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# Practice papers

## Place-based leadership: A new perspective on urban regeneration

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**Abstract** The role of inspirational leadership in bringing about successful urban regeneration has been neglected. This paper attempts to provide a corrective by exploring the role of place-based leadership in modern urban governance. It outlines arguments that are set out at greater length in the author's new book, 'Leading the inclusive city' (2015). The forces that now shape the power of place in the modern world are discussed. These forces limit the scope for place-based leadership but they do not disable it. A new framework for understanding civic leadership — new civic leadership (NCL) — is presented. In any given locality there are various realms of place-based leadership reflecting different sources of legitimacy. The concept of engaged scholarship is introduced, and the idea of an Innovation Story is presented as a creative way of unearthing new knowledge about civic leadership. Two inspiring examples of effective place-based leadership are then outlined: Melbourne, Australia and Freiburg, Germany. Emerging themes for regeneration theory and practice are discussed and pointers for further research are suggested.

**Keywords:** *leadership, innovation, regeneration, engaged scholarship, co-creation, inclusive governance*

### INTRODUCTION

The role of leadership in academic analysis of urban regeneration has been neglected. This is, perhaps, rather surprising given that urban regeneration professionals often draw inspiration from bold civic leadership that they encounter in other cities. For example, civic leaders in Baltimore, notably Donald Schaefer when he was Mayor (1971–1987), had a significant impact not just on the Inner

Harbour area of the city, but also on regeneration practice more widely. Mayor Schaefer showed great vision in recognising that the decaying dockland area at the heart of the city was actually full of potential.

The transformation of Baltimore Inner Harbour, from an unsafe, polluted dockland, with many empty warehouses, into a vibrant tourist destination with a wide range of attractions, is now

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recognised as a classic example of waterside urban renewal.<sup>1</sup> Aspects of the strategy can be criticised — for example, the gentrification of nearby neighbourhoods has displaced working-class and poor people. But it is difficult to deny that the leadership shown by Mayor Schaefer, his successor, Mayor Schموke, and other civic actors in Baltimore helped to ‘turn the city round’. Opened in 1987, the Harbourplace scheme was pivotal. It was to influence the trajectory of urban regeneration not just in many American cities, but also in other countries. For example, regeneration plans for both the Floating Harbour in Bristol and Cardiff Bay drew on Baltimore’s experience.

The pages of this journal have, in recent years, provided many case studies of progressive city planning and urban innovation. For example, a recent issue provides very useful accounts of the impressive achievements of urban politicians, city planners and regeneration professionals in Malmö, Sweden and Freiburg, Germany.<sup>2</sup> These papers provide many valuable insights: they prompt fresh thinking, point to new possibilities, and are backed by real achievements on the ground. But perhaps the modesty of the authors intervenes so that the roles of leaders, and leadership, tend to be obscured. A consequence is that the influential leadership of Christer Larsson, Director of City Planning in Malmö, and Wulf Daseking, Director of City Planning in Freiburg, goes uncelebrated.

A new book, written by the author, on ‘Leading the inclusive city’ provides detailed accounts of the role of civic leadership in bringing about radical change in both Malmö and Freiburg, as well as in 15 other cities where place-based leadership has had a remarkably positive impact on the quality of life in the city.<sup>3</sup> This paper outlines the conceptual frameworks used to explore

