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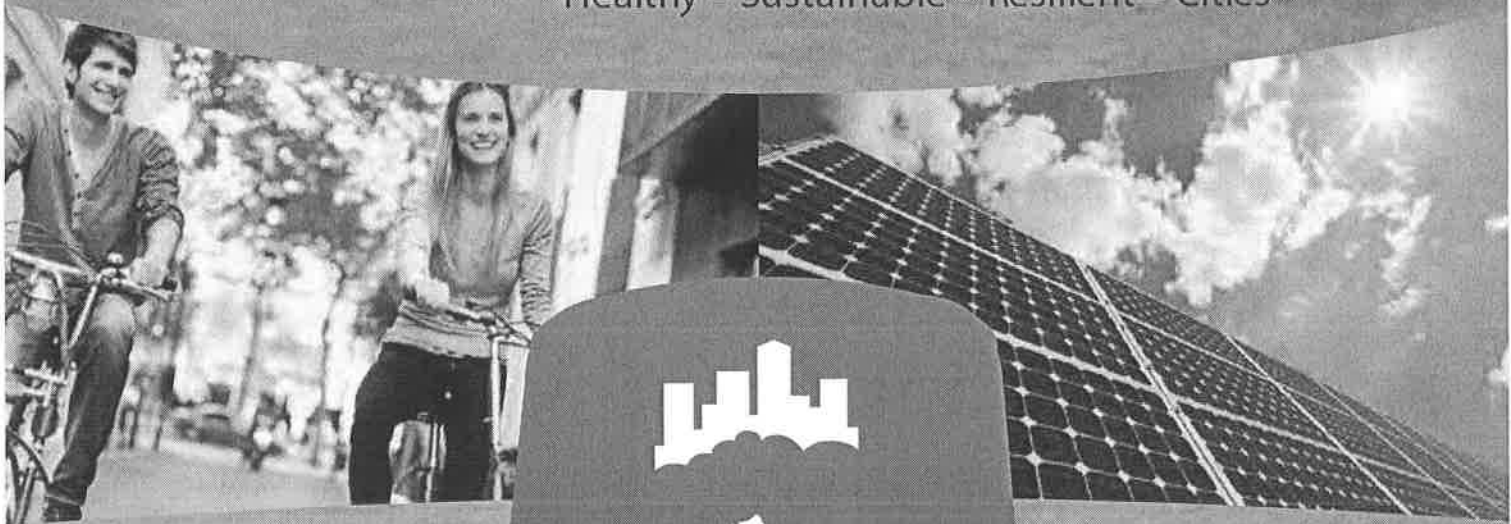
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# **Planning leadership and governance for regional Queensland**

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# Planning leadership and governance for regional Queensland

## Abstract

Regional planning in Queensland has recently undergone a significant change in approach: from statutory regional plans that covered regionally-specific policy to manage and coordinate growth and infrastructure, to very specifically defined plans aimed at resolving land use conflicts between agriculture and mining. In effect, the changes devolve regional growth management and planning responsibilities back to local government. The neo-liberalist rhetoric speaks of re-empowering local government with no discussion on the capacity of local government to exercise that power across regional boundaries.

The regional governance literature points to the lack of a generally agreed upon definition of region and the emergence of new forms of governance to respond to regionalism and localism, however, it makes limited connections to the styles of leadership required to enable those governance structures.

The purpose of this paper is to identify what the connections are between emerging forms of regional governance and leadership styles relevant to the planning profession, particularly in local government. The approach will be to explore leadership models for regional planning using actor-network theory to analyse the content of past and present regional planning documents, including the Far North Queensland Regional Plan (FNQRP) and the Darling Downs Regional Plan (DDRP). It is anticipated that the paper will identify a possible framework for leadership capacity building for the planning profession that will add value to planners playing an important role in the unfolding evolution of regional leadership and governance in Queensland.

