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**Urban leadership and community involvement:
ingredients for good governance?
Findings from the PLUS project**

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1. Introduction

The shift ‘from government to governance’ is a hotly debated topic in current urban research.¹ This might partially be due to the use of quite different notions of ‘governance’ (see Rhodes 1997). But even if one sticks to a notion of governance that could hope for wide acceptance – governance as policy making within networks in which elected governments are present but not in a position of regulating other actors hierarchically – there remains a lot to debate about. Firstly, in empirical respects the remaining role of government may be contested. Although many scholars would agree that the terms of public policy making have changed – that e.g. more institutions and actors are involved in the realization of policies, that the relationships between these actors more often have to be described as horizontal networks instead of formalized organizations, and that these networks more often cross the borders of the public sector by involving societal actors – the extent of these transformative elements may vary a lot. Since ‘governance’ is not simply the opposite of ‘government’, but “government *plus* the looser processes of influencing and negotiating with a range of public and private sector agencies to achieve desired outcomes” (Hambleton 2004), the involvement of societal actors can take many shapes. Secondly, in normative respects, governance can either be regarded as a loss of popular control over public policies, as a dangerous de-institutionalization of political accountability of office-holders towards elected bodies and a fragmentation of public action, or as an innovative way of coping with the deficiencies of representative government, its lack of learning capabilities, its intransparent party-based negotiations and its oversized public sector.

In this paper, we would like to discuss the thesis that political leadership and community involvement are central aspects when reflecting on the empirical shapes and normative challenges of urban governance. There is, we argue, considerable reason to think about and empirically investigate a possible *complementarity of urban leadership and community involvement* (CULCI) when considering these challenges. In a first step, we will situate both notions in the debate on urban governance. We will pay particular attention to two dimensions of governance, which will also be at the center of the empirical illustrations: the dimension of modes of coordination (horizontal vs. vertical) and the dimension of access (broad inclusion vs. small organizational networks). Furthermore, we will address the question of the challenges governance practices are related to. We do not want to engage in-depth into the ongoing discussion but focus on one particular feature, which seems to represent a central requirement of urban governance that can hope for successful legitimation in a democratic context, i.e. the requirement of establishing modes of ‘meta governance’ (section 1). We then will come up with a succinct account of what could be relevant context factors for shifting the balance between government and governance, considering the position of local governments in the overall political system and the different ways of institutionalizing the position of democratically elected leaders (section 2). In a third step, we are going to present several empirical examples of how leadership and community involvement are co-influencing parts in different approaches to modernize policy making in local settings (section 3).

¹ This paper resulted from cooperation within the EU funded research project “Participation, Leadership and Urban Sustainability” (PLUS) (for more information see <http://www.plus-eura.org/>). We are indebted to our partners in the project for both conceptual discussions and empirical analysis. The first major publication resulting from this project will be the volume edited by Haus et al. (2004) and we will refer to the respective contributions in the course of our argument.

2. Urban governance, irony and the idea of a complementarity between political leadership and community involvement

Leadership – like governance – is a notion as contested as loaded with messianic expectations (see Hambleton 2004, Stone 1995, Elcock 2001). Our understanding of political leadership is informed by an institutionalist perspective but also shaped by the putative role of local government in urban governance. We combine the assumption that (i) political leadership is connected to institutionalised positions and roles but also endowed with some potential for shaping its institutional environment with the other one that (ii) these institutionalised positions are established by relations of public accountability, which singles out political leaders from other actors involved in urban governance. By urban or political leadership we thus refer to democratically elected position holders at the top of municipal politics and administration.

When we speak of *community involvement* we refer to the non public side of actors involved in initiatives for urban problem-solving, be it corporate actors (organizations), associations and social movements or single citizens. All these actors hold particular rights and resources as well as more or less acknowledged positions in the life of a locality. They are led by specific motivations (which, however, are not fixed once and for all) and are situated in particular “logics of appropriateness” (March/Olsen 1989). According to the governance literature these actors are getting more and more important for fulfilling public tasks. With Kooiman (2002: 75), the growth of the governance approach can be explained partially with reference to “a growing awareness that governments are not the only crucial actor in addressing major societal issues”, and that “traditional and new modes of government-societal interactions are needed to tackle these issues.” In line with this, we present CULCI as a central moment in new modes of government-societal interactions involving the interaction between democratically elected urban governments (“political leaders”) and other actors in the urban community. Governance can be regarded as an actor centered approach to reflect upon the consequences of functional differentiation: In a highly complex environment without overall control actors are trying to find crosscutting solutions to urgent problems.

CULCI certainly is a general term, and may take on many forms in empirical reality. In the following, we wish to highlight two dimensions of variation: The degree of *horizontal* interaction between participants, and the range of *inclusion* of actors in the governance process. These dimensions are frequently put forward as key aspects in the current debate on the “shift to governance”. As for the former dimension, Phillippe Schmitter has made the argument that the core of governance arrangements “rests on horizontal forms of interaction *between actors who have conflicting objectives, but who are sufficiently independent of each other so that neither can impose a solution on the other and yet sufficiently interdependent so that both would lose if no solution were found*” (Schmitter 2002: 53, highlights in original). According to Schmitter, governance arrangements will only materialise in situations with manifest state failures or market failures, because of the need to effectively co-ordinate the actions of independent actors who control the resources required to produce the desired outcome. “Failure” may be too strong an expression for referring to the causes of governance. Instead of taking departure in the concept of state or market failure, we prefer to describe CULCI as situations in which *the potential for achieving desirable goals is increased* through the complementarity of urban leadership and community involvement.

Even so, the degree of interdependency (horizontal relations) between the participating actors remains important. To put it crudely, if participating societal groups have little or no influence on the development, decision and/or implementation of a policy initiative, their participation makes little difference and the “complementarity” would appear to be less relevant. Following this, we prefer to reserve the term CULCI for situations marked by at least some degree of

interdependence between the actors. (However, requirements of CULCI can of course also be concluded *ex negativo* when one observes that a lack of community involvement leads to policy failure or low acceptance.) The empirical question will concern the nature and the extent of these patterns of interdependence. What is the contribution of the various participating actors to the achievement of the goal in question through the governance process? In what ways do these “resources” – most often, funding, support or expertise – provide each participating actor with a degree of influence?

