

FROM POST-FORDISM TO ‘POST-HOLDENISM’: RESPONSES TO DEINDUSTRIALISATION IN PLAYFORD, SOUTH AUSTRALIA

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Global restructuring has created major problems and challenges for many regions and local economies. This is particularly so for those sub-national regions, such as the City of Playford (previously known as the City of Elizabeth) in the northern suburbs of Adelaide. Playford is South Australia’s second largest council area, containing 35 suburbs and with a population of around 80,000. Over a number of decades, it has experienced a gradual but steady process of deindustrialisation, largely due to global economic restructuring processes. However, Playford is now being threatened with a far more dramatic level of deindustrialisation, resulting from the closure of the General Motors Holden plant that for the previous six decades had underpinned its economy and employment base.

This article analyses the Playford region’s experience in negotiating the impact of these dramatic changes in the global economy. It firstly considers the impact of the deindustrialisation process on Playford. It then examines the attempts over past decades by South Australian state governments to develop and implement strategies to respond to the threats posed by deindustrialisation. The recent change of government, after 16 years of Labor governments in South Australia, provides an ideal opportunity to reflect on what these recent policy responses have meant for the City of Playford. The article also examines the attempt by local government, business and community groups in Playford to develop a

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collaborative partnership approach as part of an endogenous growth strategy in response to deindustrialisation. It concludes by examining the evolving interaction between state, local and federal policies and the resulting impact on the region's capacity to counter the deindustrialisation forces that it faces.

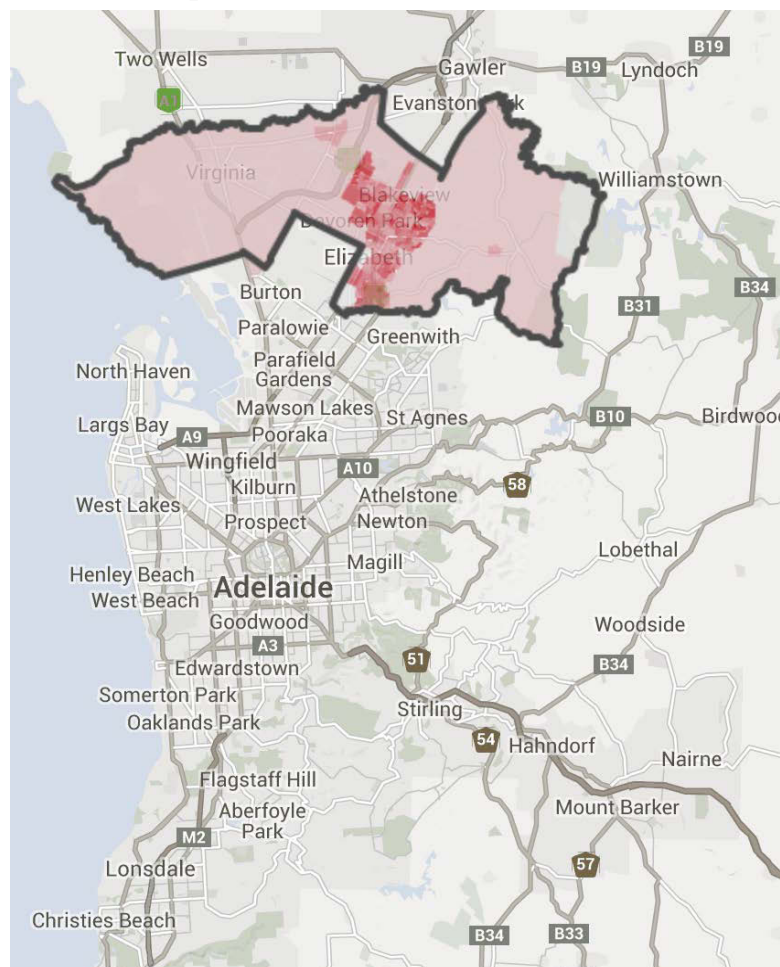
The story of automotive manufacturing industrialisation in Adelaide's north

The development of the City of Elizabeth (renamed Playford in 1997 after merging with the City of Munno Para) was at the outset the direct result of South Australian Premier Thomas Playford's efforts to attract foreign investment to Adelaide's north through a mixture of cheap labour, appealing land prices, tax concessions and publicly funded infrastructure. The development of Elizabeth from the 1950s was a venture unmatched in scale by other projects anywhere else in the country. It was built on a large stock of uniform housing designed for occupation by workers and their families and it was championed by a Housing Trust (SAHT) far more active in its vision for social and economic development than its counterparts in other states (Peel, 1995). As one of the very first Australian 'new towns', Elizabeth successfully attracted foreign investment, expert technicians, industrial workers and new immigrants to build the type of community envisaged by this experimental urbanism. Through state policy intervention, manufacturing industry and employment provided a foundational infrastructure for cultivating a robust working-class community and pool of workers for high-skilled jobs.

Elizabeth quickly became a significant hub of automotive manufacturing in Australia in the late 1950s when the multinational company General Motors Holden (GMH) established its automotive assembly plant there to complement its existing plant in the Adelaide suburb of Woodville. At its inception, the Elizabeth plant of GMH employed close to 2,000 workers, and nearly 7,000 at its peak in the 1970s. Over subsequent decades, this multinational company built a series of Australian motor vehicles that would become iconic in the country's culture. Productivity of the manufacturing industry and associated business boomed in Elizabeth and surrounds in the post-war period after the establishment of GMH. However, within only a few years, Elizabeth and the region began to feel

the impact of global economic restructuring that swept western countries in the early 1970s.

