The idea of local governance has gained much prominence but can elected local government be sustained in a role as network coordinator alone? To investigate this question this article focuses attention on four societal roles that local government systems undertake. They can support political identity, underwrite economic development, facilitate social welfare provision or act as a lifestyle co-ordinator through the practice of community governance. Tying our investigation to the embedded societal roles of local government in different systems opens up the opportunity for a global comparative perspective. It also supports an argument that a sustainable system of local government is likely to be one that is able to combine societal roles to a substantial degree and those systems left with community governance as their key societal function are particularly likely to find themselves pushed to the sidelines of governing arrangements.

PREAMBLE

Like other contributors to this volume I am delighted to pay tribute to Rod Rhodes for his wise counsel, mixed with a wonderful dash of just plain fun, which has been a huge benefit to me throughout large parts of my own career. I am also, like many others, a great admirer of his academic work and I have the brief to write about his research on local government and place that work in the context of a wider understanding of the state of play in the discipline.

It was in the early part of his career that Rod researched local government. The culmination of this work was the 459-page long masterpiece under the title Beyond Westminster and Whitehall: The Sub-Central Governments of Britain (Rhodes 1988). The work is a classic piece of high quality public administration, theoretically innovative and empirically meticulous. The essential thesis of the study is that in Britain elected local government is not a simple creature of a locality but rather its interests and actions are part of a much wider world of sub-central government including various quangos, non-elected bodies, professional associations and departmental agencies. That world is brought to life through a variety of policy networks that have different dynamics and ways of working. This argument, in turn, leads to the now widely accepted but at the time highly imaginative insight that Britain is not a unitary state but a differentiated polity where the central executive can take action but can find itself as a result facing unintended consequences. This work represented a major shift in the focus of local government studies in Britain but spoke to a much wider audience concerned about the nature of the British polity. Rod’s later work on Whitehall and the core executive (covered elsewhere in this volume) can be seen as completing this remapping of our understanding of UK governance.

Rod also made a further and major contribution to the study of local government as Chair of the UK’s Economic and Social Research Council’s Local Governance Programme that invested £2.3 million in 27 research projects and ran from 1992 to 1997. I was the Director of the programme of research and for those interested in the outputs of the...

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research programme they are captured in Stoker (1999, 2000). As Rod makes clear in his informal history of the project’s development (Rhodes 1999, p. xii), it was he who invented the phrase ‘local governance’ in a rewrite of my original research bid that had only talked about local government as working in innovative enabling ways and in a new context. The programme set itself the task of studying the ‘transformation of the structure of government beyond Westminster and Whitehall from a system of local government into a system of local governance’ (Rhodes 1999, p. xiv). Having invented local governance we had to define it and explain it, something we both attempted to do (Rhodes 1996; Stoker 1998).

The research although focused on the UK had a wider impact in the field, leading others to consider whether a similar trend towards local governance could be found to some degree in the local government systems of other countries (John 2001; Denters and Rose 2005). One of the weaknesses of our research programme was its largely UK focus and even in our conceptual work we failed to develop a sufficiently comparative, let alone global, perspective on the trends we were studying. In part recognition of this some years later Rod asked me to write a chapter on comparative local governance for the Oxford Handbook of Political Institutions of which he was a co-editor. I did (Stoker 2006a) but frankly I never liked the piece and I do not think it did the job that Rod had identified. One key motivation, driving my contribution here, is to try again to develop a more viable framework for comparative analysis so that I can get closer to delivering on the brief given to me by Rod.

But another motivation is to engage in a little self doubt and recrimination. The dynamic set in train by the Local Governance Research Programme went further than an academic exercise in examining trends in the UK’s governing arrangements. As Rod himself explains the research and its ideas entered the world of practice. We did not offer solutions but we did propose another way of seeing the world and the role of local government. Researchers offered a narrative of a different ways of working and Rhodes goes on to claim that ‘the Local Governance Programme has played no small part in challenging the dominant, managerial ideology of the 1980s and arguing for a view of the world in which networks vie with markets and bureaucracy as the appropriate means of delivery solutions’ (Rhodes 1999, p. xxiv). The Programme also identified a more networked, partnership-based and participative way of doing politics (Stoker 2000). The influence of this way of thinking about local government in the UK can be seen in, for example, Blair (1998) and the Lyons Report (2007). Stoker took the role of analyst forward as an informal advisor in the early years to the Labour Government elected in the UK in 1997 (Stoker 2004) and in related work in for the Council of Europe and United Nations (Stoker 2005). This work promoted the idea of local governance and suggested a new role for elected local government as a community governor.

But the thing is, I worry that we (and I take the larger share of the blame as the main propagator) may have sold local government ‘a pup’, that is the idea of local governance and the role of community governor. I have doubts about the sustainability of elected local government if all that it has to offer is the role of community network co-ordinator.