The second dimension we wish to highlight is the range of *inclusion* of actors in the governance process. Empirically speaking, this is a straight-forward question about the identity and quantity of actors actually involved in the various stages of the governance process. This variation may empirically be attributed to many factors. In the academic debate, decisions on inclusion have often been related to either *effectiveness* or *democratic norms*, in some cases to a purported *dilemma* between the two (Dahl 1994). Concerns about effective problem-solving may indicate that inclusion should be limited to actors who can make substantial contributions to problem-solving. This may, however, run contrary to the basic norm of democratic equality. If political decisions to a growing extent are made in networks external to the parliamentary system, the procedural legitimation of the political system may be jeopardized. On the other hand, the extension of such networks to include a broad range of actors may serve to enhance the richness of interest representation in political processes.

There are many more problems and trade-offs related to these phenomena, especially when one takes also into consideration the “failure” question mentioned by Schmitter presenting good reasons for inevitable “state” and “market failure” – which is taken even further by Jessop stressing the probability also of “governance failure” (Jessop 1998, 2002). This ambivalent kind of reasoning – “on the one hand”, “on the other hand” – seems to be quite characteristic in current debates on the challenges of governance and on the preconditions of “good governance”, but seldom one can find proposals for how to cope with this ambivalence. A rather simplistic way of dealing with it seems to be the reference to *performance measurement* and *best practice* diffusion. The diffusion of successful practice (in whatever way it is identified) will, however, not be the key to solve problems of effectiveness and legitimacy if the assumption is right that all solutions are highly contingent on the complex characteristics of “places” (see Healey 1999). If this holds true, practices from other localities may well be taken into consideration, but there has to be some reflexive capacity in order to understand the “goodness of fit” of these practices, to experiment with them but also to deploy alternatives if experiments fail.

We think that there are two ideas that could have some intellectual power in this context, not offering easy solutions, but at least enlightening the central challenges. Bob Jessop and, by referring to him, Gerry Stoker have presented them in conjunction. First, Jessop introduces the concept of “irony”, in order to describe, as it were, the adequate kind of consciousness related to experimental practices. Irony is recommended as a central political virtue and as the adequate reaction to the experience of failure of governance (Jessop 1998, 2002). Under conditions of complexity this experience of failure is ubiquitous because collective action is difficult to achieve², but the ironist does not resign in the face of this but keeps his good faith – he/she does not to the equally dangerous conclusions that “that it is necessary to look elsewhere for the salvation of our cities or that everything is hopeless” (Stoker 2000: 106). Second, if uncertainty about causes and effects on the one hand and actor motivations and competences on the other hand is the normal situation, there has to be a capacity for a “governance of governance” or “meta governance”, based on a “requisite variety”, in order to be able to change the mix of

² See Stoker’s long list of factor why governance is likely to fail (Stoker 2000: 105-6).

governance whenever a failure of the existing one becomes obvious (Jessop 2002: 48, see Stoker 2000: 106, Haus/Heinelt 2004). If this is right, governance can be considered as an ongoing collective experience of learning. From this perspective, it seems worthwhile to put the focus on the “infrastructure of governance” as a crucial element of enabling meta governance, i.e. the question how a “viable learning environment” can be created and sustained, and how “institutional design” can sustain these processes of collective learning (Stoker 2000: 107). A rough criterion for successful meta governance could be whether “institutional sustainability” has been achieved, i.e. institutions which are durable, which accommodate those actors necessary for collective action and which are capable of transforming themselves in the light of public criticism in terms of lacks of inclusion, transparency and effectiveness.

It is in the line of these conceptual arguments that we do not wish to propose a general solution to the problems of governance in advance of the empirical presentations; rather, we want to examine particular initiatives which various European cities have launched, in order to deal with the issue of social inclusion, cities which again are embedded in specific political contexts and connected to specific “places”. In what ways have decisions concerning inclusion been made, and what has been the main concern guiding these decisions? Have potential problems of effectiveness or democratic equality been identified and addressed, and what impact have such problems had on CULCI? Empirically, we expect to find considerable degrees of variation in terms of the degree of horizontal interaction between participants, and the range of inclusion of actors.

3. Experiences from four European cities

3.1 Selected cases and contextual conditions

The four cities we have chosen to illustrate different ways in which political leaders and actors form the local community interact and the ways in which these interactions impact on urban governance are Bristol (UK), Bergen (Norway), Cinisello Balsamo (Italy) and Heidelberg (Germany). Besides the fact that we think interesting constellations of leadership and community involvement can be found in these cities, a reason for selecting them was to include different types of local government and political leadership, as they are rooted in state legislation on local government. This holds true particularly with respect to two central context variables:

1. *central local governmental relationships*, i.e. the institutional place of local government within democratic states and its resulting role in terms of functions and democratic politics (see Page/Goldsmith 1987, Page 1991, Hesse/Sharpe 1991 and John 2001: chap. 2), and
2. *forms of local government*, i.e. the horizontal distribution of power in urban government which is important for identifying the concrete actors being in charge of leadership positions and the opportunities and constraints connected to their position (see Mouritzen/Svara 2002: 55-66, Wollmann 2003, Bäck 2004, Getimis/Grigoriadou 2004).

More precisely, we will refer to the typologies by Hesse and Sharpe for intergovernmental relations and the typology of Wollmann for forms of local government. These approaches do not only seem to cover more recent developments in the institutional structures of local government in Europe, but they can also be combined in a rather elegant fashion as will be demonstrated below.

Reflecting on international country studies Hesse and Sharpe (1991: 606-608) have identified three main groups of local government which they distinguish along the lines of input (local

government as a means for political integration) and output (local government as a means for fulfilling functional tasks of the welfare state):

- The “*Franco* group” comprises countries in which due to a common historical heritage local governments have a low functional status but are acknowledged (not least by constitutional law) as units for expressing “community identity” (Hesse/Sharpe 1991: 606).
- The “*Anglo* group” consists of countries where local government is predominantly considered as a means for delivering services in a most efficient and effective way. Local government in the United Kingdom with its big administrative units and the rule of *ultra vires* is a paradigmatic case.
- In the countries of the “*North and Middle European* variant” local government is both a strong service provider within the welfare state and an acknowledged political arena linked to local identity.

