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Place-based leadership and urban innovation: the unsung drivers of progressive change in the modern era

Robin Hambleton, University of the West of England, Bristol

Abstract

Place-less power, meaning the exercise of power by decision makers who are unconcerned about the impact of their decisions on communities living in particular places, has grown significantly in the last thirty years. A consequence is that societies are becoming more unequal. Even in the wealthy global cities modern capitalism is increasing inequality at a formidable rate. In a new book, *Leading the Inclusive City* (Policy Press), the author offers an international, comparative analysis of the efforts being made by place-based leaders to create inclusive, sustainable cities. This paper draws on the evidence presented in the book to suggest that place-based leaders can play a significant role in advancing social justice, promoting care for the environment and bolstering community empowerment. An opening section outlines a way of conceptualising the political space available to place-based leaders in any given context. It sets out a framework – *The New Civic Leadership* – that provides a new way of understanding the nature of modern civic leadership. The book provides seventeen examples of inspirational place-based leadership and in this paper one of these – the transformation of the central area of Melbourne, Australia – is selected to illustrate the argument. A final section discusses three emerging themes: 1) Can place-based leadership take on place-less power? 2) The need for outward-facing place-based leadership, and 3) The role of place-based leadership in bringing about radical public innovation.

Contact details:

Robin Hambleton
Professor of City Leadership
Centre for Sustainable Planning and Environments
Faculty of Environment and Technology
University of the West of England, Bristol

E: robin.hambleton@uwe.ac.uk

Also Urban Answers: <http://urbananswers.co.uk>

Introduction

It is incontestable that place-less power has grown significantly in the last thirty years or so. By place-less power I mean the exercise of power by decision-makers who are unconcerned about the impact of their decisions on communities living in particular places. Some writers have a somewhat gloomy view of the prospects for cities. They believe that the growth of multi-national companies operating on a global basis is now so well developed that cities are best viewed as helpless victims in a global flow of events. Distant, unelected decision makers now determine city futures, not urban residents.

This paper rejects this view and offers a fresh way of thinking about our urban future. It presents a new conceptual framework for understanding place-based, civic leadership and suggests that, across the world, cities are taking decisive action to shape the city according to progressive values – for example, advancing social justice, promoting care for the environment and bolstering community empowerment. This paper introduces ideas that are set out at greater length in a new book, *Leading the Inclusive City. Place-based innovation for a bounded planet* (Hambleton 2015). The aim of this paper is to introduce some of the main ideas that are examined in more detail in the book.

Both the book and the paper adopt a normative stance. By introducing concepts and ideas drawn from different disciplines, and on the experience of a number of innovative cities, the paper aims to stimulate practical efforts to improve the quality of life in cities. More specifically it sets out to recognise the unsung achievements of civic leaders and community activists in successfully resisting the forces of place-less power.

The paper has four main parts. An opening section introduces the idea of place-based power – it provides a context for the subsequent discussion. A second section sets out a way of conceptualising the political space available to place-based leaders in any given context, a framework I describe as *The New Civic Leadership*. This framework can, perhaps, offer a new way of understanding the nature of modern civic leadership. The book provides seventeen examples of inspirational place-based leadership. The third section in this paper provides a summary of just one of these Innovation Stories. It outlines the way local leadership has brought about a remarkable transformation of the central area of Melbourne, Australia. A final section presents a comparative discussion of three themes relating to place-based leadership: 1) The changing possibilities for place-based leadership in our rapidly globalising world; 2) The need for outward-facing leadership given the changing nature of public policy challenges; and 3) The role of place-based leadership in bringing about radical public innovation.

1) Contextualising place-based power

Civic leaders in particular cities do not operate in a vacuum. The power of urban governance is shaped by a variety of political, economic, social and environmental forces. Here I outline these pressures. A key theme in this

discussion is that the political space available to local leaders is **not fixed** – the frame can be expanded.ⁱ The first point to stress is that national context matters. Some countries attribute a very high societal value to independently elected local authorities and grant them substantial autonomy – for example, Sweden. In others the central state has weakened local government to the point where the locally elected politicians cannot even decide on the level of local tax they wish to impose on their citizens – for example, the UK.ⁱⁱ

Alongside constitutional and cultural differences, Denters and Rose (2005 p243) draw attention to the growing importance of multi-level governance ‘involving complicated patterns of vertical and horizontal relationships between municipalities which cross borders and produce new economic and political spaces’. These patterns, sometimes described as network governance, are shaped by socio-political history and the changing dynamics of local/central relations in any given country. Skelcher et al (2013 p43) remind us that ‘cities have deeply embedded institutional legacies’. These legacies may establish norms, or expectations, that constrain the political space, or agency, for local actors in both fairly direct and in more subtle ways. While recognising the importance of these influences we should be careful not to overstate the significance of the institutional legacy. Spurred on by local social movements and public pressures, civic leaders can invent new practices that add to, or even replace, the existing normative framework.

