Place, city, regional, rural … leadership: a review

Introduction

The notion of place leadership with its many names (Sotarauta and Beer, in this handbook) has attracted increasing interest in scholarly communities. Now and then, at academic conferences, a question of novelty surfaces from the debates: is place leadership a new approach or not? Of course, leadership has been studied since the antiquities, with Grint (2011) tracing the evolution of scholarship in this field from Plato through to Machiavelli and onwards to the Renaissance and the contemporary era. Grint (2011) nominates Thomas Carlyle as the first ‘modern’ scholar of leadership, and his focus on the ‘great men’ of history remains influential in the public imagination to this day. Elsewhere leadership studies emerged in a systematic fashion from the 1940s. In the United States several significant research initiatives came out of major universities, including Ohio State and the University of Michigan (Grint 2011), while in other parts of the world leadership studies often emerged within the context of both military training, the rise of organisational psychology and the education of engineers. There are also several prominent early studies focusing on leadership in various territorial contexts. For example, Sorenson and Epps (1996), Humphrey and Wilkinson (1993), Parkinson (1990) and McGranahan (1984) all studied phenomena that closely resemble what nowadays is labelled as place leadership.

In this review we do not focus on the substantial ‘grey’ literature in this field, instead focusing only on conventional academic outputs. However, it is important to acknowledge that consultant reports from global services firms such as PWC and McKinsey and Co commonly nominate the development of city or regional leadership as a critical step in reviving the fortunes of places. They inevitably advocate an uncritical and relatively simple perspective on place leadership, and we are not aware of any studies that have determined whether such policies have been implemented, and to what effect? More broadly, the prominence of leadership as a solution to the challenges of places confronted by decline reflects the potential it offers to policy makers, communities and researchers alike as an enabler of, and channel for, positive action. It is our contention that this need has been a key driver of the recent growth of scholarship into place based leaders, as academics seek to identify, better understand and theorise place leadership within the broader context of their disciplines and the practical needs of communities.

In this chapter, we do not embark on a review of the concept, as it is briefly discussed already in the Introduction. Instead, we aim to paint a picture of the spread and depth of
contemporary place leadership studies. The other chapters in this handbook, in their ways, discuss relevant issues related to place leadership, and thus we complement this picture by presenting the main results of a literature review we undertook in January and February 2020.

The research questions guiding this chapter are: How has the study on place leadership evolved and, more specifically, what are the empirical contexts these studies focus on, what kind of methodologies have been exploited? Also, what are the main observations? Our work adds to existing research on place leadership by providing the first systematic review of academic literature on leadership in its many territorial and spatial forms.

Methodology and general results

Especially in medical fields, literature reviews synthesise empirical evidence from a large body of studies and identify the challenges and development needs of that field. The same principle may also be applied in the social sciences, even though the number of studies analysed is usually smaller on the whole than in the sciences. Additionally, the methodologies and variables are not as strictly controlled in the social sciences as in the physical sciences, and therefore conclusions may be more contestable than in other domains of knowledge such as medical science (Perkman et al. 2013). We undertook a systematic review of the literature, following a stepwise procedure. Our main ambition was to demonstrate the current state of knowledge and methodological spread in the field and, while the methods used would not qualify as a systematic review within the health sciences, they were more methodical than those conventionally applied in the social sciences and undertaken at too great a depth to qualify as a scoping review. Similarly, our approach had none of the subjective elements that typify a narrative review. For these reasons, we refer to the search we undertook – and the process of mining the content of the publications – as a systematic review as the best summation of our search. Through this process we aimed to collect and analyse scientific publications relevant to place leadership and the research questions above, and from the analysis present an overview of the field which would allow us to identify any research gaps.

In the interest of being comprehensive, we decided to use two databases and carry out a confirmatory analysis using Google Scholar search. This, however, proved to be challenging as Google Scholar returned numerous, apparently unrelated, publications and narrowing them down as well as cross-checking the results with other searches was a prohibitive ambition. In January 2020, we identified the relevant research published on place leadership using the Scopus database and Web of Science (WoS) database. We did not specify the time span but instead searched for publications using the entirety of each database.

We first consulted the Scopus database using the keyword leadership in conjunction with the following supporting keywords: place, place-based, territorial, regional, city and rural (see Appendix 1 for more detail). As indicated in the first chapter of this handbook, scholars use multiple concepts and terminology when aiming to unravel the secrets of leadership in city
and regional development. Therefore, we decided to apply all possible leadership/spatiality combinations. We conducted an extensive search of the titles, keywords and abstracts of publications held by the Scopus database. The first Scopus search yielded 406 publications without excluding any scientific discipline.