The article begins by exploring in more depth the idea of community governance. In Rod’s terms this is the story or narrative we told about local government to policymakers and practitioners. It is my journey into a wider comparative understanding of local government that has led to these doubts about the viability of network community governance. The article goes on to use a novel comparative framework to question whether the role is a sustainable function for elected local government.
NETWORKED COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE
The responsibility of local government is not just to deliver certain services well but to steer a community to meet the full range of its needs. Networked community governance sets as its over-arching goal the meeting of community needs as defined by the community, within the context of the demands of a complex system of multi-level governance (this account draws on Stoker 2004, 2005). In this complex world of multiple demands and networks the most powerful and effective role for elected local government is that of network coordinator. To undertake this task of community governance demands a diverse set of relationships with ‘higher’ tier government, local organizations and stakeholders and citizens. The relationships are intertwined and the systems of accountability are multiple. The political process is about identifying problems, designing solutions and assessing their impact. Success is not a simple matter of efficient service delivery but rather judging whether an outcome favourable to the community has been achieved.

The networked community governance approach can be contrasted with earlier forms of governing, as table 1 sets out. A traditional public administration (TPA) perspective – dominant in the 1950s and 1960s – came under pressure from a New Public Management (NPM) wave in the 1970s, in turn to be challenged by networked community governance from the 1990s. In practice, the forms and implementation of each practice of governing varied considerably and there is an overlap between approaches and their presence in different eras. Moreover differences in implementation impact can be observed. Under the TPA model, local government was in some countries a dominant and rather domineering player. In other countries local government remained weak and under-developed in its capacity to run major services and take on substantial development challenges. The attack from NPM – with its emphasis on efficiency measures, competition between providers and a customer focus – made greater impact in Britain, the United States, Australia and New Zealand, for example, than it did in southern European countries (Pollitt and Bouckaert 2000).

The aim of networked community governance was defined not by narrow efficiency but public value, defined as the achievement of favoured outcomes by the use of public resources in the most effective manner available (Moore 1995; Goss 2001). Networked community governance frames issues by recognizing the complex architecture of government. In practice there are many centres and diverse links between many agencies of government at neighbourhood, local, regional and national and supranational levels. In turn each level has a diverse range of horizontal relationships with other government agencies, privatized utilities, private companies, voluntary organizations and interest groups. The model retains a strong role for local government as a coordinator in order to join up and steer a complex set of processes. This coordination role demands a leadership capacity that goes beyond a search for efficiency gains or a customer orientation to take on the challenge of working across boundaries (Sullivan and Skelcher 2002) and to take up the goal of holistic working which is ‘greater effectiveness in tackling the problems that the public most care about’ (6 et al. 2002, p. 46). Stoker (2006b) argues that networked governance involves managers in overseeing networks of politics to provide authorization for decisions and networks of delivery to provide the practical tools for implementation.

There is nothing to suggest that networked community governance should be any less susceptible to a variety of implementing practices. But is this community governance role a viable and sustainable role for local government? To answer this question we need to frame our investigation in a wider comparative context.
TABLE 1  Eras of local governing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Traditional Public Administration</th>
<th>New Public Management</th>
<th>Networked Community Governance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key objectives of the governance system</strong></td>
<td>Managing inputs, delivering services in the context of a national welfare state</td>
<td>Managing inputs and outputs in a way that ensures economy and responsiveness to consumers</td>
<td>The overarching goal is greater effectiveness in tackling the problems that the public most care about</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dominant ideologies</strong></td>
<td>Professionalism and party partisanship</td>
<td>Managerialism and consumerism</td>
<td>Managerialism and localism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Definition of Public interest</strong></td>
<td>By politicians / experts. Little in the way of public input</td>
<td>Aggregation of individual preferences, demonstrated by customer choice</td>
<td>Individual and public preferences produced through a complex process of interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dominant model of account-Ability</strong></td>
<td>Overhead democracy: voting in elections, mandated party politicians, tasks achieved through control over the bureaucracy</td>
<td>Separation of politics and management, politics to give direction but not hands on control, managers to manage, additional loop of consumer assessment built into the system</td>
<td>Elected leaders, managers and key stakeholders involved in search for solutions to community problems and effective delivery mechanisms. System in turn subject to challenge through elections, referendums, deliberative forums, scrutiny functions and shifts in public opinion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Preferred system for service delivery</strong></td>
<td>Hierarchical department or self-regulating profession</td>
<td>Private sector or tightly defined arms-length public agency</td>
<td>Menu of alternatives selected pragmatically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Approach to public service ethos</strong></td>
<td>Public sector has monopoly on service ethos, and all public bodies have it</td>
<td>Sceptical of public sector ethos (leads to inefficiency and empire building) – favours customer service</td>
<td>No one sector has a monopoly on public service ethos. Maintaining relationships through shared values is seen essential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relation-ship with ‘higher’ tiers of government</strong></td>
<td>Partnership relationship with central government over delivery</td>
<td>Upwards through performance contracts and key performance indicators</td>
<td>Complex and multiple: regional, national, European. Negotiated and flexible</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TOWARDS A GLOBAL TYPOLOGY OF LOCAL GOVERNANCE

In many respects it is difficult to overestimate the sheer challenge of the study of comparative local governance (see Stoker 2006a for a fuller discussion). Even within one country it is possible to spend a lot of time and effort in describing internal differences in institutional form and practice. Nation state comparison is tough enough but at least in terms of democracies there are fewer than 200 of them. Within any one country there might be several different tiers or levels of local government and the form of each might vary according to local choice or local circumstances. The truth is that the complexity of local governance institutional arrangements often magnifies the challenge of understanding within countries and makes the task of comparative study very taxing.

