior' (Le Galès and Scott, 2010, 120). While their

1 https://alumni.yale.edu/people/marvin-rees.

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research was on the NHS, the results of the 'bureaucratic revolution' they highlight can be seen in local government:

> Maximising profits and the interests of individuals and the organization became the central concern … it was not the invisible hand of the market but the visible hand of the state that distributed punishments and rewards, with the aim of bringing into being a rational, egoistic, utility-maximizing individual. (Le Galès and Scott, 2010, 134)

In this sense both groups (e.g. professionals) and individuals have become inculcated (Atkinson, 2000) with particular ways of thinking and acting resulting in new ways of conceiving and implementing local development strategies that were consistent with market forms, albeit supported by philanthropic contributions (e.g. from local businesses and funds) where available and appropriate. Certainly one can see elements of this present in the One City Plan and how it hopes to develop in the future. A clear example of this is the primacy of the productivity-driven approach in the documents and the ways in which interviewees were concerned to stress the managerial changes brought about by the city mayor through the creation of the City Office as a 'central management hub' that brought together a previously disparate range of policies in an attempt to enhance their efficiency and effectiveness.

Moreover, as noted earlier the conditions created by the particular form of neoliberalism, state restructuring, new public management and austerity have limited the options available and created fragmentation at local level both in terms of governance and service delivery. Atkinson et al. (2019, 18–19) argued that in some places this has created 'entrepreneurial project-based governance' and associated 'temporary entrepreneurial urban regimes'. The Temple Quarter development is an example of this in Bristol,[2] i.e. when a particular development has its own governance regime to promote entrepreneurial development. More generally Tasan-Kok et al. (2021) have argued within this fragmented context that 'hybrid contractual landscapes of governance' emerged as the public and private sector are increasingly combining to deliver public services. This form of 'governance by contract' creates new problems with regard to accountability, threatening to undermine traditional democratic forms of accountability and marginalise the role of communities. This can be seen in the Temple Quarter enterprise zone, where community consultation, let alone participation, has been very limited, thereby reducing accountability. The One City Plan and any other inclusive growth strategy, particularly within the UK, will have to confront these issues and find ways of integrating them into the more long-term strategic approach that the place-based approach advocates. Additionally, the ways of thinking and acting identified by Le Galès and Scott (2010) will place significant limitations on 'how to do' inclusive growth. All of these factors run the risk of alienating the local community

2 In June 2022 this was awarded £95m from the Levelling Up fund, perhaps reflecting Bristol's claim to present itself as an 'economic driver' of growth.

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and voluntary sector, thus placing severe strain on any inclusive growth strategy and place-based approaches more generally.

Elements of the foregoing can be identified in the One City Plan and the inclusive growth strategy, albeit in an embryonic form, as it seeks to construct a particular way of thinking about the city, an agenda and acting on that agenda to bring about change.

Structural limitations influencing the Plan

In the UK. national and local government has been restructured over the post-1979 period within the framework of a particular neoliberal 'political and economic regime' that itself has changed and mutated over time and across space. Following Allmendinger and Haughton (2014) we argue that the current phase of neoliberalism in the UK has been characterised by what they term the 'roll-out' variety of neoliberalism, with its attendant processes of ongoing experimentation with forms of governance that support market-based forms of action. However, this has not been a uniform process across space, and these wider processes continue to be mediated by local factors meaning that one cannot simply read off the local implications of this phase of neoliberalism.

This also reflects the changing nature of the wider reorganisation, restructuring and fragmentation of the British state and sub-national government over both time and space (see Le Galès and Scott, 2010), a process further accentuated by the response to the 2007–2008 Crash. Thus at sub-national level in the period since 1979 these developments have significantly restructured and reduced the role of local government, entailing changes in the way services are delivered (e.g. through contracting out, developing delivery partnerships with a range of private, community and voluntary sector organisations). For instance, in Bristol the council works with a range of contracted private providers to deliver services related to pre-school childcare.

Much of this has taken place under the banner of new public management and been pushed forward under governments of different political hues (Le Galès and Scott, 2010). Finally, post-2010 the 'austerity regime' has led to major reductions in local authority budgets, forcing them to increasingly focus their activities on key statutory services, leaving community/voluntary sector organisations to attempt to 'pick up the slack'. The impacts of these cuts have been uneven, with the poorest places often experiencing the most dramatic cuts in funding (Beatty and Fothergill, 2016). These changes have produced a more fragmented system of service delivery.