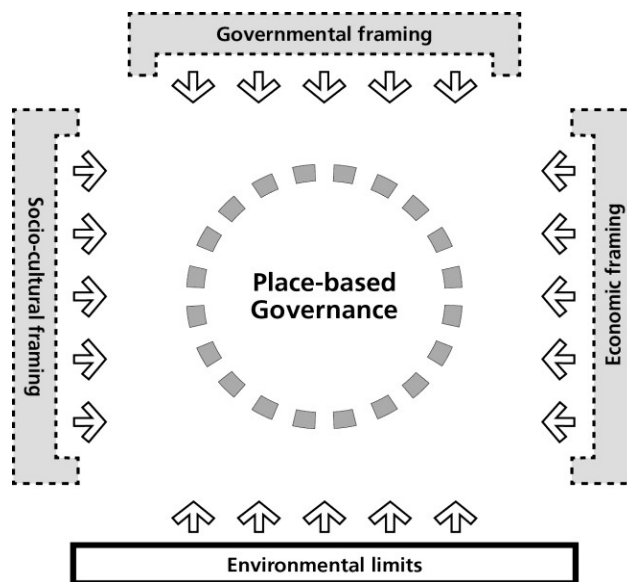
civic leadership in the book. It introduces the idea of an Innovation Story, an adaptation of the case study method of discovering new knowledge, but with a sharp focus on drawing out lessons for leadership. Two cameos of civic leadership — one drawn from Melbourne and one from Freiburg — are presented to illustrate the application of the Innovation Story approach. A final section offers some reflections on the implications of the analysis for urban regeneration theory and practice.

### FRAMING THE POWER OF PLACE

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. Figure 1 provides a simplified picture of the four sets of forces that shape the world of place-based governance in any given locality.

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.<sup>4</sup> This side of the diagram 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 sociocultural 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



**Figure 1:** Framing the political space for place-based governance

Source: Hambleton, R. (2015) 'Leading the inclusive city', Policy Press, Bristol, p. 114.

vote, citizens who do not 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.<sup>5</sup> 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, will see them dismissed at the ballot box.<sup>6</sup>

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. 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.'<sup>7</sup>

At the top of Figure 1 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 supranational organisations. For example, local authorities in countries that are members of the 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. These relationships are subject to negotiation and renegotiation over time.

It is clear that Figure 1 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. For example, Richard Flanagan in his analysis of American mayoral leadership stresses the importance of timing.<sup>8</sup> The space available for local agency is always shifting, 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.

Figure 1 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.

### THE NEW CIVIC LEADERSHIP

In the 1980s, *new public management* (NPM), which involves the use of private sector management practices in the public sector, gained popularity in many countries.<sup>9</sup> In essence, the approach stems from the belief that government should be run like a private business. In practice the introduction of NPM techniques has often done great damage to the public service ethos; treating citizens as self-interested consumers is a peculiarly narrow way of thinking about public service reform (pp.

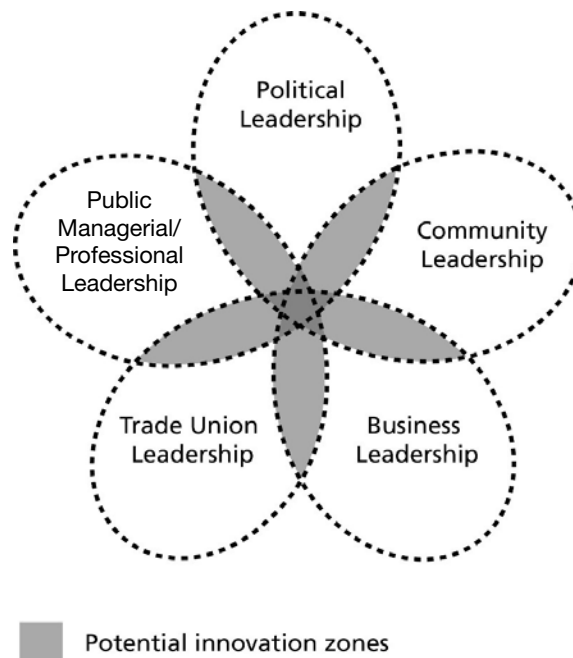
61–63).<sup>3</sup> Those interested in progressive public policy making might find the author's notion of *new civic leadership* (NCL) to be more relevant and useful.

NCL involves strong, place-based leadership acting to co-create new solutions to public problems by drawing on the complementary strengths of civil society, the market and the state. If we are to understand effective, place-based leadership, we need a conceptual framework that highlights the role of local leaders in facilitating public service innovation. A sketch of a possible framework now follows.