Next, we refined the result and excluded the following subject areas: medicine; earth and planetary sciences; agricultural and biological sciences; engineering; nursing; pharmacology; toxicology and pharmaceutics; biochemistry; genetics and molecular biology; dentistry; physics and astronomy; chemistry; health professions; materials science; and mathematics. This provided us with 319 scientific publications, labelled as the ‘Broad Scopus Search’. To get a more detailed view on place leadership research, particularly in the fields of geography, regional studies as well as policy and planning studies, we decided to limit our search to respective publications in these fields. This constituted our ‘Narrow Scopus Search’, and it reduced the number of publications to 68. Two edited books (Sotarauta et al. 2012; Collinge, Gibney and Mabey 2010) and one book (Sotarauta 2016) did not surface from the search and thus we added them manually. This absence reflected the fact that Scopus and Web of Science are focused mainly on journal publications. Indeed, all the numbers presented in this chapter appear precise, but it should be noted that collecting data using combinations of keywords leaves space for omissions, mistakes and misunderstandings, as not all publications are included and some may be included that are not consistent with the intent of the research. In the case of such imperfections, we believe they are minor and do not compromise the overall view on place leadership.

It is important to acknowledge that all the material covered in this chapter, and the majority of the work within the formally recognised academic literature, is written in English and comes from a relatively small cohort of nations. The monolingual nature of international scholarship blinds the wider body of research to this corpus of work and this is a regrettable shortcoming. The prevailing focus on case studies in Anglo-American, Australian and European democratic countries is an important shortcoming in the field, and it would be important to learn more about place leadership in other types of countries to identify how it is manifested there. There is, without doubt, a considerable body of work that essentially addresses issues of place leadership written in languages other than English.

The results of both the Scopus searches clearly show that the number of place leadership publications began to increase rapidly in the early 2000’s, although overall numbers are still relatively low. Critically, there has been a strong growth trajectory since 2008 when scholars from the University of Birmingham (UK) first brought together a group of researchers to collaborate on an edited volume (Collinge, Gibney and Mabey 2010). The peak years are 2012 and 2017 due to an edited book (Sotarauta 2012) and special issues in Regional Studies (Sotarauta, Beer and Gibney 2017) and Local Economy (Liddle et al. 2017). As the number of publications has mounted, so have the citations to place leadership publications (figure 2.2).
Figure 2.1. The number of ‘place leadership’ publications in Scopus, broad and narrow search from 1980 to 2019

Figure 2.2. Citations to all place leadership publications in Scopus from 2005 to 2019
The database search has revealed that place leadership studies have (so far) mainly been carried out in the Western world, the six most active countries being, according to the Narrow Scopus Search, the UK (34 publications); United States (13); Australia (11); Finland (9); and the Netherlands (7). This reflects the geographical spread of human geography and regional development studies, and its long history in the Anglo-American world (Hassink et al. 2018; Asheim 2020). The Broad Scopus Search found 69.1% of all the publications have appeared in scientific journals, 12.7% are book chapters, and 6.4% are books. The most productive place leadership universities, according to the Scopus database, are Birmingham, the two Universities in Bristol, Tampere and several Australian universities. It is legitimate to argue that place leadership studies, according to Scopus, has so far been concentrated in the hands of a few scholars (most notably, Robin Hambleton, Markku Sotarauta, Andrew Beer, John Gibney, Chris Collinge, Ina Horlings, Joyce Liddle, Chris Mabey and Alessandro Sancino, all with three or more publications). Interestingly, all mentioned authors have participated to a greater or lesser degree in the Regional Studies Association’s research networks on place leadership. Importantly, the field of study is expanding, and new names emerge annually as additional scholars join the debate. The list of authors within this Handbook provides evidence of the recruitment of both additional scholars and the contributions of fresh disciplinary perspectives. Crucially, there is also evidence of the gender divide also beginning to diminish as researchers such as Lummina Horlings, Sarah Ayres, Robyn Eversole, Alyson Nicholds, Martiene Grootens, Michaela Pagani and Lisa Nieth publish a growing volume of work.

Second, we decided to search the Web of Science Core Collection (WoS) and conducted a similar search with the same keywords (for more detail, see Appendix 1), excluding the following Web of Science Categories: nursing, medicine general internal, dentistry oral surgery medicine, gastroenterology hepatology, infectious diseases, information science library science, pharmacology pharmacy, surgery, biochemistry molecular biology, biology, cardiac cardiovascular systems, cell biology, linguistics, medieval renaissance studies, paediatrics, peripheral vascular disease, veterinary studies. The search labelled as ‘the Broad WoS’ gave us 260 publications, out of which 54 publications are explicitly categorised in such research areas as international relations, and 47 as business economics and 44 as public administration. Despite international relations and business economics surfacing from the Web of Science research areas, the leading journals were Regional Studies; Local Economy; Policy Studies and European Planning Studies (also Asia Europe Journal). It seems that in geography and regional studies, research is concentrated in selected outlets, universities and scholars, while in the other research areas, it is more widespread across the scholarly landscape.
Figure 2.3. Top 5 place leadership publishing journals according to the WoS database

To get a more detailed view on place leadership research, we decided to focus explicitly on publications that focus on geography and regional studies as well as policy and public administration. We labelled this search ‘The Narrow WoS’. The result was 42 publications. Not surprisingly, the journals, countries, and universities that surfaced in the Scopus searches were prominent in the Web of Science, but what is notable is that all publications were published after 2007. The top scholars in the search were the same as in Scopus, and with the Scopus search, the most active universities were Birmingham, Tampere, two universities in Bristol, Open University (UK) and several Australian institutions.

