

URBAN GOVERNANCE AND POLITICAL LEADERSHIP IN THE
MODERNIZATION OF LOCAL PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION:
EVIDENCE FROM A CITY GOVERNMENT.

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Abstract.

Implementing urban governance strategies to improve local democracy and to regulate local economic growth is an important determinant of effective local administrative change and performance. Separately, the study of the issues of urban governance, political leadership and the modernisation of public administration have received widespread theoretical and empirical attention, but the number of studies using an integrated approach to address the issue of correlation among those aspects within the local political arena are very limited.

The underlying hypothesis adopted here is the assumption that the adoption of urban governance processes by local political leadership will inevitably result in the introduction of innovations within the administrative apparatus, in order to improve its performance. Indeed, an understanding of the interaction between these three aspects is of fundamental importance for the effectiveness of most, if not all, policy interventions directed at public administration modernization.

Key words: local government, urban governance, administrative modernization, public policy, political leadership.

1. Introduction.

The process of globalization catalyzes local governments to become active innovators in public management in an effort to redeem and legitimize governance through democratic processes. In fact, the legitimacy of the city

rests “in the form of government and the story it promises – non-political, efficient, and responsive government” that both facilitates community involvement and delivers needed and desired services (Nalbandian, 1999). To this end, local political elites adopt urban governance processes that inevitably result in the introduction of innovations with the desire both to expand the representative democracy and to improve its performance in delivering public services through political and managerial leadership. Indeed, an understanding of the interaction between these aspects is of fundamental importance for the effectiveness of most, if not all, policy interventions directed at the modernization of local public administration.

Assessing the validity of this assumption is the primary focus of this paper, in which a case study is used to provide evidence that deals with the correlational nature, interactions and causal links of urban governance, political leadership and the modernization of local public administration. Most of the data presented comes from a case study, but occasionally data from other contexts is used if it is felt that it may help to support our hypothesis.

A specific aim of the contribution made here is to provide a rationale for the incorporation of urban governance, as the independent variable, and political leadership, as the intervening variable, into public administration modernisation policies. Furthermore, the discussion provides some important guidelines for future research within the area of urban governance and local administrative reforms and, from a more applied perspective, proposes a number of practical suggestions for stimulating the participation of local actors.

2. Urban Governance and local public administration modernization.

The unit of analysis “local government”, as part of the system of state political structures, sheds increasingly less light on local reality and dynamics. This makes it necessary to investigate the political-institutional system in conjunction with social processes and structures, since a system of local government is becoming a system of local governance which includes public and private organisations and the tertiary sector.

As it is understood here, urban governance is a particular dimension of the wider concept of governance or, more concretely, one of its territorial manifestations (Canales, 2001). Within local territory, two apparently counterpoised trends coincide, observable above all in cities and which affect their governance: on the one hand, the demands derived from the new forms of the reproduction of capital and, on the other, local traditions linked to specific local problems; the functionality of the local political system needs to respond to these trends via public action removed from the technocratic purism which implies isolation, and instead with the participation of the various actors with interests in the local territory.

In the urban sphere, the governance of the city, as the model of regulation, is derived from the processes of globalization and decentralisation which lead to a repoliticisation of the local level (Brugué and Gomá, 1998). This situation implicitly leads the change from local governance to the administration of the interaction of a set of organised actors who, to maximise local resources, act in a network, in which the political-administrative actors act on occasion as initiators and moderators of that interaction; the hierarchical relations inseparable from the management

model become relations of interaction which permit the organisations of civil society to become co-producers of local public services.

All this means that local governments evolve from managing public services bureaucratically to governing the city through implementing their own initiatives and exercising political leadership (Benington, 1998). This constitutes a change in the functions of the political-administrative elites, who are no longer administrators of a centralised system but instead become promoters of local development in an increasingly complex environment into which new actors are incorporated (Bovaird, Löffler and Parrado, 2002).