Figure 2 suggests that in any given locality there are likely to be five 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;
- *Public managerial/professional leadership* — referring to the work of public servants, including urban regeneration practitioners, appointed by local authorities, governments and third sector organisations to plan and manage public services, and promote community wellbeing;
- *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;
- *Business leadership* — referring to the contribution made by local business leaders and social entrepreneurs, 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.

These roles are all important in cultivating and encouraging public service innovation



**Figure 2:** The realms of place-based leadership

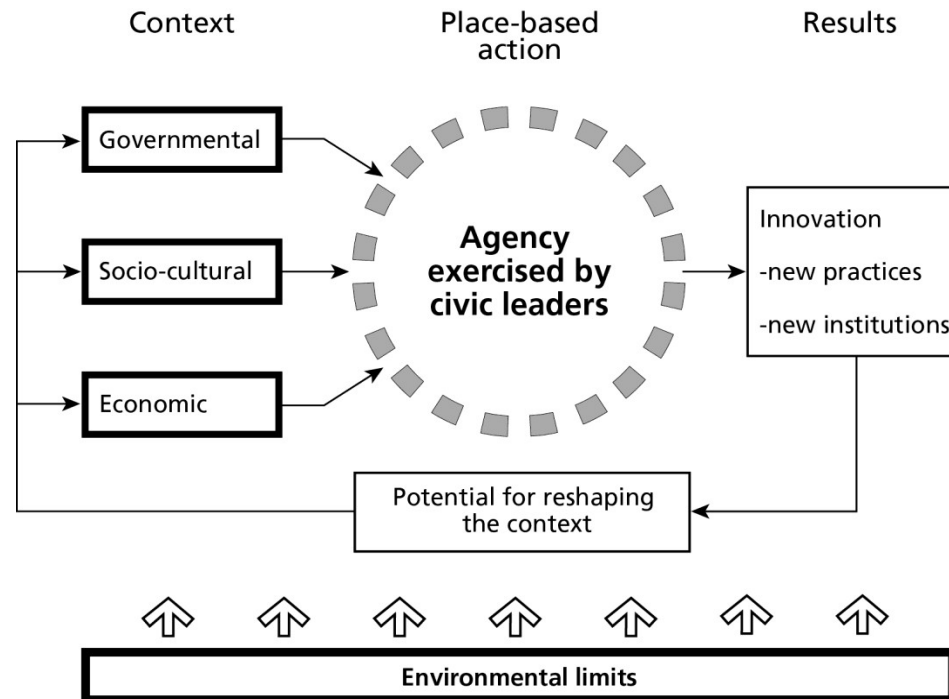
Source: Hambleton, R. (2015) 'Leading the inclusive city', Policy Press, Bristol, p. 127.

and, crucially, they overlap. The areas of overlap can be described as innovation zones — areas providing many opportunities for inventive behaviour. This is because different perspectives are brought together in these zones and this can enable active questioning of established approaches.

It is fair to say that the areas of overlap in Figure 2 are often experienced as conflict zones, rather than innovation zones. These spaces do, of course, provide settings for power struggles between competing interests and values. Moreover, power is unequally distributed within these settings. This is precisely why place-based leadership matters. The evidence from the author's research on urban governance is that civic leadership is critical in ensuring that the innovation zones — sometimes referred to as the 'soft spaces' of planning<sup>10</sup> or 'space for dialogue'<sup>11</sup> — are orchestrated in a way that promotes a culture of listening that can, in turn, lead to innovation. Civic

leaders are, of course, not just 'those at the top'. All kinds of people can exercise civic leadership and they may be inside or outside the state.

