

ARTICLES

DELIVERING JOINED-UP GOVERNMENT IN THE UK: DIMENSIONS, ISSUES AND PROBLEMS

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In the UK, joined-up government (JUG) was a central part of the first Blair government's programme for public sector reform. It remains a pivotal, if more muted, feature of the second term. We will identify the range of disparate activities that have been branded as 'joined up'. We then look at the variety of official guidance coming from the centre of government to highlight the overlapping and competing strategies that underpinned the implementation of joined-up government. Various competing strategies have been advocated and implemented at any one time. Therefore the situation was more fluid and more contested than might be inferred from the use of the homogenizing term 'joined-up government'. We conclude by briefly considering what this implies for our understanding of intra-state relationships, of the relationships between public agencies and civil society, and the relationship between JUG and the politics of the Third Way.

INTRODUCTION

For the first term of the Blair Government, joined-up government (JUG) was a central objective of public sector reform. Much was expected of it and much was claimed on its behalf. The agenda of public reform is now moving on to a focus on 'delivery' and 'quality services' rather than 'modernizing government'. However, joined-up government continues to play an important part in this new wave of public reforms. Therefore, both in relation to assessing the early stages of 'Third Way' public sector reform and also in assessing future reforms, this is a timely moment to reflect on the meaning and implications of the term 'joined-up government'.

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To make these assessments, we examine the context in which JUG arose and the dimensions it took on. We then look at the variety of official guidance to understand the competing strategies that underpinned the implementation of JUG. We find that the term JUG was used to cover a range of rather different activities and that guidance from the centre about how to deliver it varied. Therefore, there was a cluster of competing strategies being advocated and implemented at any one time. The situation was therefore more fluid and more contested than might be inferred from the use of the homogenizing term 'joined-up government'. The paper concludes by briefly considering what this might imply for our understanding of intra-state relationships, of the relationships between public agencies and civil society, and the relationship between JUG and the politics of the Third Way.

In this paper we are concerned with the overall relationships between the centre and those delivering JUG across the whole range of public services, and less concerned with the individual services themselves. By 'the centre' we mean the place where the key determining decisions are arrived at. In practice this means the leadership of the central departments with the Treasury and the Cabinet Office both having a particular overarching co-ordinating role. The leadership of each department, within the Treasury and the Cabinet Office, and various 'policy entrepreneurs' advocating particular approaches to 're-thinking' government, have all put forward different approaches and these jostle with each other in the complex politics binding local services to the centre and functionally distinct organizations to each other. The outcomes of these complex politics matter because they shape who has access to the public sphere, who is denied and which interests may be privileged.

But first, what is joined-up government in Britain? It is best viewed as a group of responses to the perception that services had become fragmented and that this fragmentation was preventing the achievement of important goals of public policy. This perception grew in prominence in the mid-1990s and has remained an important part of the thinking behind public sector reform. It is based on the view that important goals of public policy cannot be delivered through the separate activities of existing organizations but neither could they be delivered by creating a new 'super agency'. It therefore seeks to align the activities of formally separate organizations towards particular goals of public policy. Therefore, joined-up working aims to co-ordinate activities across organizational boundaries without removing the boundaries themselves. These boundaries are inter-departmental, central-local, and sectoral (corporate, public, voluntary/community). To join up, initiatives must align organizations with different cultures, incentives, management systems and aims.

Therefore, 'joined-up government' is an umbrella term describing various ways of aligning formally distinct organizations in pursuit of the objectives of the government of the day. Clearly, in the sense that they seek to co-

ordinate the work of different agencies, all governments attempt to 'join-up'. Just as the functional separation of state agencies is a necessary part of managing complexity and is a characteristic feature of the modern state (Poggi 1990), so too is the development of strategies to deal with the problems this creates. But in the UK, the term 'joined-up government' itself has been connected with particular innovations, outlined below, associated in the first instance with New Labour's modernizing government agenda (see *Modernising Government*, Cabinet Office 1999).

Our concern is with the delivery and management of JUG from the centre. As well as the work of central departments, the Cabinet Office and the Treasury both have particular responsibility for promoting and achieving joined-up government. The Office of Public Service Reform (based in the Cabinet Office and established in 2001) is taking some of this work forward. The Cabinet Office also has responsibility for a wide range of cross-cutting initiatives (such as combating social exclusion). The Treasury is responsible for the overall management framework of public finances and services (for example, some Public Services Agreements are cross-cutting and require joined-up working). Before looking at the strategies evolving at the centre, we will look first at the context within which JUG emerged.

THE CONTEXT OF JOINED-UP GOVERNMENT; A 'NEW PHASE IN THE REFORM OF GOVERNANCE'?

From at least the mid-1970s, changing pressures on public services challenged what had come to be regarded as the 'conventional' delivery of public services (see Ling 1998). At the risk of caricaturing a complex picture, we might define its characterizing features (mid-1940s–mid-1970s) as:

- The functional differentiation of spending departments with the Treasury responsible for overall financial co-ordination;
- The spatial division between central and local government with some local revenue raising powers within a context shaped by the Treasury and spending departments;
- Self-regulation for professionals in delivering public services;
- Non-professional services provided through relatively autonomous bureaucrats who were expected to be relatively passive administrators rather than active managers; and
- Formal accountability upwards to Ministers who in turn were answerable to Parliament.

This pattern of delivering public services was seen to be insufficient with a succession of official reports and politicians' speeches highlighting its supposed deficiencies in the general areas of civil service, local government, financing and management, and the specific areas such as urban policy, education, housing and social work (Ling 1998). We can now see that the debate about the 'crisis of the state', so heated in the 1970s, was premature

if not misguided, but it captured the sense that continuing with the organizational *status quo* was not an option for the public sector. This thesis was supported both by a more conservative concern with 'overload' and 'un-governability' (King 1975; Rose 1979) and by a neo-marxist literature concerned with a legitimacy crisis (Habermas 1975; Offe 1984). The first wave of experiments in the 1980s included efforts to create clearly focused, decentralized agencies capable of responding flexibly to market-like signals. This created a degree of fragmentation that was arguably more extreme in the UK than elsewhere. With this came particular problems associated with coordinating the work of various single-purpose agencies. Therefore, when JUG was discussed in the 1990s, it was not only in response to the perceived weaknesses in conventional delivery processes, but it was also a response to the perceived problems associated with fragmentation during the 1980s. However, as can be seen in table 1, the pursuit of joined up government was not a uniquely British phenomenon; the fact that it is found throughout many different regimes suggests that it is at least in part connected to wider trends. Table 1 highlights the broad shape of joined-up working elsewhere to show that the UK, while unusual in some ways, was not unusual in seeking to develop strategies for joined-up government.