In this sense, city governance involves a change from the logic of local administration, understood as the management of undifferentiated public services, to another type of administration, responsible for its citizens' welfare. To achieve this objective, the local administration is impelled to innovate and modernise, with the aim of managing the resources of the territory in order to, in conjunction with other actors and through imaginative methods of collaboration, resolve the specific problems of its citizens, making innovation and dynamism compatible with the democratic control of market forces. The responses to the processes derived from the intersection of the frontiers between the public and private sectors, the interdependencies which this produces among the organisations previously included in the two sectors and the need to base authority not on hierarchies but instead on negotiation, consensus and cooperation among a multiple set of organisations, in order to formulate and implement local public policies, constitute structural elements of local governance. Understood in this way, urban governance is simply the inclusion of local government institutions in wider processes for the formulation and implementation of public

policies. This incorporation may signify the blurring of the public power into other interests or its establishment as the promoter or coordinator from the spheres of political power of the set of actors with local interests (Stoker, 1998). The local political powers converse with local groups and organisations, which demand recognition of their influence to intervene in affairs which directly concern them; they do not concentrate on isolated interventions, but instead create links with different degrees of permanence with groups which have an interest in the city, and thus local government is required to become involved in interorganisational and intergovernmental relations and with civil society.

For Le Gales (Le Gales, 1995), the system of local governance is defined according to the interrelations between the structures of the various levels of government and the interests of the diverse socioeconomic actors. This being the case, it is inevitable that administration in municipalities is a more "political" management, insofar as it must satisfy the interests of diverse actors. In this model of management the bureaucratic hierarchy loses weight insofar as it is necessary to adopt horizontal structures which permit negotiation and partnerships.

Thus, urban governance involves a multiple projection of local governments (Benington, 1999); firstly, a downwards projection via the articulation of local civil society on the basis of the stimulation of relations among associations as a mechanism for the aggregation and encouragement of local interests; in this aspect, municipal government becomes a school of citizenship to create a civic network receptive to democratic values; secondly, an outwards projection via the constitution, on the basis of the initiatives of local government and controlled by it, of networks with market actors who contribute to the social and economic development of

the city; thirdly, the upwards projection of the local political-administrative system, or the establishment of interactions with other subnational, national and international units of government, through the exercise of the leadership of the local political elites who act as agents to promote local interests within these units. This triple projection is sustained by a policy of the modernisation of the local administrative apparatus in which strategic management, leadership and the reorganisation of the organisational structures and procedures are simply the result of the three dimensions on which urban governance is based: the strengthening of local democracy, the development of local public policies through network management and the provision of high-quality public services (Pratchett, 1999).

From all the foregoing it is easy to conclude that governance and the modernisation process that is dependent upon it are linked by a complicated relation, in such a way that process causes progress to be made towards a model of governance with implications for the local political-administrative apparatus, for its products in terms of public policies and services and for the quality of municipal democracy. To this effect, a process of administrative innovation becomes a variable which affects governance and which is modulated by local conditions, not only political but also socioeconomic and cultural, and which is influenced by social capital (Putnam, 1993) and the material, personnel and financial resources of its institutions of government and administration. Administrative innovation usually involves processes of change in the breast of the administrative apparatus, a process in which there is room for the settlement of conflicts and the search for consensus through negotiations in which elements such as power, influence and resources become evident. Administrative innovation is, therefore, a political process which adopts its own dynamics on the basis of political initiatives and is produced in the context of the

specific political-administrative activities of an administrative institution, the institutional context becoming a key variable in the process of analysis. In this regard, and contrary to the idea of a loss of the centrality of the public sector in favour of the market, the *locus* of political control may remain within the local government despite new actors being incorporated into the public decision-making process; this means accepting that governance has an important political dimension and that its effects and impacts cannot be separated from the dominant political values. All this occurs in the framework of the appearance and consolidation of new networks of actors, in such a way that the structure of local governance does not correspond to the institutional structure of local government, and nor is it identified solely with the interaction between local government and local civil society, since it is necessary to take into account the importance of the impact of the decisions of other exogenous actors without territorial interests (national and multinational companies), whose decisions may have more influence upon the city than the decisions taken by local government itself.