Figure 1: Boundary of the City of Playford in relation to the Adelaide metropolitan area



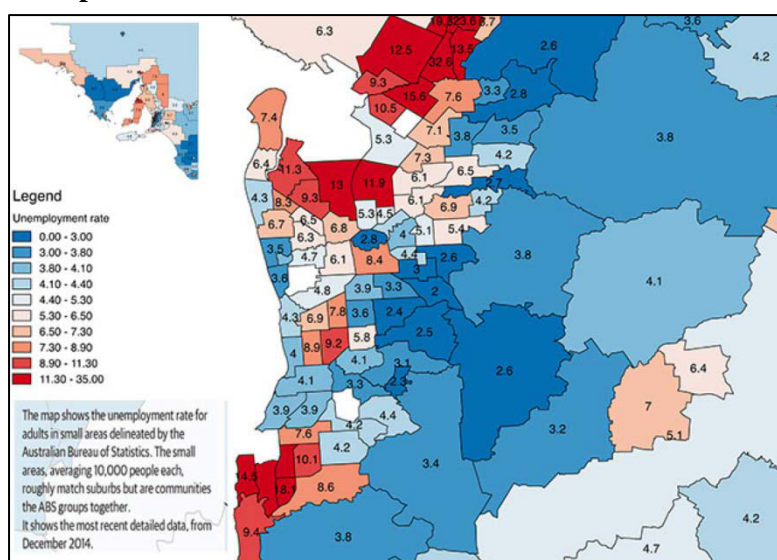
Source: AURIN, 2011

Post-fordist global neoliberalisation and deindustrialisation in Playford

The initial planners of Elizabeth could not have foreseen the changes that would emerge with the global economic restructuring of the 1970s and which transformed capital and labour through processes of neoliberal globalisation. The economic boom of the post-war era had engendered a burst of foreign investment that left local regions dependent upon the unfettered movement of capital. Changes in global markets, technology and the onset of global recession began to impact on Australian manufacturing generally and the car industry in particular. The previous import-substitution protectionist policies underpinning the growth of manufacturing in the post-war long boom were quickly replaced by trade liberalisation, deregulation and market-oriented policies, leading to a 'torrent of manufacturing job-shedding' (Weller and O'Neill, 2014: 514).

An analysis of census data across a ten-year period from 1976 to 1986 – generally the first decade in which substantial global economic restructuring began to take root – indicates a sharp decline in high-waged manufacturing employment in Adelaide's north, and a corresponding increase in lower-waged service sector employment (Baum and Hassan, 1993). Notably, only 11 of 21 factories initially established in the industrial portion of the Elizabeth new town plan remained in 1982 (Peel, 1995). With also the highest unemployment rates in metropolitan Adelaide at the time of the study, Elizabeth was clear evidence of the way economic restructuring impacted most heavily on local government areas where average incomes were low – with only the largest manufacturers able to survive after large workforce cuts. Between 1986 and 1996, socio-economic polarisation in Elizabeth and surrounding suburbs increased rapidly, with severe income declines experienced as the number of low-income families increased by 70% (Glover and Tennant, 1999). It has been argued that the initial government economic 'reforms' relating to changes in public housing provision, combined with global forces of economic restructuring, forged urban regions like Elizabeth as sites of urban poverty (Winter and Bryson, 1998). As global political and economic forces took hold over local economic conditions in the region, the demand on social services increased as unemployment rose.

Figure 2: Unemployment by small areas in the Adelaide metropolitan area



Source: AURIN, 2014

While initially regarded as a model town development, the welfare stigma attached to Playford has increased with the region's industrial decline. The northern Adelaide region encapsulating Playford experienced poor economic growth performance from 2000 to 2005, due largely to the decline in manufacturing (Brain, 2005). The situation worsened in the lead-up to the Global Financial Crisis (GFC). The shock of economic restructuring, and then the speeding up of this process in the post-GFC period, has shaped Playford's urban and social form, making it now one of the most disadvantaged urban regions in all of Australia. A socio-demographic, employment and education profile of Playford in 2013 analysed ABS data to report on a range of indicators that depicted current trends in the region (Hordacre *et al.*, 2013). It showed that Playford had a labour market participation rate of 59%, compared to 64% in the Greater Adelaide Area, and also an unemployment rate of 10% compared to 6%. As illustrated in Figure 2, there were areas in Playford (at the top of the map) in December 2014 with unemployment rates in excess of 20% and, in one case, 32.6%. The largest sectors of

employment for those working in Playford were in manufacturing, health care, social assistance and retail trade. Median weekly incomes in Playford were found in the 2013 profile to be almost \$100 lower than the rest of Adelaide, while the proportion of residents receiving government benefits and allowances was higher than elsewhere in Adelaide.

These statistics combine with other factors to identify Playford as a heavily disadvantaged urban region. Almost a quarter of Playford's population self-reported their health as 'poor', and people in the region had higher levels of chronic disease, psychological distress, social isolation and barriers to service use than metropolitan Adelaide. The average level of education in Playford was much lower than that for Greater Adelaide. There was a higher proportion of (mostly female) sole-parent families in receipt of income assistance. There was also a surging population in the 15-29-year age category. In spite of its increasing social and economic problems, the overall population of Playford has grown at two and a half times the rate of Greater Adelaide – largely due to the lower cost of housing in the area.