*Key words: regional planning, governance, actor-network theory, localism, place-based leadership*

## Introduction

Regional planning or governance in Queensland, in recent times, had been a more collaborative process than in the past, but remained largely initiated, mandated and coordinated by State Government. This model has set it apart from other states where regional governance has been described as uncoordinated, random, piecemeal and largely ineffective (P Collits, 2012a) . Certainly, regional governance has been described in the



literature as lacking any clear ownership and also as often under-resourced. There have been no lasting regional structures in Australia, a critical shortcoming, due to the tendency to abandon programs when politics change direction (Kelly et al., 2009).

With sweeping planning reforms being undertaken in Queensland, a move from State regulation to facilitation, from State control to local government empowerment is being espoused (Government, 2014). While this suits a neo-liberal reform agenda, local government response to these reforms, particularly in regard to recent steps forward for regional planning coordination and effectiveness, is important to consider. Regional planning presents an opportunity to consider complex and divergent economic, environmental and social objectives, funding priorities, personnel and power structures (Paul Collits, 2007). Often agencies that devise regional plans in the absence of a State Government directive may find they lack the democratic mandate across boundaries as well as the capacity to really drive any significant change, being subject to various uncoordinated agendas, conflicts and duplications (P Collits, 2012a). Local government will, pursuant to the Queensland planning reforms, be empowered to initiate regional planning without State coordination nor legislative power. It may prove to be a retro grade step if, despite being charged with very specific terms of reference that have significant impacts on regions across the diverse and complex areas of economic development, transport planning, human services, environmental management, education, information and research, and arts and cultural development, those agencies are unable to control outcomes at a regional level (P Collits, 2012b). An important question is if government, locally, have the ability to think, plan and execute regionally, without a driving and controlling actor.

### **Leadership and Governance in Regional Planning**

In a general sense, *leadership* entails mobilising and involving followers based on a vision to work towards. Leaders build organisations where followers' capabilities are nurtured and used, thus producing results (Sotarauta, 2014). This becomes increasingly important for regions when neo-liberalism through austerity drives and regulation reduction gives rise to notions of localism and community led development.

There appears to be consensus in the literature that with neoliberalism giving rise to notions of localism, regional communities are expected to become socio-economically viable through the community utilising their (unique) local assets and resources (Argent, 2011; Eversole, 2005; Howlett, Seini, McCallum, & Osborne, 2011). Processes of localism and decentralisation have constituted orchestrated and typically neo-liberal responses to the failures of 'big government' (Brenner, 2004). The pressure localism policy places on local government and the need to strengthen local government is agreed upon by several authors

(Argent, 2011; Brown, 2007; Kelly, Dollery, & Grant, 2009), although Duniam and Eversole (2013) remind us that local government is not the sole agent of place.

Agnew (2013) states that governance extends beyond formal government arrangements, as it moves into the realm of various other forms of authority as exercised by non-state agents. Governance operates across a variety of geographical scales, including the regional scale, leading to investigations of spaces of governance, changing geographical logics of authority and rule (Agnew, 2013). Regional governance can be seen as the combination of institutions, processes and relationships. These governance models then govern economic, social and environmental decision-making at the regional scale (Brown, 2005, p. 19). The types of governance arrangements that pertain to a region do not remain static, as is evidenced from the amended arrangements giving rise to this discussion.

Given the regional context of the discussion in this paper, leadership is approached from the perspective of place-based leadership. Sotarauta (2014) uses Stough, DeSantis, Stimson and Roberts' (2001, p.177) definition of place-based leadership to show the regional context: "the tendency of the community to collaborate across sectors in a sustained, purposeful manner to enhance the economic performance or economic environment of its region". Place-based leadership is seen to be more collective, distributed, bottom-up, facilitative and emergent than general leadership, thus adding the notion of actors and networks (Sotarauta, 2014), discussed in more detail later. The community origin and community based nature of this type of leadership makes it pertinent to consider the concept of governance in a neo-liberalist environment.