The linkage between these types of central local relationships and the institutional forms of horizontal power distribution becomes clear when seen in the light of Wollmann’s considerations on variants of *presidentialism* and *parliamentarism* as specific “path-dependencies” for the dynamics of changing the local political system (Wollmann 2003). Taking this dichotomy, firmly established in comparative politics, but usually not found in local government research, Wollmann points to the fact that forms of local government are in a process of “modernization”. They are gradually adopting features of “real” political systems, and the strengthening of political leadership is a crucial aspect in this development.³ In Germany and in Italy the directly elected mayor is now everywhere political leader and head of the local executive at the same time whereby the form of local government is very much like a presidential system. In England and in Norway there is a tendency for rendering local government much like a parliamentary system: the Norwegian cities are offered the possibility to replace the traditional committee rule by a professional city government (an option our case city Bergen has made use of) and the different options given by New Labour government to the English local authorities can all be considered as variants of parliamentary rule where a kind of city government is responsible to representatives (the councilors).

Combining the two typologies we can see an interesting mixture between congruence and divergence among four types of local government to which our case cities belong: With respect to the role of local government in the democratic state Bergen and Heidelberg are in one group, combining functional and democratic/integrative tasks; with respect to forms of local government, Bristol and Bergen are on the path of parliamentarism whereas Heidelberg and Cinisello can be said to approximate the type of presidentialism (see table 1).

³ On the contrary, the typology by Mouritzen and Svava has a strong focus on administration (“professionalism”) and honorary elements (“laymanship”), thus (implicitly) emphasizing the difference of local government to “real” government.

Table 1: Combinations of intergovernmental relationships and forms of local government

type of local government/case study city	role of local government	form of local government
<i>Anglo type</i> BRISTOL	output	parliamentarism
<i>Scandinavian type</i> BERGEN	input and output	
<i>Middle European type</i> HEIDELBERG		input
<i>South European type</i> CINISELLO		

With respect to each case these rather generally held comparative considerations can certainly only be a first approximation. More details are provided in the case analyses. What we wanted to achieve here was to increase awareness of contextual conditions that constitute basic parameters for interactions of political leaders and societal actors in urban governance. Emphasis on output or input brings specific opportunities and constraints but also implies particular expectations towards office holders and other actors. In the case of a strong functional role, there are more resources to share in the hands of local actors. However, when output orientation is not balanced by input roles (which requires a politically strong local government) this might lead to institutional fragmentation of the suppliers as in the case of the UK. Under conditions of input domination local actors have to look for upper levels in order to extract resources. Furthermore, the output dominance of the Anglo type is often going along with low electoral legitimation in terms of voter turnout – a fact that local government can (or even: needs to) try to compensate by differentiated forms of participation within governance arrangements.⁴ Differences between the presidential and the parliamentary type are important for the legitimacy political leaders can claim and the corresponding lines of accountability: in a presidential system mayors can claim direct legitimation and emphasis is put on the separation of powers, in parliamentary systems legitimacy comes through the election of representatives linked to party competition and emphasis is put on the dualism between government and opposition. In a presidential context political leaders (mayors) can act more independently from councils, but they have to look for a majority in the council frequently when basic decisions have to be taken.

3.2 Bristol/England: Lockleaze Neighborhood Renewal

Bristol is a city of 380,000 inhabitants, located in the South West of England. Bristol City Council is a unitary authority responsible for all local government tasks like education, housing, planning and social services. After the Local Government Act of 2000⁵, the city council has adopted a “leader and cabinet” system which is closest to the traditional committee leader model among the three options offered by this new legislation and by far the usual one in Brit-

⁴ See the interesting discussion of case studies along the Hesse/Sharpe typology in Heinelt and Kübler (2004).

⁵ For discussions of the Local Government Act see Wilson 2001, Wilson/Game 2002.

ish local authorities today.⁶ The leader and cabinet model puts stronger emphasis on political leadership by (i) abolishing the prescription of proportional representation in the cabinet (as was required for the former “policy committee”) and (ii) clearly separating executive-leadership functions (cabinet including leader, executive councilors) from scrutinizing ones (ordinary councilors). However, in Bristol the weakest or at least instable leadership can be found among our four cases. This is due to several circumstances. First, like most of the cities in England Bristol displays a very low voter turnout with 34 % achieved in the last elections (2003). This can not only be taken as a sign for the prevalent “output” role of local government and the low interest in local democracy, it is also derogatory to the claims of political leaders for public legitimacy as a source of personal authority. The second constrain for strong leadership lies in the fact that from these elections a hung council has resulted, something not unusual for British cities these days (cf. Stewart 2000: 160-165). At the same time the situation in the council is rather unstable due to there being no fixed legislature but elections of thirds of the councilors every year with only year in between without elections. As a consequence, the position of the political leader (the council leader) is characterized by high instability. The move to a shared cabinet has indeed been an attempt to overcome instability in leadership. The cabinet is now composed proportionally, comprising three Liberal-Democrat, three Labour, two Conservative members. This means that the “parliamentary” logic of the local government reform has been reversed, which would have meant that a one party cabinet (or a coalition) would have been established controlled by a strong party leader. Still, political leaders are highly dependent on support of the council. Finally, for years there was no Chief Executive in Bristol, which meant that this function had to be taken care of by the cabinet. Meanwhile, the post has been reestablished (which could be taken as another – maybe reasonable (!) – step backwards).

There seem to be clear and comprehensive efforts undertaken by the council to revitalize local democracy beyond the channels of council elections. A central role is played by the Bristol Partnership as the local version of the Local Strategic Partnership the government has established throughout the country, particularly in order to implement its National Strategy Action Plan for neighbourhood renewal, starting in 2001. The Bristol Partnership can be said to have developed to a smaller policy network with now about 20 actors on the partnership board linked to a subset of further partnerships. Initially, more than 70 organizations were members of the partnership. It is chaired by the Leader of the Council.

Lockleaze Neighbourhood Renewal is one of 10 Neighbourhood Renewal areas in Bristol within this program. For a periode of two years, £650,000 has been allocated to the Lockleaze initiative that follows a comprehensive approach of social inclusion, targeting problems of crime, health, employment, environment and education. In the wave of New Labour’s euphoria for local governance and community leadership (see Stoker 2002) the program requires that the priorities of the area projects are set by a partnership of local residents, voluntary organizations and service providers, organized within a steering committee and several working groups.