In this context, philanthropy has taken on new and increased significance (see Maclean et al., 2021; Harrow et al., 2021). Given the 'structural limitations' noted above, it is not unreasonable to argue that philanthropic support from locally based businesses is one source of funding that will be drawn on to fill the 'resource gap' in the One City Plan. However, as Maclean et al. (2021, 341) point out, these sources

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of funding are by no means benign altruism, moreover, they fail to 'challenge the institutions that promote inequality, content to accept the status quo'. This needs to be kept in mind when considering the key role Rees has played and underlying forces structuring the One City Plan, and the associated, unstated, discursive formations structuring the Plan.

Constructing the Plan: internal and external factors

In terms of the process of developing the One City Approach, community umbrella organisations (e.g. Voscur, the support and development agency for Bristol's voluntary, community and social enterprise), individual community/voluntary organisations, the private sector and the city's two universities were consulted during the formation of the Plan, through city gatherings and hundreds of workshops across the city. Interviewees suggested this process allowed for a direct influence on the outcome of the Plan from multiple actor groups. It was written in-house by Bristol City Council civil servants in the newly created City Office rather than by consultants. The Plan brings together hundreds of previously unaligned strategies which are now within one framework to harness collective power to benefit the city as a whole.

There is, however, an important caveat related to what we have referred to as 'structural limitations'. First, the Greater Bristol metropolitan region goes beyond the City of Bristol and includes local authority areas outside of the One City Plan's scope. This reflects the historical, administrative and territorially defined nature of local government in England. But it relates directly to the 'territorial dimension' of both governance and what constitutes a 'functional space'.[3] The Greater Bristol region is a 'functional space', arguably a discursive construct in itself, and local government does not generally coincide with such spaces. Currently there is no similar document/strategy for the metropolitan region as a whole. The One City Plan does express the intention to articulate with and compliment the West of England joint spatial strategy (subsequently abandoned) and the local enterprise partnership's local industrial strategy (BCC, 2019a, 4) that cover the Greater Bristol metropolitan region.

The Plan (BCC, 2019b; 2020; 2021) makes occasional reference to national documents such as the UK government's industrial strategy (HMG, 2017), superseded by the 'Plan for Growth' (HM Treasury, 2021) and notes a series of relevant national policy areas (such as vocational and educational training, labour market policy and childcare) that would need to be 'bent' and articulated with the local strategy in order

3 It could be argued that the West of England combined authority and metro mayor offer a 'better route' to achieving the aims of the One City Plan. However, the combined authority has not been a success to date – e.g. the failure to develop a spatial strategy which had to be dropped because all the authorities could not agree on its scope and content. Also the combined authorities that appear to have worked are those where cooperative arrangements had been in place for some time before the setting up of the combined authority – e.g. Greater Manchester (see Antrobus, 2011; Beel et al., 2021).

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to support its objectives. The problem is that these are policy domains over which the local authority has no direct control; it *may* be able to influence their operation at the local level but this will rely on getting the relevant delivery bodies/agencies on board (i.e. potentially as partners) and the centrally determined metrics/targets that structure the action of these bodies/agencies coinciding/aligning with the strategy of Bristol. The result is that the resources available to BCC do not match the ambitions of the One City Plan. While the Plan acknowledges these limitations, it only addresses them by vague references to the generation of internal resources from both the council and the wider city (presumably the private and voluntary sectors) and unspecified national sources of funding. This represents an important discursive (and practical) lacuna in the One City Plan which is addressed in passing rather than acknowledged as a significant limitation. One could argue this signifies a certain openness and frankness not to 'sugar coat' the dilemmas facing the Plan compared to simply not including them and pretending no such limitations exist. Overall the focus of the One City Plan and inclusive growth strategy is on doing things 'the Bristol way' and the things it can influence at local level.

Inclusive economic growth in Bristol: addressing inequalities, uneven economic growth and cohesion in Bristol

The One City Plan situates itself within the wider international context of the place-based approach and inclusive growth and it directly acknowledges the One New York City Plan. As one councillor pointed out: 'it's been developed by the mayor much more on an American model than a British model … that's very much led by the mayor' (cabinet member, Bristol City Council; see also Hambleton 2019; 2020a). This demonstrates the national and international 'policy transfer' of the One City concept and lesson learning from other city contexts (cf. Clayton et al., 2017; OECD Champion Mayors for Inclusive Growth, 2018).