It is now possible to present a simple flow diagram of civic leadership (see Figure 3). The four forces shaping local political space (see Figure 1) are, once again, shown as factors that place constraints on place-based leadership. As mentioned earlier, the environmental limits, shown at the bottom of the figure, are non-negotiable. This is because the scientific evidence proving that cities are making a major contribution to the growth of human induced (or anthropogenic) greenhouse gas emissions is incontrovertible. It follows that it is now essential that we devise more sustainable approaches to urban planning and city living. The other three forces — governmental, sociocultural and economic — also limit the agency of local actors. These forces, however, which vary dramatically from country to country and



**Figure 3:** A process model of civic leadership

Source: Hambleton, R. (2015) 'Leading the inclusive city, Policy Press, Bristol, p. 129.

city to city, are to some extent pliable. In all cities civic leaders have at least some political space available to them. Successful civic leaders use the power and influence they possess to make changes, introduce new practices, create new institutions and, in some situations, they are able to renegotiate the ground rules limiting local autonomy. Figure 3 highlights the dynamic possibilities for place-based leadership.

### ENGAGED SCHOLARSHIP AND THE INNOVATION STORY CONCEPT

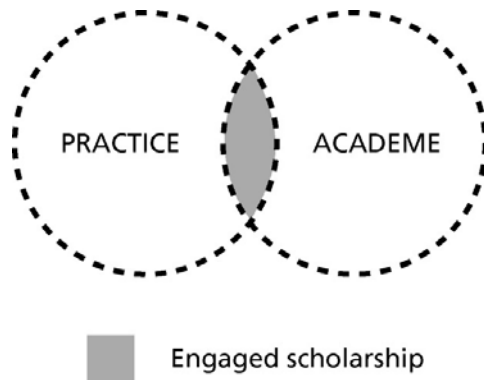
Ernest Boyer, President of The Carnegie Foundation, had a significant impact on the evolution of conceptions of scholarship in US higher education, and his insights provide a good entry point to a discussion of engaged scholarship. In his influential report, *Scholarship Reconsidered*, he concluded:

'What we are faced with, today, is the need to clarify campus missions and relate the work of the academy more directly to the realities of contemporary life... We proceed with the conviction that if the nation's higher learning institutions are to meet today's urgent academic and social mandates, their missions must be carefully redefined and the meaning of scholarship creatively reconsidered.'<sup>12</sup>

In a later article he indicated that:

'The scholarship of engagement ... means creating a special climate in which the academic and the civic cultures communicate more continuously and more creatively with each other.'<sup>13</sup>

The author has defined engaged scholarship as the co-creation of new knowledge by scholars and practitioners working together in a shared process of discovery (p. 28).<sup>3</sup> This approach, which resembles systemic action research,



**Figure 4:** Engaged scholarship

Source: Hambleton, R. (2015) 'Leading the inclusive city', Policy Press, Bristol, p. 29.

recognises that there are different ways of knowing.<sup>14</sup> There is a substantial body of literature on the nature of knowledge, and many typologies have been developed. One helpful distinction is that between 'explicit' knowledge (sometimes described as formal, scientific or professional knowledge) and 'tacit' knowledge (knowledge stemming from personal and social experience that cannot be codified).<sup>15</sup> Engaged scholarship attempts to draw, in an intelligent way, on both categories of knowledge.

Figure 4 illustrates how practice and academe are brought together in engaged scholarship. Effective collaboration in the area of overlap between practice and academe requires good relationships to be constructed. This involves creating spaces in which participants can take risks and raise doubts, always knowing that their views will be respected. Adventurous explorations of this kind can only be productive if co-creators trust each other — this is easy to say, not always easy to do. Dotted lines are used in Figure 4 to emphasise permeability.

In 2011–2012 Jo Howard and the author carried out an action research project on place-based leadership in three cities — two in the UK and one in The

Netherlands.<sup>16</sup> This research project provides an example of engaged scholarship, and it is also the source of the Innovation Story concept. The Anglo-Dutch study involved co-creating new knowledge in two senses. First, it bridged the worlds of academe and practice — researchers collaborated actively with practitioners to construct an Innovation Story documenting the leadership of public service innovation in each city. Secondly, the research developed new understanding by engaging in international dialogue. People from the two countries, with different experiences, shared their ideas and co-created new ways of thinking about civic leadership.