Figure 2.4. The number of ‘place leadership’ publications as in Web of Science, the Broad and Narrow WoS from 1975 to 2019
Our literature review reveals, first, the challenges in using such generic keywords as ‘leadership’, ‘place’, ‘city’ or ‘region’. The meaning of ‘place leadership’ may be reasonably precise in individual articles, but in practice, there are multiple definitions or components of the core concepts; leadership, region, place etc. (see Paasi, Harrison and Jones 2018; Bass and Bass 2009). Second, acknowledging the difficulties in specifying the concept of place leadership for a database search, we believe we have demonstrated that place leadership with its many specifications is, as we define it today, a relatively new and rapidly emerging field of study. We, of course, acknowledge that our searches do not capture all these earlier studies focusing on power, politics or governance in ways that would today be labelled as place leadership.

Selected studies in a closer scrutiny

For the analysis of individual publications and their research designs, the abstracts of the 42 publications identified in the ‘Narrow WoS’ search were read to identify their empirical component and the ways in which data was collected and knowledge created. The articles focused on leadership within public organisations and on other contexts outside the scope of this analysis, as well as editorial and conceptual articles, were excluded from the analysis. This left 35 journal articles that were analysed in more detail (see the list of references).
Our analysis reveals clearly the embryonic nature of research on place leadership. We endorse Hu and Hassink’s (2017, 225) observation that “despite some first valuable insights, research on place leadership is still in its infancy, conceptually vague and empirically insufficient”. However, the review shows the research gaps are being filled by a continuous stream of studies, simultaneously revealing new research opportunities and pointing towards fresh research questions. Research on place leadership is varied and includes investigations on who place leaders are and how they function; place leadership patterns; the relationship between governance structures and leadership; leadership styles when promoting economic development; the roles played by different actors in collective place leadership; the differences and similarities between countries, and between places in a country; the effects of changing leadership on development policy; analyses of the capacity to seize leadership in a place; exploration of the roles of leadership in local/regional development; methodological experimentations; and similar themes.

In reflecting on the emergent nature of studies of place, or city and regional, leadership it is clear there has been a strong focus on situating the new research field in a broader context of regional studies and human geography; establishing what place leadership is, and is not; and identifying its potential contribution amongst the more established research questions that dominate these disciplines. Put simply, much of the work that has been published to date has either sought to prove that place leadership is a real and identifiable phenomenon or set out to establish the dimensions or boundaries of its influence. In some instances, it has sought to do this by providing one or more case studies, while elsewhere it has endeavoured to find independent verification of its potency. Often there has been a difficult juxtaposition between the analysis of the governance arrangements within which city and regional leadership is enacted, and the evaluation of the agency of individuals and groups that lies at the core of leadership as a concept. There remains a risk that authors seeking to shed light on leadership end up producing an analysis of governance structures, without delving into the ways in which this institutional framework has enabled, and shaped, the decisions and actions of the actors.

Research on place leadership is contextual in three ways; it is situated in (a) a specific geography and (b) an institutional environment and, often, (c) in a broader conceptual framework, as many of the authors have inserted place leadership into long-established theoretical or analytical structures. Each of these contexts is important, and in combination they create the complex environment in which city and regional leadership finds expression at a multitude of scales around the globe. This diversity, of course, challenges many methodologies and contributes to the dominance of case studies in this body of research. For some researchers place leadership has provided a supporting framework, adding additional analytical leverage in their work. For example, for Roger Stough and his collaborators, regional leadership was seen to be an important component of both their
models of endogenous development and the planning for economic growth (Stough et al 2001). Some have centred their analysis explicitly on place leadership (Smailes 2002) as a way of better understanding community dynamics. Research on place leadership is also relational, as, by definition, analyses revolve around, and centre upon, a multitude of factors including systemic features of leadership, the reciprocal influence of influential actors, the social positions of leaders, the incidence of collective/shared leadership or distributed leadership, and the relationship between community leaders and the instruments of state power.