Approaches to developing the comparative study of local governance have notwithstanding these difficulties tried to identify some basic institutional differences between systems. Lidstrom (1999, pp. 100–6) distinguishes between approaches that focus on historical or present day criteria. Historical heritage might lead in one direction in terms of the distinctions drawn while a concern with present day realities might lead in other directions. The former option could lead to the overlooking of recent developments. If the focus is the current position it appears that a range of institutional factors could be focused on. You could take the overall scale and size of budgets and staff available to municipalities; alternatively you could use criteria of formal local government autonomy and freedom from central control.

Given a focus on where local government stands in world that appears more globalized it would seem appropriate to look to present day features of local government to develop a classification. But which features? The dominant form of classification in comparative local governance looks at local government systems as a whole and links together a range of factors. According to Lidstrom (1999, p. 103) ‘the most widely accepted and frequently cited’ is that provided by Hesse and Sharpe (1991). There are three main groups according to this categorization: A Franco group that would include many of the countries of southern Europe, an Anglo group based around the UK and Ireland and to some extent the United States and New Zealand and finally a north and middle European variant including the Nordic countries, Germany and the Netherlands. Page and Goldsmith (1987), Page (1991), Batley and Stoker (1991), and John (2001) where the focus is more narrowly on Europe adopt a similar classification with a strong division between Northern and Southern countries. Norton (1994, pp. 13–14) in what is claimed to be a classification of ‘world systems of local government’ does add a Japan group and splits the United States and Canada away to a separate North America group. Denters and Rose (2005, pp. 10–11) with a more world focus adapt the Hesse and Sharpe model but distinguish between local governments embedded in unitary and federal systems.

The difficulty of all these classifications is that they mix various constitutional and institutional details to produce frameworks that are rich in capturing variety but poor as tools for comparative analysis. We soon got lost as qualifications are added to capture the inherent institutional diversity in the world of local government. The further problem with all of these classifications is their narrow and largely western focus. They are concerned almost entirely with mature rather than new wave democracies but it would seem relevant to consider the position of local government in these other settings (Bennett 1989, 1993; Coulson 1995). Indeed in Latin America there is a strong argument to say that local government has been a major site of experimentation for new forms of democratic practice in post-authoritarian regimes (Selee and Peruzzotti 2009). In many southern and

Public Administration Vol. 89, No. 1, 2011 (15–31)
developing countries local government has also been a site for innovation and major decentralization initiatives over the last decades (McCraney and Stren 2003). The quality and nature of that decentralization may vary but in Asia, Africa and Latin America we have seen the emergence of new protocols of governance and municipal management at the local level in part as a response to the sheer scale and complexity of the processes of urbanization that have been occurring (Stren 2003). And even in those countries where a full-scale democratic practice may be novel or only partially established reform measures, have generally, seen local governments in these countries gain substantially more power, again in reaction to rapid social and economic change.

We need to make a conceptual leap forward to enable us to grasp and analyse the emerging world of local government. Typologies rooted in a focus on a narrow range of countries are not good enough in today’s context. The new world of local government demands a broader comparative perspective so that we can learn from each other. But existing comparative frameworks are too narrowly focused on a few western concerns and not sufficiently global. Moreover they are too dominated by a focus on formal institutional differences rather than by a concern with the practices and functions of local governance systems. We need a new global typology to enable us to take forward our understanding.

**A TYPOLOGY BASED ON FOUR SOCIETAL FUNCTIONS**

We need to think about a simplifying framework in which to present a comparative yet global understanding of local governance (see table 2). One key question to ask of any system is what are its core functions? In the case of local governance, I argue, the focus at the beginning of the 21st century is on expressing identity, social investment (economic development), social consumption (welfare) and post-material concerns (lifestyle issues). Each of these functions needs to consider in very broad terms and may be expressed in different practices in different countries. So economic development may focus on planning and regulation activities in some countries but find additional expression in direct provision in other countries in terms of, say, energy provision. Each function is also under threat in some way because of wider societal and economic developments. The functions are defined by what they do and also by their capacity to attract and retain a social base, a group of interests or supporters that in different ways become a client of the function. The social base helps to sustain each function’s importance and relevance to society at large.