It is self-evident that a model of local governance and administrative change can only be explained from a dual analytical perspective i.e. macro y micro. The macro approach is used to explain the social, political and economic factors which influence the behaviour of actors, and the micro perspective to analyse the process from the autonomy of the local government level, which permits an understanding of the administrative change. The analysis and description of concrete processes will permit the inductive identification of the distinctive features of the mechanisms of governance, in order to resolve the problems of a city in the historical, institutional and dynamic context of the local political-administrative level.

3. Urban governance and local political leadership.

In the field of Political Science and Public Administration, some studies of political leadership in the local sphere place emphasis upon personal characteristics (Gleason, 1970, Kessner, 1989) or upon institutional aspects (Pressman, 1972, Svara, 1990). There also exist normative studies regarding the best use of power in order to manage (Pfeffer, 1992). The study of leadership, therefore, emphasises two dimensions: the personal and the institutional.

However, in addition to the complex of personal and contextual circumstances such as personality, political experience, institutional factors and the local structures of opportunity, leadership also depends on the capacity to take risks. Local public administration overlaps with the political sphere and politicians must play an active role, formulating the strategic objectives of the local government and administration and controlling their results with regard to strategic affairs¹.

Governance demands leadership capable of working horizontally. The personal characteristics of the Mayor of Alcobendas provide him with the capacity to establish cooperative relationships with economic interests without neglecting social affairs and without corruption scandals. He catalyses the energies and initiatives of other public and private actors capable of giving the city its own identity.

A study of governance must make reference to leadership, which is

¹ On this point, there is no doubt that the direct election of mayors would strengthen both political leadership and administration, united under a single authority.

particularly important in the sphere of local government in cities where other resources, including institutional and empowerment resources, are limited in relation to the challenges to which they must respond. Leadership is of interest in governance insofar as the more its exercise involves interactions with followers or other actors, then the existence of systemic factors does not necessarily lead to the development of processes of governance; their causes are to be found in political action constituted on the basis of the exercise of political leadership. This is because in the fragmented contexts which characterise cities, political leadership becomes one of the principal, if not the principal elements, of urban governance. Without a doubt, this exercise of leadership is modulated by institutional factors such as the model of the strong mayor, which is configured in the Spanish local government system, as long as he or she enjoys a majority in plenary sessions.

4. Governance and local public management: administrative modernisation as a necessary element of urban governance in the city of Alcobendas.

The process of governance in the city of Alcobendas and its correlative, the modernisation of its administrative apparatus, is a process characterised by the interaction between public actors and society. This interaction is more evident at the local level where, due to its specific characteristics and, as will be demonstrated in this paper, the implementation of procedures which influence the public decision-making process produce more impact upon society in comparison to the same processes at the central and regional levels.

One of the objectives of the local government team is to guarantee its reelection, which obliges politicians to be receptive, in order to identify and satisfy the needs which local civil society demands. This requires, as a priority, the establishment of mechanisms for relations with citizens in general; while the key instrument in this relation is periodic elections, importance must also be given to channels for citizens' participation, a decentralised political-administrative organisation in touch with citizens, public policies aimed at satisfying citizens' needs, strategic planning and communication with citizens. Furthermore, it is necessary to ensure local economic development and, consequently, an innovative interaction with the market; here, the instruments for relations are public-private agreements for the development of construction projects in the city and collaboration with the private sector for the implementation of aspects of local public policies.

The relations between the administrative apparatus and civil society are based, with regard to citizens, on the provision of high-quality public services; the necessary instruments for this are an increase in the supply and quality of public services, the bringing of these services closer to citizens via their decentralised provision, participation in the design of services and even in the coproduction or provision of some public services by citizens. With regard to the relations of the administrative apparatus with the market the instrument of relation is the production and indirect provision of public services or a system of concerted agreements.