Urban political science reveals two main logics relating to the power of place in modern societies: an economic logic and a political logic. We will add a third lens, but let’s take the two well-established perspectives first. Hank Savitch and Paul Kantor (2002) provide a helpful overview of these drivers of urban development, and I draw on their analysis here. The economic logic claims that cities are required to tussle in a competitive marketplace and must strive to promote economic growth at all costs. Tiebout (1956) made this claim over fifty years ago, when he suggested that people and industry choose their locations based upon a simple cost-benefit ratio of goods and services available. Building on this ‘public choice’ perspective, Peterson (1981) suggests that, owing to local resource deficits and the need to maintain their competitive position, cities have become dependent on higher levels of government and private investment for survival. On this analysis urban dependency increases as the world becomes more global. Labour and capital are mobile, people follow jobs, and industry opts to move to more distant locations where the cost of land and labour is lower. A central claim of this economic logic is that cities must conceive of themselves as business corporations – as efficiency-maximising organisations, which must strive to enhance economic productivity as determined by the needs of capital.

A contrasting way of explaining the behaviour of cities is provided by the political logic. This suggests that cities, far from being business corporations, are political entities with, in democracies, elected civic leaders who are accountable to their citizens. Cities have particular socio-cultural values, histories, traditions and identities. It follows that civic leaders should be expected to pursue policies and practices relating to the needs and values of their residents, not the requirements of place-less capital. Opinions differ on

the most appropriate political strategy to adopt. For example, David Harvey offers a Marxist analysis and suggests that:

‘The traditional city has been killed by rampant capitalist development, a victim of the never-ending need to dispose of over-accumulating capital driving towards endless and sprawling urban growth no matter what the social, environmental, or political consequences’ (Harvey 2012 pp xv-xvi).

He argues that the whole capitalist system of perpetual accumulation has to be overthrown and replaced. Susan Fainstein, while agreeing with much of Harvey’s diagnosis of the problem, argues for a strategy of ‘non-reformist reforms’. She argues that:

‘... transformational movements aimed at a more egalitarian society must find a rationale based in human motivation rather than historical inevitability and, if not committed to or expecting revolution, must seek to achieve their aims through politics’ (Fainstein 2010 p19).

Political parties from across the political spectrum present alternative visions of how to create a fairer more prosperous society – with some being more convincing than others.

A third logic shaping the space available for place-based leadership is ecological. It is essential for civic leaders to build a concern for the natural environment into the **heart** of their approach to urban governance. The rapid increase in green house gas concentrations, and the potentially disastrous climatic consequences, suggest that city leaders, public managers and others need to pay much more attention to the ecological footprint of current policies and practices. Boone and Modarres outline seven pathways to sustainable development (2006 pp185-189). They advocate a precautionary approach rather than adopting a blind faith that all will be better. Their suggestions tie in with the advice of others seeking a more sustainable approach to urban policy making and practice (Girardet 2008; Parkin 2010; Pearson et al 2014). These authors, and the many who share their values, recognise that the dominance of market thinking is not contributing to human progress. Tim Jackson puts it this way:

‘There is a sense ... in which individual prosperity is curtailed in the presence of social calamity. That things are going well for me personally is of little consolation if my family, my friends and my community are all in dire straits. My prosperity and the prosperity of those around me are intertwined...’ (Jackson 2009 p1)

His book is focussed on finding a credible vision of what it means for human society to flourish in the context of ecological limits.

This environmental dimension has been serious neglected in urban political science and public administration, and this limitation needs to be rectified. Some may argue that ecological imperatives do not amount to a distinct perspective – they may feel that the political and/or economic drivers will, for

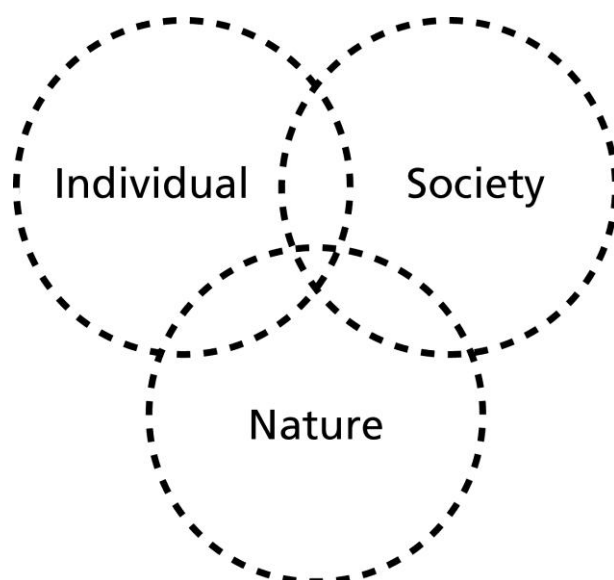
good or ill, carry (or not carry) the environmental arguments. This is to misunderstand the nature of the sustainability crisis now facing modern societies. Nature needs a distinct seat at the urban governance table if cities are to achieve social and ecological resilience.