The Bristol Regeneration Partnership Committee, chaired by the Leader of the Council, was responsible for selecting the ten neighborhoods to take part in the program and prioritizing the allocation of funds. These decisions seem to have been drawn in the Bristol partnership alone without wider involvement. In the stage of policy development (defining concrete projects for Lockleaze) there seems not to have been significant leadership by the city. It failed in establishing in time an organizational structure for managing the renewal program. Leadership for

⁶ The account of the Bristol case study is based on the national report of the English partners in the PLUS project (see footnote 1) (Carmichael et al. 2004).

stimulating citizen involvement and establishing viable steering institutions at the neighborhood level had to come from a community development worker who after all succeeded in establishing an informal steering group including various communities and organizations and in organizing an open day where local residents could articulate their needs with respect to neighborhood renewal. The delayed employment of a project manager resulted in time pressure for spending the money which urged him to adopt a “city boss” style of leadership (concentrating on running the administrative machinery) and to amalgamate considerations on various steps of realizing the initiative. Participation was not very broad since only three of the 12 regular participants of the Steering Committee were coming from the neighborhood whereas service organizations dominated. Citizen involvement seems to be more appropriate with respect to identifying needs and discussing priorities than developing professional projects ready for submission.

As the research report states (Carmichael et al. 2004: 59):

“The rigid spending requirements set by central government have imposed major restrictions on the renewal process. Because of the slow start to the project [...] by the time the Manager and Facilitator were in place, the process had to shift to spending money or else lose the funding. Projects had to be set up before priorities had been established and agreed, and were therefore allocated on a first-come-first-served basis as long as they fitted within the general criteria, and partly based on consultation carried out by local organisations for other projects. Most interviewers agreed that with more time spent on capacity building and consultation more could have been achieved with the funding.”

It can, however, be added that the slow start of the project, which was at least partially responsible for the spending requirement becoming rigid, can be traced back to failed leadership, not only to the national program. Obviously, in the case of Bristol both the personal commitment of the political leader(s) and the administrative capacity to organize the neighborhood network was missing. This can be taken as another example of government programs for local partnership failing because the local characteristics do not fit. Although in principle, considerable resources were available, building coalitions and establishing mechanisms of broader governance did not succeed because of lacking governing capacity at the local level. But this does not mean that the remarks about rigid regulations in the government program are negligible. On the contrary, strongly formalized organizational patterns for governance, imposed top-down, can be contra productive to network building. They urge actors to participate in certain activities they are not really convinced of – in order to get the funding. This is an important obstacle to the development of meta governance capacity. Certainly, cooperation between resource controlling organizations (service providers) has been fostered and was welcome by them⁷ – but the institutional arenas of community involvement are dominated by professionals and collective action is missing a common perspective. Successful participatory governance cannot be created from scratch just by giving money and establishing an organizational framework. It has to be generated gradually and reflexively. To be sure, clear rules are helpful because they empower actors and create reliability in collective action – but the problem in the Lockleaze case was just that the *local* definition of clear rules was missing – which would have been a task for leadership. But, as things went, there is “very little positive complementarity between urban leadership and community involvement” (Carmichael et al. 2004: 58).

⁷ Clarence Stone reflects on British examples where the formalization of partnerships even led to a decrease of cooperation in those localities where there had already been a vivid informal cooperation (Stone 2004).

3.3 *Bergen/Norway: Lovstakken urban regeneration plan*

The Scandinavian type of local government is represented in this paper by the municipality of Bergen, Norway's second largest city (243,487 inhabitants) located on the west coast of southern Norway.⁸ In Norway, the local government system is the main instrument for provision of the very extensive range of public services associated with the "welfare state". Bergen's net running expenditures for 2002 was approximately €719 million, a figure that illustrates Bergen's position as a Scandinavian type of local government.

The Lovstakken urban regeneration plan is the PLUS social inclusion initiative studied in Bergen. It is an urban regeneration initiative involving governmental actors on several levels, as well as quite extensive participation of community groups.

In the mid 1990s, there was a growing awareness of problems that had been developing in the former working class area of Lovstakken, close to the city centre. In this area, a lion's share of Bergen's public housing was located. The Lovstakken area was marked by problems related to poor living conditions, environmental issues, unemployment, and poor public health.

In 1998, the Executive Committee of the City Council of Bergen initialized the development of a program for improving the living conditions in the area. The initiative originated with the political leader of the Urban District Council in Aarstad.⁹ The Urban District of Aarstad was to be responsible for the program. It was also recommended that local community actors were to be mobilized in the process. Originally, the program was meant to be a joint effort for improving the living conditions in the area of Lovstakken. The idea was that the funding costs were to be divided between the State, the Municipality and the District. On the basis of the program developed and decided upon in the District, an action program was formulated by a joint working group of representatives from the District (including local organisations) and the Municipality of Bergen. *The Action Program for the area of Lovstakken* formed the basis for an application for 50 mill NOK from the State Government over a period of five years, sent by the City Government of Bergen in June 2001. The application was however turned down, and the money was not granted.

In spite of the refusal of the application, many of the projects have subsequently been implemented. Nevertheless, it hasn't turned out to be the grand scale effort the District was hoping for when they started out developing the program. One of the main problems of implementing the program has been a general lack of interest in the area from the Municipality of Bergen. In spite of active political leadership in the District, there have been examples where initiatives and applications have been slowed up by the responsible Commissioner in the City Government, with the direct result of losing the money the District was applying for. Another example is that the City Council recently redistributed a fund they originally had established to sell out public flats in the District of Aarstad. The aim of this fund was to reduce the amount of public housing in the area of Lovstakken, to achieve a more equal distribution among the Districts. Both representatives from the local organisations, the District administration and the political leader of the District Council report about this lack of interest and lack of priority of the area.

A very broad range of actors were asked to get involved, including local NGO's ranging from the sports clubs to the Salvation Army, as well as the local school, police and so forth. Open

⁸ The contents of this case presentation is based in its entirety on information from the case study carried out by the Norwegian PLUS team from the Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research (Hanssen et al. 2004).