It is common to criticise leadership studies as a field of ‘hero worshipping’, that is, to have the field dismissed as being an area of academic work that is overly leader-centric in its approach (Thoroughgood et al. 2016). This perception may reflect both the uninformed perceptions of a broader public exposed to the leadership writings evident in the mainstream press, and it may also reflect the legacy of Thomas Carlyle referred to at the start of this chapter. However, our analysis showed that this is an antiquated notion of the nature and character of most scholarly work in this field which has moved on to emphasise the relational aspects of leadership, including followership (Oc and Bashshur 2013). Moreover, only one paper in our sample could be considered leader-centric: the work of Nikulin, Trotsuk and Wegren (2017) could be labelled as describing ‘heroic actions’ of a powerful individual. However, we need to open in our efforts to understand place leadership in different places and times. Place leadership may take heroic or non-heroic forms and modes of action, either for good or bad.

Place leadership studies deal more with leadership than individual leaders and are thus consistent with Grint’s (2001) view that, while the role of individual leaders may be limited, the importance of leadership is not to be underestimated. Moreover, as Samuels (2003) puts it, leaders are more than “vessels for irresistible and inevitable change”; they stretch the many constraints that shape regional development trajectories with, by and though other actors.

**Conceptualization calls for additional attention**

Research on leadership is a delicate art, a temptation to adopt overly prescriptive premises on what is ‘good leadership’ is always present. There is a normative element embedded in leadership studies, but, still, as with any worthy academic endeavour, the work should be analytical by nature and take pains to identify where place leadership produces which kinds of outcomes, under what contexts, by and for whom, instead of prescribing an abstract normative ‘best way’. Indeed, each piece of research on place leadership, in its own way, needs to address the following basic questions (among others): who influences whom, how, for what purpose and in what kind of context – and with what outcomes? (Sotarauta, Beer and Gibney 2017, 190). However, due to the embryonic nature of the field, only a few studies explicitly discuss and analyse these questions in a systematic fashion. For example, the relationship between leaders and followers, a traditional target of leadership studies is explicitly analysed in only a very limited number of articles (see, for example, Budd and
Sancino, 2016). Additionally, traditional targets of scholarly attention including questions around power, influence, leadership traits, leadership behaviour, for example, are investigated in few articles and a limited number of monographs (Sotarauta 2016) (for more see, Nicholds, in this handbook). In large measure, research on place leadership predominantly builds on the intellectual traditions and pre-occupations of regional studies, and to some extent policy studies, but to a much lesser degree it draws on the field of formal leadership studies. This is not to say that research on place leadership ought to replicate other forms of leadership study as it is a distinctive field, that seeks to address unique question and has emerged within a specific set of disciplinary backgrounds.

It is, however, surprising how few studies make use of the theories, models and methods developed in other fields of leadership enquiry, which focus on relatively similar issues and themes but in different context – military institutions, large corporations, policy networks, public sectors organisations, communities et cetera. We are forced to ask: is the context within which leadership takes place so influential that parallels between the leadership in and of places and the leadership of other institutions cannot be drawn? The exceptions include studies that look to examine transformational leadership, a foundational concept in the organisational leadership literature (Sotarauta and Suvinen 2019; Kroehn, Maude and Beer 2010; Madsen and Mullan 2014). Interestingly, according to Bratton (2020), leadership studies are moving to a less leader-centric focus and the emphasis of analysis is shifting, to a certain degree, to issues related to followership and other relational themes. Place leadership studies have an opportunity to contribute to the further development of leadership studies in these areas of intersection. There is no doubt that research on place leadership could draw more on other types of leadership studies without losing its unique focus and identity and in doing so it would increase both the insights it offers for a set of ‘home’ disciplines and its reach into other dimensions of social science.

In spite of some critical remarks, the overall quality of scholarship on place leadership is high, as evidenced by the quality of the journals in which many of the articles are published. There is, of course, scope for further intellectual growth and we also need to acknowledge that many of the studies are not yet, strictly speaking, studies on, or of, leadership but rather hybrids integrating a new conceptual framework into long established research interests and well-established theories.

Agency vs structure

Place leadership scholars, based on their empirical studies, are unanimous that leadership is shaped by its context (industrial structures, governance, institutional environment), and that the context moderates the relationship between leadership inputs and outcomes. In some cases, leadership compensates context, while in other instances context is a compensating factor for inadequate leadership (Budd and Sancino 2016). As we discussed earlier in this chapter, place leadership is shaped by three key expressions of context – the specific
geography in which leadership is enacted; the institutional environment that marks that locality; and, the broader conceptual lens through which researchers seek to understand place leadership. Governance is an important part of all three ways context shapes place leadership. Governance is of itself a conceptual frame of reference, governance arrangements are unique to individual places and governance is a product of the institutional environment in that specific territory.