The complexity of socio-economic problems emerging from these conditions will only increase with the closure of GMH, which took place in late-2017, and its impact on local employment, social services and general community wellbeing. The closure of GMH will have an enormous impact on the region socially and economically. Analysis of its contribution to SA's economy in 2011 found GMH generated \$1.1 billion towards Gross State Product (GSP), 11,700 jobs and nearly \$65 million in taxation revenue to the state (Burgan and Spoehr, 2013a). Later analysis of the impact of GMH's total economic activity in the Playford region identified a further reduction in employment and investment following the GFC (Burgan and Spoehr, 2013b). Its closure is considered likely, if not certain, to make the business of some of the major component suppliers to GMH uneconomic, affecting also the state's supply chain servicing GMH in Playford and other activities undertaken by these businesses elsewhere. Greg Combet, the former chair of SA's Automotive Transformation Taskforce, estimated that fewer than one in five major car component makers will stay in South Australia after the GMH closure in 2017. He noted that most at risk are the SA subsidiaries of international firms: 'They say they'll keep working until the last car rolls off the assembly line at Elizabeth and then they're out' (Russell, 2015). Economic modelling has shown that GMH's closure means a loss of \$1.24 billion to economic activity in the state, up to 13,200 jobs and a

\$72 million reduction to SA's taxation base (Burgan and Spoehr, 2013a). Compounding the loss of GMH in Australia, infrastructure investment in the region has been predicted to fall steeply from \$103.7 million in 2014 to \$16.1 million by 2023 (Mahmoudi *et al.*, 2014). It is likely that urban poverty will become more deeply entrenched in Playford unless sustainable urban and industrial rejuvenation strategies are implemented.

These factors combine to make the issues faced by Playford more complex, and to increase the urgency for the state to develop and implement new social and economic policies that might rejuvenate Playford in the face of serious crisis. These challenges need to be seen in historical context, by considering what policy responses the South Australian Government has had to the challenges of deindustrialisation and what impact the closure of GMH has had on this strategy. The historical trajectory of South Australia's manufacturing industry was shaped initially by post-war state intervention (Sheridan, 1986, Rich, 1988). The loss of Keynesian 'consensus' about the role of the state in economic development contributed to a significant divergence in economic priorities from the mid-to-late-1970s, as global economic crisis and the search for a new institutional fix beyond Fordism shifted gear to the financial capital drivers of global market growth. A shift from productive forms of economic growth into non-productive forms was particularly damaging to Playford and, as is borne out in the following analysis, for South Australia's attempts to respond to deindustrialisation in the era of neoliberal globalisation.

State Government responses to deindustrialisation

The development of manufacturing industry in South Australia involved a high level of state intervention. During his period as South Australian Premier (1938-65), the 'conservative' Thomas Playford adopted a policy approach that involved direct state intervention to secure national and international investment in South Australian manufacturing. The establishment of the City of Elizabeth, and of the GMH plant there, was one of the outcomes of this policy approach that was effectively masterminded by Playford's closest public service advisor, J.W. Wainwright, whose principles were described by his biographers as 'those of a Keynesian theorist with a practical gift for effective business regulation' (Stretton and Stretton, 1990). The extent to which the rapid

expansion of manufacturing investment and employment in South Australia in the Playford era was actually due to this relatively *ad hoc* form of state intervention remains a matter of some dispute amongst researchers (see Stutchbury, 1984, Rich, 1988, Rich, 1993, Wanna, 1980). However, it is agreed that the successful industrialisation of the state economy was at least facilitated by the Playford Government's approach, even though it was undoubtedly also the result of the post-war economic boom that all Australian states benefitted from in that era.

From the onset of global restructuring in the early 1970s, the challenge facing South Australian governments became how to prevent, or moderate, industrial decline and to find alternative sources of economic growth. In the four decades since, governments of both major parties have adopted a variety of approaches to this task. While there has been a general trend towards more market-based approaches in line with the increasing hegemonic influence of neoliberalism in both parties, a variety of forms of state initiatives has also been employed in an attempt to meet the challenge of a declining manufacturing sector. These include:

- the increasing bureaucratisation of economic development and planning through the establishment of an evolving sequence of economic policy departments and advisory bodies;
- the utilisation of state-run financial agencies such as the State Government Insurance Commission and the ill-fated State Bank of SA;
- the on-going search for a new source of resource wealth such as the Olympic Dam copper/gold/uranium mine with the capacity to generate the sort of financial bonanza for SA that was being experienced in the resource-rich states of Queensland and Western Australia; and
- the development of alternative manufacturing industries, such as the submarine project for the Australian navy and the promotion of technology-based and alternative energy industries.

All of these initiatives can be seen as having had some successes for a while in moderating the impact of industrial decline. From a longer-term perspective, however, they have been overwhelmed by the increasing impact of outside forces – including not only the effects of global corporate restructurings but, most recently, the impact of a neoliberal federal policy regime under the Howard, Abbott, and Turnbull Coalition

governments. In particular, decisions of the former Abbott government effectively forced the closure of the GMH Elizabeth plant and removed any opportunity for the state to engineer a gradual transition to alternative industrial investment in the area. These developments have led recent state governments to other means of trying to arrest the decline of manufacturing. Faced with a barrage of federal policies that have had a devastating effect on South Australian industries, such as motor vehicle manufacturing and the submarine building project, the state Labor governments of Mike Rann (2002-12) and Jay Weatherill (2012-2018) engaged in a series of political campaigns in an attempt to build opposition to those policies. While these campaigns at times were effective in causing some political damage to the Abbott and Turnbull governments, in South Australia at least, they have had little effect in reversing the policy decisions at which they have been directed.

While many aspects of the policy approaches identified above continued under the Labor regime that governed South Australia over sixteen years, the Rann government introduced what it portrayed as a more coherent approach to economic policymaking in South Australia. The policy was described in a number of planning documents, including *South Australia's Strategic Plan* (initially released in 2004 and updated biannually) and a *30 Year Plan for Greater Adelaide* (2010). These policy documents reflected a desire by the government to move beyond the previous *ad hoc* approaches to state planning. Arguably, however, there is little in these documents that acknowledges the extent of the state's crisis, or that provides a coherent strategy for dealing with its impact.