**TABLE 2  A typology of local government societal functions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Societal function</th>
<th>Identity</th>
<th>Economic development</th>
<th>Welfare</th>
<th>Lifestyle coordination</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Base</td>
<td>Among citizens in general</td>
<td>Among power holders relevant to the project and those kept in by small incentives</td>
<td>Providers of services and also the clients of services</td>
<td>A broad and changing mix of individuals and groups in community and those who act leaders of community governance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Countries where that function is prominent</td>
<td>Italy, France</td>
<td>United States, China</td>
<td>Sweden, Brazil, South Africa</td>
<td>Australia, UK</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One of the most established functions of local government in many systems is the expression of identity. Local government means something to its citizens because it expresses where they were born or where they live. To say you are from a particular village, town or city can be a source of pride. Local government matters to citizens because it says: ‘this is where I am from and who I am’. Local government systems especially those that are long-established and little reorganized in terms of their basic scale – France and Italy – would appear to be particularly well placed to express identity. In some instances, such as where distinctive languages or cultures are at stake within a nation state, a local government institution can come to be an important carrier of political identity as, for example, would appear to be the case of Barcelona.

Various scholars see the forces of globalization as threatening this role of expressing political identity. Thompson (2010, p. 135) notes how ‘some have argued that globalization is producing the political flourishing of something like global civil society or cosmopolitan governance’. This empirical observation is accompanied by ‘normative arguments that suppose that political identity has moved beyond the state because the state was always an artificial constraint on the possibility of global political community, and suggest that globalization offers the possibility of something more humanly authentic’ (Thompson 2010, p. 135). However others see normative claims and empirical trends pointing to stronger local and regional identities in the context of nation states. In particular argues Thompson (2010, pp. 135–6) ‘communitarians of different kinds have resisted these approaches and argued that states still express specific identities that belong exclusively to their own citizens and which these citizens cannot readily change. They have insisted that cosmopolitans empirically underestimate the continuing political significance of particular, culturally grounded, human communities while they themselves reject the normative desirability of subjecting those communities to the moral demands of a universal politics’. Identity claims can still be made by many local government systems and they provide a source of legitimacy and an expression of their underlying ethos. Indeed one way of reconciling the demands of the global and local is to encourage citizens to operate under the mantra of ‘Think Global, Act Local’.

The issue of economic development is relevant to the core function of many local government systems. In the UK the role of Victorian local government as a handmaiden to the industrial revolution is widely recognized (Stoker 1988). Land use planning and regulation of housing, industrial and commercial development are central to this function. The provision of venture capital or other forms of industrial development support are also common activities. But the role can also be expressed through direct provision. Providing basic infrastructure for water, sewerage, or energy provision, building roads, developing transport remain central tasks for local government systems stretching from China, through Brazil and the United States and to South Africa. These tasks are often accompanied in the subtle tasks of human capital development, providing education, training and skills for a workforce.

The economic development role can come in a variety of forms but one of the most prominent and virulent is when local government takes a role as the organizer of a growth machine (Harding 1997). As Goldsmith (1992, p. 395) explains:

In these countries, the paramount task of local government is to promote the economic health of its community. Growth is paramount, with services to property – fire, police and transport – being the major activities providing the foundation on which growth can take place. ‘Boosterism’ is a term sometimes used of the general ethos described.
Local government can establish for itself a powerful role and one supported by embedded business and economic interests in undertaking this function as the promoter of economic development.

Again the role could be seen as under threat (see, for example, Dicken 2003) as the nature of economic activity changes in the face of global competition and as the spatial specificity of industry shifts in a new industrial era less reliant on access to market outlets, raw materials, power sources or immobile manufacturing facilities. Yet these spatial factors still remain important to some degree and there are further counter arguments to suggest that locality remains relevant in economic development. Locality factors arise in the attraction and retention of skilled workers to locations and the importance of industrial networks of provision in providing particular localities with an advantage in various production niches. Being a media town or textile city – where similar types of industries can co-locate – could appear to be an economically important lever to pull.

Local government has a third core function associated with welfare provision and redistribution. Initially this role might have been seen as involving public safety, some income support and others activities to provide for basic needs. But welfare functions have developed in many countries to take on a wider range of higher needs for education and advancement. This role is prominent in parts of Europe according to Goldsmith (1992). He points out the prominence of welfare provision and its embedded support both from local citizens and service-providers as a key feature of local government systems. In these systems issues such as equity and redistribution shape ‘the growth and working of local government, which has acted as the producer and deliverer of state welfare services, such as education, housing and transport. Countries such as (West) Germany, the Netherlands, Britain and the Scandinavian group have all been concerned in the period since 1945 with the provision of a wide range of the collective consumption goods which comprise the welfare state’ (Goldsmith 1992, p. 396). But the welfare role is also prominent in Latin American local government and in local government systems in East Asia, China, Africa and virtually every part of the globe. The scale of the resources available and the effectiveness of the support provided by welfare services vary enormously but the basic idea that local government has an embedded role in welfare provision and redistribution is a prominent one.