What, then, is an Innovation Story? It is a short, structured narrative describing a particular innovation. It attempts to throw light on how change was brought about and tries to draw out leadership lessons for others. This approach can be applied widely in the public, private and non-profit sectors. It provides a way of exploring the relationships between leadership and innovation — a process which, even now, is not well understood. This paper is focused on a particular kind of Innovation Story — that is, stories that advance understanding of the role of place-based leadership in spurring innovations that help to create an inclusive city.

In summary, an Innovation Story employs engaged scholarship and, ideally, it should have the following characteristics:

- *Short.* Busy practitioners and activists may not have the time to read lengthy case studies. An Innovation Story provides the reader with a concise summary but, by citing sources and providing web-links, it offers the reader a way of investigating further if they wish.
- *Factual and practical.* Much of the literature produced by city authorities

— and place-marketing has much to answer for — is designed to promote, or sell, the city. Being economical with the truth, as some city promotion presentations are, is unhelpful. An Innovation Story needs to be based on evidence, and should produce practical knowledge that stands up to scrutiny.

- *Inspirational*. Innovation Stories are not intended to ‘prove’ that the approach presented is ‘the right’ way to lead change in the modern city. Rather, a good Innovation Story enhances understanding and stimulates a creative response from those hearing the story.

Urban regeneration practitioners and, indeed, public servants and civic leaders in general, are often interested to learn about creative initiatives tried out in other places. Typical questions are: Why did they do it? What was the impact? Who benefited and in what way? How cost effective was it? These are all good questions, but the one that the author finds is most often asked is: *How* did they do it?<sup>17</sup> Practitioners are action oriented — they seek ideas on how to bring about change. An Innovation Story may not always be able to generate clear answers to this question but it should be suggestive. This is why the use of the word ‘story’ is helpful. Story telling in public policy analysis is a valuable approach to the documenting of experience that can provide inspiration as well as practical insights for public service leaders and activists.<sup>18</sup>

### EXAMPLES OF INSPIRATIONAL CIVIC LEADERSHIP

This section provides brief cameos of two examples of bold place-based leadership in two cities: Melbourne, Australia and Freiburg, Germany. These are not complete Innovation Stories. Rather, they provide pointers towards the issues that an

Innovation Story can cover. In both of the cases presented here place-based leaders have been able to make a significant impact on the quality of life in their city, and their effectiveness in breaking new ground in the broad field of city planning and urban development has attracted international praise.<sup>19</sup>

### The transformation of the centre of Melbourne, Australia

In the early 1980s the centre of Melbourne was a dump. Private interests, concerned only with urban development profits, were busy taking advantage of weak political leadership and poor planning policies to manufacture a boring ‘could be anywhere’ town centre. In June 1978 the local newspaper, *The Age*, described Melbourne as having ‘an empty useless city centre’ — and published pictures to prove it. Leap forward 30 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.

Some commentators attribute the change to the big urban projects that have attracted media attention and tourist visitors — for example, Federation Square, the new Museum of Victoria, and the Melbourne Exhibition Centre. Rob Adams, Director of City Design for the City of Melbourne, knows better. He is clear that the big projects alone could not account for the dramatic transformation:

‘The change has been more subtle: the city is greener, more people live downtown, the footpaths are wider, paved with stone and featuring side walk cafes, flower stands and fruit stalls. There is more pedestrian space, as well as more bicycle routes and a better balance between the car and other forms of movement’.<sup>20</sup>



Many local leaders contributed to this remarkable transformation — local politicians, community activists, urban designers and others. Under the leadership of Rob Adams, 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 by 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.

