

Mobilising the Leadership of Cities and Regions in the 21st Century

Paper Presented to the RSA Winter Conference

London, 22 November 2013

Professor Andrew Beer

Centre for Housing, Urban and Regional Planning,

The University of Adelaide



The Place-Based Leadership Agenda

- The Deficit in the Leadership of Cities and Regions
 - Why Leadership Matters
- What Do we Know About Leadership in Cities and Regions?
 - Is Good Leadership Universal?
 - How Can Leadership be Mobilised?
 - Case Studies and their Limitations
- Conclusions

The Leadership Deficit

- Regional or place-based leadership is deficient in many developed economies
 - Hildreth and Bailey (2013) noted that UK cities and regions have lagged behind their European comparators because of leadership gaps
 - The Centre for Cities (2006) argues cities and regions ‘have their hands tied’ with respect to economic development because of reliance on central government funding
 - OECD (2010) considered inadequate leadership a cause of poor regional performance in some territories
 - Beer and Baker (2013) noted the absence of leaders in parts of rural Australia
 - Halkier (2013) observed ‘lock in’ and leadership failure in two of his three case studies in the tourism industry in Jutland
 - Sotarauta and Kosonen (2004) reported that South-Ostrobothian in Finland had to ‘import’ leadership to address its economic challenges

Why Leadership Matters

- Strong consensus amongst researchers and policy makers that place based leadership matters. Improved:
 - Capacity to set a vision for the future
 - Increases the likelihood of achieving that vision and securing an economic future
 - Positions the community within global markets
 - Flexibility and resilience when confronted by change
 - Reduces exposure to path dependence
 - Social and institutional capital
 - Strengthened through practice and use
 - Vertical relations with government, and horizontal relations with partners and other stakeholders



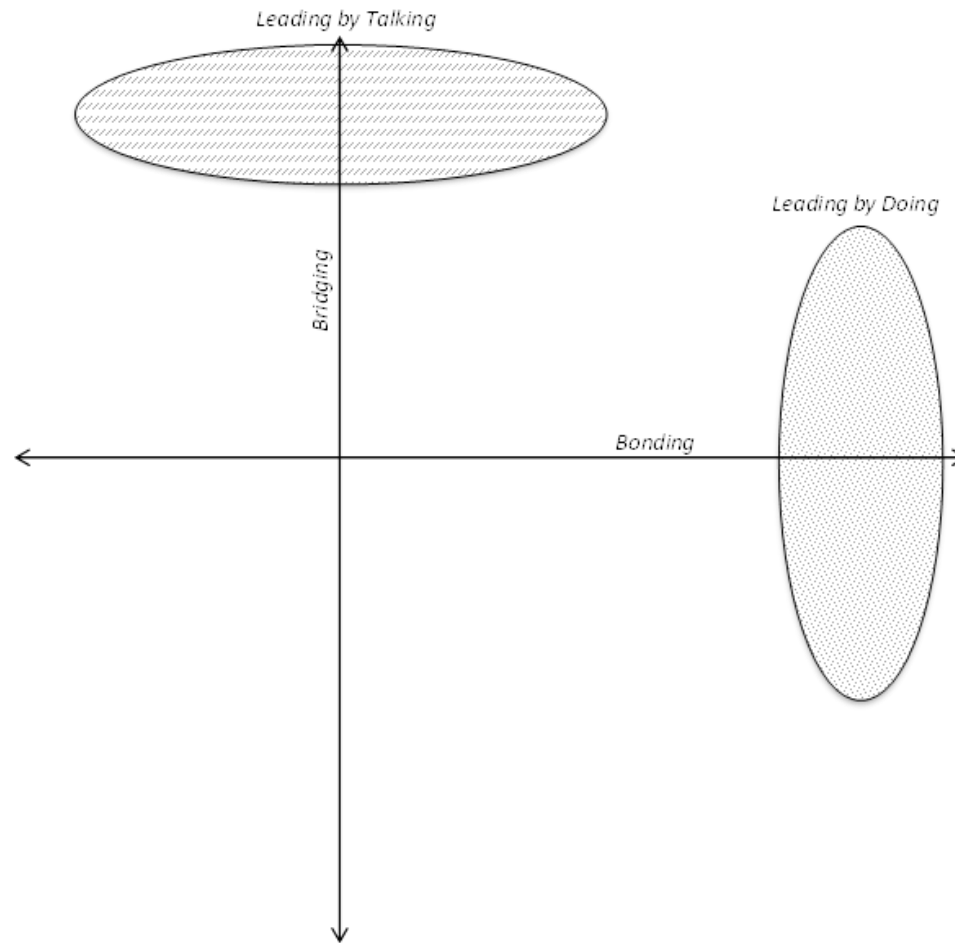
What Do we Know About Leadership in Cities and Regions?

- The leadership of cities and regions is more complex than in linear organisations such as corporations or governments
 - It's a property of groups not individuals
 - Based on mutual trust and collaboration
- Good leadership is:
 - Agenda setting and task oriented
 - Pays attention to the socio-emotional side of internal group dynamics and engagement with external stakeholders
 - A coalition of stakeholders (Lions not leopards)
 - more likely to both deliver change and stability in leadership

What Do we Know About Leadership in Cities and Regions?