2) The New Civic Leadership conceptual framework

The above discussion suggests that place-based leaders are not free agents able to do exactly as they choose. On the contrary, various powerful forces shape the context within which civic leaders operate. These forces do not disable local leadership. Rather they place limits on what urban leaders may be able to accomplish in particular places and at particular moments in time.ⁱⁱⁱ

In this section I present, in a series of steps, a new conceptual framework for thinking about civic leadership – a way of thinking that I describe as *The New Civic Leadership*. As a first step I provide a simple framework developed by Richard Rees, a British urban designer, as it helps to bridge the divide between social scientific and ecological perspectives. Rees argues that the essential elements of contemporary life – the individual, society and nature – have become separated out, and that they need to be reconnected. **Figure 1** is derived from his perspective and illustrates a simple way of framing my thinking about sustainable development.^{iv} Dotted lines are used to signal that the boundaries are porous.

Figure 1: The individual, society and nature



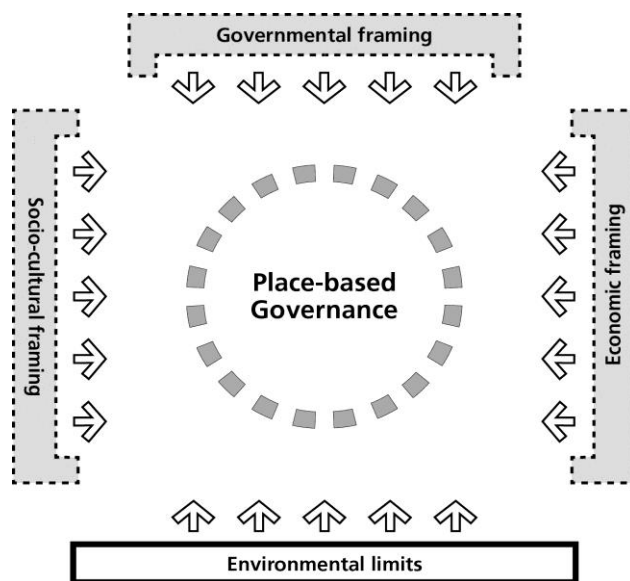
Source: Richard Rees, Urban Designer, UK.^v

Rees argues, consistent with a growing body of writers on resilient cities and communities, that city leaders, urban planners, architects, designers and

others need to **embed** a fruitful co-existence with nature into urban policy and practice.^{vi} Our relationship with the natural environment should not be regarded as another policy consideration – it needs to be integral to public policy making.

Figure 2 provides a simplified picture of the forces that shape the world of place-based governance in any given locality. To the three forces discussed in the previous section, I add – at the top of the figure - the constraints imposed on localities by laws, regulations and government policies.

Figure 2: Framing the political space for place-based governance



Let's run through this figure. At the bottom of the diagram, are the non-negotiable environmental limits. Ignoring the fact that cities are part of the natural ecosystem is irresponsible, and failure to pay attention to environmental limits will store up unmanageable problems for future generations. This side of the square is drawn with a solid line because, unlike the other sides of the square, these environmental limits are non-negotiable. On the left hand side of the diagram are socio-cultural forces – these comprise a mix of people (as actors) and cultural values (that people may hold). Here we find the rich variety of voices found in any city - including the claims of activists, businesses, artists, entrepreneurs, trade unionists, religious organisations, community-based groups, citizens who vote, citizens who don't vote, children, newly arrived immigrants, anarchists and so on. The people of the city will have different views about the kind of city they wish to live in, and they will have differential capacity to make these views known. Some, maybe many, will claim a right to the city. We can assume that, in democratic societies at least, elected leaders who pay little or no attention to these political pressures should not expect to stay in office for too long. Expression of citizen voice, to use Hirschman's term (1970), will see them dismissed at the ballot box.