⁹ During the case study period, Bergen was subdivided into 8 urban districts. Each of these districts were headed by a politically appointed council, each with a sizeable administrative staff. A large portion of Bergen's net running expenditures was delegated to the urban districts.

meetings were frequently arranged in the process of developing the program. All local organisations, civil initiatives and other local instances (the church) in the area of Lovstakken were invited to present their ideas and proposals at these meetings. Based on the ideas and proposals from the organisations, the representative from the administration of the urban district formulated a program proposal.

Even if most of the projects implemented have been small – scale projects, the local organisations have been invited to participate in the implementation of some of them. Open meetings have been held about the use of a planned community house (before having been granted enough money to build it), and about renewal and investment in public meeting places such as streets and parks.

It should be noted that the involvement of community actors mainly has been a matter of information and consultations. In no stage have community actors been granted formal positions, and there is little or no evidence of residents or their associations having wielded power in the sense of forcing through changes to plans or outcomes. On the other hand, it seems as if participating actors have been given considerable influence in the sense that their inputs have been included in the plan.

The political leader of the District Council acted like a political coordinator in this development process. She was active in making proposals and in initiating open meetings, and she frequently had meetings with the representative from the administration responsible for formulating the proposal. Her highly proactive role is a contrast to the rather passive approach adopted by the Urban District Council. In this sense, the leadership in the Lovstakken urban regeneration plan seems to deviate from what might be expected from the collective style often associated with the Scandinavian type of local government.

The Leader of the District Council has acted as an initiator, and as driving force behind the plan in all its phases. Her leadership strategy has not least been one of a “network manager”, in the sense that the plan has involved various attempts to solicit the support and commitment of actors outside the Urban District, especially other levels of government. She has also been actively involved in the efforts to achieve a high level of community involvement.

It must be noted that Lieng in the case period was a member of the City Council, and prior to the reform, the city council. Accordingly, she was in a position to put the Lovstakken issues on the agenda on the central political level in Bergen. However in many phases the process was headed by a trio consisting apart from Lieng of the chief officer of the district, Aagot Himle, and the chief planner, Sverre Hoiness. Thus, Lieng’s individual political leadership seems to have alternated with a more collective approach. However, the lay members of the Urban District Council seem as a general rule to have played a quite passive role in the planning effort.

Even though parts of the Lovstakken urban regeneration plan have been implemented, the plan as a whole can hardly be described as downright successful. The general goal of the regeneration effort has been to improve living conditions in Lovstakken, in terms of social as well as spatial and environmental factors. These goals can be related to the 29 measures in all that are listed in the Lovstakken regeneration plan. According to the informants, a total of 15 measures have been implemented, a total of about 50%. This does indicate a degree of substantial effectiveness. However, several important measures have yet to reach the implementation stage. Notably, the measures that require funding and support from actors outside the urban district have only to a very limited extent been implemented:

- The “community house” has still not been built. There are reasonable prospects for obtaining the necessary funding for this project within the next 3-5 years, however this cannot be verified beyond doubt.

- The district's high share of Bergen's social dwellings has not been reduced significantly. The City Council at one point set aside funds to cover the expenses associated with this measure, but these funds were subsequently reallocated to other purposes.
- A number of parks and public spaces were to be established or upgraded. At least one of these projects has been implemented, however others have not.

These shortcomings clearly have much to do with the considerable procedural challenges associated with the multi-level aspects of the process. Concerted efforts from Aarstad to build partnerships with other authorities have to a great extent been foiled, at least partially due to a lack of interest or waning commitment from municipal authorities. After having received positive signals from a certain agency concerning funding for the community house, the application for funding prepared by the urban district (which had to be forwarded by the City Government) was delayed in the City Government administration. The funds set aside for the selling out of social dwellings in Aarstad were reallocated to other purposes by the City Council. According to some informants, the City Government assumed a rather passive role in the lobbying process towards national government, and this effort was not successful. An application for approx. €6 million was turned down.

The newly implemented (at the time) urban district system has had a strong bearing on the progress of the initiative. Highly successful in terms of identifying local problems, implementing relevant measures with the use of its own resources and not least, highly able to mobilise involvement from local groups, it has nevertheless not proved effective in terms of building alliances with resource-controlling actors of municipal decision-makers

Following this, a main conclusion seems to be that a genuine complementarity of urban leadership and community involvement has occurred in Aarstad, generating awareness of the general problem, as well as identifying specific challenges and possible solutions. The lack of successful implementation of several goals should probably be attributed to the problems encountered in soliciting the support and commitment of actors external to the Urban District. This serves to underline a basic precondition for CULCI to lead to effective outcomes: It may be difficult for urban leaders to obtain successful outcomes by means of CULCI if the issue in question cannot be funded by resources controlled by the political leader or by the community actors.

The Lovstakken urban regeneration plan can probably best be described as a combination of broad inclusion of community actors and rather vertical relations between the governmental and non-governmental actors. Another way of putting this is that the local community has been involved on a broad basis, however not very intensely. Community groups have not really been integrated into a structure with real decision-making powers, they have rather remained in the position of someone who is consulted from the outside. There hasn't been any trade-offs between contributions in terms of financial resources or long-term commitment on the one hand, and diffusion of decision-making powers on the other.

3.4 Heidelberg/Germany: District development planning

The city of Heidelberg is located in the southwestern part of Germany in the federated state (Land) of Baden-Württemberg.¹⁰ It has a population of approximately 130,000 inhabitants. As a "county exempt city" Heidelberg comprises the functions of both municipalities and counties and is thus responsible for a large array of services. The municipal administration is headed by

¹⁰ The account of the Heidelberg case is based on the German national report for the PLUS project (see footnote 1) by Egner et al. 2004

a directly elected mayor (called Lord/Lady Mayor). There are three deputy mayors, appointed in accordance with proportional principles and in charge of their own directorates but formally subordinate to the mayor. The mayor also chairs the council and all its committees including the district councils which have been established for all the city's districts. The tenure of the mayor is longer than the election period of the council (eight compared to five years) and he/she can hardly be removed from office. The strong position of the mayor (with competencies reaching far into the realm of the "legislature") has, however, not led Wollmann to use the label of "super presidentialism" (as in Italy) because the power of the mayor is mitigated by mechanisms of influence on the side of the "parliament" (council) that are not common for presidential system (the mayor can not appoint deputy mayors without the consent of the council whereas the council can autonomously appoint deputy mayors with a majority of two thirds of its members). In sum, the mayor has far reaching administrative power and channels of influencing political decisions, but is dependent on finding common ground with the deputy mayors and the city council.