Actors from two of the realms of place-based leadership shown in Figure 1 were prominent in bringing about these changes. Politicians set the tone for local innovation and, in particular, they stressed the importance of creating a very high quality public realm. A new urban design subcommittee was created. Chaired by a councillor who was a strong advocate of the urban design agenda, this subcommittee was crucial in changing the

engineering-dominated culture of the local authority. But paid public servants, particularly in city planning, transport planning and urban design, also played an important leadership role. The city council did not farm out design work to private planning consultants and architects. Instead the local authority built up a first-class design and delivery department.

### **Green civic leadership in Freiburg, Germany**

Freiburg, Germany's southernmost city, has established itself as a world leader in relation to sustainable development. The city, which has a population of 230,000, has been successful in promoting a civic culture that combines a very strong commitment to green values and respect for nature with a buoyant economy built around, among other things, renewable energy. The UK-based Academy of Urbanism was so impressed with the achievements of the city that it published 'The Freiburg charter for sustainable urbanism' to promote imaginative city planning and sound urban design.<sup>21</sup>

Urban regeneration practitioners from across the world flock to the city to learn about the many green innovations the city is now famous for — in public transport, renewable energy and city planning.<sup>22</sup> Many head for the Vauban district on the south side of the city. Here they find a newly created, family-friendly neighbourhood full of green spaces and attractively designed homes. The energy to power this neighbourhood is 95 per cent from renewable resources. Joan Fitzgerald, an American sustainable development expert, was astonished by what she found when she visited the area, saying:

'Vauban goes beyond anything we are thinking of in the United States under the banners of smart growth, transit-oriented development, or new urbanism.'<sup>23</sup>

The origins of the community activism that underpins current innovations in Freiburg can be traced to the late 1970s. A successful, local and regional campaign against a proposal to locate a nuclear power station in nearby Wyhl provided the original impetus. A colourful coalition of anti-nuclear activists was born and, from small beginnings, this new green movement became increasingly successful.<sup>24</sup> As early as 1986, the year of the Chernobyl disaster, the City Council declared Freiburg to be a nuclear power free zone. Many articles have now been published on Freiburg's high quality approach to city planning and urban design. Peter Hall provides a good overview in a chapter in his recent book, and he highlights the importance of civic leadership in bringing about change:

'... what stands out in Freiburg is the role that visionary leadership can play in changing a city's direction.'<sup>25</sup>

Located within the state of Baden-Württemberg, Freiburg has two political institutions: (1) The city council (Gemeinderat) with 48 members who are elected on an 'at large' basis for a term of five years; and (2) the Mayor, who is directly elected for a fixed term of eight years. Local authorities in Germany are relatively strong — they have a constitutional right to local self-government and they have the legal power to levy their own taxes to finance activities as they think fit.

The leadership provided by successive directly elected mayors has had a significant impact on the quality of life in the city. Special praise should go to Dr Rolf Böhme, a Social Democrat mayor. Elected in 1982 he was to remain in office until 2002 and, during this period, he was very active in bringing about many of the innovations that now make Freiburg famous. He worked closely with

appointed officers; special mention should be made of his close working relationship with Wulf Daseking, Director of Planning and Building in Freiburg for many years, before retiring in 2012. Mayor Dr Dieter Salomon, a member of the Green Party, who was elected in 2002 and re-elected in 2010, is deeply committed to the green agenda for the city.

Successive directly elected mayors and elected councillors have promoted ambitious thinking in Freiburg. Their consistent commitment to green values, coupled with an enthusiasm for trying out new approaches, has set the tone for the pursuit of a forward-looking, progressive agenda for the city. The continuous drive of local activists, pushing for a progressive agenda, is a further important feature of the Freiburg success story.

## EMERGING THEMES FOR REGENERATION THEORY AND PRACTICE

Four interrelated themes for regeneration theory and practice emerge from the analysis presented above, and these are now considered in turn.