The 1980s and the fragmentation of delivery

The Conservative Governments of the 1980s and early 1990s introduced a range of measures intended to break up what was held to be a monolithic, inward-looking public sector too little concerned with the needs of service users. These measures included the creation of agencies, internal markets, privatization, market testing, and compulsory competitive tendering (CCT). At the heart of these reforms was the creation of focused (hopefully single-purpose) agencies driven by clear market-like incentives to perform ever better, especially in relation to costs and customers' needs. The objective was improved efficiency and responsiveness. 'State functions were dispersed through market and quasi-market mechanisms, by the outsourcing of government functions to private sector companies and by the establishment of civil service Executive Agencies, NHS Trusts, GP fund-holding and the proliferation of quangos' (Newman 2001, pp. 55–6). However, this sort of single-focus approach exacerbated the difficulty of co-ordinating multi-agency responses to complex problems.

Co-ordination was made more difficult partly because the incentives to achieve each organization's aims were greater than the incentives to achieve more system-wide objectives. In Urban Policy, for example, this led to the Audit Commission's criticisms of an uncoordinated approach to regeneration (Audit Commission 1989). Following this criticism, reforms such as the Single Regeneration Budget were introduced and an approach later to be called 'joined-up' slowly began to emerge. Urban policy began to emerge as a key example of why joined-up government was needed.

TABLE 1 *International examples of joining up government*

| Country | Joining up | Key points |
|-----------|---|---|
| Australia | <p>In Australia, the three main types of joined-up working are: between federal and state governments; between officials providing similar service across the country; and partnerships between public and private sectors.</p> <p>Until the 1990s, joined-up working was mostly top-down. More recently local officials and politicians have led the way to provide co-ordinated services to citizens.</p> <p>Despite a long history of using performance measurement, government has been slow to develop cross-cutting measures.</p> <p>Partnership arrangements have often been secretive leaving the public unaware of why decisions were taken.</p> <p>Examples of joined-up working include Centrelink, which provides information to the public on behalf of a number of services, and an inter-agency approach to combating drug misuse.</p> | <p>The need for joined-up working is accepted both centrally and locally. For example, central government has led a co-ordinated response to external trade pressures and international agreements. More locally, the development of one-stop shops has been successful at joining-up information about services. Officials have benefited from the exchange of technical and practical information.</p> <p>Barriers to building further on these successes include: secrecy leading to suspicion from the public; the danger that partners exercise their veto leading to grid-lock; and weakly developed cross-cutting measurements leading to inadequate performance management.</p> |
| Canada | <p>Joined-up working occurs in two ways. First, between the federal government and the local states and territories. Secondly, across departments. The round of public sector reforms initiated by the 'Programme Review' in 1994 made it possible for public services to share their resources. These have contributed to a significant increase in joined-up government.</p> <p>Performance targets are used to co-ordinate joined-up working. These are concerned with what should be done rather than how it is achieved.</p> <p>The Auditor General of Canada has stated that these arrangements are too often hidden away from the public. This is especially common where delegated, voluntary, or private organisations are involved.</p> | <p>Cross-cutting performance targets have proved helpful. For example, the Great Lakes 2000 initiative brought together Environment Canada, six other federal departments, and four Ontario Province ministries. It used 50 performance targets for environmental and health improvements.</p> <p>There are two main barriers to the further development of joined-up working. First, decision-making is often hidden from the public and from elected politicians. But the Treasury Board Secretariat is also concerned that too much formal accountability might stop partnerships responding flexibly to citizens' needs.</p> <p>Secondly, despite successes using performance targets, the Office of the Auditor General has concerns that the poor quality of information makes performance management less effective.</p> |

TABLE 1 *Continued*

| Country | Joining up | Key points |
|-----------------|---|--|
| The Netherlands | <p>Joined-up government extends in three directions: between the central and the local levels of government (for example, the Ministry of Home Affairs promotes modernisation in local government); between government departments (for example, the cabinet's annual interdepartmental reviews); and between 'social partners' (for example, in advisory groups).</p> <p>Since the 1980s there has been media and public concern that with so many partners it becomes hard to co-ordinate the business of government.</p> <p>Performance targets have been used to improve co-ordination. For example, the Government's budget is now based on what politicians want to achieve rather than how to achieve it. The Cabinet also carries out cross-cutting reviews. However, the Finance and Interior Departments are unable to impose cross-cutting performance targets on other departments. It has been technically, and sometimes politically, difficult to keep the whole departments focused on achieving performance targets.</p> | <p>The Dutch inclusive style of running public services has been successful in many respects. Successes are associated with low strike rates, the successful management of rising welfare costs, and the management of difficult ethical issues such as abortion.</p> <p>However, involving many partners in decision-making and in delivering services also has a cost. Dutch Governments have tried to change the balance between inclusive partnerships, on the one hand, and co-ordinating costs and overall activities, on the other. By reducing the number of advisory councils, for example, it is hoped to provide more stream-lined decision-making.</p> <p>The barriers to successfully achieving this balance are, first, that powerful social partners in each public service limit central co-ordination. Secondly, the development of cross-cutting performance measures has been slow.</p> |
| New Zealand | <p>With a relatively small and centralised system of governing, joined-up government in New Zealand has mainly involved co-ordinating central government departments to provide joined-up services on the ground. For example, Strengthening Families aims to improve the wellbeing of families and it is supported by the Ministries of Health and Education, the Ministry of Social Policy and many other central agencies. At the local level, collaboration is strengthened by interagency case management, jointly identifying gaps, and joint use of resources.</p> <p>Central to achieving this co-ordination are the Strategic Priorities and Overarching Goals. These set out the Government's objectives, including cross-cutting targets. Each Department is then required to develop its own Key Results Areas within these priorities. Departments later publish their achievements against these targets.</p> | <p>The use of Strategic Priorities and Overarching Goals is a bold attempt to co-ordinate joined-up working. In areas such as care for older people it has helped to bring agencies together at both national and local levels.</p> <p>However, the impact of this on the core work of Departments is often limited. Strategic Priorities only partly determine the way Departments work.</p> <p>Overcoming these limitations would require the development of more tightly defined priorities. This is technically difficult to do. These would then need to be more closely linked to what each department does. In turn, this would require incentives to encourage the pursuit of Strategic Priorities.</p> |