On the right hand side of the diagram are the horizontal economic forces that arise from the need for localities to compete, to some degree at least, in the wider marketplace - for inward investment and to attract talented people. Various studies have shown that, contrary to neo-liberal dogma, it is possible for civic leaders to bargain with business (Savitch and Kantor 2002). Recognising the power of economic forces, including the growth in global competition between localities, does not require civic leaders to become mere servants of private capital. For example, a detailed study of the governance of London, New York, Paris and Tokyo concluded that:

‘Global forces are not making the politics of place less important. Globalism and local governance are not mutually exclusive but are deeply entwined... important differences remain in the ways particular world city-regions are mediating international forces’ (Kantor et al 2012 p 241)

On the top of **Figure 2**, as mentioned, we find the legal and policy framework imposed by higher levels of government. In some countries this governmental framing will include legal obligations decreed by supra-national organisations. For example, local authorities in countries that are members of the European Union (EU) are required to comply with EU laws and regulations, and to take note of EU policy guidance. Individual nation states determine the legal status, fiscal power and functions of local authorities within their boundaries. As mentioned earlier, these relationships are subject to negotiation and renegotiation over time.

It is clear that **Figure 2** simplifies a much more complex reality. This is what conceptual frameworks do. In reality the four sets of forces framing local action do not necessarily carry equal weight, and the situation in any given city is, to some extent, fluid and changing. The space available for local agency shifts over time, and a key task of local leaders is to be alert to the opportunities for advancing the power of their place within the context of the framing forces prevailing on their area at the time.

The figure indicates that place-based governance, shown at the centre, is porous. Successful civic leaders are constantly learning from the environment in which they find themselves in order to discover new insights, co-create new solutions and advance their political objectives. Note that the four forces are not joined up at the corners to create a rigid prison within which civic leadership has to be exercised. On the contrary the boundaries of the overall arena are, themselves, malleable. Depending on the culture and context, imaginative civic leaders may be able to disrupt the pre-existing governmental frame and bring about an expansion in place-based power.

Perhaps we need some fresh vocabulary – or modified ways of thinking – that can inject new impetus into the discussion of socio-environmental futures? Firstly, how should we define leadership? My own definition draws on both the leadership literature and on my personal experience of leadership in communities, in government and in higher education in Britain and the USA: ‘Leadership involves shaping emotions and behaviour to achieve common goals’ (Hambleton 2007 p174).^{vii} This definition puts emotions front of stage

and also emphasises the importance of leaders adopting an inclusive approach to the identification of the aims and purposes of collective endeavour.

The realms of place-based leadership

The definition of leadership put forward implies a wide range of activities aimed at generating both new insights and new ways of working together. It prizes respect for the feelings and attitudes of others as well as a strong commitment to collaboration. It is imaginative, involves risk taking and involves 'being able to put yourself in the situation of someone else' (Keohane 2010 p89). My approach to the study of place-based leadership is informed by this perspective, and I wish to emphasise that the feelings people have for 'their' place have been seriously neglected in both the leadership literature and the public service innovation literature. Following Hoggett (2009 p175) I take the view that approaches to leadership need to develop a form of 'passionate reason'. How we feel is not a distraction from reason – on the contrary: 'Not only are our feelings essential to our capacity for thought but they are themselves a route to reason' (Hoggett 2009 p177). This idea of emotional engagement is central to what I call the *New Civic Leadership* (NCL).

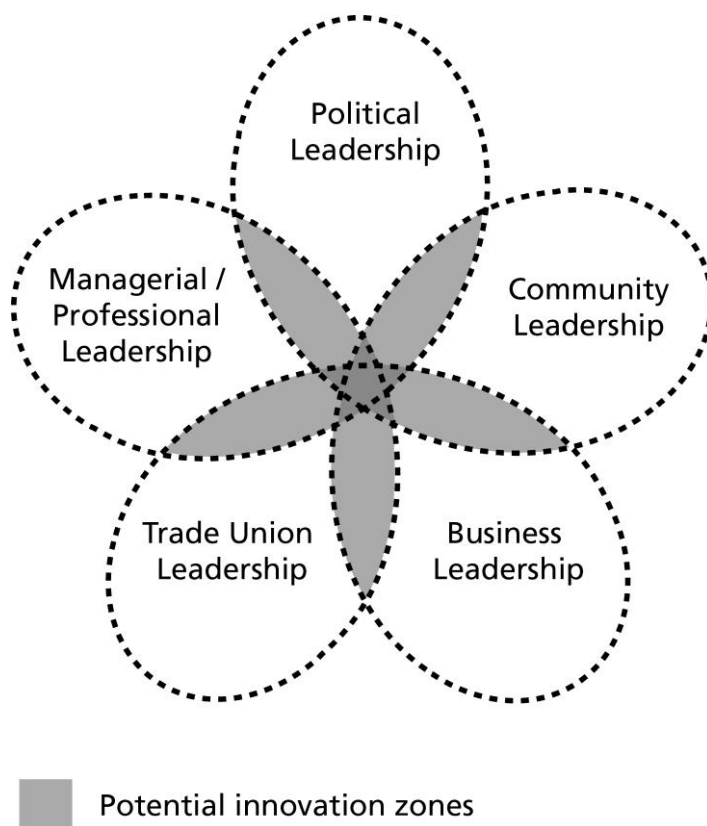
Civic leaders are found in the public, private, and community/voluntary sectors, and they operate at many geographical levels – from the street block to an entire sub region and beyond. It is helpful to distinguish four realms of place-based leadership reflecting different sources of legitimacy:

- **Political leadership** – referring to the work of those people elected to leadership positions by the citizenry. These are, by definition, political leaders. Thus, directly elected mayors, all elected local councillors, and Members of Parliament are political leaders. Having said that we should acknowledge that different politicians carry different roles and responsibilities and will view their political roles in different ways.
- **Public managerial/professional leadership** – referring to the work of public servants appointed by local authorities, central government and third sector organisations to plan and manage public services, and promote community wellbeing. These officers bring professional and managerial expertise to the tasks of local governance.
- **Community leadership** – referring to the many civic-minded people who give their time and energy to local leadership activities in a wide variety of ways. These may be community activists, social entrepreneurs, voluntary sector leaders, religious leaders, higher education leaders and so on. The potential contribution to civic leadership of an independent and engaged voluntary and community sector is important here.

- **Business leadership** – referring to the contribution made by local business leaders, who have a clear stake in the long-term prosperity of the locality.
- **Trade union leadership** – referring to the efforts of trade union leaders striving to improve the pay and working conditions of employees in public, private and voluntary sector organisations. Elected by their members these leaders enjoy democratic legitimacy within their organisations.^{viii}

These roles are all important in cultivating and encouraging public service innovation and, crucially, they overlap. I describe the areas of overlap between these different realms of leadership as **innovation zones** – areas providing many opportunities for inventive behaviour – see **Figure 3**. This is because **different perspectives are brought together within these zones** and this can enable active questioning of established approaches. Heterogeneity is the key to fostering innovation. Civic leadership has a critical role in creating the conditions for different people to come together – people who might not normally meet – to have a creative dialogue, and then to follow through on their ideas. I use dotted lines in **Figure 3** to emphasise the connectivity, or potential connectivity, across the realms of civic leadership.

Figure 3: The realms of place-based leadership



Source: Author

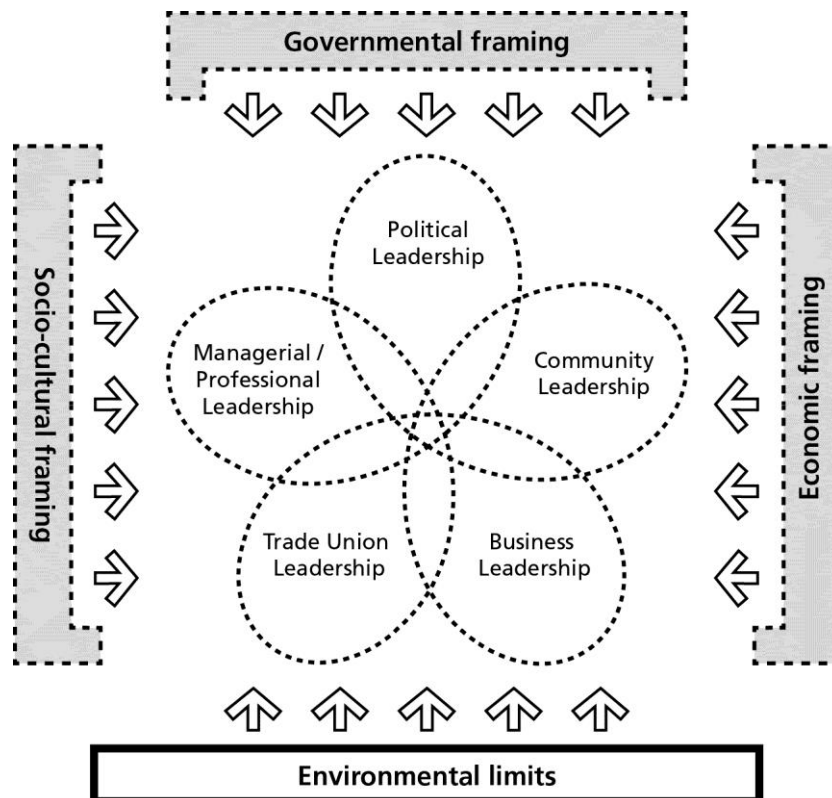
Wise civic leadership is critical in ensuring that the innovation zones – sometimes referred to as the ‘soft spaces’ of planning (Illsley et al 2010) or ‘space for dialogue’ (Oliver and Pitt 2013 pp 198-199) – are orchestrated in a way that promotes a culture of listening that can, in turn, lead to innovation (Kahane 2004). New ideas emerging in the field of urban planning resonate with the argument I am putting forward. For example, Balducci and Mantysalo (2013) suggest that successful urban planning involves the creation of ‘trading zones’, meaning arenas within which different stakeholders exchange ideas for action without necessarily developing shared agreement on core values and motives. This notion of trading zones is close to the idea of innovation zones set out in this book.