### The need to understand and challenge place-less power

Over the last 30 years or so, 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 place-less power, which arises largely because of the globalisation of the economy, needs to be challenged. People living in particular localities need to regain the authority to decide what happens to the quality of life in their area. Given that place-less power gains so much from having weak forms of local democracy, the task before us is a daunting one. There is growing public

concern, however, particularly since the 2008/2009 financial crash, that neo-liberal ideology is creating increasingly unequal societies and that, at the very least, the world needs to develop more responsible forms of capitalism. Various scholars have now provided penetrating critiques of the nature of neo-liberal ideology and of the negative consequences. For example, Michael Sandel, in his incisive book, 'What markets can't buy', shows how '... we have drifted from *having* a market economy to *being* a market society.'<sup>26</sup> He illustrates how the obsession with market values is crowding out more important values — for example, sympathy, generosity, thoughtfulness and solidarity.

Moreover, other writers have shown how there is no such thing as a 'free market.' For example, Ha-Joon Chang explains how *every* market has rules and boundaries that restrict freedom of choice.<sup>27</sup> In practice, as Theodore *et al.* show, neo-liberalism has 'entailed a dramatic intensification of coercive, disciplinary forms of state intervention in order to *impose* versions of market rule.'<sup>28</sup> The international financial crash of 2008/2009 has not just cast doubt on the ability of markets to allocate risk efficiently. In addition, it has prompted a deeper sense of unease, a feeling that markets have become detached from morals and a broader sense of public purpose. Academic studies that examine the interplay between place-less power and place-based power should be encouraged. Such studies can explore what changes are needed to rebalance power relations between localities and global economic forces.

For urban regeneration practitioners a key theme is to develop the awareness and skills of place-based leaders so that they can negotiate more effectively with place-less power. The case studies of Melbourne and Freiburg are instructive in this context. In both these cities

place-based leaders have been more than ready to turn away developers who are unwilling to comply with stringent requirements relating to the improvement of the public realm.

### The new civic leadership

There is evidence to suggest that place-based leaders in cities across the world are having a significant impact on the local quality of life. It is misguided to view cities as helpless victims in a global flow of events. On the contrary, imaginative civic leaders in many cities are enabling citizens to shape the urban future according to progressive values — advancing social justice, promoting care for the environment and bolstering community empowerment. Civic leaders in Melbourne and Freiburg should be praised for their effective pursuit of enlightened public policy making, but the important point to make is that they are not alone. The author's new book provides examples of progressive civic leadership in all continents.<sup>3,29</sup>

The role of place-based leadership in bringing about radical change deserves to be given more attention. The NCL framework presented in this paper provides one way of understanding local leadership. The author defines leadership as: 'Shaping emotions and behaviour to achieve common goals.'<sup>30</sup> Strengths of this definition are that it draws attention to how people feel, and it emphasises the collective, social construction of common purpose. With this definition in mind, the NCL model posits the existence in a locality of various realms of place-based leadership — see Figure 2. Civic leaders are to be 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. Successful place-based leaders are good at building relationships across

the realms of leadership and, as often as not, they exhibit a facilitative style of leadership — that is, they accomplish ‘objectives through enhancing the efforts of others.’<sup>31</sup>

Civic leaders, and this is certainly true in relation to the leadership of urban regeneration, need to build strong grassroots relationships alongside their horizontal and vertical relationships. In this context it is useful to refer to the efforts of those working in communities that have a history of conflict, even violent conflict. Paddy Harte, who played an important role in the strategy to bring about peace in the island of Ireland, highlights the importance of supporting community leaders who can transcend the language of conflict:

‘In my experience, people with a passion for their community will always be the spark that ignites community spirit and they form a very precious part of economic and social regeneration. It is vitally important that these very valuable people are supported. ... I have worked with some remarkable community leaders and without them no real change would have been possible.’<sup>32</sup>

Local leaders need, then, to be able to see the bigger picture, but at the same time remain connected with people across the city, in ways that empower them to take action.