The social welfare function is under pressure in some countries from fiscal demands created by ageing population profiles, advances in technology leading to more expensive treatments and increased expectations about the quality of services to be offered. In those systems where these roles are prominent in the activities of local government it is possible to predict some tensions and some realignment of responsibilities (for a further analysis, see Glennerster 2010).

The final role for local government is the least well formed and embedded but has risen to prominence in a range of local government systems in recent decades. The role involves local government systems stepping beyond welfare service provision and narrow support for economic development to a broader co-ordinating role in supporting citizens’ changing and developing lifestyle choices. The move towards networked community governance has in turn encouraged a vision of the role of local government as place shaping – ‘the creative use of powers and influence to promote the general well-being of a community and its citizens’ (Lyons Report 2007, p. 3). The co-ordinator role is the future according to the Lyons Report (2007, p. 3):

Whatever the legal and constitutional arrangements for the provision of a service or function, if it has impacts on local people, then the local authority should have a role
in representing the community interest and influencing that service. That requires not just the joining-up of resources and activities, but also a leadership and influencing role to ensure that the efforts of all agencies are focused on the outcomes of greatest importance to local people. Local government is well placed to play this convening role.

Although suitably cautious and tentative in their remarks, researchers suggest a trend towards a growing pertinence for this role of governance over government. John (2001) and Denters and Rose (2005) suggest that the emergence of a community governance role is a key feature in comparative local government in the modern era driven by response to changes in the social and economic context. Echoes of this emerging community governance role can however be found in local governance systems around the world (Stoker 1998).

Community governance or co-ordination can be seen as a role that has emerged as a response to changes in people’s lifestyle and the complexity of modern life and its associated challenges (Stoker 2004, 2005). Complexity also results from the sheer technical difficulty of what many local governments now attempt to do in the public sphere. They have moved from hard-wiring challenges to a concern with soft-wiring society. It was enough of a challenge to build schools, roads and hospitals and ensure the supply of clean water, gas, electricity and all the requirements of modern life. But so much of what they are trying to do now is about soft wiring, getting healthier communities, ensuring that children from their early years get the right stimulation and the right environment in which to grow and develop, trying to find ways in which our economy can grow in a way that meets the challenges of globalization and the need for sustainability. Soft wiring challenges are complex.

Complexity is also reflected in that there is a boundary problem in a lot of public policy arenas. Who is responsible for keeping us healthy? Is it the citizen who should eat and drink appropriately, the state that should provide good advice or companies that should sell healthier food? We know it is unfair to ask the police, on their own, to solve the problem of crime. We know that for our children to become educated we need more than better schools. In short, complexity comes from the fact that the boundaries between sectors of life and different institutions have become increasingly blurred.

So complexity of function, scale, purpose and responsibility are part of the modern condition and community governance is the response because it is only through giving scope for local capacity building and the development of local solutions that we can hope to meet the challenge posed by these complexities. The solution to complexity is networked community governance because it is only through such an approach that local knowledge and action can be connected a wider network of support and learning. In that way we can get solutions designed for diverse and complex circumstances.

REFLECTIONS ON THE TYPOLOGY

These four roles for systems of local government – identity expression, economic development, social welfare and community governance – are distinctive and capture different types of activity. But is the list exhaustive? That is a difficult claim to establish but I would argue that the four roles capture the major societal functions of local government systems. Are there other roles widely undertaken by local government systems? At one stage you might have argued in the era of city-states or medieval fortresses in Europe that local government had a core function around security and defence. That role has been usurped by national and international level organizations in most parts of the world. However if
security is more broadly defined as a disciplinary/coercive function it could be seen as a fifth role expressed through the controlling and surveillance power of local government. But I would rather see the discipline function as embedded in each of the four roles I have identified. The local state both enables and controls and it can do that latter activity through identity (by rules of residence), economic development (by regulations), welfare (through child protection), and community governance (through selecting among networks). The four functions each connect to a social base, as argued above, but that connection can have both a benign and more controlling face.

How could we use the typology? What we can say immediately is that different countries are unlikely to have their local government systems exclusively assigned to one role or the other and so another analytical challenge is to work through the implications and dimensions of different mixes in order to develop a more sophisticated understanding of local government systems. Allocating a societal function to a local government system could be done in a variety of analytical ways. We will need to develop criteria to make the judgements using a mix of ‘hard’ evidence about spending and staffing with ‘soft’ evidence about ethos and understanding. The amount of public spending on a role is a good starting point but is not always going to be the most appropriate guide. We could add some sort of content analysis of a local government’s public documents. Systems could be classified according to their primary or secondary functions. Systems could be compared between those that appear to be able to mix roles and those that struggle to perform one function effectively. Comparisons could be made between systems that have a shared societal role as prime function. Or comparison could be drawn across a function, looking at systems where it is prominent compared to systems where it is less prominent. In short one of the virtues of the typology is the range of questions and dimensions for comparison that it provides.