4.1. Administrative modernisation: the instruments of interorganisational relations.

4.1.1. Relations between elected representatives and directors and specialist technical staff.

To facilitate joint work between politicians and managers a Management Centre has been created, as a special organ of the Administration, for the decentralised management of the services of planning, coordination and organisation. This Management Centre is presided over by the Mayor, while the members of the Municipal Commission of Government act as committee members.

The creation of the Management Centre has as its objective the development and implementation of a new culture of management, on the basis of a differentiated organisation far removed from the bureaucratic culture. It is a unit with the capacity to coordinate and, consequently, to strengthen the strategic capacity of the centres for implementation, attempting to avoid the organisational fragmentation associated with the traditional system based on hierarchy. In order to control the production and provision of services on the part of the distinct units, a System of Programming by Objectives has been set in motion. This has meant that in the implantation of sectorial policies an interaction is produced between the distinct units, which are therefore connected by processes.

4.1.1.1 Management by objectives.

The implementation of this instrument is an attempt to involve Area Directors in the management process in order to increase their responsibility with regard to political objectives. On the one hand, it is a mechanism of interaction which requires joint working between councillors and intermediate management. On the other, the function of managers is

understood to be that of motivating the personnel under their command and involving them in the achievement of the objectives of the government team. To this end, in the sphere of political guidelines, managers and specialist technical staff have a margin to propose programmes and their objectives, results and budgets. Work is aimed at obtaining results which have been reached by consensus and, consequently, enjoy legitimacy and permit rapid reaction in the case of non-fulfilment.

The implementation of this instrument revolves fundamentally upon the creation of project teams, comprised of employees from diverse areas of the Administration or, in other words, organisation by projects; thus, the coordination team agrees with each Programme Head a concrete task.

4.1.1.2. Strategic planning.

With the decision to implement a Strategic Plan for the city, the City Council of Alcobendas has assumed a leadership based on the coordination of the different actors able to take decisions and to contribute their commitment to strengthen the city. The Strategic Plan serves as an educational instrument for planners and for citizens and, in effect, has become a pedagogical instrument for cooperation; it makes actors become aware of a territorial solidarity in such a way that the very process of elaborating the Strategic Plan is more important than the concrete results. Strategic Planning in Alcobendas permits the definition of new objectives which are compatible with the private objectives of actors. Similarly, it helps the diverse actors to design common strategies and identify common priorities. The Plan has an important educational effect: it educates participants with regard to the city. In this sense it is an instrument to show the relationships and their position in the structure of the city. It also places

the emphasis on the process and not on the plan. To this end it involves actors in the environment through a deliberative process, which permits local elites to reinterpret the definition of local public problems. The process of involving a set of actors with interests in the city so that they identify political demands, inviting them to outline the future design of the city, relegitimizes their relationship with the municipal institution.

4.1.1.3. Decentralisation.

The model of organisational decentralisation linked to coordination and planning has been a constant factor since the beginning of the 1980s, when the growth of the municipal apparatus began. Decentralisation as an instrument of governance was introduced onto the municipal agenda in 1984, and remains there today. It is certainly true that the objective has been the creation of a highly decentralised public municipal sector. There is no doubt that the model of decentralisation implanted has always been based on the giving of responsibility to the different areas; these enjoy differing degrees of autonomy, resulting in an increase of contact and interactions between the Administration and its environment. At the same time, it intensifies and structures communication between the Administration and citizens by providing information. Decentralisation means that directors and managers are responsible for part of the financial, technical and administrative management of their area, having determinate degrees of autonomy for the management of human and instrumental resources and acquiring responsibilities for the execution of local public programmes and policies, and similarly for the results of financial, technical, human resource and administrative management.