The point I wish to highlight from this discussion of innovation zones, or trading zones, is that place-based leadership can shape the quality of the exchanges that take place in these spaces. It is true that these arenas are often experienced as conflict zones – there are many clashes of values in the modern city. The role of leadership is to orchestrate a process of social discovery within these zones that is constructive and forward looking.

In sum, leadership capacity in modern society is dispersed. Our systems of local governance need to respect and reflect that diversity if decisions taken in the public interest are going to enjoy legitimacy. Further, more decentralized approaches - both across localities and within each realm of civic leadership - can empower informal leaders to be part of the dialogue. **Figure 3** simplifies a more complex reality. It is not intended to show how the dynamics of local power struggles actually unfold. The relative power of the five realms varies by locality. Moreover, the realms shift in influence over time. The interactions across the realms are also complex and, of course, there are many different interests operating within each realm. Nevertheless I believe that the notion of five different realms – with leadership stemming from different sources of legitimacy within each realm – provides a helpful way of framing discussion about civic leadership.

Earlier I explained how various forces shape the context within which place-based leadership is exercised and I set this out in diagrammatic form in **Figure 2**. Having now explained the five realms of place-based leadership it is possible to advance the presentation by locating the five realms within this broader context – see **Figure 4**.

Figure 4: Place-based leadership in context



Source: Author

In this section I have outlined a conceptual framework for understanding place-based leadership – or, in a phrase I am using here, the *New Civic Leadership*. In my new book this model is used to throw light on changing thinking relating to public leadership, and seventeen Innovation Stories of inspirational civic leadership in different cities around the world are presented to illustrate how the model can be applied in practice (Hambleton 2015). In the next section I provide, in abbreviated form, one of those Innovation Stories.

3) Melbourne makeover ^{ix}

In 1978 the centre of Melbourne, Australia was a dump. The local newspaper, *The Age*, described Melbourne as having ‘an empty useless city centre’ – and published pictures to prove it. Leap forward thirty years and *The Economist* praises Melbourne as being ‘the most liveable city in the world’. Indeed, Melbourne has now established itself as an international leader in how to create a people-friendly public realm at the heart of a major metropolis. How did they do it? Answer: strong, place-based leadership.

Local leaders from the different realms of leadership contributed to this remarkable transformation. Elected local politicians and community activists played a major part. But, under the leadership of Rob Adams, Director of City Design for the City of Melbourne, city planners and urban designers played a decisive role. The first Melbourne strategic plan of 1985 aimed to switch the

whole of the central area from a 12-hour pattern of activities to a vibrant 24-hour centre. The plan set out robust urban design principles and clear priorities for land use, built form, an increased central city residential population, community services and streetscape.

Out went the previous developer-dominated approach to urban regeneration and in came very strong design requirements – for example, insisting on building up to the street frontage, requiring active frontage on all streets and a very protective stance in relation to historic buildings and spaces. Purposeful planning, coupled with an imaginative approach to development control, has reshaped the public realm. The term Central Business District (CBD) was discarded and replaced with the idea of a Central Activities District (CAD).

The results are spectacular. The central area residential population rose from 650 dwellings in 1985 to reach 28,000 in 2013. The city is now much greener, there is more pedestrian space and there are many more bicycle routes - a really lively street café culture has been created and local, service-oriented businesses are thriving. The main leadership lessons identified in the Melbourne Innovation Story in my book are as follows (Hambleton 2015 pp 254-255):

- Strong leadership by councillors and officers working together can transform the entire culture of an organization. In the Melbourne case it proved possible to embed a strong commitment to people-friendly design across city hall departments
- The quality of the public realm that results from urban development should drive all planning decisions, not the attractiveness or otherwise of individual buildings. This requires high calibre professionals to articulate public purpose in their dealings with the private sector
- Public private partnerships can bring about creative urban development but only if decisions are driven by public purpose. In Melbourne those wishing to develop property must demonstrate a community benefit if they are to win approval
- A high level of attention to detail and a strong commitment to public participation is a strong feature of the way the City of Melbourne works with residents and other stakeholders in the city
- Civic leaders in Melbourne engaged in systematic learning from other countries. In particular, the appointment of Jan Gehl Architects, from Copenhagen, as urban design consultants meant that the city was able to learn from examples of high quality urban planning in Europe

Melbourne is not alone in demonstrating that powerful place-based leadership can deliver progressive public policies. In my book I record significant achievements in numerous cities – from Copenhagen to Curitiba, from Ahmedabad to Malmo, and from Guangzhou to Portland.

