

Gender, place attachment and the leadership of cities and regions in transition

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Introduction

- Impacted communities have been surveyed about their views on their leaders, but the leaders have not
- 15.2% of community members: leaders handled the transition 'very well' or 'extremely well'
- Most community members lost trust in their leaders during the transition
- Government fared particularly poorly (Beer et al., 2023)
- But how was this perceived by the place leaders?



Methodology

- In-depth, semi-structured interviews with place leaders: South Australia (8) Victoria (6)
- Formal and informal leaders
- Male = 11 Female = 3





Key findings

- Place leaders use various techniques to enhance effectiveness during time of shock
- Place leaders' perceptions of their communities are nuanced, fragile and generally more positive than community members' perceptions





Enhancing effectiveness in place leadership

- Place attachment
- Gendered leadership lens
- Boundary spanning and super silos
- Fragile and divergent narratives



Place attachment

'Place leadership is shaped by place attachment processes.' (Grocke et al., 2022)

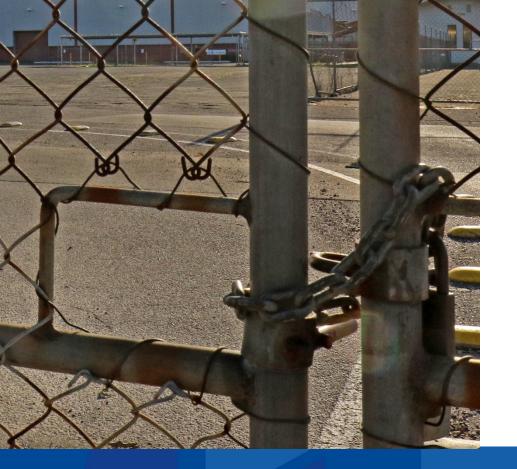
Being of place (Grocke et al., 2022)

- Place identity
 'I grew up in Salisbury.'
- Place interaction

'I remember going with my dad to those big picnic days.'

• Place realisation 'My first car was a Holden Commodore.'





Place attachment – key takeaway

Bridging the gap between people and systems

Using social capital to secure benefits (Manzo and Perkins, 2006)



Gendered leadership lens

'Women cannot be effective unless others accept their leadership.' (Rhode, 2017)

- Women more democratic/participatory than autocratic/directive (Eagly and Johnson, 1990)
- Described male leadership as 'ego driven' 'patch protection' 'Women lead by committee and by consensus, and men lead by dictatorship.'
- 'Old versus new', not always gendered:

'I do think it's gendered. But in saying that, I think it's also the leadership style that's increasingly coming through in places like start-up thinking.'

 Male dominated environments = additional difficulties: *'There is definitely some gendered difference in how funding for economic development is given out.'*



Gendered leadership – key takeaway

Gender as impediment and asset





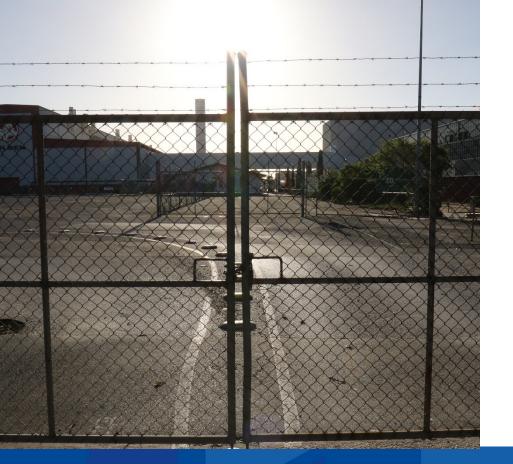
Boundary spanning and super silos

'Difficult problems invite new ways of working and thinking.' (Williams, 2002)

- COVID-19 presented opportunities for creative problem solving 'Every single business changed their business plan. If they wanted to survive, they had to.'
- Collaboration and communication increased; super silos emerged 'It's forced collaboration across council teams, at sort of an unprecedented rate.'
- State and federal politicians

'In a place like Elizabeth you're a kind of a conduit for everybody, you're a link so that you can link people up.'





Boundary spanning and super silos – key takeaway

Enhanced status quo rather than radical shift



Fragile and divergent narratives

'Personal narratives serve as representations of the roles people play.' (Shaw, 1997)

- Degrees of positivity varied by leader type
- The 'ideal' and the 'ought' (Shaw, 1997)
- All leaders recognised divergent narratives their dominant narrative was fragile





Fragile and divergent narratives – key takeaway

Leaders presented a narrative that was acceptable within the context of the structural forces of their leadership role



Summary

• Place leaders use complex mechanisms to enhance effectiveness during times of shock

• Place leaders see their communities differently than community members, but do accept various narrative versions of events



Policy impacts

- Impacts and outcomes: leaders' views are not representative of the wider community
- 'Scratch the surface' of preferred narratives
- When supporting place leaders to transform communities:
 - Look for the leaders who are innovating and taking risks
 - Support diverse leaders
 - Support leaders with strong social capital





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