TOWARDS A TYPOLOGICAL THEORY OF DIFFERENT PRACTICES OF LOCAL POLITICS AND MANAGEMENT

A typology can only be the beginning of an analysis. To identify four broad types of activity against the broad brush criteria of a core societal activity of a local government system is, arguably, valuable but there is a danger in the end of producing only an exercise in more effective description. Yet it is possible to move from a focus on typologies towards what George and Bennett (2005 p. 235) call typological theorizing which can provide ‘a rich and differentiated depiction of a phenomenon and can generate discriminating and contingent explanations and policy recommendations’. As a first foray into such theorizing this article comes up with an argument that certain types of local government activity are likely to be associated with certain forms of local politics and management (see table 3). The argument is not that that all functions are matched by certain style or styles of politics and management in all empirical cases but that there is a logical connection between certain functions and certain practices.

Let us deal first with the management practices and inter-governmental relations associated with different societal functions since these are more straightforward to explain. In welfare provision and community governance types the form of intergovernmental relations is integrated, as all parts of the governmental system share in the task at hand. This is the world of government beyond the centre in the UK in the post war period so ably captured by Rhodes (1988) when welfare functions were dominant. The world of community governance that we argue emerged in the UK from the late 1990s onwards.
WAS LOCAL GOVERNANCE SUCH A GOOD IDEA?

Table 3: Forms of local government function and associated politics and management

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Associated form of</th>
<th>Identity</th>
<th>Economic development</th>
<th>Welfare provision</th>
<th>Community governance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local Politics</td>
<td>Representative and clientelistic</td>
<td>Regime Building</td>
<td>Collective and partisan</td>
<td>Networked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic culture</td>
<td>Parochial</td>
<td>Conciliation</td>
<td>Subject</td>
<td>Participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intergovernmental relations</td>
<td>Weak autonomy</td>
<td>Strong autonomy</td>
<td>Integrated</td>
<td>Integrated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>Underdeveloped</td>
<td>Facilitative but selective</td>
<td>Active: hands on</td>
<td>Boundary spanning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Rhodes 1999; Stoker 1999, 2000) also relies on network-based management but of a more horizontal rather than vertical form. Identity politics requires only weak formal autonomy to work, since it is in local government’s relationship with citizens about closeness to the locality rather than a capacity to make a difference. The economic development role to really flourish requires some considerable local autonomy in practice so that special deals and incentives can be provided to drive forward economic growth in a competitive environment. In a less competitive environment or more controlled environment, such as China, maybe that formal autonomy may not be necessary. But some informal capacity to do deals will still be essential.

On the management side the identity function makes few demands. The economic development function requires skilful and selective support for key interests and likely success stories. The welfare function requires the most obviously Weberian form of management: organized and with effective monitoring. The community governance role requires new skills of boundary spanning. As local government systems move between functions or change their mix of functions you might expect to see some tensions around operating these various management styles. Indeed one tension facing the establishment of community governance in systems such as the UK or the Nordic countries with previously strong Weberian bureaucratic welfare systems is finding the organizational space for a new system of management to flourish.

The societal roles undertaken by local government systems of identity framing, economic development, social welfare and community governance encourage and are supportive of certain types of civic culture and local politics. Civic culture is the term identified by Almond and Verba (1963) and they draw a distinction between three types of political culture. Each type captures citizens’ orientation towards their polity. The first is the ‘parochial’ political culture where the citizen has little direct contact with the formal and specialized agencies of government and spends much of their time unaware of the political system. But the parochial has a sense of local community and identity. The second orientation is referred to as the ‘subject’ political culture. Here the orientation of the citizen is as an observer with an awareness of the political system in general but a lack of engagement with it on particular issues. This orientation is used by Almond and Verba to characterize a substantial element in British political culture in the late 1950s as deferential. But deference towards the political system is only one response that could be in tune with Almond and Verba’s subject culture. The subject culture can lead to citizens seeing the political system as legitimate or in a more negative light. Crucially it is rather defined by its passive orientation towards the outputs of the system. That orientation

Public Administration Vol. 89, No. 1, 2011 (15–31)  
may be deferential but it need not necessarily be so, indeed with increased expectations about what government could or should deliver among a better educated public, it could lead to more demanding or critical citizens (Norris 1999). The crucial question for subject political culture is what does the political system deliver? Finally the ‘participant’ political culture is one where citizens understand the political system and are oriented towards being actively engaged with it both in general terms and over particular issues. Again that engagement may lead to positive or negative elevations of the political system but the orientation towards engagement remains.