The critical aspects of place based leadership for regional governance include:

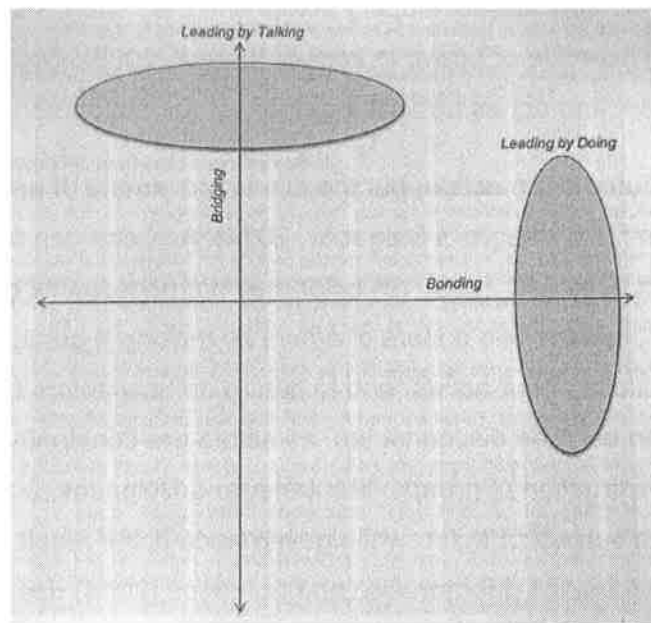
- A distinction between 'institutional environment' and 'institutional arrangements' (for example education, training and skills, innovation, infrastructure) that represent barriers influencing economic development. Rodríguez-Pose (2013)
- Development strategies need to be tailor-made for different regional institutional arrangements and not be a one-size fits all policy framework
- The importance of local capacity building and a greater focus on process rather than outcome indicators
- **Local capacity building requires enabling local actors**, and assigning more responsibility for the planning and development process (Rodríguez-Pose, 2013)
- The goal of institutional intervention is to help regions 'reinvent' themselves, but whether regions reach that goal will depend on current conditions, institutional

bottlenecks, conflict-solving capabilities and the strength of direction of intervention (Rodríguez-Pose, 2013).

- Place-based leadership tends to be collaborative rather than hierarchical, and involves collaboration across a number of institutions, individuals and firms (Beer & Clower, 2013).
- Governments have an important role in creating the right conditions under which leadership can emerge, especially as the task of place leadership appears to be more complex than leadership in hierarchical organisations (Beer & Clower, 2013).
- Ayres (2013) asks why these local government staff members cannot be the leaders, asking who is then responsible for leadership and change at a regional level.
- Beer and Clower (2013) argue that communities need to enhance their opportunities for leadership if they are to maximize their prospects for development, thereby placing some of the responsibilities for leadership on the communities themselves.
- the greatest risk for places is not poor leadership, but the absence of leadership

Figure 1 below depicts the different styles of leadership that can assist in mobilising leadership. In addition to the role of professional officers, Beer and Clower (2013) acknowledge the role of networks and the distribution of power in the communities. Stimson, Stough and Roberts's (2002, p. 279) proposal that "leadership for regional economic development will not be based upon traditional hierarchical relationships; rather it will be a collaborative relationship between institutional actors encompassing the public, private and community sectors – and it will be based on mutual trust and co-operation." is quoted to underscore their point. The model is considered a useful framework for building local capacity and enabling local actors to take on leadership roles to initiate a regional vision with associated strategies and implementation programmes.

Figure 1 Styles of leadership: leading by talking and leading by doing



Note. Reproduced from "Mobilizing leadership in cities and regions" by A. Beer and T. Clower, 2013, *Regional Studies, Regional Science*, 1(1), p. 13.

Effective leadership is seen as the region taking a strong role in setting the vision for the future and then stepping in to implement plans and processes to bring about change (Beer & Clower, 2013). For localism to be effective as nominated by the current state government as a result of greater empowerment for local communities then actors will need to mobilise quickly to form effective networks for vision setting and implementation of strategies.