TABLE 1 *Continued*

| Country | Joining up | Key points |
|--------------------------|---|--|
| Sweden | <p>Joined-up government in Sweden involves small central Ministries, relatively independent agencies managed by the Ministries, and regional and local authorities.</p> <p>Historically, negotiation and compromise have been important features of joined-up working. More recently, Parliament has also set budgets for cross-cutting policies.</p> <p>In order to co-ordinate the work of so many partners, in recent years Government has reduced the number of agencies by joining some of them together. Remaining agencies have been given tighter performance and spending targets by central government.</p> | <p>The delivery of Swedish public services is characterised by negotiation, collaboration and compromise. Previously, limited 'joining-up' was achieved through such negotiation. More recently, Governments have also used performance targets, including cross-cutting ones.</p> <p>The pursuit of 'joined-up government' is not a major public goal in Sweden. Government has responded to the pressures for improved co-ordination by a combination of joining together agencies, encouraging collaboration, and setting cross-cutting targets.</p> <p>Barriers to further improvements include: the limit to further amalgamations of agencies if they are to carry out their specialist tasks; the danger that collaboration and negotiation will lead to gridlock; and the difficulties experienced in setting targets which determine how partners work.</p> |
| United States of America | <p>Joined-up government in the United States is, first of all, between the federal government and the state governments. For example, the Federal Executive Boards spread best practice throughout the public sector. It is also between the public sector and the voluntary sector. Major programmes for delivering child-care, training and community safety depend upon the voluntary sector, for example Boost4Kids, the Child Care Partnership Project, 21st Century Skills, SafeCities.</p> <p>The states have independent powers in many areas and share responsibilities in others. Central government therefore often lacks the power to impose performance targets. It therefore often relies more on funding initiatives and legislating where it can rather than enforcing targets.</p> <p>Central government also identifies and spreads best practice in joined-up working (for example, through the Federal Communications Network).</p> <p>However, some cross-cutting performance targets are used. These are proposed by each Department, considered by the Office of Management and Budget, and decided on by Congress. Under the Government Performance and Results Act, agencies must publish their performance reports.</p> | <p>The United States provides a wide variety of joined-up working with each state often finding new ways of delivering services. However, with so many programmes, and new programmes being developed all the time, it is often difficult to measure success.</p> <p>However, despite limited legal powers, the central government has successfully established widespread provision in areas such as services for homeless people, childcare support, and training.</p> <p>Joined-up working has often been pursued, therefore, by spreading best practice. However, there is an increasing use of cross-cutting measures (for example, the Department of Health and Human Services has established targets for other agencies on reducing tobacco use).</p> <p>Barriers to further improvements include the incompleteness of performance data. Although targets are set very openly, the public can be less confident that agencies are accurate in describing their performance.</p> <p>The down-side of encouraging innovation is that the opportunity to slowly improve a joined-up service by carefully evaluating its long term effectiveness may be lost.</p> |

Note: the background work for this table was carried out for the National Audit Office's report on *Joined up Government* (NAO 2001).

New challenges and strategic responses

Urban policy provided a fertile policy arena where discussions about 'joined-up government' began to take root. Coinciding with the rise of New Labour was the growing acceptance of a claim that there were qualitatively new problems developing which required an innovative approach to public services. This resonated with the emerging Third Way claim that New Labour was at once a radical departure from the then Conservative Government and a pragmatic response to the problems of the day. One important symbol helping to define these issues in the UK was the so-called 'wicked issues' identified by Clarke and Stewart (1997a). According to Clarke and Stewart's argument (Clarke and Stewart 1997a, p. 3), wicked issues require:

- Holistic not partial or linear thinking, capable of encompassing interaction between a wide variety of activities, habits, behaviour and attitudes;
- A capacity to think outside and work across organizational boundaries;
- Ways of involving the public in developing responses;
- Embracing a willingness to think and work in completely new ways. While most people will come to this trapped or constrained by conventional organizations, labels and assumptions, what is needed is willingness to entertain the unconventional and pursue the radical. This implies:
 - A new style of governing for a learning society.

The assertion that joined-up government implies a 'new style of governing', is a strong claim. Clarke and Stewart were not alone in making it. 6 and his colleagues are equally forceful: 'In many countries, the mid-to-late 1990s marked a new phase in the reform of governance. This epoch will continue well into the first decade of the new century and will come to redefine how we think about government' (6, Leat, Seltzer and Stoker 1999). A little later, the Social Exclusion Unit painted a 'stark' picture of deprived neighbourhoods and suggested that no single agency could solve these problems on its own (DETR 2000b, p. 9). Similarly, Rhodes summed up the findings of the ESRC Whitehall Programme by suggesting that there has been a shift away from top-down government towards governance where power is more dispersed. He argued that this implies a change in the way public services are delivered (although he cheerfully adds that, in his view, 'all governing structures fail') (Rhodes 2000, pp. 360–1). In summary, according to this argument, we have seen the emergence of a class of problems whose causes are so complex, and whose solutions are so multi-factorial, that they require a multi-agency response. The spatially and functionally fragmented, professionally dominated, bureaucratic model, accountable vertically to a Minister, suddenly seemed old fashioned and ripe for modernizing.

The Cabinet Office was at the heart of efforts to re-think the delivery of

public services. At the heart of its strategy (Cabinet Office 1999, para. 7) lay two principles:

- 'inclusiveness: policies are forward-looking, inclusive and fair.
- Integrated: policies and programmes, local and national, tackle the issues facing society – like crime, drugs, housing and the environment – in a joined-up way, regardless of the organizational structure of government.'