4.1.2. Relations between specialist technical staff and public employees.

4.1.2.1. The reorganisation of processes and procedures.

In Alcobendas the reorganisation and innovation of administrative processes is the result of concentrating on the provision of services which take citizens and the administrative organisation as a whole as the reference point for improving their performance. In this sense they are tools for the satisfaction of citizens' needs and for the improvement of the overall performance of the organisation, taking into account the involvement of suppliers and employees. The principal objective of the change in processes is to mobilise the creative potential of the greatest possible number of public employees. Process innovation is being performed incrementally, evaluating the organisational possibilities and agreeing the design and implantation of innovations with the personnel who participate in the process, through the creation of *ad hoc* working parties which avoid its merely top-down extension.

4.1.2.2. Quality.

In Alcobendas the strategic and operative levels overlap, in a continuous process of quality improvement, through the operationalisation of the quality objectives defined by the politicians on the basis of consultations in which directors, managers and employees participate and which are linked to other objectives (organisational or cost-based, among others). Similarly, indicators of quality are defined (also according to interviews with citizens), on the basis of certain dimensions of quality. Thus, an innovative approach to quality has been developed; its ideas are framed by: 1) An orientation to citizens' needs, with continuous improvement in municipal services and products associated to different public policies. 2) An internal

orientation, by developing procedures with the participation of public employees, in such a way that practically all employees and all the directors and specialist technical staff are familiarised with the concepts of quality. 3) Transversality and interrelation as defining characteristics in the implantation of all the tools of quality e.g. the Complaints System, Internet and Citizens' Charters.

Finally, it must be emphasised that innovations in each of the areas are complementary and coherent, both with those undertaken in previous stages and with those undertaken in other areas, meaning that the innovative actions reinforce each other, and thus the distinct activities become integrated in a package of policies.

5. Agents activating the process. Leadership as a conditioning factor: the interaction of political leadership and managerial leadership.

In the sphere of public organisations there coexist political, managerial and corporative interpretations of change and different ways of understanding leadership. Alcobendas has a political and managerial leadership which coincides with a vision of the city, accompanied by the absence of a professionalism derived from a corporative (bureaucratic) vision of the administrative apparatus. The interaction of political and managerial leadership facilitates an effective strategy of organisational change.

In Alcobendas, the political leadership exercised by the Mayor has been a critical factor in the process of change; as a result, some of the characteristics of this leadership require examination.

There exist contextual factors which facilitate the leadership model of the Mayor, José Caballero, (a city unstructured territorially and socially). Successive mandates have permitted him to accumulate political capital from which he exercises a pragmatic leadership. Caballero exercises a strong proactive leadership in his party and in the municipal government. He is not a professional politician, in the sense of harbouring ambitions beyond the municipality, and thus concentrates all his efforts on the city. He has a project for the city in which:

a) On the basis of his own initiatives he achieves the implication and mobilisation of diverse actors, who have their own interests, for the development of the city. Such initiatives include the network of local associations and also property developers, with the objective of creating public value on the basis of a public resource (for example, the transformation of a plot of land belonging to the Town Hall into the Alcobendas 2000 Urban Project, which creates and distributes value).

b) The Mayor includes among his followers both political appointees and specialist technical staff who are in favour of the change in administrative culture and of modernisation. The door has been opened to recent graduates who gain managerial posts, as well as to managers who have experience in the private sector. The impulse of the process is maintained through training.

c) He achieves investment from the CAM (Autonomous Community of Madrid) for urban infrastructure, public facilities and housing, and even manages to mobilise politicians from the surrounding cities.

d) He is capable of sensing new possibilities for the city and generating expectations among political and managerial appointees for the achievement of those possibilities. His ideas, in some town planning projects, cause surprise among some councillors, but not resistance.

- e) During his mandate there has been an absence of corruption. Similarly, he does not pursue personal gains in wealth from the exercise of his post.
- f) As Mayor, he is accessible to citizens. He also attempts to include citizens in the governance of the city.
- g) He exercises control of the associational sphere, through institutional support.