An understanding of how governance is articulated in the locations under study is an important component of any analysis of place leadership. But, at the same time, research needs to ‘unpack’ the structural elements from the agency of actors – the decisions and actions of individuals and groups – in order to step beyond a simple recount of underlying conditions. Many authors are acutely aware of this tension, with Vallance, Tewdwr-Jones and Kempton (2019, 1731) observing that “place leaders can mobilise interpretive and network forms of power outside formal governance structures to encourage long-term thinking and broker innovative cross-organisational projects”. While for their part Benneworth, Pinheiro and Karlsen (2017, 245) maintain that “contradictory pressures emerging from institutional structure have important consequences for place leadership processes.” Place leadership research, therefore, needs to understand both how the structures of governance shape action, and how leadership can at the same time overcome the restrictions of governance.

Hidle and Norman (2013) further explored this tension between agency and structure, noting that variations with respect to leadership practices cannot be fully explained in terms of levels of trust, social capital and institutional set-up. Instead, issues related to how power is institutionalised need to be explored and explained in order to improve our understanding of processes associated with the construction of leadership of governance. Similarly, Rossiter and Smith (2017) explored the relationship between governance and place leadership and found that “At the same time there were a number of leaders in place who were able to harness these institutions, in order to access both private and public resources and apply them through acts of public entrepreneurship to affect change.” Clearly, in this instance, and in many other studies, leaders are both the product of institutional structures, but also retain the power to shape and reshape those arrangements upon gaining influence. There is clearly a dynamic and ever-changing relationship between the two.

The questions inevitably raised by studies of place leadership around the relative influence of agency and structure have important implications for both the practice of regional development and its future theorisation. At the level of regional development practice, place leadership appears to offer a way forward for places affected by sluggish growth, economic shocks or other adverse conditions. There is the prospect of the pathway to growth if the right decisions are made and the most appropriate resources mobilised. Similarly, within the theorisation of regional growth trajectories, the role of agency and its relation to structure remains a blind spot, calling for further theorising and empirical studies (Grillitsch and Sotarauta 2020 2-3). The influence is indirect and time dependent, “Place leadership does
not produce immediate effects on local industrial dynamics, but rather through influencing and shaping institutions as ‘mediators’ of economic practice and interaction” (Hu and Hassink 2017; Raagena and Keerberg 2017).

Consequently, the studies in our sample of place leadership publications have identified different patterns of leadership between countries but also within them (e.g. Hidle and Normann 2013; Blažek et al 2013; Sotarauta, Kurikka and Kolehmainen, in this handbook). Importantly, in spite of the differences in institutional arrangements and governance structures, Beer et al. (2019), Sotarauta and Beer (2017) and Budd and Sancino (2016) have found both differences, but also similarities, in place leadership across national boundaries. It is far too early to generalise or theorise on these observations, but even though differences clearly exist between countries and in how place leadership is expressed at different spatial scales, they are not as great as we would otherwise presume. There are distinct commonalities in the ways leaders act when confronted by challenges, seeking to take advantage of opportunities or interacting with other actors. But of course, as Sotarauta (2016) indicated, nuanced comparative analyses reveal that underneath the generic similarities, there are both governance and grassroots level differences in the ways place leaders mobilise themselves and others. The differences include who is involved, and who has earned a position in the place leadership fold. There is also variation in the sources from which place leaders are drawn – ranging from managerial leaders from within the public sector to politicians to business leaders to civic leaders (Potluka in this handbook), and many kinds of combinations of representatives from each of these groups (Hambleton 2015a). As Fonseca et al (in this handbook) observe, place leadership has focused, by definition, on issues outside and between organisations, not paying a great deal of attention to how internal situations in specific organisations condition patterns of place leadership.

**Overview of methodology**

As argued earlier in this chapter, many journal articles, chapters and other research outputs struggle to link the empirical description of place leadership with broader conceptual analyses. This under-theorisation has broad ranging implications including a limited engagement with wider debates in the social sciences generally, a more limited adoption of this concept by researchers around the globe and the partial operationalisation of the concept, which in turn limits both the policy roll-out of these ideas and the take up of methodological innovations.

A majority of the papers in our final collection employed qualitative methods in their empirical studies, and most were case studies. In total, some 31 out of the 38 articles we examined were case studies and, of these, there were 11 single case studies and 20 comparative case studies. Interestingly, 12 of the comparative case studies were cross-country comparisons and this cross-border dimension emphasises the acknowledged need to identify place based leadership as an outcome of general – rather than locality specific –
processes. One study compared two industries in one place. The most common combination of methods was interviews accompanied with the analysis of secondary data (media, policy documents, other studies, etc). Other methods included the use of vignettes, action research (ethnography), participatory observation, a heuristic method, illustrative innovation biographies, sense-making, process tracing and broad scale description. The spatial scale of the analysis also varied, with 11 studies focused at the city/city-region level, while 14 had a regional focus. The remainder revolved around, and centred on, relatively small rural communities, while a small number involved the implementation of a survey covering entire nation.