### **Actor Network Theory and its application to Regional Planning**

Latour (2005) explains that Actor Network theory (ANT) is not necessarily a theory *per se*, but a social-constructivist approach that places more emphasis on explaining associations, including power relationships and inequalities. Dolwick (2009) adds that ANT is probably better understood as a descriptive method, with the actor-network being the central concept.

ANT is claimed to enhance understanding of strategic outcomes and organizational governance networks (Montenegro & Bulgacov, 2014). Whittle and Spicer (2008) argue that ANT makes it clear how actors are connected in networks, how allegations about the truth are constructed and how objects and artefacts enable organised action.

'Social' is underpinned by the notion of 'association' and can be understood in terms of webs, or actor-networks of various elements (Dolwick, 2009). In these webs, social relations are not independent of the material world (Whittle & Spicer, 2008). According to Law (1992)

almost every interaction of human beings with other human beings is mediated by objects.. For ANT researchers, objects are developing actors and they explain the large asymmetries and the overwhelming exercise of power in society (Latour, 2005). Objects are thus treated as part of social network and act as actants together with human actors.

The actor is not the source of an action, but the aim in movement of an array of entities aiming in one direction (Montenegro & Bulgacov, 2014). An actor can be a person, group, idea, or material object (Dolwick, 2009). An actor may not necessarily be the source of action, but something that modifies a state of affairs by making a perceptible difference (Dolwick, 2009). Questions about actors tend to centre on how actors become interconnected and can become disconnected, as actors are constantly involved with others in the formation and destruction of groups (Montenegro & Bulgacov, 2014). Kjaer (2004) views government as a subject or actor, while governance is the result of completed actions as a form of social coordination. Montenegro and Bulgacov (2014) deem the study of movements, interactions and changes in governance to be more logical than older study topics such as hierarchical and market logics. Policies that permeate governance networks expose the actors that are involved (Montenegro & Bulgacov, 2014). According to Latour (2005), action is not done with total conscious control, and should be regarded as a conglomerate of many groups of agency (Dolwick, 2009).

Networks must leave physical traces of some prior activity, which can be followed by a researcher and recorded empirically. Such a trace is made noticeable by conflict/controversy, flows of translation, labour, effort, movement and production (Latour 2005, p 128). Latour (2005) sees actions as an association between agents, and not simply as a human attribute. In ANT, groups are created and re-created, as are governance networks which are also subject to formation and dissolution (Montenegro & Bulgacov, 2014).

Translation in ANT is a multifaceted interaction in which actors construct definitions and common meanings, define representatives and cooperate with each other towards individual or collective goals (Montenegro & Bulgacov, 2014). Murdoch (1998) explains translation as referring to the processes of negotiation, representation and displacement which establish relationships between actors, entities and places.

When entities are effectively aligned and translations perfectly accomplished, a network is stabilised and these entities operate in unison, thereby enabling the enrolling actors to 'speak' for all. The links and relations thus become standardised and predictable. The more stable the network, the more irreversible the translations for such a network will be (Montenegro & Bulgacov, 2014). Montenegro and Bulgacov (2014) state that governance in

the form of self-organised networks does not result from planning, but is self-generating and gains more strength and autonomy over time (2014). Sorensen and Torfing (2005) do not share this view and claim that governance networks can be formed in a variety of ways, from self-development to being initiated by those at higher organisational levels.

Sorensen and Torfing (2005) view governance networks as having potential for proactive government, due to the presence of multiple actors. A network presupposes a capacity of self-organisation, efficiency, and action by the actors involved. Networks do not substitute for the action of single organisations and it is rare that efficient networks will emerge from cooperation among weak individual organisations

Montenegro and Bulgacov (2014) hold that governance network theory will be more robust if it considers within its scope not only human actors (private and public), but also non-human actors such as plans and reports. They see the role of the non-human actor as essential for understanding organisations since the social sphere is formed by the overlapping of human and non-human actors (Montenegro & Bulgacov, 2014, p. 120). Materials, such as plans, shed light on relationships between people because relationships involve these objects as mediators; and they interfere in people's decisions, attitudes and behaviours (Montenegro & Bulgacov, 2014).

