Regions

THE VOICE OF THE MEMBERSHIP
## NO 302, 2016 ISSUE 2

VARIETIES OF REGIONAL LEADERSHIP

- EU Referendum in the UK: Regional Perspectives
- The growth paradigm and smart specialization in peripheral regions?
- Bergamot farm resilience in Italy

EXPLORING VARIETIES OF LEADERSHIP IN URBAN AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Joyce Liddle, Aix-Marseilles Université, France, John Gibney, University of Birmingham, UK, Markku Sotarauta, University of Tampere, Finland and Andrew Beer, University of South Australia Business School, Adelaide, Australia
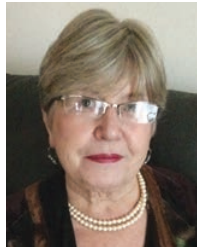
The contributions in this special edition of *Regions* include a selection of five papers taken from a total of fifteen papers presented at a seminar of the Regional Studies Association's international research network on Leadership in Urban and Regional Development. The event was held at the University of Birmingham, UK between 12-13th November 2015 (for a separate Research Network Report, please refer to pages 30-1 of this issue).

The five papers included in this edition result from the challenge to explore different conceptions and meanings of the term 'leadership' in urban and regional studies; the relative strengths and weaknesses of different methodological approaches to the study of urban and regional development leadership; and how to aid understanding and categorization by explaining the many varieties of leadership found in sub-national settings.

The first two papers by Sotarauta and Liddle reflect on the conceptual methodological and theoretical state-of-the-art, and both stress the need for 'place leadership' researchers to be clear about which precise expression of leadership is the focus of their research enquiry. Are we researching political, executive, community or business leadership – or all of these? Are we talking about formal leadership and/or emergent leadership? Also at what scale is research to be conducted? At community, neighbourhood, town, city, region or trans-border level? Perhaps in new and emerging ICT-enabled settings? Also, to what extent might there be other distinct expressions of leadership to be found across these settings? Sotarauta poses five key questions (i) who are the leaders?, (ii) the relationship between institutions/governance structures and leadership, (iii) can leaders make a difference or is it illusionary? (iv) strategies sand capacities, and (v) how do leaders emerge and learn their skills?

Liddle agrees on the need for conceptual, methodological and theoretical clarity but also makes a plea for closer re-alignment between leadership research within management sciences, and a developing body of work within the broader fields of social sciences. She urges scholars to acknowledge that 21st Century leadership research, in particular within urban and regional settings, differs from previous leadership research, which was based largely on private sector models and focused on heroic, individual leaders within 'bounded organisations'. She concurs with Sotarauta in his assertion that leadership studies are dominated by examining people in positions of authority in corporate settings. For Liddle, the wider innovation eco-system is a key factor so urban and regional leadership can link people, ideas, resources, networks, and other elements to achieve objectives. She calls for scholars to adopt new frames of reference and thinking more appropriate to the realities of leadership within urban and regional settings.

Drawing on a wider range of comparative case experiences from around the world, the three remaining papers in this edition by Hambleton and Sweeting, Grootens and Horlings, and Budd and Sancino offer different perspectives on the phenomena, and each adds significantly to this important debate.

Hambleton and Sweeting summarise a research report *The Impacts of Mayoral Governance in Bristol*, presented to civic leaders in September 2015, with a detailed analysis of the perceptions of different sets of actors and of different socio-economic groups within a UK city. It threw light on leadership of urban governance prior to November 2012, and examined how well the mayoral model has performed since its adoption. They reveal that the former system of governance, with a council leader and cabinet, was flawed in terms of visibility of the leader and effectiveness in decision-making. The mayoral model resulted in a dramatic increase and improvement in the visibility of city leadership and the vision, although they did caution against too much centralised power in the hands of one individual. Underlying the research were some important questions such as whether the institutional design of local government can make a difference to the way leadership is exercised, do directly elected mayors promote an outgoing style of leadership, and does having a directly elected mayor change the relationships between politicians and officers or indeed leaders and followers?