The Rann government had also adopted a number of innovations that were explicitly aimed at more effectively integrating social development into its economic strategy through whole-of-government strategic policy and 'joined-up' partnerships. This signalled a turn in policymaking to what Bob Jessop and Ngai-Ling Sum have called neo-statist and neo-communitarian principles, incorporating the outsourcing of responsibility for economic development to the private business sector and for social development to the community services sector (Jessop and Sum 2006: 112-113). This approach to regional development places the onus on community organisations, local citizens and grassroots mobilisations to develop and implement economic strategies, usually in partnerships with the state and business interests and a host of other stakeholders. The state is thereby permitted to retreat from its central position in social policy.

As Adams and Hess (2001) argue, relationships built on partnerships at this level are regulated by nothing more than shared values. They are not protected by the legal authority of state intervention to regulate engagement, making the community's involvement in partnerships susceptible to the voluntarism of the private sector's entry into contracts for development. As the private sector's 'bottom line' is a return on investment, there is no obligation for it to deliver on social development beyond this.

Under the Rann government, these strategies included the establishment of a Social Inclusion Unit within the Department of Premier and Cabinet to address the social impacts of deindustrialisation. A key theme throughout these various policy statements and initiatives was the central role of community collaboration and social partnerships in underpinning a viable response to the challenges faced by South Australia. Written into the social inclusion initiative was a focus on the inter-relatedness of multiple social problems that require joined-up partnerships between government, community and business to deliver services meeting the needs of disadvantaged communities (Bell, 2009). With an aim of early intervention and prevention, the social inclusion initiative sought to insert a partnership approach to socio-economic development into the state-level policy framework, seeking to build social innovation capabilities in communities. The original aims of the social inclusion policy included strengthening communities established around traditional manufacturing industries like Playford, which had failed to recover from deindustrialisation.

With an economy teetering on the brink of crisis and uncertainty post-GFC, the SA government embarked upon the implementation of a new methodology in urban renewal called Integrated Design. This approach to rejuvenating urban areas, including those experiencing deindustrialisation, was an idea promoted by an Adelaide 'Thinker In Residence', Professor Laura Lee of Carnegie Mellon University in Pennsylvania, USA, during her 2009-2010 Adelaide residency. This approach resulted directly from a key recommendation in Lee's Thinker In Residence Report, *An Integrated Design Strategy for South Australia* (Lee, 2011). Lee posited that 'design in general, architecture, landscape architecture and urban design have not been central to, nor leading, planning and development activities in the state' (*ibid.*: 13). An Integrated Design Commission was established to provide advice to the Premier and Cabinet on design, planning and development, particularly

in relation to the State's Strategic Plan. It would also be statutorily empowered to do so in an independent capacity. Significantly, it would also be imbued with authoritative decision-making powers.

In October 2011, Mike Rann was replaced as Labor Premier by the Left's Jay Weatherill, a change that also resulted in a subtle change in economic strategy. In 2012, the new Weatherill government released *Manufacturing Works: A strategy for driving high-value manufacturing in South Australia* (DMITRE, 2012) which more explicitly acknowledged the crisis in South Australian manufacturing and promoted a strategy based upon helping manufacturers to make the transition to high value-added manufacturing, while stressing that the government cannot, and should not, make decisions on behalf of manufacturers – a version of the 'steering not rowing' theory of the role of government embedded in the UK 'New Labour' approach.

Following GMH's announcement of its closure, the Weatherill government responded by establishing an Automotive Transformation Task Force, chaired by former federal industry minister Greg Combet. The Task Force was intended to implement the government's *Our Jobs Plan* (DPC, 2014) policy that committed \$60 million of investment to supporting automotive industry restructuring, diversification and acceleration of advanced capabilities. With a vision for future growth opportunities that reflect the diversity of SA's economic base, it attempted to integrate job-creating infrastructure projects with investments in developing the skills and capabilities of communities, their workers and industries that will be most displaced by the closure. The best-case outcomes of this investment, however, were also predicated on a commitment from the federal government to 'step in' and provide in excess of \$300 million to help rejuvenate the region. However, the federal government did not commit to that level of financial support and this failure fundamentally undermined the Labor government's attempts at alternative strategies for regional economic development.

Between early 2016 and late-2017 there was a burst of state policy responses to the ongoing crisis facing South Australia following the federal government's failure to provide any targeted policy responses. In April 2016, the Arrium steelworks at Whyalla in the state's mid-north went into administration, owing debts of nearly \$3 billion. An opportunity emerged to save the steelworks when the then Weatherill government and the federal Coalition government agreed to help secure

Arrium's purchase by UK industrial management firm GFG Alliance. This plan made it possible to restore the steelworks to full operation and directly protect the jobs of 3,000 workers and create an estimated 2,000 more jobs regionally.

In October 2016, a once-in-a-generation storm battered South Australia, producing catastrophic damage to the state's energy transmission infrastructure and plunging virtually the entire state into a blackout lasting hours and costing millions. This saw the Weatherill government respond with *Our Energy Plan*, a policy designed to intervene in the neoliberal National Energy Market (NEM). The policy's introductory message from the Premier claimed that "[t]he national energy market is failing South Australia and the nation" and that '[t]he privatisation of our state's energy assets has placed an enormous amount of power in the hands of a few energy companies' (Government of South Australia, 2016: 1). This new energy strategy launched a suite of initiatives combining capital investments, incentives and regulatory measures aimed at increasing local control of energy provision and security and raising the level of public ownership of the network.