Conclusion

The systematic literature review on place leadership in its many forms enable us to further develop the field of study. Our work adds to existing research in two ways.

First, we provided the first systematic review of place leadership. Our main ambition, in framing this handbook, was to paint a picture where this embryonic, but rapidly emerging, field of study is going and where it needs to progress to if major research gaps are to be addressed. We acknowledge the general nature of our review and the fact that we are deeply embedded in the study of place leadership ourselves. Thus, we would welcome a more thorough analysis carried out by others with more specific research questions. It is clear from this systematic review that studies of place leadership have grown rapidly over the past decade, with a significant increase in both the number of research outputs and citations. In part, this growth is a product of the seed funding provided by the Regional Studies Association to a series of networks on this topic – with this financial support allowing the dissemination of findings, the development of shared projects, networking between researchers and research groups, and the recruitment of early career researchers into this area of inquiry.

Second, we synthesised our empirical results into a state-of-the-art view of the field, and we were able to pinpoint several theoretical and methodological gaps that were discussed in this chapter but also in the introductory chapter of this handbook. We considered why studying place leadership requires a mix of methodological approaches, and why there is a pressing need to move away from an excessive reliance on case studies (without downplaying the importance of in-depth case studies). Plurality in the methods used to study this phenomenon will provide us with a more colourful set of accounts on an important topic. This chapter has identified the challenges posed by contemporary approaches and suggested some potential avenues how they may be overcome.

Synthesising our results, we postulate three key insights. First, there is a need to develop substantially the theoretical basis for the study of place leadership. On the one hand, we need to dig deeper into the specific concepts that are at the core of understanding and explaining leadership. These include, for example, power, influence, mobilisation, leader-follower
interaction, followership, and group dynamics. For this purpose, the interaction with research into organisational and political leadership, as well as network management communities, needs to be intensified. We see this as being a fertile space for mutual learning. On the other hand, we need to continue inserting place leadership within other fields of interest in regional studies and geography, more specifically as one of the core elements in research work on ‘agency’ and the relationship between ‘agency and structure’. Research on place leadership has the potential to add a novel ingredient to regional research broadly, as well as its constituent disciplines of geography, economics, sociology and policy studies through its capacity to add agentic empirical evidence, theory development and policy advice.

Second, place leadership scholars have for some time been working on comparative research designs involving case studies. This is exactly what Rodríguez-Pose (2020) emphasised in his account on the study of institutions. He argued that comparative case studies “are perhaps the most effective way of getting to grips with the linkages between urban and regional growth and the influence of institutions”, through processes linked to agency (Grillitsch and Sotarauta 2020). Additionally, because research on place leadership draws heavily on case studies, other methodologies can be experimented with and developed (see for more in detail, Beer and Irving, this handbook; Karlsen and Larrea, this handbook; Grillitsch, Rekers and Sotarauta, this handbook; Dinmore and Beer, this handbook).

Third, research on place leadership is well positioned to inform policy makers and development practitioners at different levels on how to improve leadership capacity in, and for, a range of governance settings, leadership practices and capabilities. Currently, many policy makers and practitioners are influenced by leadership theories and practices developed out of private and public organisations. However, local and regional development brings forward a much wider constellation of actors and interests, and the pathway to earning a leadership position and influence across organisational and institutional borders is very distinct from that found in large public and private sector institutions. It is important to remember that, in its efforts to link leadership to structures, and vice versa, research on place leadership operates in midst of heterogenous sets of actors rather than hierarchies, and in this respect, it is uniquely placed among leadership studies. Its complex leadership patterns stem from the ambiguous relationships between leaders as well as between leaders and followers, and continuously evolving constellations of them, makes it a very different target of study from the more established leadership studies.

In conclusion, it is clear that research into place leadership has traversed considerable terrain already, but remains a relatively immature field, rich in the potential for intellectual and policy advances. This review – essentially a stocktake of the ecology of research in this field – helps us to better understand the challenges ahead and the pathways available to the community of scholars as they seek to advance their research agendas.
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The Narrow Scopus Search

TITLE-ABS-KEY ("place leadership" OR "place-based leadership" OR "place based leadership" OR "leadership and place" OR "city leadership" OR "leadership in city" OR "leadership of city" OR "rural leadership" OR "regional leadership" OR "territorial leadership" OR "leadership and city") AND (EXCLUDE (SUBJAREA, "MED")) OR EXCLUDE (SUBJAREA, "EART") OR EXCLUDE (SUBJAREA, "AGRI") OR EXCLUDE (SUBJAREA, "ENGI") OR EXCLUDE (SUBJAREA, "NURS") OR EXCLUDE (SUBJAREA, "PHAR") OR EXCLUDE (SUBJAREA, "BIOC") OR EXCLUDE (SUBJAREA, "DENT") OR EXCLUDE (SUBJAREA, "PHYS") OR EXCLUDE (SUBJAREA, "CHEM") OR EXCLUDE (SUBJAREA, "HEAL") OR EXCLUDE (SUBJAREA, "MATE") OR EXCLUDE (SUBJAREA, "MATH")