### **The leadership of public service innovation**

The literature on public service innovation is dominated by managerial and/or technological ways of thinking. Too many think-tanks, and their followers in the media anxious for newsworthy claims and counter claims, see innovation as a technological fix. Much of the expanding literature on smart cities falls into this trap. More generally, writers on

innovation often neglect the politics of place as a key driver of social innovation. The argument presented in this paper attempts to provide a corrective by suggesting that, while scientists and technical experts have a vital contribution to make to social progress, radical public service innovation is more likely to be driven by groups of people working together in specific places solving particular problems. Effective place-based leadership and productive social innovation are, then, inextricably linked.

Two suggestions have been made that bear on the public service innovation theme. First, as shown in Figure 2, the areas of overlap between the various realms of place-based leadership can be thought of as innovation zones. Successful civic leaders spend time and effort working to create such innovation zones — settings in which actors with differing backgrounds and experiences can come together and co-create new solutions. Working in these zones can, at times, be uncomfortable as leaders are encouraged to step outside their familiar realm of authority and engage with the perspectives and realities of others.

Frank Barrett suggests that jazz improvisation provides invaluable insights for the public service innovation agenda now facing leaders in both the public and the private sectors. He argues that leaders need to embolden people to try something new, knowing that the results will, in all likelihood, be unexpected and ‘unexpected’.<sup>33</sup> Evidence from the author’s research, consistent with the argument put forward by Barrett, suggests that civic leaders can play a crucial role in setting the tone for local conversations and orchestrating a constructive process of social discovery.

Secondly, the concept of an Innovation Story has been introduced. It remains the case that the role of leaders in stimulating and facilitating successful experimentation

is not well understood. It may be that the Innovation Story approach can help to fill gaps in our knowledge about the relationship between bold civic leadership and effective public service innovation. At one level the idea of an Innovation Story has a very simple basis. It involves the creation of a plausible narrative describing a particular innovation, or set of innovations, and drawing out lessons for leadership. At another level it represents an attempt to go beyond the conventional case study approach to public policy evaluation.<sup>34</sup> When implemented successfully it can, perhaps, contribute to a methodological advance in evaluation studies.<sup>35</sup>

### **Engaged scholarship and the importance of a critical perspective**

The traditional role of the university has been to advance understanding, by carrying out research, and to teach students. Many universities do not see themselves as key players in improving the quality of life in their city. On the contrary, the traditional university still tends to view its campus as being a space that is, somehow, detached from the surrounding area — a separate reflective place devoted to learning, research and study. A growing number of universities, however, now recognise that this attempt to cut academic life off from society, not only creates town–gown tensions, but also misses significant opportunities for student learning, practice-oriented research and innovation in theory building. Increasingly universities are playing an active role in the place-based leadership of the city in which they are located — to the benefit of academe as well as the city and the city region. Some of the most advanced practice in relation to this agenda is to be found in the USA where universities, particularly the leading public universities, have long had a strong commitment, not just to engaged scholarship, but also to

playing an active role in urban development.<sup>36</sup>

In many cases it is the disciplines associated with urban regeneration and renewal that are leading the way in relation to the development of engaged scholarship. For example, faculty working in departments providing undergraduate and postgraduate courses in city planning, architecture, urban design, property and construction, real estate, landscape architecture, sustainable development, geography, environmental management, public policy, public administration and business management are often active in collaborating with actors in the city to the benefit of course content and policy relevant research. It is encouraging to note that academic interest in civic, or public, engagement has grown in recent years. For example, in the UK, the Academy of Social Sciences has set out advice on how learned societies can become more active in knowledge exchange and public engagement.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, a National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE) was created in 2008 to help inspire and support universities to engage with the public.<sup>38</sup>

Universities can be described as important anchor institutions in the city, stable organisations with a longstanding role in the locality. As universities become more active in civic, or place-based, leadership it is essential that they maintain their independence. The collaborative, or civic, university seeks out and works with actors across the realms of place-based leadership shown in Figure 2. It participates in the creation of innovation zones — it works to build relationships with other actors and generates new knowledge. But the successful civic university always maintains critical distance. The independent status of the university will remain its main asset, even as the university moves to become a respected place-based leader.

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