Grootens and Horlings move the debate beyond more structural economic explanations, and argue for more attention to be given to the role of agency in the emergence and reproduction of peripheralisation and uneven socio-spatial development, and especially the role of leadership in relation to specific and varied institutional contexts. Few accounts of leadership have found an appropriate balance between structural determining processes versus the creative force of human actors, especially in peripheral regions. Their research sets the scene for understanding our gaps in knowledge on leadership in a peripheral area – that of a Central Eastern European context as they seek to gather empirical data on leadership in between connected peripheries of Estonia and the Netherlands. In using an actor-orientated perspective, the aim is to unravel the subtleties of negotiation, manipulation, and exercise of power between core and peripheries.

In the final paper, Budd and Sancino present a conceptual and evaluative framework of city leadership in the field of sport in case study areas of Brescia (Italy) and Milton Keynes (UK). Sport, they suggest, is a key policy system with potential to trigger other related systems (e.g. tourism; health; leisure and quality of life) across European Cities. International sporting events can also have significant global reach. In adopting a heuristic methodology they successfully map the capabilities of the different types of city leadership across the relevant actors; structures and processes; and followership patterns. Thus, they identify which mix and kind of city leadership is appropriate and sustainable in regard to the domain of

sport and to the contextual circumstances in which different inputs and interactions of political, managerial and civic leadership may exist. They conclude by showing that civic leadership and its interplay with political and managerial leadership appear to be the most interesting perspectives for observing city leadership patterns in the domain of sport, but the inter-connectedness of sport, health and education and the prevalence of continuing socio-economic challenges and wicked issues requires future comparative research into other domain systems in order to identify key city leadership patterns.

It is obvious from all five papers, that there are transferable lessons to be learned from qualitative research methods deployed in academic disciplines beyond economic geography as leadership scholars are integrating understanding of varieties of leadership experience by drawing upon political economy, psychology, sociology, social anthropology, linguistics, and education studies. The adoption of a multidisciplinary approach – of course with care taken to avoid theoretical and methodological confusion and inconsistency - could aid a much more extensive exploration of leadership dynamics in cities and regions over the coming years.

In terms of bringing in approaches to leadership enquiry from disciplines beyond the traditions of urban and regional studies, it is important to capture the 'doing' of leading in vivo and in situ. This would help to reveal the fine detail of how leadership is enacted at the micro-level and across the ordinary and mundane everyday activities that take place in and around leaders and leading. Adopting ethnographic and action research methods that allowed for long term longitudinal data to be gathered, could provide rich qualitative accounts of the experience of those 'doing the leading' and of those 'being led' that might help to capture less-well understood features of urban and regional development such as hidden/covert leadership and the place of 'the other' in the enactment of counter-reaction leadership, as well as the significance of emotionality and identity in subnational decision-making.

The question of hidden/covert leadership was a leitmotif for many of the contributions because Leadership, refers not only to the things that senior leaders do publicly in an urban/regional development entity per se, but also needs to be understood as 'how leaders go about influencing others off-line' beyond their formal organisational boundaries and beyond their own local geographical settings. This 'influencing of other things'

– including the sometimes covert or veiled influencing of wider framing policy and institutional design – the establishment of the formal policy parameters and the strategic and/or operational 'ground rules' and norms that serve either to constrain or enable others - is often invisible and represents a hidden form of leadership. Hidden leadership may be unauthorised, undemocratic and unaccountable – it may at worst evolve into what might be characterised as 'Leadership as Cabal' where the degree and form of influence may not be apparent (if ever at all) until long after events have occurred and projects and programmes have been completed and economic growth agendas have succeeded or failed.

In periods of political and economic transition, where there is heightened intra- and inter-place competition for resources, or where there is economic uncertainty or social instability within and across places, hidden forms of leadership can have powerful effects on development trajectories. Increasingly undertaken by private sector consulting firms working with and/or alongside large (often transnational) firms and in association with other compliant local entities (including Universities), this type of leading is opaque and alternative voices may be squeezed out, and other important creativities suffocated, if they do not align with whatever is the dominating 'party line' of the day – and irrespective of the strength of alternative arguments and propositions. The dynamics of hidden leadership (and its purpose) in city and regional development are under-researched and a more critical approach to leadership enquiry, may reveal more about how hidden forms of leadership may explain decision-making outcomes, who's counsel is listened to and who's is not, and the social equity (or lack of it) in the distribution of money and resources.