In table 3 it can be seen that I have added a fourth type of civic culture associated with the economic development role, namely the idea of civic culture premised on the conciliation of citizens. The trickle down of the benefits of economic growth are sold to them collectively and offered in a more targeted way to those that are in a position to question and challenge. The key insights into this form of politics come from Clarence Stone’s famous study of the regime politics of Atlanta in the United States (for example, see Stone 1989, 1993; Stoker 1995; Mossberger and Stoker 2001). Politics in local government in this rampant boosterish form of economic development is driven by the social production model of power. Stone describes the political power sought by regimes as the ‘power to’ or the capacity to act, rather than ‘power over’ others or social control (Stone 1989, p. 229). Achieving the capacity to act is by no means certain; cooperation needs to be created and maintained. Regimes overcome problems of collective action and secure participation in the governing coalition through the distribution of selective incentives such as contracts, jobs, facilities for a particular neighbourhood, and so on. As Stone points out, the benefits realized by participants may be purposive as well as material – for example, the opportunity to achieve an organization’s particular goal, such as civil rights. Cooperation does not imply consensus over values and beliefs, but participation in order to realize ‘small opportunities’ (Stone 1993, p. 11).

Because of the resources it controls, business is a key participant in governing coalitions focused on economic development. Nevertheless, the relative strength of business, the composition of particular businesses engaged in the coalition, and the presence of other interests, such as neighbourhood groups or environmental groups, will vary from place to place, and may change over time.

Broadly, as indicated in table 3, the argument is that a parochial culture appears to fit best with a local government that defines itself as about identity. The idea of government being seen as distant yet expressing identity for the citizen requires a little explanation. It reflects a relationship where knowledge of the governmental role or judgement about its performance is subordinated to understanding that its core value is as a public face of a community. In some instances a great deal of respect can be given to local elected representatives who are seen as both the key decision makers and champions for their local communities. Local government in parts of Northern Europe and the Nordic countries, for example, would appear to have respected and trusted local representatives. In many parts of the world elected mayors provided a focal point for strong expressions of identity based representation. At times, and in some cases, the politics of identity could develop a clientelistic form where ‘local political leaders were expected (and themselves expected) to deliver favours (jobs and/or other benefits) to their supporters in return for votes’ (Goldsmith 1992, p. 395). This ‘bringing home the bacon’ patronage based style of politics is, according to Goldsmith, prominent in Southern and Central Europe and it may also be characteristic of local politics in local government systems in parts of Africa and the Americas.
The second form of civic culture – the subject culture – is most appropriate to and would appear to fit best with partisan and formally organized collective politics. Politics is communicated between citizens and parties and constructed in an organized manner. The formal party politics that dominated local government in large parts of northern Europe for much of the second half the Twentieth century provides one form of this type of politics. But another can be observed in the local politics of Latin America developed around the emergence of participatory budgeting and other forms of more participatory democracy. A new politics of engagement is developed to underwrite and support the older politics of representation through parties (Selee and Peruzzotti 2009).

Participatory budgeting (PB), a political expression of subject civic culture moving towards a participant culture started its existence as a form of engagement in Porto Alegre, Brazil in the late 1980s but by 2004 it is estimated that over 250 cities or municipalities practiced some version of it (Cabannes 2004; Sintomer et al. 2007) The essence of PB rests on an annual opportunity for citizens to engage in the process of public spending decision making in their neighbourhoods and more broadly their locality. Formal elected representatives work alongside citizens in making decisions and in a way that tends to reinforce the collective support for the ruling party. Citizens are drawn into a process of agenda and priority setting. Allocating monies and budgets is plainly an area where engagement is possible to build even among relatively disadvantaged or disengaged citizens. Being involved in decisions that make a difference is an offer that many citizens can be attracted by and can help move them from being subjects of local governing processes to active participants (Wampler 2008; Smith 2009).

A strong sense of involvement is prominent in the participant civic culture where citizens are not waiting for an invitation to engage but are driving the agenda and organizing their own politics in a loose, pluralistic and episodic manner. Networked community governance, at best, can see the formal elected representatives and local officials take on some form of steering function but the dynamic in the system comes from the everyday makers of politics among citizens themselves (Bang 2003; Sorensen 2006). These everyday makers provide the driving force for local politics. They are ‘strong, self-reliant and capable’ (Bang 2003, pp. 20–1) and embrace the role of community in managing complex problems and the challenges of diversity. These citizens are not easily controlled or directed but they do not see themselves as simply in opposition to the system but rather the key to making it both fair and effective in solving community problems.

THE SURVIVAL OF LOCAL GOVERNANCE

We can see pressures emerging to challenge the functional claims of local government in terms of expressing identity, encouraging economic development and social welfare redistribution. These were touched on earlier in the article. But in this final section of the article it is the role for local government as a network co-ordinator that will be placed under most scrutiny. Is it the saviour that Rhodes and Stoker implied it might be?