The researchers applied the preceding knowledge to the analysis of the following two regional plans to determine the differences in scope.

## **Methodology**

A content analysis was conducted of the Darling Downs Regional Plan (DDRP) and the Far North Queensland Regional Plan (FNQRP) to identify the significant differences in scope between the two different generations of statutory regional plans in Queensland.

These two plans were chosen for comparison as they represent identified regions in Queensland that share similar characteristics in terms of population and settlement configuration outside the capital and without the institutional arrangements such as the South East Queensland Council of Mayors that provide additional support to regional networks.

The analysis was conducted manually by firstly comparing the table of contents of both documents to identify gaps and commonalities and secondly by contrasting the operational and relationship frameworks provided by each document. Future research will require ethics clearance to include interviews from key actors in these regional areas and to use NVivo software to manage more detailed content for further analysis.

The purpose of the content comparison was to ascertain those elements that are evident in the first generation of statutory regional plans that are not included in the next or second generation of statutory regional plans. This analysis then informed a discussion about the changes for actors and networks involved in regional planning, particularly local government.

### **Case Study – Darling Downs Regional Plan and the Far North Queensland Regional Plan - Differences in scope**

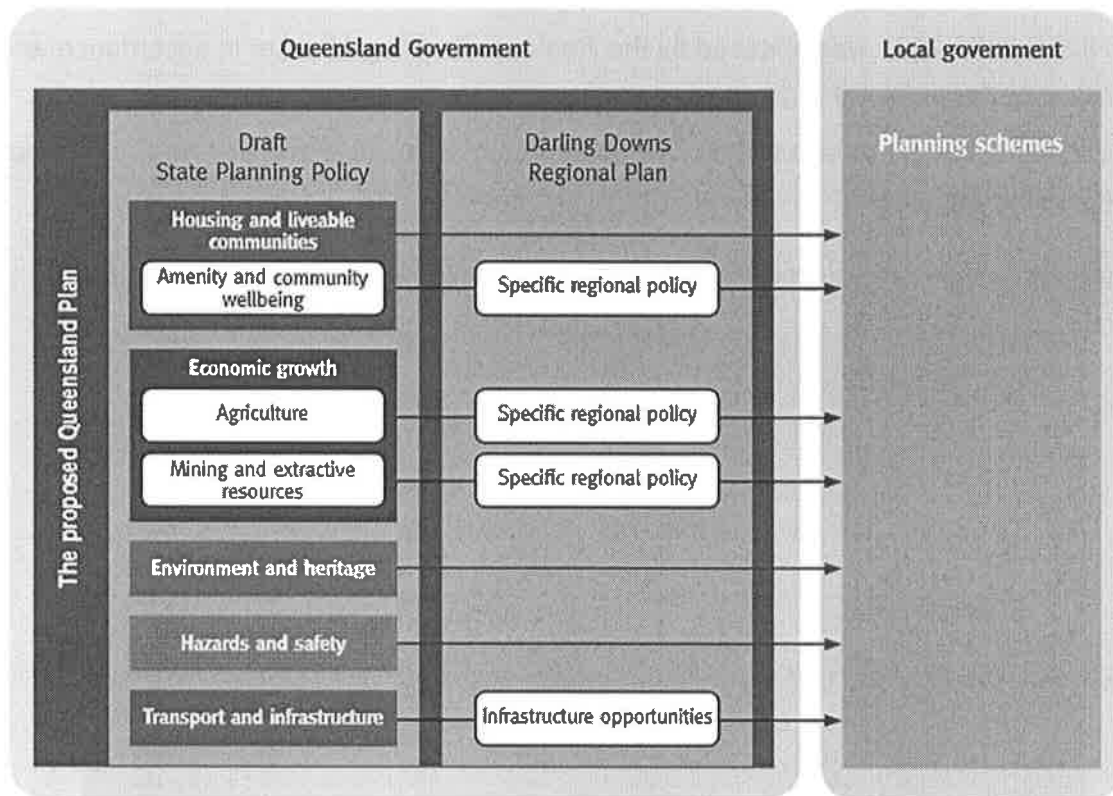
Queensland is undergoing significant planning reform with the express and ambitious aim to create the best planning and development assessment system in Australia that will:

- Streamline assessment and approval processes;
- Remove unnecessary red tape; and
- Re-empower local governments to plan for their communities (Government, 2014).

The key elements of the planning reform include the *Sustainable Planning and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2013* (SPOLA Act), the State Assessment Referral Agency (SARA), a single State Planning Policy and changes to the local infrastructure contributions framework. New legislation is also proposed, with the *Planning for Prosperity Bill* likely to be introduced into Parliament this year. The philosophy behind the single State Planning Policy is that it simplifies and clarifies state interests and replaces a number of other state planning policies.

The way the relationship between the proposed Queensland Plan, a vision document for the entire state of Queensland, single State Planning Policy and the new generation of regional plans operates is expressed in figure 2.

Figure 2 Darling Downs Regional Plan operation and relationship with State Planning Policy



Note Reproduced from “Darling Downs Regional Plan” by Queensland Government, 2013.

This “best planning system” is proposed to deliver regional plans that apply the State planning policy where and when necessary to particular regions (Government, 2014). The State also suggests that, for local government, this new system will mean confidence, capability and discretion to better plan for their communities in the context of state priorities. The State identifies for itself a new role as whole-of-government facilitators (Government, 2014). How the State intends to facilitate appropriate regional development is unclear at this time.

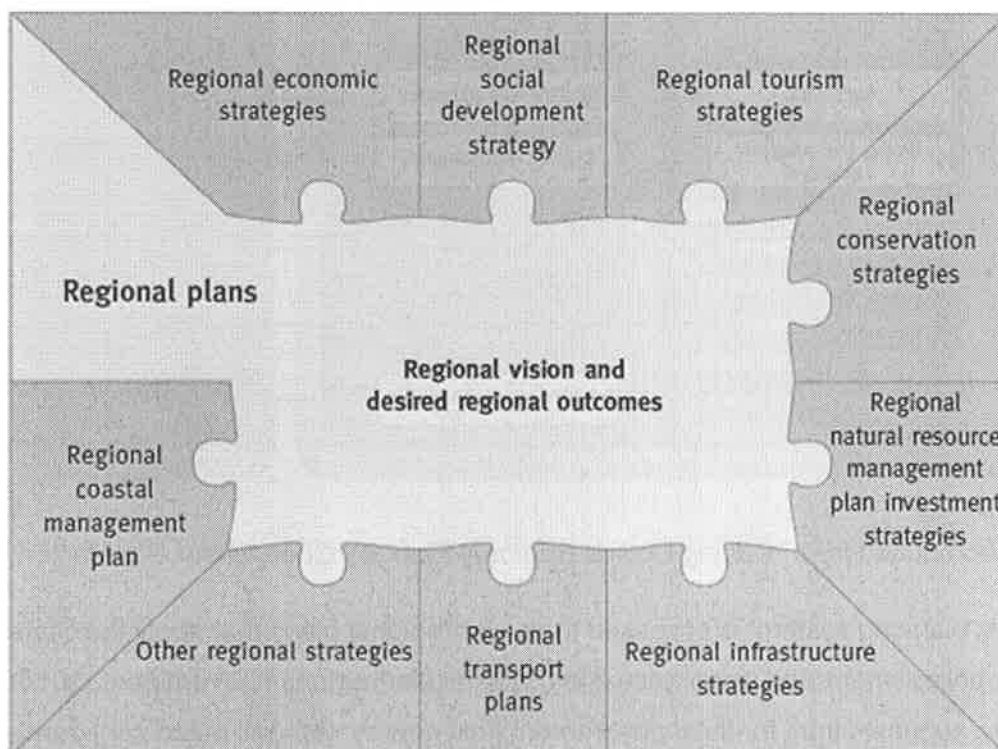
The proposed regulatory framework suggests that, for regional planning, any regulation will only be *where and when necessary*, e.g. to resolve land use conflicts that impact on the four-pillar economy, e.g. agriculture and resources (Government, 2014). The proposed structure of the current Bill includes eight chapters with, at the time of writing, a notable absence of a regional planning chapter. The *Sustainable Planning Act 2009* contained Part 4 for regional planning. The hastily and poorly consulted introduction of the *Regional Planning Interests Act 2014 (RPIA)*, lacking regulations revealing the detail, focusses only on the co-existence of resource activities with the preservation of other important regional interests. Neither the proposed planning chapter, nor the *RPIA, 2014*, include any State Planning Regulatory