Doubling down on this energy plan, in August 2017 the Weatherill government announced that it would help to fund a \$650 million solar-thermal plant in Port Augusta, also in South Australia's mid-north. Construction was planned to commence in 2018 and contribute, not only jobs, but a further renewables industry driven intervention into SA's energy infrastructure mix. Weatherill perceived this as firing a shot into the ongoing national debate over the merits of coal-fired power in the context of the broader climate change debate. The SA Government's support was based on a \$110 million grant from the federal government that helped to secure US firm Solar Reserve's commitment to the project.

This more interventionist stance by the Labor government was symbolised by a confrontation that occurred in March 2017 between Premier Jay Weatherill and the federal Energy Minister Josh Frydenberg. The federal government had waged a relentless campaign against the South Australian government's 'over-reliance' on renewables as part of its defence of its own energy strategy that sought to retain a role for existing coal-based power stations. While the two politicians were at the press conference to announce a federally funded initiative, Weatherill launched into a spectacular attack on the federal government's energy

strategy and in particular on its undermining of South Australia's energy initiatives (Wills, 2018).

Undoubtedly, this adoption of a more explicitly 'interventionist' approach by the Labor government came about as a result of the Weatherill government's pleas for intervention falling on the deaf ears of the former Abbott government. This failure to achieve support from the federal government had clearly contributed to the closure of Holden and a significant reduction in the state's industrial capabilities. Ironically, support from the Turnbull federal government was important for a range of industrial rejuvenation projects proposed under Weatherill. However, neither this belated support nor state government policies themselves were able to overcome the ongoing decline of manufacturing industry, especially in the northern suburbs of Adelaide, as social problems and inequalities have continued to increase there.

The remainder of this article will examine in more detail the attempts that emerged in Playford itself to develop an endogenous social development strategy in response to the impact of deindustrialisation and fiscal austerity. It also will analyse the impact on these local strategies of changes in the state government's policy approaches to the problems arising from the GFC and the impending GMH closure.

Partnerships for rejuvenation initiatives in Playford

The necessity to build social capital into the collaborative initiatives of local industry has for decades been explicit in progressive urban geography and political economy literatures. This is due to the critical role local communities play in innovating and developing regional capability (Tura and Harmaakorpi, 2005). Nevertheless, the local region is commonly viewed narrowly as an 'economic' entity (Broomhill, 2001). This signifies negative consequences for local labour forces and the broader local communities in which they are based and which are often now beholden to the global orientation of neoliberal economic policy. These regions are commonly locked into policy pathways that dismantle institutional infrastructures, meaning that local governments can no longer support social development alongside concessions to market-driven economic development (Brenner and Theodore, 2002). As Peck and Tickell (2002) point out, neoliberal policy at the regional and urban level is narrowly focused on supply-side interventions,

entrepreneurial forms of urbanism, private infrastructure investments and promotion of regions to attract foreign capital investment by spruiking cheap land and labour – all the result of lax regulatory frameworks and the product of regional policy neoliberalisation.

The economic focus on ‘fast policy’¹ transfers diminishes the role of social policy in mitigating economic crisis through rejuvenation strategies. The neoliberalisation of governments has meant a withdrawal of their commitment to full employment and social protections more broadly. With the federal level of government in Australia becoming committed to ‘competitive federalism’, states have taken over the burden of fiscal crisis, as welfare provision and other social policies have been passed onto them from the national level. This has led to even greater economic tendencies in policymaking (Broomhill 2001). The urban poor are left in long-term unemployment or low-paid service industry work, eroding labour’s strength and placing heavy burdens on social services that are being increasingly outsourced to the not-for-profit sector (Peck, 2012, Peck and Ward, 2002). The pressure of neoliberal economic forces shifts wealth upwards, and dumps responsibility on overburdened and underfunded local regional governance arrangements. Under these contemporary conditions, deindustrialising regions often rely on collaborative partnerships between local government, NGOs, state government agencies and private industry to develop policy that tries to tie economic growth to some form of local socio-economic development. The Playford region in Adelaide’s north provides one such example of social and economic partnerships that have had some success, though not without problems.

Innovative social development ideas and initiatives at a regional level in Playford preceded the adoption of collaborative partnership ideas and policies at a state level. Social development policy as a vehicle for enhancing local social capital was implemented through the ‘Playford Partnerships’ created in 1999. This initiative aimed to serve as a ‘collaborative venture bringing together all levels of government, not-for-profit organisations and the community to develop sustainable

¹ As Jamie Peck and Nik Theodore’s book *Fast Policy* notes: ‘We inhabit a perpetually accelerating and increasingly interconnected world, with new ideas, fads, and fashions moving at social-media speed. New policy ideas, especially ‘ideas that work,’ are now able to find not only a worldwide audience but also transnational salience in remarkably short order’ (Peck & Theodore 2015: Cover blurb).

projects and outcomes for the residents of Playford' (Hall, 2005). Once the Rann government began to incorporate social development policies that included social inclusion, partnership and integrated design ideas, these themes were enthusiastically embraced by policymakers and community leaders within Playford.

From 2005 the Playford Partnership concept underpinned all of Playford City Council's relationships with the region's community and organisations. Its aim was to work with local partners to explicitly leverage resources and effect a more sophisticated integration of community needs (City of Playford, 2005). The embedding of a 'partnership philosophy' in Playford's work practices represented an attempt to encourage a culture of broad collaboration that facilitated the community's involvement in efforts to enact social and economic change (Hall, 2005). Playford Partnerships offered an innovative model that potentially integrated a diversity of interests and a wider spectrum of community actors in order to achieve a significant degree of collaboration and community engagement at the local level.