4) Reflections and emerging themes

In this paper I have opened up an exploration of the possibilities for strengthening place-based leadership in a rapidly globalising world. Some of my vocabulary may be unfamiliar, but I hope that the argument I am presenting can stimulate fresh thinking about how to promote the creation of inclusive cities – cities in which civic leaders, defined broadly, strive for just results while caring for the natural environment on which we all depend.

My over arching concern is that current economic and social trends are creating increasingly unequal societies, divided societies, unhappy societies, unsustainable societies. In the era of globalisation – the one that we all now live in – place-less leaders, that is, people who are not expected to care about the consequences of their decisions for particular places and communities, have gained extraordinary power and influence. This power needs to be challenged, and people living in particular localities need to regain the authority to decide what happens to the quality of life in their area. To reignite the power of communities in particular places may seem a forlorn hope in an era in which multi-national companies appear to be taking over the reins of international power.

But the argument presented in my book is not a pessimistic one. The place-less power of modern capital - the power to shift investments internationally, and engage in the ruthless exploitation of peoples in different countries and places – is no longer seen as reasonable conduct by many people. Growing concerns about climate change and the rapid acceleration of unsustainable development are attracting a backlash against the neo-liberal model of economic development. The need to develop a more responsible form of capitalism now attracts international support, and there is an expanding literature on how to advance prosperity without destroying the planet (Jackson 2009; Hopkins 2011).

In this final part of the paper I offer some observations on three topics relating to local leadership that stem from the analysis presented in this paper and in my book. These are best seen as reflections, rather than conclusions. I hope that they can stimulate debate and encourage more research on these topics.

i) Can place-based leadership take on place-less power?

The discussion in Section 1) of the paper noted that some scholars appear to believe that the forces of globalisation have all but erased the power of elected local authorities to shape the fortunes of their cities. The claim is made that all local leaders must give priority to serving the interests of private capital – the political space available to them to do anything different has all but disappeared. The evidence presented in my book suggests that these scholars are wrong. It is, of course, clear that international economic forces constrain the exercise of place-based power. But this does not mean that place-based agency has vanished. Much depends on the national and regional context, on community and political organising at the local level, on local feelings of loyalty and identity, and on the quality of place-based

leadership. For example, as we have seen, Melbourne City Council has no problem turning away developers who cannot meet their exacting requirements relating to enhancing the quality of the public realm. In this instance global capital has to serve public purpose, rather than the other way round. In my book I document other examples, including cities in developing countries, like Curitiba, Brazil, where progressive, place-based leadership is guided by local priorities and expectations, not the preferences of place-less power.

ii) The need for outward-facing place-based leadership

A separate paper presented to the conference suggests that the institutional design of local government may help or hinder local leadership (Sweeting and Hambleton 2015). That paper shows that the introduction of a directly elected mayor model of governance in Bristol has enhanced the visibility and effectiveness of civic leadership in the city. In my book I also examine local leadership change in Bristol, and I explore alternative models of democratic urban governance – including models built around a collective model of leadership as well as variations on the more individualised, directly elected mayor model. The evidence suggests that there is no ‘right’ way to design the institutions of local government. Different models have been developed in different countries and, not surprisingly, they have different strengths and weaknesses. However, we can, if we examine experience on an international basis, identify some common features of successful, progressive urban leadership. Firstly, the leadership sees itself as leading the place, **not** leading the council or the city bureaucracy. This enables leaders to tap into energies emanating from all of the five realms of leadership shown in **Figure 3**. Second, effective leadership is multi-level. It is misguided to believe that only those in senior positions are able to exercise urban leadership. Localised area-based, community leadership is essential as well as leadership within each realm of leadership. Third, imaginative leaders make an **emotional** connection with citizens and, in particular, they cultivate civic pride. Feelings of local loyalty, which tie in with feelings of place-based identity, are an important resource for progressive leaders. Fourth, effective city leaders articulate a clear vision for their city, one that advances social justice and promotes care for the environment and the public realm. Melbourne provides but one example of this kind of progressive urban leadership.

iii) The role of place-based leadership in bringing about radical public innovation