All contributions have offered a fresh focus on uncovering the relationships between three core aspects of the sub-national leadership experience – namely; i) the tricky question of the roles and contributions (formal/publicly expressed and also sometimes hidden) of individual leaders and groups of individuals attempting to lead urban and regional projects as well as places (in order to better understand the motivations of those who seek to lead as well as the relational dynamics across and between leadership teams and how these are mediated and reconciled); ii) the everyday activities of leading (what are leaders actually doing?) and leadership processes

(how is this 'leading' being enacted, by whom and with whom?); and iii), the relevance and impact of different local and national contexts both in terms of how economic, social, environmental and policy context shapes (or does not) leadership approaches and how different leadership approaches might influence place-based development outcomes differently (if they do at all). Systematic studies of matched pairs of leadership case studies in different places in the same country or in different countries might provide a body of valuable cross-cultural comparisons and could help to better evidence the nature and relative 'weight' of any contextual factors at play.

Dr. Joyce Liddle is Professor of Public Leadership & Management in IMPGT, Aix-Marseilles Université and Visiting Professor at the Universities of Eastern Finland, Northumbria & Edge Hill, UK. She researches in public leadership and entrepreneurship, territorial governance, partnerships and networks.
joyce.LIDDLE@univ-amu.fr

Dr. John Gibney is a Senior Fellow at the Birmingham Business School, University of Birmingham, UK. His research and teaching interests cover: leadership and governance in urban, regional & cross-border economic development; leading, managing and organising in/for knowledge creation and innovation; knowledge and learning policy in a sub-national development context.
j.gibney@bham.ac.uk

Dr. Markku Sotarauta is Professor of policy-making theories and practices (local and regional development) in the School of Management at the University of Tampere, Finland. Professor Sotarauta specializes in leadership, innovation systems and institutional entrepreneurship in city and regional development.
markku.sotarauta@uta.fi

Professor Andrew Beer is Dean of Research and Innovation at the University of South Australia Business School, Adelaide, Australia and Chair of the Regional Studies Association. Andrew has worked on regional issues in Australia since the early 1990's and most recently has engaged with issues including the regional distribution of social isolation of older Australians and place leadership.
andrew.beer@unisa.edu.au

Regions

THE VOICE OF THE MEMBERSHIP

In a packed issue, we harness the perceptions of academics from different parts of the UK on the nature of the debates in the regions on the question of the UK's membership of the EU.

The *Regional Survey* in this issue presents a selection of papers from a broader set of research papers presented and discussed at the RSA's International research network seminar on Leadership in Urban and Regional Development held in Birmingham, UK in November 2015 which addressed the theme of 'Exploring Varieties of Leadership in Urban and Regional Development'.

Our guest editors (Joyce Liddle, Aix-Marseille Université, John Gibney, University of Birmingham, Markku Sotarauta, University of Tampere, and Andrew Beer, University of South Australia) bring together a collection of interesting articles analyzing some of the main conceptual, theoretical, methodological and empirical debates surrounding Urban and Regional Leadership.

Leadership is a contested concept and much is written on the topic across a multitude of management and social science disciplines. There is, however, little agreement on what it is, or how to research it. Place leadership is one of the key factors explaining how some places are able to adapt to new situations, and to exploit emerging opportunities for transforming localities.

In the Survey there is an exploration of different conceptions and meanings of the term 'leadership' in urban and regional studies, an examination of the relative strengths and weaknesses of different methodological approaches to the study of urban and regional development leadership, and some case study examples of leadership in sub-national settings.

We also have case-study research from East Germany (growth paradigms); Italy (resilience of bergamot farmers) and S.E. Ireland (developing region-specific smart specialisations) in our *In Depth* and *Research Notes* sections, respectively.

This is all rounded off with a report on the Annual Conference in Graz, Austria.