Furthermore, leadership is exercised through both a discourse and activities. The leadership of the Mayor of Alcobendas may be analysed by studying his discourse and his activities (Drake, 1995).

5.1. The discourse of the Mayor².

A set of beliefs, values, perceptions, preferences and motivations can be identified through the discourse of the Mayor. The beliefs of the Mayor are a reflection of socialisation and personal experience; since beginning clandestine political activity in 1966 he has shown a commitment to ideological values which demonstrate a personal conviction, namely that politics is an instrument to avoid inequalities and transform society, with a long-term project to construct a vision of the city in which sustained economic growth is combined with social structuring. He defines himself as a self-made man. In 1976 he founded the local group of the PSOE together with six other members. He is thus a mayor with deep roots in the community³. This helps his personality to be more important than the party

² This has been analysed on the basis of his declarations to the press, radio appearances and a personal interview. The Mayor is easily understandable and his declarations are clearly sincere.

³ "...I'm going to retire here as Mayor of Alcobendas..." (the Mayor).

to which he belongs, assisted by an image of effectiveness, accredited by the media and the city's opinion leaders.

The Mayor maintains a "city dream"⁴, understood as the knowledge which he has of Alcobendas, supported by his years of residence in the city and his political activism under the previous regime.

5.2. The activities of the Mayor.

In the field of government action, during the first democratic government he strove, as a councillor, to encourage citizens' participation, arguing that political activity should be located where the real problems are to be found i.e. at the neighbourhood level.

He is a visible Mayor⁵ (which is in itself a form of accountability), and the objectives and methods established to make his vision a reality are based on an incremental pragmatism; he is a Mayor concerned with a) the

⁴ "...we have a Mayor who is very given to having his own ideas and this is good for us. We all plan and we all work thinking of things, the Mayor doesn't, things occur to the Mayor and passes them on, and at the end of each ten ideas, well, one works out, which is what constitutes a bit the dynamics and the difference between this municipality and others..." (Councillor for Town Planning, 1999-2003 legislature).

⁵ This visibility is shown in frequent public appearances, dedicating a considerable number of hours weekly to contact with citizens and with representatives of interests (associations and local businesses). In his agenda for the distribution of task time there is also an important institutional activity dedicated to contacts of representation: "...The Mayor is present in all the acts of the associational movement, and of course in municipal acts and so he is a man who walks around and about the city continually to see what is wrong or what doesn't work..." (Director of Communication).

creation of networks and b) the implementation of agreements which permit maximum advantage to be taken of public and private resources⁶.

This means he shows a capacity to maintain dialogue with those who have different interpretations of the city and to balance the tensions among actors, by acting as intermediary between the needs of citizens and the local possibilities. In the same way he has an important influence upon local public opinion. This explains why since the beginning of his mandate he has maintained close relations with local associations and interests and stimulates the implementation of informal networks, creating the potential for consensus in specific public policies.

As a result of all the above, the efficient institutional leadership of the Mayor is supported by two pillars. On the one hand, the Mayor as entrepreneur in the Schumpeterian sense of the term and, on the other, the Mayor as the incarnation of the social figure of “politician”, the person who is immersed in politics as a vocation, in the Weberian sense⁷. From the perspective of the metaphor of the Mayor as entrepreneur, he has played an important role by proposing and negotiating agreements with private business interests and, as representative of the city, by promoting it in other

⁶ "...I believe that I have known how, from the start, to differentiate what is left-wing and what is right-wing, from the viewpoint of the economic result, on the one hand...the right always defends it and we had to give a social result. Well...it seems that those two options which seem antagonistic, can converge...I believe that it is the result of the 20 years...making the economic element converge...an action...an activity with social results as the fundamental pillar which we developed in the first legislature...". (the Mayor).