Confident urban leaders set out a vision for their city but, just as important, they try out ideas and learn from experience. The literature on how to lead public service innovation is still relatively young. While a fair amount is now known about how to bring about public service ‘improvement’, much less is known about how to break new ground and discover new possibilities. Much of the literature on ‘innovation’, in both the public and the private sectors, tends to focus on technological innovation and/or managerial change. A key theme in my book is that strategies of this kind limit thinking. Radical public innovation is, as often as not, political and place-based – ‘twas ever thus. If

we track back to the origins of modern social, health, education and housing services we usually find inspirational activists who were moved to take action at the local level. Found in the voluntary sector, in religious institutions, in trade unions, in local businesses, in local government, in local political parties and elsewhere, these change agents were often driven by a passionate belief in their ability to change society for the better, and they acted on their beliefs. These place-based leaders invented entirely new public services and have transformed the living conditions of millions of people. In the modern era we find a growing number of cities – and Melbourne has been discussed in this paper – that are developing entirely new ways of working, ways that promote the public interest. They value improvisation and foster experimental styles of working.

In summary, this paper introduces a way of discussing place-based leadership that aims to do more than advance thinking and understanding relating to leadership and public service innovation in a rapidly changing world. It also seeks to provide direct assistance to grassroots activists, busy policy makers and practitioners who want to promote the development of inclusive cities. It is hoped that the paper will encourage scholars concerned with urban change and public service reform to explore theories relating to place-based leadership and public service innovation.

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Endnotes

ⁱ The notion of political space is well established in urban studies and social geography. For example, Lefevre (2010) discusses the process of building metropolitan areas as political spaces. He defines political space as a space of involvement of political, economic and social players where a legitimate collective action is produced, an action necessary to address existing issues and orient the future.

ⁱⁱ The extraordinary centralisation of power within the British state is deeply troubling for those of us who live in the UK. Prime Minister Thatcher – through the introduction of the Rates Act 1984 – took the power to set the level of local taxation over the heads of local voters. Known

originally as 'rate capping' (as the single local tax available to local authorities in those days was a property tax called rates), this centralised approach was, despite promises to the contrary, retained by the Labour Government in the period from 1997-2010. The Coalition Government, elected in 2010, has also retained capping. In various lectures I have described the dramatic shift of power within England from localities to Whitehall in the last thirty years as 'centralisation on steroids'. Film available at: www.urbananswers.co.uk

ⁱⁱⁱ Research on the performance of US city mayors lends support to this claim. For example, Ferman (1985 p197) shows how '...leadership strategies must be examined in the context in which they are executed'. And Flanagan (2004), in the light of his examination of the performance of nine American city mayors, highlights how timing is critical – the political space available to civic leaders, the relationship between structural forces and the power of agency, varies over time.

^{iv} This framework departs from the familiar presentation of sustainable development in the literature and in policy circles. The established model of sustainable development also comprises three overlapping spheres – but these are usually labelled as environmental, economic and social. Policy prescriptions stemming from this conceptualisation often advocate thinking in terms of 'a triple bottom line' – achieving economic prosperity, environmental quality and social justice (Elkington 1997). But, as examined in more detail in my book, while many companies and governments may espouse these principles actual performance in implementing the principles often leaves a lot to be desired.

^v Richard Rees and I spoke at a conference on *Places in Transition* in London on 21 January 2010 organised by the UK Resource for Urban Design Information (RUDI). I draw here, with his permission, on his presentation titled *Re-thinking places: The individual, society and nature in city design*.

^{vi} Spurred on by concerns about climate change, the wasteful consumption of vast quantities of fossil fuels, fears about food and water shortages, and in recognition of the need to develop renewable energy strategies and a steady state economy, the literature on urban resilience is expanding. A number of useful texts are now available – see, for example, Berners-Lee and Clark (2013); Bulkeley 2013; Droege (2006), Flint and Raco (2012), Hopkins (2011), Jackson (2009), Lewis and Conaty (2012), Monaghan (2012) and Newman et al (2009). For overviews of the city as an eco-system see Girardet (2008) and Newman and Jennings (2008).

^{vii} I recognise that leadership is a contested concept. Discussion of the nature of leaders and leadership should always take account of historical processes and the social context. Nevertheless there is, for the purposes of this paper, virtue in a ten-word definition because it provides a reasonable degree of clarity about how I am using this slippery term.

^{viii} The idea of realms of civic leadership was first developed in work the author carried out on leadership for the Royal Commission on Auckland Governance (Hambleton 2009). These ideas were further developed in a scoping report for the Local Authority Research Council Initiative (LARCI) (Hambleton et al 2009); and in a report the author co-authored with Jo Howard for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (Hambleton and Howard 2012).

^{ix} The full version of this Innovation Story appears as 'Innovation Story 13: Place-shaping: the Melbourne experience' in Hambleton (2015) pp 251-255