The particular form of inclusive growth envisaged in Bristol was described by an advisor to the city mayor in the following terms:

> The … Plan … is not a conventional spatial land use plan … , it's a collective plan for public service and public purpose in the city, but it has got a spatial component … it takes the vision for the city forward to 2050, so it's quite long term, and the idea is that the One City Approach, this collective effort by different stakeholders, will deliver to multiple agencies the One City Plan … that has a geographical dimension, there is investment … for particular parts of the city [which] might address … inequalities.

The key issue remains – whether or not those living in deprived areas will be able to take advantage of opportunities related to economic development, which is the 'acid test' for the strategy. Nevertheless, the underlying narrative of the strategy is that

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everyone can benefit. This line of argumentation is central to a vision of what the city will/could be like in 2050 if everyone works together for the collective good. What the One City Plan presents is a 'vision statement' (Kenny, 2014; 2016), an 'imagined future' and it offers a 'plan' (a strategy) to work back from that 'future' presenting a framework decade by decade of what the city hopes to achieve in order to realise that 'future'. The six key themes of connectivity, economy, environment, health and well-being, homes and communities, and learning and skills each have three initiatives associated with them each year. In this sense it resembles what Kornberger and Clegg (2011, 138) refer to as a performative practice. In their analysis:

> Strategizing means developing a (usually big) picture of the future that will frame immediate courses of action. In this sense, strategy turns the arrow of time; the future becomes the condition of the possibility for action in the present.

The bulk of the One City Plan (BCC, 2019b; 2020; 2021) sets out a provisional 'road map' to achieve that 'imagined future', what Kenny (2016) refers to as a 'guidance tool'. The approach is one that is careful to emphasise that this 'road map' is not set in stone but is an iterative one (a process and a practice) that will be regularly revisited and reviewed in the light of developments both within the city and externally. A manager of a community interest company in the city pointed out '[It] really is saying now that there's a One City Plan that is clear about objectives and the vision of the city, and is a living, moving, breathing, document'. This process and practice seeks to be evidence-based (BCC, 2019a, 4–5) and includes 'local knowledge' (BCC, 2019a, 44) through the active and ongoing involvement of private and community partners in the process.

Moreover, the very title 'One City' seeks to represent the city as one that is attempting to overcome divisions and work collectively in the best interests of the city and everyone who lives in it. Again this represents an attempt, at least discursively, to enhance both collective action and inclusion. The approach adopted is also consistent with the city's attempt to portray itself as outward looking, part of a global network of cities in contrast to the parochialism of many English cities. A key element is that the city is 'open for business' (see BCC, 2019a, 29–31), signalling that it is seeking inward investment.

Territorial assets and collective agency

More generally there is a sense in which the approach deploys a series of tropes (Nelson, 1998) to present itself as a multiplicity of cities: a dynamic city, a sustainable city, a creative city, a green city, a learning city, a cultural city, a diverse city, a healthy city and ultimately an inclusive city. Traces of these multiple cities can be found within the Plan as it attempts to create a narrative of a diverse city with a multiplicity of strengths (territorial assets) that can be drawn upon and combined to create a city that reconciles (economic) growth with social and environmental fairness

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and sustainability. Nevertheless, the language used in the Plan documentation (BCC 2019a, 2020, 2021) can be seen as of a managerial and technocratic nature, which is no surprise given that it was written by council officers. This is accentuated by the clear influence of a strategic management discourse as a core structuring element in the One City Approach (e.g. Kenny 2014; 2016). Arguably the use of such language is not inclusive as it requires 'membership' of a particular 'policy (language) community' in order to understand it and participate in its development and implementation.

Great care is taken to develop a particular discourse that emphasises the One City Plan is not the product of a single organisation, but of a 'joint enterprise' – a 'co-production' of many partners, the product of a range of different knowledge forms and evidence that has been brought together and assimilated, and that it will continue to evolve in response to changing circumstances in this manner. It is an iterative and 'living' document to be updated regularly through various feedback mechanisms such as regular city gatherings and workshops. The clear contention is that the approach is not the product of a single organisation/body or 'owned' by a particular organisation or group of individuals – it is collectively owned, the product of participation by a diverse range of organisations and actors from all sectors across the city and will continue to develop on this basis. In this sense the One City Approach represents a discursive attempt to articulate the development of a new model of city leadership which embraces cross-sector collaboration, aligned to the ambitions and goals set out in this plan (BCC, 2019a, 38; Hambleton, 2019; 2020a).