As the National Audit Office shows (2001, p. 23) evidence of Cabinet Office interest in this is extensive. A number of reports by the Cabinet Office's Performance and Innovation Unit (PIU) directly address the skills, budgeting arrangements, and leadership styles that would be needed to facilitate joint working (PIU 2000a, 2000b, 2000c). New Units, most significantly the Social Exclusion Unit, were created to facilitate joined-up working. Meanwhile, the Service First Unit used the People's Panel (a cross-section of the population intended to provide a sounding board for public policies and services) to find out about citizens' experiences in using services which aimed to be joined up. The Cabinet also issued a range of guidance to encourage best practice in joined-up working. This included a good practice database, the Public Sector Benchmarking Service, the TNT Partnership Award and Beacon Schemes. Service Action Teams were established with a membership drawn from departments, local government and the voluntary sector and charged with identifying ways to remedy practical problems faced by groups at different episodes in their lives. The Cabinet Office has also encouraged 'learning laboratories' to experiment with different ways of joint working and to disseminate findings. Along with the Treasury, the Cabinet Office developed the Invest to Save Budget in 1999 to which agencies can apply for funding for innovate projects which, very often, have a joined-up element to them. Finally, the Cabinet Office's Centre for Management and Policy Studies is responsible for running and developing courses and seminars and many of these concerned joined-up working. Since the election of 2001, two new units – the Prime Minister's Delivery Unit and the Office of Public Service Reform – will have at least some responsibility for joined-up government.

The other central department responsible for overarching issues is the Treasury. As noted above, they have promoted joined-up working through the Public Services Agreements (identifying the overall aims of Departments – some of which are cross-cutting), the Public Services Productivity Panel (advising on ways of improving productivity in the public sector) and in providing an accounting and budgetary framework within which joined-up working can take place. Outside the two central coordinating departments, each of the main spending departments has developed a range of initiatives which involve joint working, such as the Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions' Rough Sleepers initiative, the Department for Education and Skills' Early Years Development and

Childcare Partnerships, the Department of Trade and Industry's Business Link Partnership, and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's British Trade International (see National Audit Office 2001).

If JUG was high up on the first Blair Government's agenda, it also excited the wider academic community. Much of the political science literature complements the claim that the models of public service delivery were changing (or should change) profoundly. These mostly suggest that the new models are simply a necessary response to wider changes (but see Clarke 2000 for a critical outline of these claims). Much of the political science literature draws on the concept of 'governance' to examine this shift (see Stoker 1998). Although the term 'governance' is not used consistently (see Pierre and Peters 2000), amongst other things, it gestures towards:

- new types of public-private partnerships;
- 'flatter' relationships between organizations;
- a blurring of boundaries between previously distinct functions; and
- new ways of managing the consequential relationships.

In 'governance', outcomes result from a multiplicity of decisions rather than a single strategic choice of government (Kooiman and Van Vliet 1993, p. 64). More recently, Kooiman (2000) has characterized these processes as 'heterarchical', combining a variety of vertical and horizontal relationships. In other words, where power might once have flowed from a single authority, it is now disparate. Texts track a change of metaphorical language from a machine, capable of being driven, to that of an eco-system or of mutually adaptive complex systems (Dick 2000). These arguments reinforce the claim that bureaucratic 'silos' have become anachronistic. New service models are said to be about partnerships, networks, 'flat' relationships, and trust.

There is a danger that the governance approach might see the changing structures of the public sector as simply a consequence of wider changes. We will see below, however, that these wider pressures are associated with a range of competing responses and that outcomes are fluid and contested. Furthermore, JUG is not simply a response to wider pressures; there is clearly a relationship between JUG and the so-called politics of the Third Way. For example, the Prime Minister, in his Foreword to *Wiring it up* (PIU 2000a, p. 3) argued, 'Many of the biggest challenges facing government do not easily fit into traditional Whitehall structures'. This apparent appetite for challenging the vested interests of Whitehall provided the basis for claiming a radicalism which was an important for 'New Labour' its first term. Particularly in the writings of the 'policy entrepreneurs', there may have been both conscious and more subtle reasons for echoing and amplifying the claim to newness.

In this atmosphere, JUG was taken up with enthusiasm in many different contexts and in many different ways. It soon became an umbrella term covering different dimensions. For political and budgetary reasons, depart-

ments, agencies, local governments, and voluntary bodies were keen to 'badge' their activities and innovations as 'joined up'. The *Wiring it up* report, mentioned above, suggests the variety of activities that might be called joined up. These can be summarized as:

- Organizational change;
- Merged structures and budgets;
- Joint teams (virtual or real);
- Shared budgets;
- Joint customer inter-face arrangements;
- Shared objectives and policy indicators;
- Consultation to enhance synergies and manage trade-offs;
- Sharing information to increase mutual awareness.

In the following section, we suggest that it is helpful to identify the different dimensions that characterize these activities in order to understand the varying tensions and dilemmas within it.

THE DIMENSIONS OF JOINED-UP WORKING

The practices associated with 'joined-up government' are wide-ranging. In this paper, we have organized these in four dimensions. This is a pragmatic typology rather than a theoretically constructed categorization. However, the fourfold typology organizes the many activities associated with JUG into four inter-related clusters.

These clusters are: those dimensions concerning the internal life of each organization (such as its culture and values, information management and training); those dimensions concerning interorganizational life (such as shared leadership, pooled budgets, merged structures and joint teams); those dimensions concerning the delivery of services (such as joint consultation with clients, developing a shared client focus, and providing a 'one stop shop' for service users); and, fourthly, those dimensions concerning accountabilities 'upwards' and target setting from above (such as Public Service Agreements and other shared outcome targets, performance measures, and shared regulation). Expressed differently, these dimensions might be regarded as inwards, outwards, downwards and upwards (see figure 1).

New ways of working across organisations

According to Jupp (2000), the word 'partnership' was used 6197 times in Parliament during 1999 compared with just 38 times ten years earlier. Outside Parliament, comments such as 'Partnership working is at the centre of the National Childcare Strategy' (DfEE 2000a, p. 1), are widespread in public sector policy statements. 'Partnership' focuses on the mechanisms used by two or more organizations to work together on a shared agenda while keeping their own organizational identity and purpose. It offers the prospect of securing greater value for money through the co-ordination of activities and promises better public services.