The Broad Scopus Search

TITLE-ABS-KEY ("place leadership" OR "place-based leadership" OR "place based leadership" OR "leadership and place" OR "city leadership" OR "leadership in city" OR "leadership of city" OR "rural leadership" OR "regional leadership" OR "territorial leadership" OR "leadership and city") AND (EXCLUDE (SUBJAREA, "MED")) OR EXCLUDE (SUBJAREA, "EART") OR EXCLUDE (SUBJAREA, "AGRI") OR EXCLUDE (SUBJAREA, "ENGI") OR EXCLUDE (SUBJAREA, "NURS") OR EXCLUDE (SUBJAREA, "PHAR") OR EXCLUDE (SUBJAREA, "BIOC") OR EXCLUDE (SUBJAREA, "DENT") OR EXCLUDE (SUBJAREA, "PHYS") OR EXCLUDE (SUBJAREA, "CHEM") OR EXCLUDE (SUBJAREA, "HEAL") OR EXCLUDE (SUBJAREA, "MATE") OR EXCLUDE (SUBJAREA, "MATH") AND (LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE, "Regional Studies") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE, "Local Economy") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE, "Policy Studies") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE, "Regional Studies Regional Science") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE, "European Planning Studies") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE, "International Journal Of Public Administration") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE, "Journal Of Urban Regeneration And Renewal") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE, "Regional Leadership In The Global System Ideas Interests And Strategies Of Regional Powers") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE, "Rural Society") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE, "Urban Studies") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE, "Administration") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE, "Governing Cities In A Global Era Urban Innovation Competition And Democratic Reform") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE, "American Review Of Public Administration") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE, "Australian Journal Of Public Administration") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE, "Cities And Sustainable Technology Transitions Leadership Innovation And Adoption") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE, "Environment And Planning C Government And Policy") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE, "Eurasian Geography And Economics") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE, "European Journal Of Development Research") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE, "European Urban And Regional Studies")

Appendix 1. The search commands

The Broad Scopus Search

TITLE-ABS-KEY ("place leadership" OR "place-based leadership" OR "place based leadership" OR "leadership and place" OR "city leadership" OR "leadership in city" OR "leadership of city" OR "rural leadership" OR "regional leadership" OR "territorial leadership" OR "leadership and city") AND (EXCLUDE (SUBJAREA, "MED")) OR EXCLUDE (SUBJAREA, "EART") OR EXCLUDE (SUBJAREA, "AGRI") OR EXCLUDE (SUBJAREA, "ENGI") OR EXCLUDE (SUBJAREA, "NURS") OR EXCLUDE (SUBJAREA, "PHAR") OR EXCLUDE (SUBJAREA, "BIOC") OR EXCLUDE (SUBJAREA, "DENT") OR EXCLUDE (SUBJAREA, "PHYS") OR EXCLUDE (SUBJAREA, "CHEM") OR EXCLUDE (SUBJAREA, "HEAL") OR EXCLUDE (SUBJAREA, "MATE") OR EXCLUDE (SUBJAREA, "MATH") AND (LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE, "Regional Studies") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE, "Local Economy") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE, "Policy Studies") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE, "Regional Studies Regional Science") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE, "European Planning Studies") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE, "International Journal Of Public Administration") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE, "Journal Of Urban Regeneration And Renewal") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE, "Regional Leadership In The Global System Ideas Interests And Strategies Of Regional Powers") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE, "Rural Society") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE, "Urban Studies") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE, "Administration") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE, "Governing Cities In A Global Era Urban Innovation Competition And Democratic Reform") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE, "American Review Of Public Administration") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE, "Australian Journal Of Public Administration") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE, "Cities And Sustainable Technology Transitions Leadership Innovation And Adoption") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE, "Environment And Planning C Government And Policy") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE, "Eurasian Geography And Economics") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE, "European Journal Of Development Research") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE, "European Urban And Regional Studies")