The unravelling of the state government's 'partnership' strategy

The GFC represented a point at which local initiatives in the Playford region were confronted with a new turn in the SA government's planning and development policies. Under the Rann government, the new Integrated Design Commission (IDC) had occupied an independent advisory position in the Department of the Premier and Cabinet (DPC) and was given the authority by Premier Rann to review and critique government planning initiatives so that goals of social and economic sustainability could be achieved in projects relating to the built environment. However, from 2012, the further decline of Playford's manufacturing industry and the increasingly likely closure of GMH re-focused the Weatherill government's policy framework for partnerships.

Like the Social Inclusion Unit, the IDC's funding was cut in the post-GFC period by the Weatherill government and its functions were re-located into two agencies – the Office for Design + Architecture (ODASA) and Renewal SA. Since 2012, the latter agency has been most involved in partnerships in the Playford region, carrying out what remains of the state's integrated design strategy in its urban renewal role.

Renewal SA's partnership with local government, business and the community in Playford has represented a core element of the SA government's approach to revitalising the Adelaide regions that have suffered most dramatically from deindustrialisation.

The Playford Alive urban renewal project has also featured in Playford's collaboration with the state government. This was developed as a partnership between Playford, Renewal SA and the Department for Communities and Social Inclusion (DCSI) in what is one of the nation's largest urban renewal projects and aspires to ultimately provide housing for over 40,000 people. The project aimed to transform the region's most disadvantaged areas by developing accessible, sustainable and connected urban environments in 'holistic' consultation with community, industry and business organisations (Renewal SA, 2014).

A close reading of the state's role in the Playford Alive development makes it clear that its decision-making in the post-GFC period represents a neo-statist approach to either promoting or adjusting to global neoliberal conditions (Jessop, 2002). Although at the regional scale integrated partnerships have always included some involvement from the state government, Renewal SA's re-framing of the integrated approach was an assertion of the state's dominant role in driving Playford-based initiatives. A large focus of Renewal SA's role in Playford Alive was the sale of publicly held land to property developers, supposedly for the purpose of affordable housing construction. However, in practice, Renewal SA effectively acted as a broker for private property investment in regional development.

In these instances, it was further observed that, where developers have been left to deliver Renewal SA's urban renewal initiatives, this has diminished the state's control over the final outcome². 'Development' has often amounted to private property speculation, and there was no way for government to reconcile development of the built environment with its own investment in social development, where it still did invest. However, the market-oriented focus of the government's approach to these socio-economic issues diminished further still the state's role in delivering sustainable outcomes. It is evident that problems were encountered more

² For a detailed discussion of the experiences of those involved in Playford's urban renewal in the context of SA's industrial rejuvenation, in-depth interview data can be found in Dean (2017).

frequently as these initiatives were formulated at higher levels of governance and implemented in a top-down fashion.

Other contradictions are evident within the approach adopted by the state government. The market-oriented response to economic and social restructuring implied a policy shift from state control to regulated competition as its new regulatory regime replaced its more historic top-down planning. As such, government has fulfilled a role of formulating policy prescriptions, but implementation has lacked (or merely left out) the capacity to fulfil the government's fundamental goal to ensure the social return in regional rejuvenation. This has left partnerships to deliver integrated policy outcomes that can only be applied at far smaller scales, divested of a significant role for government in their delivery, and largely regulated by neoliberal policy mechanisms.

In abolishing both the Social Inclusion Unit and Integrated Design Commission, the South Australian government partly relinquished responsibility for regenerating vulnerable urban sites undergoing rapid deindustrialisation. Its neo-statist approach left very little room for an effective state presence in regional economic development partnerships. The outsourcing of responsibility for regional economic development to private investors and community organisations represented a neoliberal 'rolling back' of the state's involvement. Policy changes in the post-GFC period weakened the government's role in regional development. Under post-GFC conditions, cuts to government budgets have undermined the state's ability to thoroughly integrate and regulate social and economic rejuvenation initiatives in the regions. Renewal SA's involvement did not possess the institutional capacity to join up state government with the region as the IDC had done.

The reality of Renewal SA's role in Playford Partnerships reflected its inability to engage in anything beyond a brokerage role in negotiations between private developers and community organisations tendering for lucrative contracts to deliver them. This then threatened to make on-the-ground partnerships ineffective at producing integrated outcomes that cater to both social and economic development. Hence the state Labor government implemented a strategy that allowed market forces to dictate private investment decisions. As a model for implementing partnerships to achieve outcomes at regional level, it therefore lacked the regulatory authority to mandate the integration of social and economic goals. The reality of partnerships as experienced by some of Playford's most

involved players speaks of the need to allow on-the-ground relationships to flourish and build strategy from ground up. Collaborative engagements that develop as outcomes of partnerships formed by local people and needs are more effective than those initiated at state level.

A ‘partnership philosophy’ which has been evident in on-the-ground initiatives in Playford can be differentiated from the ‘partnership policy’ implemented at the state government level. Despite Playford’s long-running partnership basis for social and economic rejuvenation projects, Renewal SA acted as the agent of the SA government in leading major initiatives in Playford. But there was an evident divide between the collaborative and integrated design philosophy embedded in the policy logics of regional partnerships and their efficacy when formulated as state-driven policy frameworks. The impression shared by many of Renewal SA’s training and employment officers working in Playford was that a ‘mismatch’ existed between how government approached industry and employment rejuvenation and what was actually needed to achieve it. It produced a disconnection between policymaking and the demands of regional development conditions.

This state-level agenda for mass-scale training engagement failed to address the reality that there was already a disproportionately high unemployment rate in Playford, which reached 14.7% in the December 2014 quarter (Labour Market Strategy Group, 2014). By December 2016, the unemployment rate was 14.6%. It was a little lower, at 13.5%, in December 2017 but this slight decline was largely a result of an increase in casual and part-time work. It has increased again in the first quarter of 2018. *Skills for All* was a program that had long sought to address the unemployment rate in outer Adelaide, and it represented a robust and integrated policy for regional industrial rejuvenation from the perspective of training future employees. However, when implemented as a state-level strategy, it fell short of an appropriate response. Increased participation in training occurred in programs that did not align with the state’s workforce demand.