The danger of the institutional position of the German mayor lies in the temptation of mixing up formal leadership ("power over" as head of administration and council) with actual leadership (creating "power to" in the sense of common purposes guiding collective action).¹¹ At the same time, citizens expect the mayor to act independently from narrow logics of party politics and administrative rationality. The uncertainty of gaining political support for major initiatives increases in the case of a "cohabitation" which has been the case in Heidelberg since the last council elections in 1999 after which the Social Democratic Lady Mayor, Beate Weber, has to confront a council comprising seven parties with the Christian Democrats as the biggest one. This gives additional weight to the fact that the Lady Mayor has to "find" a majority for each decision. There is no clear coalition with a fixed political program. The current mayor's solution to the difficulties of constructing governing coalitions has been to launch numerous participatory initiatives which shall help to "embed" single decisions and projects in a broader common visions and plans since she took over office in 1990. In contrast to her predecessor whose leadership style has been characterized as that of a "task leader" (focusing on the realization of certain policy contents) she adopted the style of a "procedural leader" (trying to establish dialogical structures through which consensus, better knowledge and identification with public concerns shall be achieved) (Schneider 1997: 103).

One example – and a major manifestation – of this new approach is the initiative for a "*district development planning*" (DDP). Early at the beginning of her first tenure, the Lady Mayor started this initiative in order to meet two main objectives: improving and enriching the knowledge basis for a decentralized form of planning and addressing and fostering the identification of citizens with their district which at least in some cases is rather high. We cannot go into details of DDP here, but want to throw some light on some central features only and then present some considerations on features of CULCI. The main characteristics of DDP can be described as follows: There are two major planning steps for each of Heidelberg's districts: a stocktaking which consists mainly in gathering information about the district and leads to a first document describing central features of the districts but also naming problems. In a second step developmental objectives and proposals for measures are worked out and summarized in a second document to be passed by the council. The content of these plans can be regarded as covering a broad range of issues. When the city council adopts it, this does not mean that it agrees to all the measures proposed in the plans – there have to be further decisions for concrete measures/expenditures.

¹¹ For the difference between "power over" and "power to" in the creation of generating governing capacity see the various contributions of Clarence Stone (1989, 1993, 1995, 2004).

Seen from the angle of institutional design a DDP constitutes various institutional arenas linked with the formal bodies of local government: district meetings and future workshops for women in the first step and thematic workshops with invited stakeholders in the second step are linked with the district councils and the city council. In addition, there is an intra administrative arena with two levels: the level of the top executives (the mayor and the deputy mayors) and a working group with those offices giving inputs to the thematic workshops. This means a high degree of coordination. But DDP is also very challenging with respect to endurance: the whole project will take the city more than ten years, so that even the very long tenure of the mayor (as mentioned eight years) would not have sufficed without reelection.

The case of DDP can demonstrate various *features of CULCI*. First of all, it has to be stressed that there is a clear accountability of the Lady Mayor for the initiative as a whole. This can be described as a kind of procedural responsibility for linking the various institutional arenas, especially the arena of political decision making (council) with the deliberative arenas of the workshops. This involved

- *procedural decisions*, namely the decision on withdrawing the first district development plan from the arena of political decision making in the expectation of an objection by the councilors; the motive here was to rescue the substance of the planning process (and thus the time and energy of participating citizens) from being torn apart in the irresolvable conflicts of “high” city politics;
- *designing, redesigning and reinterpreting rules*; institutional design here refers to the construction of a reliable, transparent and robust basic framework by the Lady Mayor and her staff; redesign or maybe better: reinterpretation has been practiced with respect to the scope rules of DDP by refraining from a binding character and a too concrete formulation of the plans, again in reaction to the conflicts within the council. DDP has thus become more dependent on *permanent* leadership (and community involvement), but also pressure activities of citizens vis-à-vis their councilors;
- *changing the context*; DDP got into a political crisis in an early stage when more and more actors (chamber of architects, council parties) criticized that district planning needs an overall frame; finally, the Lady Mayor agreed and launched the initiative for a complex city development plan; today, there seems to be common agreement that this city wide framework has been necessary;
- the *organizational responsibility* of the Office for Urban Development and Statistics as part of the Lady Mayor’s own portfolio, going along with close communicative networks between the operational and the leadership level; at the same time there is a high administrative challenge for leadership with respect to the co-ordination of various other offices participating in the process of DDP;
- a highly demanding *communicative role* of the Lady Mayor and her staff (as well as of all the city representatives taking part in the workshops); the Lady Mayor has to “sell” the results from arena to arena and is thus required to speak different “languages” within different audiences; this is very much connected with a special style of leadership (visionary-communicative), but also with the personal charisma of the political leaders;
- since the councillors are practically absent from the interactive arenas of DDP citizens put their *trust* in the effectiveness of their participation primarily in the person of the Lady Mayor who is fostering this attitude by promising to consider proposed measures and ideas and have them discussed in the political arena; this requires a conscious way of treating citizens statements, especially when not all preferences can be satisfied.

With respect to the dimension of *access* to institutional arenas it can be said that the proceeding of DDP (formalized in a self-binding way by the city's administration) comprises a multitude of arenas which at some point gives access to nearly all who have an interesting in participating: all interested citizens may come to the district meeting and the district council's meeting, stakeholders can participate in the workshops, women have special opportunities for raising their voice, and the various political actors (district councilors, city councilors) are able to participate either in the workshops or deliberate in their arenas. It is, however, important to consider who actually participates at which stage and what the content of the various arenas is. There is a clear emphasis on those actors which can be considered as advocates and multipliers, but are also connected to particular resources and knowledge with importance to the quality of life in the respective district (the stakeholders invited for the thematic workshops). However, the invitation policy by the city can be called very inclusive. In order to get a clearer picture research has focused on three of the districts (Kirchheim, Emmertsgrund and Handschuhsheim). It turned out that 55, 71 and 96 "key persons" in the three districts participated in the thematic workshop, a rather high number and, not least, increasing over the years, which can be taken as a sign of acceptance (especially since Kirchheim is nearly as big as Handschuhsheim and twice as big as Emmertsgrund). The relation of key persons and city representatives has been changed in favor of the former. In the future workshops for women there has been an increase of participation as well (see table 2). The district meetings open for everybody also involve some additional actors, although there is a high degree of overlapping with workshop participants.