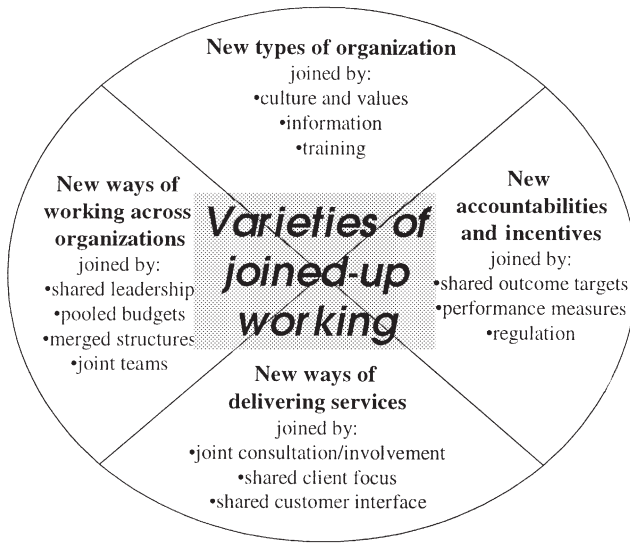


FIGURE 1. *The main dimensions of joined-up working*

Partnerships have arisen in a variety of contexts. In urban regeneration, policy partnerships have been widespread since 1994. Indeed, varying kinds of public-private partnership lay at the heart of successive waves of urban development policies from the 1960s. Well before the first Blair Government, the Environment Committee of the House of Commons (House of Commons 1995) was concerned about the functioning of partnerships, recommending that they should be based on inclusivity and equality. (On the organizational capacity of the different partners to be effectively included, see Mawson *et al.* 1995; Hall *et al.* 1998.)

Partnerships work in different ways. Variables include: membership; how partners are linked; the scale and boundaries of partnerships; and the organizational context of the partnership (see table 2).

Not surprisingly, given these variations, there is no single model of partnership in the UK. Many partnerships have been stimulated by initiatives coming from the centre. One example of this is the Social Exclusion Unit's report of September 1998, *Bringing Britain Together. A National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal* (Cabinet Office 1998). This developed a more sophisticated defence of JUG than might be found in the earlier arguments in relation to urban regeneration. It identified complex causes of deprivation and included criticism of centralized, over-regulated, and overly departmentalized intervention. Amongst other initiatives, it gave rise to the New Deal for Communities which demonstrates many characteristics of joined-up government under the Labour Government: central funding for local partnerships; encouraging the involvement of the local community; developing partnerships; and spreading best practice through the projects.

TABLE 2 *Aspects that vary within partnerships*

| | |
|--|---|
| Partnership members <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals • Parts of organizations • Whole organizations • Public • Private • Voluntary | Links between partners <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal/informal/contractual • High or low trust • Equal or hierarchical • Focused or broad sweep • Co-evolution, coupling and convergence |
| Scale and boundaries <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National/local/global • Number of partners • Boundaries (where they are drawn) • Boundaries (tight or loose) • Boundaries (own mandate or given) | Organizational context of partnership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Fit' with existing institutional architecture • Maturity of relationships • Legitimate or illegitimate • Resource dependency • Impact/steerage capacity |

The Invest to Save budget was also designed to stimulate partnerships by funding projects that involved two or more public sector partners working together in innovative ways. The Integrated Service Teams were charged with identifying barriers to joint working and in 1999 these were replaced with an interdepartmental steering group and five Service Action Teams. The PIU (2000a) supported this with a study of how government could encourage joint-working in general and partnership in particular. Meanwhile, a series of reports from the Social Exclusion Unit advocated partnership working (for example, on rough sleeping).

Elsewhere, with more or less central direction over the form of partnership, government either required or strongly rewarded the creation of partnerships in policy areas such as education, employment, health, and urban regeneration. An element of partnership working has been written into the requirements or guidance for many significant initiatives of New Labour's first term, such as Education Action Zones, Employment Zones, Sure Start, Health Action Zones, the Single Regeneration Budget, New Deals for Communities, Crime Reduction Partnerships, the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit, and the Health Improvement Programmes. To a greater or lesser extent, in all of these there is room for experimentation and innovation (in process if not in outcome). However, this has not meant that the centre has adopted a hands-off approach to partnership. A new repertoire of central direction is emerging through the use of benchmarks, bids, beacons, best value, corporate governance and so on. These provide the basis for either a supportive environment within which local partnerships can innovate or a rather more crude centralization. We have yet to see which will predominate.

New accountabilities and incentives

Central departments have competing views about how to manage local partnerships. They also face difficulties over political accountability. Con-

ventional forms of central accountability do not always fit comfortably with the need for local responsiveness. A second aspect of joined-up government therefore concerns the innovative use of accountability, incentives and performance management.

There have always been dilemmas about accountability in the public sector. The need to simultaneously deliver responsive local public services while maintaining central coordination will always create a tension. However, JUG gives this tension a new inflexion and, arguably, makes it less easy to manage. As John Makinson, who drafted the Public Services Productivity Panel's *Incentives for Change*, asked '(A)re individuals in these agencies (i.e. public bodies) accountable first and foremost to the Government that sets their agenda, to the management that is responsible for their careers, to the customers who create the need for their service, or to the taxpayer who foots the bill?' (quoted in PSP, undated, p. 21). We might add that in a partnership the members are also expected to be responsible to each other and this summarized accountability is in table 3.

In January 2000, the PIU report *Wiring it up* examined how previously existing accountability arrangements and incentive systems could be reformed to facilitate joined-up working. 'Current systems of audit and external scrutiny contain very few positive incentives for cross-cutting initiatives' (PIU 2000a, p. 52). This echoed a concern of the National Audit Office in June 1999 that public auditing should not be a barrier to joined-up working. Furthermore, the National Audit Office committed itself to supporting 'worthwhile' change, ensuring 'joined-up' learning within its own organization, and developing its work on performance measurement (National Audit Office 1999). More generally, the National Audit Office supported the following statement by the Public Audit Forum (which represents public sector auditors):

Modernising Government represents a significant change in the public service environment, and its successful implementation will require new ways of working. The goal of achieving more efficient and effective delivery of public programmes is one that is shared between public sector managers and auditors, and the Public Audit Forum do not want fear of the risks of change to stifle innovation designed to lead to improvements. So we encourage auditors to respond constructively and

TABLE 3 *Dilemmas of accountability*

| Type of accountability | Principal | Key mechanism |
|------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|
| Financial | Taxpayer | Value-for-money and probity |
| Political | Citizen | Ministerial responsibility |
| Performance | Manager | Performance management |
| Partnership | Partnership members | Trust and mutuality |

positively to *Modernising Government* initiatives and support worthwhile change. (Quoted in National Audit Office 1999, p. 2)

The challenge posed by partnership working is not simply that scrutiny mechanisms were once structured around ministerial responsibility for individual departments. The challenge concerns how to combine ministerial responsibility with the other forms of accountability identified in table 3, above. This would involve more thought about how to establish accountability where outcomes are achieved through collaboration and dialogue; how to calculate whether partnership members have behaved in a trustworthy fashion; and how to performance manage where those individuals being managed have only limited control over outcomes. I would describe this as a process of deliberative accountability.