The mismatch between agencies like Renewal SA and policies like *Skills for All* are evidence of state government policy frameworks that, although looking good on paper, missed important and complex factors about the region where they were implemented. The relationships built in Playford by those intimately involved in collaborative processes on the ground established a high degree of institutional thickness. They formed

patterns of coalitions on a platform of integrated partnership. However, their involvement in a common enterprise for development in the face of growing social and economic crisis evidently could not be matched by a state willing to allow the free market to dominate regional economic developments.

The state's failure to effectively combat neoliberal deindustrialisation processes in Playford should be read in the context of the federal government's political-economic agenda. The former SA Weatherill government, along with numerous manufacturers like GMH and component suppliers in the Playford region, presented arguments in support of ongoing federal government assistance for a transition to the kinds of advanced and diverse manufacturing capabilities the state government had been seeking to promote. Yet the Productivity Commission's recommendations to the former Abbott government found no compelling evidence to continue providing government assistance, instead reducing tariff protections to a negligible level (Productivity Commission, 2014). This prompted the announcement that GMH would cease manufacturing operations by 2017, followed shortly by Toyota's similar announcement of closure. It was soon revealed that the removal of government protections from the automotive industry was a critical factor in the Abbott government securing Free Trade Agreements with China, Japan and Korea (Maher, 2014). Further work linking the closure of GMH with the Abbott government's agenda of deepening trade liberalisation would be helpful in mapping the extent of Australia's 'managed decline' (Conley, 2013) of industry policy, and how this neoliberal agenda has contributed to Australia's precarious global competitiveness.

Conclusion and implications

How are we to make sense of this story of a region's experience of deindustrialisation and what conclusions can be drawn from it? Many aspects of the complex processes of deindustrialisation are illustrated by this story, depending on the particular lens that is used to view it. First and foremost, while South Australia, as a small state with limited resources, is in a very vulnerable position in relation to current processes of global industrial restructuring, the Playford experience provides a classic example of how neoliberal globalisation also can bring greater

uneven development between, and even within, local regions. The traumatic consequences of the impact of global restructuring on some communities is evident, not only in the decline of industry and the increasing numbers of people unemployed in the City of Playford, but also in the emergence of severe social problems and inequalities, and in the breakdown of the processes of social cohesion and reproduction. More than two decades ago, Mark Peel, himself a product of Elizabeth's boom time, predicted the challenges that de-industrialising regions such as the City of Playford now face:

Deindustrialisation, restructuring and the retreat of the State destroy the future. In Elizabeth, perhaps more than in other Australian places, these forces combined and interacted in particularly powerful ways. But given the increasing internationalisation of restructuring pressures and the dominance of short-term and often short-sighted 'efficiencies' in public policy, this may become a more common future: cities in which only some people carry the burdens of social and economic dislocation (Peel, 1995: 195).

Secondly, the impact of the closure of the car industry and the deindustrialisation process in Playford demonstrates how important a viable manufacturing sector is to the wider economy in which it is located. The deindustrialisation process in Playford has had a more widespread effect on employment throughout Adelaide and the state as a whole. The spill-over effects throughout the South Australian economy are enormous. The National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling (NATSEM) modelled the impact of the closure of the car industry on aggregate job losses and estimated that by 2018 24,000 jobs will be lost in South Australia, and 200,000 in Australia as a whole (Spoehr, 2015: 5). Moreover, manufacturing is important not just for the immediate employment it provides. As John Spoehr has argued: 'In advanced economies, manufacturing is central to driving productivity and innovation and is the biggest spender on research and development and knowledge intensive services' (*ibid.*: 4).

The loss of these crucial drivers of productivity and innovation can be seen throughout the state, and increasingly, the nation. The neoliberal industrial reforms that have shaped Australia's industrial economy since the Hawke and Keating Labor governments have sought to increase competitiveness in manufacturing, but they have achieved little in the way of innovative outcomes. This has been exacerbated by the winding down of the mining boom and the failure of governments to adequately

invest in active industry policies to capture some of the benefits of short-term high commodity prices.

Thirdly, the emergence of neoliberalism as the dominant ethos guiding public policymaking has led to the undermining of democratic process at the state level and the adoption of policy approaches that, while full of excitable rhetoric, remain largely ineffective in addressing the growing problems. These energetic, sometimes frantic, attempts at making a particular local economy stand out in the crowd of competing regions can be seen as rather desperate attempts at development by means of local 'boosterism', providing a great deal of hype but little substance. In South Australia this approach has been common and shows no sign of abating. In the 2015-16 State Budget, SA Treasurer Tom Koutsantonis outlined a 'market-driven industry growth' plan for investment, with 'bridging' infrastructure projects funded at state level alongside tax concessions for private investment in the north of Adelaide. This strategy of 'appeasing corporate South Australia' is how the government hoped to shape the future industrial landscape of Playford and the state (Rohweder, 2015).

While the Weatherill government was clearly focused on the massive employment crisis that the state faces, it moved forward with a 'neoliberal lite' suite of initiatives. Many of its proposals were modest and reliant on a relatively disinterested private sector. The state did what it could to facilitate private investment in the face of limited resources and significant vulnerability – providing support for local entrepreneurial initiatives in small and medium business and connecting them to those government services that are available to provide a competitive edge in global markets. This was a far cry from any revival of Keynesian stimulus policies of full employment but continued much of the *ad hoc* nature of policy found in SA's recent history of local boosterism that has consistently footed the bill for corporate investment. Interventionist revenue-raising ideas, like the short-lived bank levy, were defeated by powerful business and finance lobbying interests. The South Australian government remains severely constrained in its ability to restructure the local economy.