Provisions to enable regulation of the urban growth boundaries contained in first generation regional plans.

The FNQRP 2009-2031 was released by the Regional Planning Minister in accordance with the *Integrated Planning Act* in 2009 (Government, 2009). The DDRP was released by the Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development, Infrastructure and Planning in October 2013 (Government, 2013 ).

Figure 3 Far North Queensland Regional Plan operation and relationships with other regional documents



Note. Reproduced from "Far North Queensland Regional Plan" by Queensland Government, 2009.

A comparison between figure 2 and figure 3 highlights a dramatic departure in the space of four years from an integrated, collaborative jigsaw approach, putting all the pieces of regional success together with various actors and networks, rather than a mechanism to only filter state interests into planning schemes and resolve conflict. The other major change observable in the comparison is the absence of the State Government as the controlling and driving actor facilitating the initiation, preparation and execution of a regional plan vision and strategies.

Table 1 highlights the areas of commonality and identifies the major gaps between the tables of content analysis conducted between the two regional plans. Again it is the absence of a regional vision with strategic direction and actions to achieve and implement desired regional outcomes (DRO) across a variety of networks that is most apparent.

Table 1 Comparison between Far North Queensland Regional Plan and Draft Darling Downs Regional Plan

Element	DDRP	FNQRP
Regional Vision		✓
Strategic Directions		✓
Regional Land Use Pattern/ Categories including Urban Footprint (Growth Boundary)		✓
Relationship of regional plan with other non-spatial plans and strategies		✓
Implementation (roles and responsibilities, including capital works and service programmes)		✓
Regional Planning Committee	✓	✓
Resolving land use conflicts	✓	
Specific actions and strategies for implementation derived for all DRO's		✓
Supporting infrastructure plan		✓

The “best planning system in Australia” as the stated aim of the planning reforms by the State Government, should, to reflect best practice, recognise the opportunity that regional plans provide to develop an integrated land use planning response that addresses regionally significant land use planning issues and establishes a statutory framework to guide sustainable growth across Queensland (Planning Institute of Australia, 2013). Regional plans that only work to resolve land use conflicts, where and when necessary, fall short of this opportunity. Certainly, the next generation regional plans are merely an articulation of State interests relevant to the region, rather than a complete regional plan. Important issues critical to the success of regions such as natural hazards, economic development, infrastructure planning and coordination and regional transport networks are missing from these regional plans, as is any long term regional view or vision of the future.

### **Changes in Actors and Networks with the new generation of Regional Plans**

With the new generation of regional plans, the State Government in effect has withdrawn as an actor from the initiation, preparation and implementation of regional plans in Queensland that, in the past, contained a strong, collaborative regional vision for the future. The State

Government is therefore no longer provider but rather potential mediator in the translation of the actor-network, where actors endeavour to build and defend the network of the region. Certainly while neo-liberalism means less government it does not logically follow that there is less need for governance.