New types of organization

The PIU also advocates measures to reward joined-up working leading to a new type of organization. It suggests 'cross-cutting activity should be more visibly rewarded . . . leaders should be judged and rewarded on their performance in securing cross-cutting objectives as highly as for securing purely departmental objectives . . . career progression in the Civil Service should depend on developing experience in a range of policy areas including, so far as possible, experience across the wider public sector, the private sector and the voluntary sector as well as experience in frontline service delivery...' (PIU 2000a, p. 7). This requires a significant and acknowledged shift in civil service culture as well as changes in career structures across the public, private and voluntary sectors. Such changes are inevitably hard to quantify and the benefits would take time to become observable. (A useful mapping of current performance incentives for front-line staff, including comparative data on incentives across the public and private sectors, is contained in the Public Services Productivity Panel's Incentives for Change, PSP 2000.)

More widely, in policy areas as varied as better regulation and older people, the government has reiterated the theme that joining-up requires both a change in leadership style and a whole change of culture (www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/innovation/2000/winning/active and www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/2000/taskforce/GovernmentResponse). Bardach is more explicit, claiming that:

Almost nothing about the bureaucratic ethos makes it hospitable to inter-agency collaboration. The collaborative ethos values equality, adaptability, discretion, and results; the bureaucratic ethos venerates hierarchy, stability, obedience, and procedures. (Bardach 1998, p. 232)

This weakening of hierarchical interventions implied by joined-up government also implies new ways of working within public organizations.

The PIU (2000a, p. 28) argued that '(A) step-change in attitudes is needed if more cross-cutting initiatives are to be successfully implemented. . . . Effective leadership is needed to promote and sustain cultural change'. The CMPS also organized a seminar in the summer of 2000 on 'Leadership for Joining-up' at which participants aimed to 'develop a deeper understanding of what new forms of leadership may be called for in order to deliver joined-up outcomes and cross cutting policies; reflect on their own leadership approaches; (and) explore the relationship between leadership, including political leadership, and the performance of public service organizations' (<http://www.cmeps.gov.uk/wh.../Leadership>).

The arrival of an ideal type of joined-up government would require radically different organizations than those that currently populate the public sector. However, even a more constrained form of joining up will continue to pose challenges for public organizations (and, although this is not the focus of this paper, it will also pose challenges for the organizations of voluntary and corporate partners). The capacity to create such organizations, which are also accountable and responsive, will be a limiting factor to the JUG project.

New ways of delivering services

A fourth dimension of JUG is the attempt to have disparate decision-takers respond to the same signals from the public. These signals might be customer/client focused or they might be based on involving the same sections of the public in arriving at decisions about how best to deliver services. In the former case, the emphasis may be on the 'front-of-house', providing a joined-up way into public services and this may or may not be combined with joined-up working behind the stage (see Hagen and Kubicek 2000). This is often referred to as the 'one-stop shop' (see Bent *et al.* 1999 for a discussion of the various ways in which this has been pursued). In the latter case, the intention is that local services should be aligned as they all become driven by the same priorities.

'One-stop-government' is only one way among many of creating a joined-up customer/client focus. Other ways of involving users cover a spectrum from education, information, consultation, involvement, through to (community) partnership, delegated control, and public control (see Davies 1998). The purposes behind these vary. They include a more joined-up provision of information to the public (for example, the Small Business Service Gateway pilot). A more active role is implied for citizens in various efforts to strengthen consultation – one of the nine principles in the Service First programme. It is regarded as an essential early step in programme and organizational reviews and this would include joined-up working (Cabinet Office 2000a, p. 40; Cabinet Office 2000b).

This objective of innovative and joined-up consultation was supported by the creation of the People's Panel (brought to an end in 2002). This included questions about levels of satisfaction with public services

(including, but not exclusively, joined-up government) and it collected data both through more qualitative focus groups and more quantitative questionnaires. Other examples of joined-up consultation include the exercise conducted by the Women's Unit (Women's Unit 1999) and the 'Listening to Older People' events (Cabinet Office 2000c).

In addition to this plethora of central government initiatives, even more public involvement activity takes place at the local level. The Local Government Association estimates that there are 114 local authority panels (Cabinet Office 2000d). Some of this is joined up. The Social Services Inspectorate has identified joint consultation as a key part of joined-up working. Similarly, the Home Office and voluntary sector issued a Code of Good Practice on jointly consulting with the voluntary sector (www.ncvol.org.uk). DETR insist, 'Unless the residents of deprived communities are partners in joint-working, nothing will change' (DETR 2000b). Elsewhere, Hilary Armstrong emphasized that further progress in partnership working should demonstrate more attention to inclusivity (DETR 2000c, p. 3). As suggested above, joined-up government is about aligning agencies and, in some cases, individuals and their communities and orienting them towards shared goals. In a case such as Sure Start, however, the intention is to tackle child poverty and social exclusion by developing some 250 local initiatives (DfEE 2000b). Each of these is based upon addressing the particular needs of local communities.

However, the relationship between public involvement and joined-up government is not a simple one. On the one hand, providing information to the community, understanding their values and concerns, and inviting them actively to participate in public decision-making, can strengthen joined-up working. On the other hand, it can lead to institutional conservatism (people resist change – for example the closure of a hospital), Nimbyism (if there is a down side to JUG then it should not be felt in 'our' neighbourhood), and organizational fragmentation (with a proliferation of new joined-up services springing up alongside existing agencies).

Despite the dangers of public involvement, delivering joined-up services on the ground can often only be achieved with local knowledge. This knowledge is typically informal and unsystematic (compared with more formal and systematic knowledge that underpins performance management elsewhere in the public sector). However, it is crucial to the success of the programme and it is only found within the communities where it is generated. This brings two problems for conventional public sector management: first, the knowledge base is different to that used previously; and secondly, by empowering the local community there is a risk that those who are formally accountable will lose the capacity to determine policy. This is not a problem unique to joined-up working, but because JUG often requires local involvement, and because it displaces clear lines of accountability, the problems are made worse.