Leadership and governance in Bristol

What is taking place in Bristol is two things. First is the construction of what Hajer (1993) terms a discourse coalition of 'urban managers'. Such coalitions are made up of 'a group of actors [including organisations] who share a social construct' (Hajer, 1993, 45) about the world, or some part of it, and how it functions. Moreover, they will tell similar stories that seek to account for why things 'are as they are' and what needs to be done to 'treat' them. Second, it represents an attempt to create a form of 'urban regime' (Stone, 1989; 1993) – a coalition – that is the bearer of the One City Plan and will transcend electoral cycles because it is 'collectively owned' and not merely the reflection of a particular set of interests; rather, it embraces a wide range of interests and operates in the 'public interest'. Whilst this cannot currently be empirically confirmed it is clear from the above that at least in a discursive sense there is an attempt to construct a form of 'transcendent urban regime'.

The evidence from our interviews suggests that a wide range of public, private and voluntary sector actors directly contributed to the Plan which argues:

> A City Leadership Group will give clear ownership to the statements made in this plan and work to prioritise city-wide actions. This will help ensure that the One City Plan

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> and Approach is embedded over time within core institutions in the city. It will be a source of cross-agency resources to ensure action is taken, this group will also advocate for the adoption and incorporation of the spirit of the One City Plan across Bristol. (BCC, 2019b, 38)

This approach was reflected upon by interviewees, for example a council official:

> The city office approach has brought in far more private partners who recognise that … they've always seen themselves as having a key role in the way that the city organises itself. Now they're being recognised as key parts of the governance of the city and it is a distinct change from government to governance. That's something that the mayor points out frequently and it is true, and when you do get meetings with a range of private sector partners and public sector partners together, they say, well we don't see this anywhere else and we don't see the commitment to the place that we're experiencing here in Bristol.

In this sense it is also about 'the rich interconnectivity of the city as a dynamic and diverse "system of systems"'. It is built on six 'stories' or themes as we noted earlier all of which are interdependent (BCC, 2019a, 9). The use of the word 'stories' is interesting because it suggests a series of interlocking narratives – what might be termed 'tales of the city' that seek to convey the complexity and collective nature of the city as part of an attempt to overcome 'artificial' boundaries and social divisions. Again this resembles elements of the approach Kornberger and Clegg (2011, 152) identified in Sydney where they noted: 'As several of the people interviewed argued, strategy's style differed markedly, resembling a form of storytelling'.

Finally the documents are about strategic planning, in the sense of thinking strategically, but not in a rigid sense, in order to achieve an 'imagined future'. They articulate a line of argumentation that follows that developed by Kenny (2014; 2016) who argues that '[a] strategic plan is not a set-and-forget instrument. It's a living and breathing document that guides decision making and helps marshal resources' (Kenny, 2016). This form of 'strategic planning' aims to keep people focused on the 'big picture' and how to achieve it. Here we see echoes of what Kornberger and Clegg (2011, 139) detected in Sydney in the sense that '[t]he final document, entitled Sustainable Sydney 2030, presented a strategic vision for Sydney and mapped out how to accomplish it'.

Overall the One City Approach claims that it has established a network of 'new' governance mechanisms that bring 'order to the chaos' which it claims previously characterised the governance of the city. This may be interpreted as an attempt to convey the message that there has been a distinct shift from being a seemingly complacent city resistant to development and change where 'good ideas came to die', to a more entrepreneurial culture though with a strong social conscience (Stewart, 1996; Tallon, 2007). The One City Approach is portrayed as offering something new and opening up a way forward, as a chair of a city funds board argued: 'I think we've

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got a unique moment in the history of the city, certainly … in recent generations … to really do something special and leave a legacy that … lasts … and makes a real difference'.