Because of that withdrawal as a providing actor from the translation process, the historical or prior power relations in the actor-network space have been distorted and could result in the potential exacerbation of the inequalities between metropolitan and regional areas. It could also be interpreted as another chapter in the book of ad-hoc efforts at regional governance that change as often as new political dispensations enter.

The gap that this withdrawal leaves is the absence of an “object” that enables organised action at a regional level. Montenegro and Bulgacov (2014) support the idea that [regional] plans can indeed be considered as objects that can link and empower networks to achieve strategies and outcomes as physical traces of those associations.

The current state of local government and other actors in the regions have been impacted by tight fiscal conditions, with local government having been impacted by cost-shifting for a substantial time. It is argued in the literature that efficient networks do not arise from cooperation between weak individual organisations (Montenegro & Bulgacov, 2014). The role of local government in regional planning may well be further weakened by a lack of perceived mandate to operate across local government boundaries and to think regionally rather than about their own patch. It stands to logic that if the network is weak, there will be a lack of physical traces such as objects, in this case a more traditional iteration of a regional plan or an emerging form of regional governance based on localism. If no network arises no physical traces will be left that could potentially galvanise a regional community to establish a vision and act on it.

### **Implications for Actors and Networks in terms of leadership and governance in Regional Planning**

If we are to have a localism agenda whether as a result of neo-liberalism austerity measures or a desire for collaborative governance, leadership will need to evolve to place-based leadership to ensure sound regional governance. Place-based leadership in Australia is very poorly researched, partly due to its complexity, but partly as a result from the fact that regional leadership *per se* is almost absent from the research agenda. What is known is that local government is not the sole agent of place but works with community, professional staff

and the private sector to achieve joint vision. . Effective and efficient networks are therefore very important.

Governance arrangements are deemed to be important in the creation of conditions where sound actor-networks can be established; as institutional arrangements can remove or place barriers that impact on the local capacity to initiate and execute place-based leadership. Although research has shown that rapidly changing regions need informal modes of government, current governance arrangements do not recognise this. Current arrangements that research has shown, also make little or no provision for a regional level of government. Place-based leadership requires the transfer of power and the shifting of competencies, and although local government has been empowered to conduct their own planning for their regions, there is little evidence of the transfer of competencies, either to regional bodies or to the communities. When considering the clear arguments in the literature that State Governments need to create the right conditions for a regional agenda and place-based leadership, doubt can be cast on whether this has actually occurred to a level where place-based leadership will be able to establish actor-networks.

Taking into consideration the limited spare resources in fiscally constrained local government and local communities, the role of the planner in regional planning can be argued to be that of advocate. Using the Beer and Clower (2013) styles of leadership, the planner is probably limited to leading by talking at this stage. The bridging effect of leading by talking might cause some elements of networks to arise, which may later evolve into leading by doing on the part of the planner. Bridging the gaps in the actor-network space will thus be a critical role for local government planners to further a regional vision dialogue in coming years. If this cannot be achieved, the answer to the question "Can local government think, plan and execute for regional communities without a driving and controlling actor?" might very well be "*no*".

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# 7th Making Cities Liveable Conference Kingscliff

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June 18th, 2014

## *Healthy – Sustainable – Resilient – Cities*

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- Managing population growth and an ageing population
- Transport and logistics: public transport – road systems – cycling – walking
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- Legislation and policies: what changes can we expect
- Health promoting cities: ageing – children – safety – mental health
- Sustainable cities: economic growth – policy to program
- Impact of new technology: how will it continue to drive change
- Regional and rural towns: the interconnectivity between city and the bush
- Future of work: dispersing jobs and the urban impacts
- Food security – recycling – waste management
- Managing natural resources and renewable energy
- Climate change: responses and outcomes

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