Dimensions of joined-up government: provisional conclusions

From this outline of the dimensions of activities taking place within the public sector we could be excused for believing that the ambition of JUG is little short of a wholesale change in the public sector. We have seen demands for new types of organizations, new ways of interorganizational working, new ways of delivering services, and new accountabilities. Yet it is hard to find evidence of such a dramatic step change. Does this mean that JUG has in some sense failed? Or was the language of change deliberately grandiose in order to secure some small shift? Or was its real purpose more mundane; trying to patch together a Westminster model which had become unmanageably fragmented in the 1980s but not intended to alter the 'hard-wiring' of the British state?

To some degree, all of these might be true. There is no single answer to these questions because the dimensions of JUG are so varied. Furthermore, in the following section, we shall see that the strategic responses are equally varied. Therefore there is no unified JUG project which can be said to have succeeded or failed. More probably there are competing interests that are expressed through different strategic approaches to JUG. We examine these in the following section.

BEST PRACTICE AND KEY GUIDES; DIFFERING STRATEGIC RESPONSES TO JUG

From the dimensions outlined above, it should be clear that there are many barriers in the road to joined-up government. At the same time there is no lack of guides and reviews claiming to know how to overcome these. The chief amongst these are summarized in table 4. ('Key recommendations' are those given prominence within the text reviewed; we have not listed every recommendation but we have tried to identify those that are key.)

Table 4 suggests a connection between JUG and the politics of the Third Way:

The Third Way suggests that it is possible to combine social solidarity with a dynamic economy, and this is a goal contemporary social democrats should strive for. To pursue it, we will need less national government, less central government, but greater governance over local processes. (D'Alema, cited in Giddens 2000, p. 5)

This approach articulated by D'Alema suggests at least three things. First that there is a shared basis for social solidarity on which we can all agree. Second, that the pursuit of economic and social efficiency is both important and a technical matter. Third, that tensions between these can be managed in a process of governance in which evidence and expertise are available alongside stakeholder involvement. Through good governance, a commonality of purpose can be identified.

So, looking at table 4, under the column headed 'goal setting', we see, on the one hand, the Treasury's commitment to national Public Service

TABLE 4 *Summary of key recommendations from guides to joined-up government*

| Source | Goal setting | Accountability | Networking and alliances | Skills and learning | Time and money |
|-----------------------|--|--|---|--|---|
| Audit Commission 1998 | Success must be measured | Partnership boards are needed (and of appropriate size and membership) Partnerships must clarify where accountability lies Use open, well advertised planning meetings | Trust is 'the most important ingredient' | Staff must understand organizational and wider context | |
| Cabinet Office 1998 | | | Complex problems such as deprivation require joined-up solutions | | |
| DH undated | Explicit commitment to clear and common goals | | Participation of the 'right people' | Explicit leadership from CE and Board | |
| DfEE 2000a | | | Use publicity to build support | Research local needs (e.g. the 'hard to reach') | |
| DETR 2000b | Focus on prevention rather than cure Develop shared outcome targets | | Empower local community Involve all levels of government Partnership working needs more inclusivity | Provide leadership and commitment Change culture to focus on shared outcome targets | 'Mainstream services are the key' (area-based initiatives not enough) |

TABLE 4 *Continued*

| Source | Goal setting | Accountability | Networking and alliances | Skills and learning | Time and money |
|--------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|---|---|--|
| DETR 2000c | Have commonality of purpose | | Treat all partners equally Central government must facilitate not direct | Provide leadership (e.g. from local authority or local people) | Continuity of staff, where possible |
| DETR 2000a | Use Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) to develop common purpose and priorities | | LSPs to build and co-ordinate local partnerships Government Offices to support LSPs | | 'Effective partnership working takes time' (p. 20) |
| DETR 1998 | Clearly defined goals and quality standards Members report their progress towards agreed goals | | Establish common interests and identity which transcend organizational differences Demonstrate added value of partnership and communicate this | | |
| LGA 1999 | Avoid having conflicting national targets and initiatives | Partnerships need more legal clarity | Avoid excessive central control Involve the community | Staff will need multiple skills many of which are currently under-developed | Establishing partnerships takes time |
| Clarke and Stewart 1997a | Think and work across organizational boundaries | Involve the public | | New style of governing for a learning society | |

| | | | | |
|---|-------------------------|---------------------|--|--|
| Rhodes 2000 Stoker 1998 Kooiman 2000 OECD 2000 | | | Shift from government to governance makes networking necessary in dispersed power structures | |
| NAO 1999, 2000 Cabinet Office 2000a, 2000b, 2000c | | Joined-up auditing | Involve the public early in organizational reviews and be creative | |
| Bardach 1998 | | | | Radical change of culture needed to allow non-hierarchical working |
| Jupp 2000 | Clear objectives needed | Build in evaluation | Ensure each partner benefits Develop trust between partners | |
| Pratt <i>et al.</i> 1999 | | | Whole system events including all stakeholders | |
| Wilkinson and Appelbee 1999 | | | Whole system events cross functional, task-aligned teams Large-scale intervention methods | Work with diversity Whole system approach Continuing reflective learning |
| NEF 1998 Cooperrider 1997 | | | Large group processes Appreciate inquiry | |

TABLE 4 *Continued*

| Source | Goal setting | Accountability | Networking and alliances | Skills and learning | Time and money |
|--|--------------------------------------|--|--|---|------------------------------|
| CIPFA 1997 | | | 5-step cycle for building and managing partnerships | Unlearn the skills developed in hierarchical working and develop new skills | |
| Huxham and Vangen 1996; Mintzberg <i>et al.</i> 1996 | | | | Organizational learning to know yourself and partners | |
| Clarke and Stewart 1997b | Focus on achievable aims | | Understand each others organisations, build trust Learn the architecture of joined-up working | Develop non-hierarchical tools Foster 'boundary spanners' | Give a sufficient commitment |
| Leadbeater and Goss 1998 | Involve more people in setting goals | Involve more people in auditing | Bring new people into politics | Public sector managers to become 'civic entrepreneurs' | |
| 6 <i>et al.</i> 1999 | | Joined-up accountability should create 'pressure points' for effective JUG | | Joined-up knowledge | |
| 6 1997 | Focus on changing culture | | Partnerships should be based on inclusivity and equality House of Commons Environment Committee | | |
| Mawson and Hall 2000 | | | | Leadership and networking skills will be needed | |