Nevertheless, there are many diverse and potentially contradictory elements within it. For instance how will the emphasis on productivity-driven growth in high value-added economic sectors be reconciled with the deeply embedded deficits in education and training in the socially and spatially marginalised parts of the city that currently excludes people living in these areas from benefiting from productivity-driven growth? Questions over how people in these areas will be enabled to participate in these economic developments and enhance their life chances and well-being remain unanswered and there is no specification in the Plan of how this might be achieved. However, currently it appears that many of the key actors in the business and community sectors have signed up to the approach. To what extent the leadership driving the associated governing and discursive coalition will be able to maintain it in the light of future developments when the distribution of the associated outcomes begin to emerge remains an open question (Hambleton, 2020b).

In summary a wide variety of factors discussed above can be identified in and as influencing the One City Plan and the inclusive growth strategy, albeit often in an embryonic form, as it seeks to construct a particular way of thinking about the city, an agenda and acting on that agenda to bring about change. Such change effectively seeks to narrow territorial inequalities spatially, in terms of labour markets, regenerating deprived communities, addressing underperformance in education and skills and addressing affordability of pre-school child care. Finally we recognise that what we provide in this article is a particular 'reading' of the documents and that no such 'reading' can be considered to be definitive, rather they are 'contested'.

Conclusion

Given that the place-based approach is intended to be tailored to the particular conditions and needs of each place it is not possible to draw prescriptive conclusions relevant for all places. However, on the basis of our analysis of Bristol's attempt to develop such an approach it is possible to identify some more generic issues that will need to be addressed. Bristol's approach represents a place-based approach concerned to address issues related to economic, social and territorial development through a particular type of growth strategy that is based on productivity-driven growth. However, this is linked with an acknowledgement of the need for a 'fair' distribution of economic contributions and benefits in terms of enabling people to participate in that growth through improving education, skills, training and connectivity for those people and areas of the city that to date have not been able to participate in or benefit from Bristol's past growth. Additionally there is a recognition of the need to address the social conditions

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(e.g. housing, poverty/exclusion) of the marginalised areas of the city which have deeply embedded problems. In this sense it may be argued that place-based cohesion is being addressed, albeit through a particular 'Bristol approach', that of 'inclusive' growth. Many interviewees pointed to territorial capital assets and cohesion initiatives, more co-ordinated and effective territorial and multi-level governance within Greater Bristol, and collective action between the private, public and community sectors to tackle social and economic problems.

The One City Plan is ambitious in terms of what it hopes to achieve, but it is limited by the availability of resources and this applies to other attempts to develop inclusive growth strategies in the UK and elsewhere. In terms of any place-based approach there is only so much that endogenous development can achieve on its own; additional 'outside' resource inputs will be required. In the UK context this means a combination of endogenous and exogenous development, and in the aftermath of ten years of austerity, the impacts of Covid-19 and a government apparently focused on 'levelling up' the midlands and north, any external resources are unlikely to match the scale of the problems.

Finally, it needs to be kept in mind that by adopting its particular variant of 'inclusive growth', the city is involved in a process of the 'mobilisation of bias' and 'agenda setting' (Bachrach and Baratz, 1962; 1963) with rules that constitutes certain 'things' as legitimate objects of debate whilst simultaneously excluding others. The primacy accorded to productivity-driven growth and maintaining the city's competitiveness is a clear example of this; it is the *sine qua non*. The result is that the 'social dimension' is subordinate and dependent rather than, for instance, emphasising an approach on enhancing 'well-being'. This is by no means unique to Bristol and can be seen at EU level and in many member states.

Moreover, what remains unresolved is how 'thought', in the sense of political rationality, will be translated into 'action' (and what will be the outcome of this translation process). Can the city construct and deploy appropriate policy bundles that utilise and build on the available territorial capital while enhancing it and simultaneously addressing the deficiencies identified in the document? Can it put in place the appropriate forms of inclusive governance that engages with and draws on the resources and knowledge of other governmental organisations and the community and private sectors? How the One City Plan will move from the realms of discourse, narrative and political rationality to address Bristol's deeply embedded social and spatial inequalities while constructing and maintaining an urban regime and associated 'governing coalition' is the big question that remains to be resolved. What this article shows that is of particular relevance to the wider international community, given the ubiquity of the place-based approach as a way of addressing local development and the tendency to view it as a 'magic bullet', is that there are issues endemic to this approach that will require 'innovative' and context relevant solutions that can access and combine

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resources whilst simultaneously developing forms of governance that can overcome embedded sources of resistance and engage with marginalised communities. Unless such considerations are taken into account from the very beginning of the process of developing a long-term strategy, the chances of success will be greatly diminished.

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