The Narrow Scopus Search

TITLE-ABS-KEY ("place leadership" OR "place-based leadership" OR "place based leadership" OR "leadership and place" OR "city leadership" OR "leadership in city" OR "leadership of city" OR "rural leadership" OR "regional leadership" OR "territorial leadership" OR "leadership and city") AND (EXCLUDE (SUBJAREA, "MED")) OR EXCLUDE (SUBJAREA, "EART") OR EXCLUDE (SUBJAREA, "AGRI") OR EXCLUDE (SUBJAREA, "ENGI") OR EXCLUDE (SUBJAREA, "NURS") OR EXCLUDE (SUBJAREA, "PHAR") OR EXCLUDE (SUBJAREA, "BIOC") OR EXCLUDE (SUBJAREA, "DENT") OR EXCLUDE (SUBJAREA, "PHYS") OR EXCLUDE (SUBJAREA, "CHEM") OR EXCLUDE (SUBJAREA, "HEAL") OR EXCLUDE (SUBJAREA, "MATE") OR EXCLUDE (SUBJAREA, "MATH") AND (LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE, "Regional Studies") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE, "Local Economy") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE, "Policy Studies") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE, "Regional Studies Regional Science") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE, "European Planning Studies") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE, "International Journal Of Public Administration") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE, "Journal Of Urban Regeneration And Renewal") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE, "Regional Leadership In The Global System Ideas Interests And Strategies Of Regional Powers") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE, "Rural Society") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE, "Urban Studies") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE, "Administration") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE, "Governing Cities In A Global Era Urban Innovation Competition And Democratic Reform") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE, "American Review Of Public Administration") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE, "Australian Journal Of Public Administration") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE, "Cities And Sustainable Technology Transitions Leadership Innovation And Adoption") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE, "Environment And Planning C Government And Policy") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE, "Eurasian Geography And Economics") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE, "European Journal Of Development Research") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE, "European Urban And Regional Studies")


TO (EXACTSRCTITLE, "Future Of Cities And Regions Simulation Scenario And Visioning Governance And Scale") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE, "Innovation In City Governments Structures Networks And Leadership") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE, "International Planning Studies") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE, "International Regional Science Review")

Web of Science Core Collection / The Broad WoS

TS=(["place leadership" OR "place based leadership" OR "place-based leadership" OR "leadership and place" OR "city leadership" OR "leadership in city" OR "leadership of city" OR "rural leadership" OR "regional leadership" OR "territorial leadership" OR "leadership and city"])

Refined by: [excluding] WEB OF SCIENCE CATEGORIES: (BIOCHEMISTRY MOLECULAR BIOLOGY OR BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION OR MEDICINE GENERAL INTERNAL OR BIOLOGY OR CARDIAC CARDIOVASCULAR SYSTEMS OR AGRICULTURE MULTIDISCIPLINARY OR CELL BIOLOGY OR AGRONOMY OR ECOLOGY OR CRIMINOLOGY PENOLOGY OR DENTISTRY ORAL SURGERY MEDICINE OR GASTROENTEROLOGY HEPATOLOGY OR HEALTH CARE SCIENCES SERVICES OR HORTICULTURE OR INFECTIOUS DISEASES OR MEDIEVAL RENAISSANCE STUDIES OR PEDIATRICS OR PERIPHERAL VASCULAR DISEASE OR NURSING OR PHARMACOLOGY PHARMACY OR VETERINARY SCIENCES OR SURGERY)

Timespan: All years. Indexes: SCI-EXPANDED, SSCI, A&HCI, CPCI-S, CPCI-SSH, ESCI.

Web of Science Core Collection / The Narrow WoS

TS=(["place leadership" OR "place based leadership" OR "place-based leadership" OR "leadership and place" OR "city leadership" OR "leadership in city" OR "leadership of city" OR "rural leadership" OR "regional leadership" OR "territorial leadership" OR "leadership and city"])

Analysis: [excluding] WEB OF SCIENCE CATEGORIES: (BIOCHEMISTRY MOLECULAR BIOLOGY OR MEDICINE GENERAL INTERNAL OR BIOLOGY OR CARDIAC CARDIOVASCULAR SYSTEMS OR CELL BIOLOGY OR DENTISTRY ORAL SURGERY MEDICINE OR GASTROENTEROLOGY HEPATOLOGY OR LINGUISTICS OR INFECTIOUS DISEASES OR MEDIEVAL RENAISSANCE STUDIES OR INFORMATION SCIENCE LIBRARY SCIENCE OR PEDIATRICS OR PERIPHERAL VASCULAR DISEASE OR NURSING OR PHARMACOLOGY PHARMACY OR VETERINARY SCIENCES OR SURGERY) AND SOURCE TITLES: (REGIONAL STUDIES OR LOCAL ECONOMY OR POLICY STUDIES OR EUROPEAN PLANNING STUDIES OR AMERICAN POLITICS QUARTERLY OR INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION OR ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING C GOVERNMENT AND POLICY OR REGIONAL STUDIES REGIONAL SCIENCE OR EURASIAN GEOGRAPHY AND ECONOMICS OR EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH OR EUROPEAN URBAN AND REGIONAL STUDIES OR GEOGRAPHICAL RESEARCH OR LOCAL GOVERNMENT STUDIES)

Timespan: All years. Indexes: SCI-EXPANDED, SSCI, A&HCI, CPCI-S, CPCI-SSH, ESCI.