- Good Leadership is (continued)
 - Multi-faceted
 - No one style of effective leadership
 - ‘quiet leaders’, charismatic leaders, socially embedded leaders, subversive leaders
 - Built on on-going interactions with other stakeholders
 - Adequately resourced
 - The importance of ‘slack resources’
 - Found in all parts of the community
 - Volunteer business leaders, elected leaders & amongst professional staff

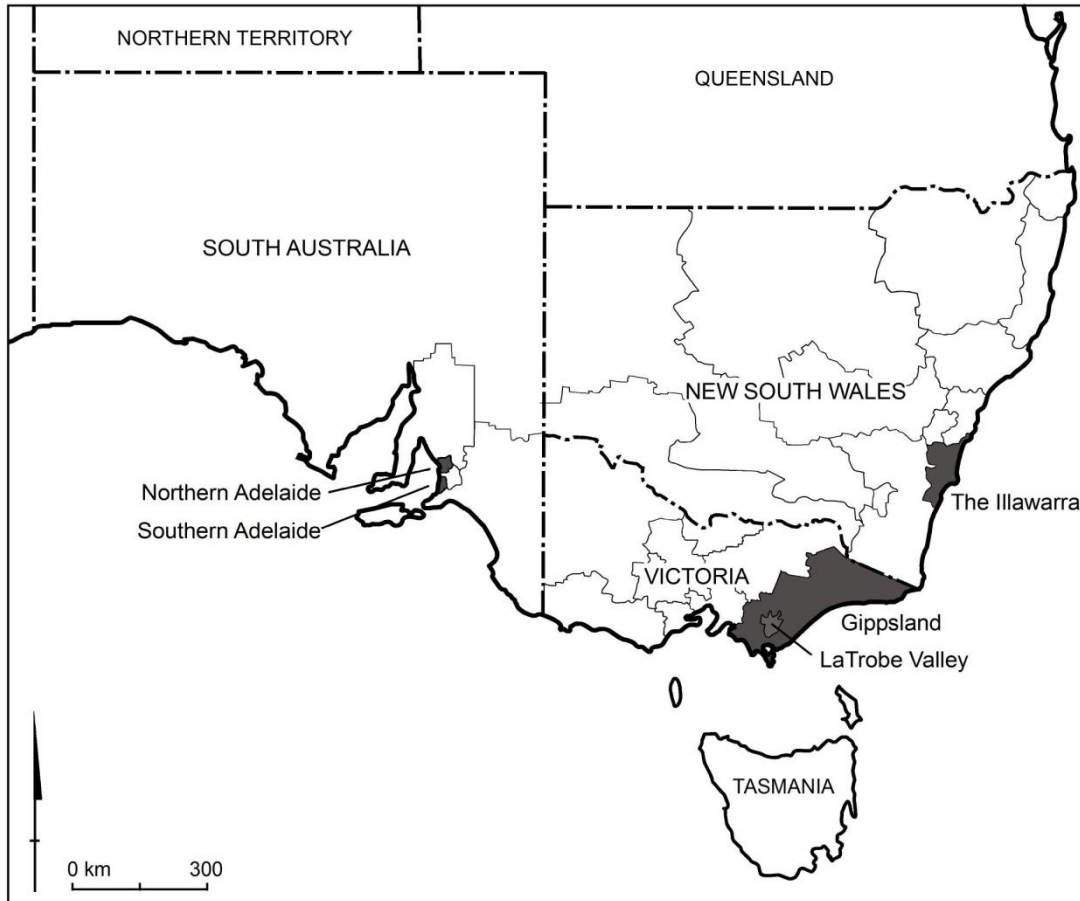
Leading by Talking, Leading by Doing



Case Studies

- Academic and popular understanding of place-leadership is heavily reliant on case studies. But,
 - Too great a focus on ‘good news’
 - The challenge of ‘contingency theory’
 - That effective leadership will arise if a city or community is confronted by a major challenge
 - Are these insights transferrable?
 - Impact of systems of government
 - ‘Great person’ models of leadership
 - The Beechworth Baker

Case Studies



THE UNIVERSITY
of ADELAIDE

Case Study: Southern Adelaide



Case Study: La Trobe Valley



Is Good Leadership Universal?

- No
 - Leadership in any form is not universal
 - Highly centralised systems of government challenge the formation and expression of city or regional leadership
 - Australia, UK, Germany etc
 - Decentralised systems of power sharing are more likely to encourage local leaders
 - US Federal system, EU principle of subsidiarity
- No
 - Leadership roles can be used to concentrate power and influence within a segment of the community
 - Leadership groups can be distanced from their communities
 - Can make poor decisions, or fail to act

How Can Leadership be Mobilised?

- Central governments, cities and regions can all contribute to creating an institutional structure conducive to regional formation
 - Share power
 - Across tiers of government, the private sector and the community
 - Establish appropriate institutions
 - Ensure leadership efforts are adequately resourced
 - Engage with all sections of the community
 - Accept and value difference, but build a cohesive leadership group
 - Public, private and institutional members
 - It needs to be a collective and collaborative effort, and not all individuals can work in those environments

How Can Leadership be Mobilised?

- Set goals and review them
 - Task orientation, outcomes focus
- Develop the leadership group
 - Exposure to knowledge, leadership training, new concepts
 - Provide opportunities to practice leadership
- Renew the leadership group
 - Succession planning
 - Seek diverse skills and experience

Conclusions

- Perhaps 10-20% of cities and regions enjoy effective leadership
 - These deficits reflect both a failure to understand the leadership of cities and regions, and in some instances, an unwillingness to see leadership emerge
- Greater understanding can - and will - empower cities and regions to shape their future
- Policy efforts – nationally and supra nationally – that place priority on city and regional leadership will have significant impacts