Table 2: Attendance at future workshops and thematic workshops

	Kirchheim (1995)	Emmertsgrund (1998)	Handschuhsheim (2002)
<i>future workshops</i>	9	13	27
<i>thematic workshops</i>			
key persons	55	71	96
city representatives	42	35	32

Although there is a clear social bias in the composition of actual participants (rather well-off women with academic degree and job flexibility in the future workshops, and middle class in the thematic workshops – practically no foreigners in both cases), we can speak of a comparatively inclusive participation – all the more since many advocacy actors participate. It has to be stressed, however, that participating in a workshop at one evening does not mean to be member of a *network*. The workshop bring together actors who partially are member in smaller networks or policy communities and partially do not belong to significant networks at all. The workshops thus are important mainly because they open smaller networks to a larger audience (and via documentation to the general public) and force actors from administration and organizations to give good arguments for their position. Agenda setting and priority definition are the most significant contribution to urban governance.

3.5 Cinisello Balsamo/Italy: Eusebio neighbourhood pact

The south European type of local government is represented in this paper by the municipality of Cinicello Balsamo, a city of 74,252 inhabitants north of Milan.¹² The Eusebio neighbourhood pact is the PLUS social inclusion initiative studied in Cinisello. It is an urban regenera-

¹² The contents of this case presentation is based in its entirety on information from the case study carried out by the Italian PLUS team from the Polytechnik of Milan (Balducci et al. 2004).

tion initiative involving extensive involvement by neighbourhood groups and other actors in an area marked by problems relating to poor housing standard and social inequality. Eusebio was constructed mainly in the 1970s to meet a rising demand for housing in the Milan area for migrants from other parts of Italy. The pact is characterised by a combination of extensive community involvement and reliance on external funding, thus reflecting key dimensions of the south European type of local government, in which a traditionally low functional status is combined with a focus on the expression of community identity.

In Italy, the “Neighbourhood pact” is an experimental programme set up by national government to provide funding for public housing projects, as a means to address problems of “urban, building and social decay” (Balducci et al. 2004: 34). The municipality of Cinisello in 1997 submitted a proposal in a national competition for funding under this programme. The proposal won, and was awarded a total of €8,5 million.

Measures funded by the Eusebio neighbourhood pact have primarily focused on the physical environments of the locality. These measures include physical intervention on housing stock, refurbishing of existing houses, construction of new housing for special users such as students and the disabled, redesign of public places, maintenance work on facades, construction of a new multi-functional centre for the elderly and children, and the establishment of special premises for craft activities – the latter as a measure to stimulate job creation.

The civil society of the Eusebio neighbourhood was quite extensively organised many years prior to the implementation of the neighbourhood pact. Needs and demands of the residents were addressed by coalitions between neighbourhood associations and other local organisations such as the parish church as early as in the 1980s. In the Eusebio neighbourhood pact, broad participation of civil society actors was solicited. As many as 11 local associations signed the original neighbourhood pact proposal. This strategy was in line with the participatory nature of the “pact” as a policy instrument, as the term implies agreement and co-operation.

The nature of the community involvement in the Eusebio neighbourhood pact can be said to have changed according to the changing phases of the programme. In the policy development phase, community involvement took place mainly in the form of information and consultation on a broad basis. A number of meetings of small groups of residents (in the same staircase) were held. A “Neighbourhood Workshop” was established as a forum for dialogue and proposal formulation. Nevertheless, the co-ordination of the project and the formulation of proposals in detail were managed by the Neighbourhood Pact Office (a municipal agency) in co-operation with a co-ordinating group consisting mainly of public officials – personnel from ALER (a regional agency for residential housing) and the municipality – as well as outside consultants.

When the proposal was presented in detail at a broad-scale public meeting, it was met with heavy resistance by some of the residents. A protest action was initiated, carrying out a petition to the Municipal Council signed by 150 residents. Also, a new Tenants Association was set up, blocking further co-operation if resident’s demands were not given consideration. These actions proved to be effective, as discussions with residents and local associations were resumed in order to reach a solution by consensus. This process took place under the auspices of the Neighbourhood Workshop. Four working groups were set up to address different aspects of the project through discussions between local community and public authorities. This process eventually succeeded in producing a revised plan that met with consent in the local community.

The Mayor was the political leader of the Eusebio neighbourhood pact. The mode of leadership changed markedly during the progress of the initiative, apparently as a consequence of the changes in community involvement noted above.

The initiative to submit a proposal to the competition for neighbourhood pact funding was made because of the mayor's expressed wish to exploit all available resources at the national and European level in order to resolve local problems. Partially because of the very limited time available, she chose a leadership strategy very much based on her own position in conjunction with the local government administration, a strategy that to a small extent involved local residents and their associations. In other words, the neighbourhood pact process was very much based on direct political leadership in the early phases. According to the researchers, the obtainment of fast results seemingly was given priority over concerns about community involvement. As the proposal won the competition for funding, consultations with the local community became somewhat broader. The real change in leadership style occurred, apparently, following the reservations expressed by residents to the detailed plan proposal. Following this, the involvement of the mayor became less direct.

All in all, the initial phases leading up to the rejection of several proposals by the residents very much confirms with the expectations formed by the strong mayor form associated with the South European Type of local government system. The subsequent broadening of community involvement can be interpreted as an attempt to alter the mode of governance in order to transcend apparent shortcomings of this type.

The Eusebio neighbourhood pact can be regarded as a policy success in the sense that quite wide-ranging measures largely pertaining to the physical infrastructure of the locality were implemented, based on the obtainment of external funding and largely in accordance with demands and wishes of the residents. These results were accomplished through a process that seen as a whole was marked by complementarity between urban leadership and community involvement. In the words of the research team:

“The participation process was started by the conflict that arose over the original ‘Neighbourhood Pact’ proposal put to the ministry by the municipality that was rejected by local residents. It then combined with leadership styles in an original manner. It allowed local leadership to avoid too much direct contact with the local community (the mayor was openly contested in the first public meeting with local residents) and to play the role of political backer of the initiative relying on professional staff who dealt directly with local residents in the ‘Neighbourhood Pact Office’ (municipal officials) and on the ‘Neighbourhood Workshop’ (run by municipal officials and outside consultants)” (Balducci et al. 2004: 16).