| | | | | | |
|---------------------|--|--|---|---|---|
| PIU 2000a | Shared objectives, corporate goals and policy indicators | Remove existing disincentives for joined-up working caused by accountability arrangements | Joint consultation encourage local responsiveness | Joint teams Share information | Merged budgets Incentivize joined-up working |
| PIU 2000b | | | Electronic service delivery can allow people to interact with government more effectively | Electronic service delivery can be used to create joined-up government but this will require leadership, incentives and cultural change | |
| PIU 2000c | | Strengthen regional government to facilitate joined up government programmes on the ground | | | |
| Treasury 1998, 2000 | Public Service Agreements 'have encouraged real improvements in joint working' | Public Service Agreements can help to hold Ministers to account even with new patterns of service delivery | | | |

Agreements and on the other, DETR's preference for local agreements in Local Strategic Partnerships. Similarly, we see the PIU's emphasis on the importance of specialist analysis compared with the Leadbeater and Goss emphasis on involving more people.

On accountability there are similar tensions. For the Audit Commission, it is important that formal partnership boards establish accountability transparently. The Treasury view is that national PSA's can help to hold Ministers to account even in joined-up services. Meanwhile, the PIU suggests that strengthened regional government should have a role.

The guidance offered on networking and alliances is more consistent. The Audit Commission identifies trust as 'the most important ingredient'; the Department of Health is concerned to ensure the participation of the 'right people'; DETR is concerned to empower the local community and to ensure inclusive participation. The LGA (Local Government Association), predictably, wants to limit central control. However, there is a tension between this and the Treasury's advocacy of accountability to Ministers and the use of PSAs.

Developing new skills in goal-setting, accountability and networking would, most are agreed, require a new type of leadership and a new culture of learning and working. Bardach, in particular, emphasizes the need for a radical change of culture. Skills and learning therefore appear to be very important in managing the tensions that may arise in goal-setting, accountability and networking. Given that this also implies different ways of working and of delivering services, it is not surprising that it has been faced with some professional and bureaucratic resistance. Resistance might be greater when the time and money required to deliver JUG is restricted.

What table 4 shows in summary form is that some of the assumptions that lay behind the Third Way during the first Blair Government were refracted in the JUG project. It presupposes that through technical expertise and partnership, communities can arrive at shared goals which will be compatible with the wider objectives of national government as it pursues both a competitive economy and an inclusive society. But table 4 also demonstrates the variety of ways of pursuing this vision and the tensions amongst these ways on issues such as goal setting and accountability. It also focuses our attention on the practical difficulties of securing consent through partnerships while still providing some central direction and financial control and this matter will doubtless continue to exercise the Treasury. Fissures between the Treasury and spending departments and the Cabinet Office may lead to continuing calls to join up at the local level while the centre, meanwhile, fragments.

CONCLUSIONS

Joined-up Government was a major element of British government during the first Blair Government and it has rightly attracted a great deal of attention. It is best seen as a strategic response to both the weaknesses

of 'conventional' public administration and the fragmenting effects of the reforms of the 1980s. However, just as the delivery innovations of the 1980s refracted the neo-liberal assumptions of markets, choice and efficiency, so too did the innovations associated with joined-up government refract the assumptions of the Third Way. However, JUG cannot be seen as simply the administrative corollary of the politics of the Third Way.

The various guides to good practice demonstrate that even within the official literature there are conflicting and competing strategies for managing intra-state relationships and for managing relationships between state agencies and civil society. Poggi (1990, p. 133) suggests that 'the much increased, differentiated and increasingly autonomous administrative apparatus becomes in turn the site of a different kind of politics . . . – bureaucratic politics'. Similarly, Hood, long before the phrase 'joined-up government' was used, identified the problems arising from modern government becoming multi-bureaucratic rather than mega bureaucratic 'meaning that the patterns of behaviour by agencies towards one another in the process of "policy delivery" can become increasingly complex and that the manipulation of the overall system from the centre can become much more difficult to achieve and dangerous to the system's professed values if it is not achieved' (Hood 1982, p. 67). Just as sex was probably going on before it was invented in the 1960s, so too was joined-up government being practiced before it was so named.

The point being made by both Poggi and Hood is that the management of intra-state relationships has always been a difficult and inexact form of politics. As Ling (1998) shows, the history of the British state from 1945 sees a relatively fluid set of competing claims about how best to manage intra-state relationships in pursuit of the objectives of the government of the day. Although there is a relationship between JUG and the third way, JUG cannot simply be seen as Third Way public administration. It is too varied and contested for that. For example, the Treasury is committed to PSAs as a way of managing state relationships and also as a way of improving the delivery of joined-up services. The Cabinet Office and its various Units tends to emphasize the importance of training and cultural change, or DETR tends to emphasize the need for inclusive participation at the grass roots. These differences represent not only differences within the Third Way project but also genuine intellectual differences about the best way to implement Third Way policies. As we enter what appears to be a post-Third Way phase in the life of New Labour, such intellectual (and institutional) differences of opinion will continue. And they will continue to matter because the outcomes will help to shape access to the state, who is marginalized, and which policies fit comfortably with the institutional architecture of the state.

In other words, the way in which intra-state relationships are managed opens up the state to different forms of participation by different interests. It also makes it easier to pursue some sorts of intervention and harder to

pursue others. JUG, for example, brought partners into the state who had in the previous decade been marginalized. It also facilitated interventions in 'wicked problems'. But this is not a new departure for the British state. The Community Development Projects in the 1970s, for example, attempted to do something similar (and intra-state relationships were even less well managed, see Ling 1998, pp. 82–96). As with the Community Development Projects, although they solved some recognized limitations in existing policies and services, they created new problems of their own. It will be important for the long-term trajectory of the Blairite project that these problems are identified early and addressed.

The role of the centre in how to facilitate the local implementation of JUG has never been satisfactorily established. Conflicting and competing definitions of the problem and priorities for action populate the central spending departments and the two co-ordinating departments (Treasury and Cabinet Office). As the agenda of public reform moves on, it is important that academics and practitioners take stock of the lessons learned from this important initiative. This paper is intended to contribute to this process.

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