Sustainability for local government as for all other governing bodies rests on a combination of access to soft and hard power. To borrow from Nye’s (1990, 2008) terminology, developed in the context of international relations, governing agencies can use hard power – the power of command and incentives – but also have access to a pool of soft power, the power to get other people to share your ideas and vision. A local government system that bases itself on expressing a sense of identity may in many countries find itself with a social base that can sustain it into the future, as it appeals to the souls of
citizens. It may lack hard powers of coercion, regulation or economic incentives – it may be able to do little directly for its citizens to save them from harm or promote their development – but it will be able to engage through soft power. It will draw legitimacy to itself because of the values, ideologies and ethos it expresses. The economic development role involves, as described earlier, the process of building a regime of partners between local governments, key sections of the business community and other stakeholders who are offered small incentives to go along with the growth project. This process involves in Nye’s terms developing soft power. Here the prime driver is the hard power of economic incentives reaching to a substantial range of interests combined with the agenda setting capacity of soft power to create a vision of the ‘new’ and ‘vibrant’ village, town or city that economic development will deliver. The social welfare role has also the capacity for local government to attract a substantial social base of both service receivers and providers. Tough fiscal challenges may limit the hard power of direct incentives but again a soft power to set the governing agenda and promote welfare and redistributive values would seem to be still feasible.

The difficulty of the community governance role is that the use of hard power is limited by the sheer scale and complexity of the tasks at hand and soft power is the only option for local government. The first flaw in the governance thinking offered by Rhodes and Stoker is this failure to fully recognize the value of hard power. Rhodes (1989, 1997) thought that the skills of diplomacy, communication and bargaining would be enough in achieving co-ordination. But this overlooked the importance of hard power in terms of coercion and strong material incentives. Our second mistake was not to fully recognize the limited amounts of soft power available to local government. One key issue with community governance as a societal role for local government is that it has far less support from citizens or organized interests within society. It is one of those ideas appealing to academics discovering a new paradigm – as exemplified by the governance perspective promoted by Rhodes and Stoker – but it is very difficult to embed in popular culture understandings of how societies are governed. As indeed I noted (Stoker 1998, p. 21) governance ‘lacks the simplifying legitimizing ‘myths’ of traditional perspectives’. Moreover in the face of a diverse, pluralistic set of demands from citizens it is difficult to see local government as community governor as anything other than bounced along on a fluctuating wave of popular politics, seemingly relevant at some points and seemingly irrelevant at others. The role may leave local government as a bystander in the effective governance of a country with other tiers of government, public agencies, partnership organizations and third sector trusts having a bigger and more substantial role. It is not a role that ensures that local government in embedded in either the body or soul of citizens or particular stakeholders.

Offering to be a place shaper or community governor places local government on a slippery slope to the sidelines of governing arrangements. The United Kingdom, and most particularly England, could be seen as an exemplar of this trend (Stoker 2004). There is an increasingly desperate rhetoric about a community governance role but limited substantive functional capacity in relation to welfare provision and economic development limits elected local government in England. Moreover there is little scope for identity politics because multiple reorganizations have created a local government system of a scale and coverage that has in large parts of the country little to do with citizens’ felt sense of community.

Local government systems that have had a sustained relationship with the ‘big ticket’ items and functional responsibilities around identity, economic development and welfare
may be better placed to hold on to a substantial governing role. For those systems in the throes of development, equally, grabbing responsibility for one of these big ticket items will be a major step on the way to becoming a vital part of the governing arrangements of that country. If relying on community governance is the weakest position for a local government system then having no effective claim over any of the four functions outlined in this article gives a clear-cut way of defining those countries that have no de facto local government system. There are several countries in the developing world where such a position could be seen as obtaining including, for example, Pakistan (Taj 2010). You could make the case that Australian local government has never made the grade of being a substantial part of the countries’ governing arrangements (Aulich 2005).

Given social and economic changes some systems of local government are more vulnerable than others. In this light being able to combine some of the roles outlined in this article may be the hallmark of a strong and sustainable system of local government in the future. In the Nordic countries a strong base in the politics of identity, combined with a significant role in welfare development matched by a skilful development of community governance role has resulted in a system which is likely to remain one the strongest throughout the world (Rose and Stahlberg 2005). The position in other countries where local government has historically been strong might not be so positive, as key societal functions leak away. The challenge in developing systems of local government to achieve a sustainable degree of social rootedness will be considerable.

CONCLUDING NOTE
Local government systems – such as those of the UK – that are left primarily with the role of a network coordinator are in trouble. The community governance role – promoted by Rhodes and Stoker – is vulnerable because it lacks depth to its social embedding. It is deficient in both the hard and soft power to sustain its role. Intellectual, local governance is an appealing idea but as a base for defining and promoting the role of elected local government it is unsustainable. Rhodes – Phase 1 – as a determined empirical public administrator, could be comfortable with this conclusion. Rhodes – Phase 2 – as the ethnographer and interpretive specialist, might find it harder to embrace. In Phase 2 a post-modern concern with the narratives of governance and the construction of meanings and practices has become dominant in the work of Rhodes (2007). This perspective tends to lead to a focus on the soft power of persuasion and a neglect of the hard realities of power, and here we can see the seeds of the problem that in this article we have suggested that exists. Local government systems need a substantial amount of hard power in order to exercise soft power. You can’t win with the losing hand. That is the fatal flaw in the community governance vision.

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