Following initial phases dominated by the mayor and the municipality, the Eusebio neighbourhood pact was marked by extensive community involvement. Although this is not explicitly stated in the case study report, the principle of inclusion seems to have been close to all-encompassing. Residents were informed and consulted by means of several public meetings of varying scale. Residents and their associations became directly involved in the re-formulation of the proposal. There is no evidence in the case study report of groups being denied access to the process.

If the Neighbourhood Pact is regarded as a policy network, the relationship between the actors appears to have shifted from vertical to horizontal during the progress of the phases of the project. The formulation of the original proposal as well as the development of the first detailed plan of the project were carried out without granting much influence to actors outside the sphere of public government. This essentially vertical relationship between governmental and non-governmental members of the network shifted because of the expressed dissatisfaction of the residents with the proposed plan. Firstly, the residents acted as a protest group, signing a petition and organising a new tenant's association opposing the plan. In order to meet this challenge, the mayor and the municipal project management decided to give residents a greater say through an interactive process of re-formulation. Following this decision, the

community groups were given direct influence and as a consequence the relationship shifted to a more horizontal pattern.

Seen as a whole, the CULCI of the Eusebio neighbourhood pact takes shape as a broadly inclusive network with close to horizontal relations between the actors. This observation seems to deviate from what could be expected from a South European type of local government, in the sense that the position of the “Strong mayor” became less decisive in later phases. In this case, community involvement has provided not only specific inputs to policy decisions. The community actors were also instrumental in bringing about the shift in the *nature* of community involvement.

4. Conclusions

We have tried to identify aspects of CULCI in the four case descriptions. As outlined in the sections 2 and 3.1 we have primarily been interested in the question of governance (horizontal coordination in policy making) and participation and we have embedded these variables in a broader conception of a complementarity of political leadership and community involvement in increasing procedural legitimacy and effective problem-solving in urban policy making by establishing “meta governance”. No doubt, the cities presented here are as diverse as the initiatives under observation. Therefore, comparative conclusions have to be drawn with high caution and can only be of an explorative character. So, what have we learned from the four cases?

First, the small selection of policy initiatives presented in this paper illustrates some measure of the variation in urban leaders’ approach to community involvement – and in the response of the community actors to these approaches. In Bergen, the approach of politicians and managers in the Urban District can best be described as kind requests made towards non-governmental actors in the Urban District to express their views and discuss measures without committing themselves further. In Cinicello, early attempts to delimit community involvement to non-committing consultations were foiled by demands for real influence on behalf of the community actors. In Bristol there was a failure to even solicit the required “quota” of involvement, not least due to inadequate management, whereas in Heidelberg an elaborate, long term scheme of extensive community involvement in all districts has been developed.

There seems to have been a different “vibrancy” of local communal life in the cities or districts respectively, which becomes obvious in a rather striking difference between the initiatives in Bergen and Cinisello. In both cases, urban leaders were primarily looking to establish arenas of *consultation* with community actors. In Bergen, these requests by and large received a positive response, but at all stages community actors had to be motivated and induced to participate. In Cinisello, on the contrary, community actors were not contented to be relegated to mere consultations, and went to great lengths to obtain greater power. One way of regarding this latter case, is to say that CULCI transcended the failures of the initial approach, which was rather in line with the “strong mayor”- form often associated with the South European type of local government. In other words, CULCI in Cinicello seems to have forced a change in the mix of governance, through an ongoing experience of learning.

Although the municipal authorities of Cinicello, and not least the mayor, may have been less than enthusiastic about the shift in approach forced upon them by the community groups, it could be argued that this kind of self-powered dynamics is a hallmark of vital and potentially successful community involvement. In order to transcend limitations posed by established modes of governance, changes in patterns of interaction and influence are required. The concept of *meta governance* implies that all parties involved in governance should be able to initiate changes of this kind, thus maximising the “adaptive capacity” of the system of governance

to changing circumstances. Successful meta governance is an aspect of successful CULCI to the extent that leaders manage not only to obtain a measure of community involvement, but also to allow such involvement to decisively shape the governance process.

Secondly, our four cases might be said to display a rather representative mixture of (formal) *institutional change in political leadership*. For the exception of Heidelberg all city authorities operate within institutional settings which have confronted major changes in the last decade with an emphasis on a strengthened position of political leaders, but also the attempt to give incentives for political leaders to “go outside” traditional city hall politics. What we can see from the social inclusion initiatives is that these formal institutional changes in the realm of representative government cause some turbulence and uncertainty in policy making. The crucial question might be whether this questioning of political routines can be given a productive and innovative direction. Achieving “meta governance” (in the sense explicated above) might require some form of institutional consolidation, in order to be able to interact with the local community. If attention is absorbed by internal instability of leadership positions there is the danger of a separation of arenas for community involvement and “official” city politics.

Consolidation of political leadership seems most challenging in Bristol (three council leaders in three years, abolishment and reestablishment of chief executive). As a consequence, political leadership has lacked visibility and reliability and has not been able to address the wider community in a visionary and sustainable way. Lacking awareness of projects for community involvement is fatal in a time where institutions become fragmented and networks have to be built up. Turbulence within local government and pressure to fulfill national regulations have absorbed attention and energy whereas opportunities for meta governance have had not time to evolve. At the moment we can see attempts to consolidate leadership by settling a proportional executive (which actually could be regarded as a kind of “counter implementation” of parliamentarisation of local government). In Heidelberg and Cinisello political leaders enjoy a rather secure position after having been elected, but in order to get things done they have to find support for their agenda. The example of Cinisello demonstrates the temptation of a “bossy style” politics of strong mayors, fostered also by the requirement to mobilize resources from higher governmental tiers which is typical for the Franco type structures. But it also shows that “city bosses” or disconnected “visionaries” can be turned into more responsive “consensus facilitators”.¹³

¹³ For these categories of leadership styles cf. Getimis/Grigoriadou 2004.

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