Fourthly, this story reveals a number of contradictions embedded in the adoption of social and economic partnership strategies. The SA government took ownership of partnership initiatives developed at the local level, but it did not adequately embrace the philosophy that could make it work effectively. It merely facilitated private sector involvement,

effectively becoming a hollowed-out vessel for speculation-driven investment. The SA government's position on partnerships in Playford might have been the subject of Peck and Tickell's colourful description of how states yield to the free market through initiatives that mismatch policy with reality and yet are built on government-mandated partnership platforms:

There is only one way to cook the partnership pie: under the watchful eye of a central government chef, first take a liberal serving of the private sector, add a teaspoonful of local authority involvement (careful not to overdo it, as the chef says this will cause indigestion) and garnish with a sprinkling of other local stakeholders; cook in the high temperature of cuts, corruption scandals and inter-organisational competition; then, having first ensured that there is nothing else on the menu, serve in large dollops to the general public; tell them it will do them good (and it is what they asked for). The result unfortunately is anything but wholesome: it is a mass produced kind of partnership (Peck and Tickell, 1994: 251).

Certainly, the story of Playford's experiment with social partnerships as a strategy for developing an endogenous response to the challenges posed by deindustrialisation does contain some positive aspects. It suggests an important role to be played by social and knowledge forms of capital in endogenous economic growth. Integrated policy formations on the ground in regional settings may counteract neoliberal globalisation, avoiding the 'one size fits all' approach and facilitating relationship-building amongst local players. With the global-local connection defining neoliberal processes, opportunities may exist for the transfer of alternative strategies to disparate global regions finding themselves in similar crises to Playford. With South Australia's history of experimentation and its thriving culture of firsts³, these social development initiatives in Playford represent some hope for future attempts to develop local alternatives to neoliberalism as part of the solution to rebuilding regions faced with industrial decline.

Nevertheless, it is clear that, while such worthwhile local initiatives can be an important component of a strategy to counter deindustrialisation, they are insufficient by themselves to overcome the powerful national

³ See the SA Parliament's 'Timeline for South Australian Firsts' - including first colony in the British Empire to legalise trade unions, 1876; second jurisdiction in the world to allow women to vote, 1896; first Australian state to make discrimination based on age unlawful, 1991; *etc.* (Parliament of South Australia, 2010).

and global forces that are driving it. They are no substitute, for example, for a national industry policy backed by robust state and federal economic and political institutions capable of protecting the remaining viable elements of the manufacturing sector and developing future platforms or ‘key enabling technologies’ such as nanotechnology, photonics, advanced materials, and so on (Spoehr, 2015: 3). Australia currently bucks the trend of industry policy for high-tech manufacturing innovation, and the current agenda of favouring start-ups and corporate tax cuts does very little to commit the government to investment and leadership in industrial transformation. This seems to reflect the federal government’s belief that manufacturing is part of the ‘old’ economy. Yet Spoehr has made the point that it is not true that manufacturing industry is in decline in comparable OECD economies:

Examples abound of small, high cost countries that have actively sought out and secured positions of international competitive advantage, moving up the value chain to compete less on cost – price factors and more on agility and ‘new manufacturing’ characteristics. These include Switzerland, the Scandinavian countries, Singapore and others. They sought to maintain and expand their involvement in manufacturing as central to their prosperity and their ability to participate in the global knowledge economy, rather than allow de-skilling and deindustrialisation (ibid.: 7).

Finally, from the vantage point of a post-Holden South Australia, what might the recent election of a Liberal government in South Australia mean for future policy responses to deindustrialisation in the state? In the context of the federal government’s ongoing rigid neoliberal policy stance, the Liberal SA government elected in early 2018 has limited options available to it.

The election of the Liberal Party and Premier Steven Marshall has effectively ended the industry and urban rejuvenation initiatives of the former SA Labor government or reshaped them into more explicitly supply-driven initiatives. One of the Marshall government’s earliest announcements was to scale back the energy policy initiative of the Weatherill Labor government which, beyond the recent installation of a battery storage facility in the state’s mid-north, would have included building a gas-fired power station (government as ‘energy provider of last resort’) and the installation of home battery storage units in 50,000 SA homes, including 30,000 Housing Trust-owned homes or low-socioeconomic households. In line with the market-oriented principles

that shape its economic policy agenda, the Marshall government has already abandoned initiatives which, at their core, are social-democratic in design and effect. It has declared ‘no budget surprises’ (Siebert, 2018) with which to justify cutting public sector expenditure. However, the previous Liberal governments of Dean Brown and John Olsen made similar pledges to the South Australian public during the 1990s before implementing an audit commission that recommended the sale of key assets (including electricity supply and information technology services), rapidly transferring public wealth to overseas private shareholder interests (Broomhill *et al.* in Spoehr and Broomhill, 1995). It remains to be seen whether the track record of Liberal governments in South Australia forebodes tough times ahead for the state’s citizens and taxpayers.

Of course, we are no longer living in the era of the long post-war boom when the new town of Elizabeth was established as a major initiative of industry and social policy. The hollowing out of the economic capacity of state governments suggests that only a radical strategy of nation-building intervention at the federal level, in conjunction with existing and new local community partnerships, might be capable of achieving new investment, employment and improved quality of living in areas like Playford. Only such a strategy could counter the processes of deindustrialisation. Certainly, private local, national and international capital, backed by market-oriented government policies, will not by themselves achieve this.

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