⁷ "...the Mayor, as the person who works hardest, who dedicates most hours to the Town Hall, is the person who also demands most, but he demands convincingly, in some way he obliges you to give more than you are giving because you see that he is giving it to you and in addition he is asking you for it..." (Councillor for Town Planning).

regions and countries to attract new industries, lobbying at regional and national government levels, searching for new investments, subsidies and aid from the different levels of government, including the European Union, with the aim of generating local projects and initiatives which have acted as catalysts for local industry. The Mayor is considered as an entrepreneur of the city, a person capable of creating coalitions of interests and developing opportunities for the city, which reduces the impact of party politics. His leadership influences the level of confidence of citizens and also external investors.

The Mayor represents a model of promotional leadership, capable of agglutinating diverse coalitions (public-public and public-private) through their complementation and the optimisation of their effectiveness. It is necessary to underline the role of the Mayor in the creation of a network of public and private actors around a variety of projects (the Science Museum, for example). The Mayor is interested in all that which interests the city: from the poverty and standards of living of the least well-off sectors of the population to projects which reap prestige. The links with associations which do not exclusively pursue economic interests have proven to be essential. Similarly, the Mayor exercises a leadership which is open to society, linked to certain values and based on common objectives aimed at improving the city through diverse projects.

Moreover, his leadership is creative, insofar as it is capable of mobilising sectors of the local community for collective action (the Youth Plan), demonstrating his capacity for creativity and coordination. The key to Caballero's leadership has been the development of a strategy of regeneration with regard to property development, through consensus

among local elites, in order to promote economic development and social progress, with a capacity to mobilise groups which participate in associations utilised as inputs in the process of the formulation and implementation of local public policies. This has been assisted by the control exercised over the local political party; his position as head of the electoral slate and subsequent reelection guarantees him control over the party.

The Mayor also exercises situational and administrative leadership: he understands the reality of the city and is capable of diagnosing necessities and coordinating those actors essential to the search for solutions. In this context, his principal talents consist of 1) interpreting public opinion and mobilising support, 2) having a vision of the public policies of the administrative apparatus in terms of their impact upon the electorate. The leadership he exercises over the directorial staff of the administration permits him to adapt its administrative factors to the satisfaction of citizens' demands, as identified by the Mayor (Arenilla, 2001).

In summary, three characteristics may be identified in the leadership of the Mayor which, in line with Ioannou (Ioannou, 1992), are: *personal* characteristics. Caballero is not limited by reality, takes risks, tends to act on the margin of the norms and shows energy, self-confidence and the capacity for hard work. He employs specific *tactics and behaviour* which increase his political resources to pursue his objectives, in the form of searching for alliances with other actors; to this effect, he mobilises resources and attempts to maximise his autonomy, and attracts political and administrative collaborators to his points of view. He is not bound by his status as Mayor, although he does use it to mobilise resources. His ability to seize opportunities is clear, in the sense of taking advantage of

favourable situations. Finally, he operates in a favourable *context*, since he enjoys legitimacy as a result of renewing his mandate as Mayor in various legislatures⁸.

It is easy to discern that the initiative of the model of governance has arisen, therefore, from a strong Mayor⁹ with, in principle, majorities in the plenary sessions. Taken together, political impulse and legislative majorities are the essential conditions for the strengthening of leadership as a guarantee of success, in addition to the mobilisation of citizens and the inclusion in the political agenda of the most pressing social and economic problems.

5.4. Shared leadership: collaboration between elected posts and managerial posts.

As stated earlier, one of the elements proposed as a problem of government and management in local governments is the confusion of roles between elected posts and managers. The process of governance in Alcobendas, while promoted by the Mayor, is carried out by a nucleus of councillors who work with a group of public managers, forming a type of joint oligarchy on the basis of objectives shared between the managers and this

⁸ "...According to the surveys of our Research Department and after 20 years in power as Mayor and 4 as Deputy Mayor, his image has been strengthened not only in being known as the Mayor, which is logical, but rather in recognition of his labour, it is now greater than 20 years ago, which isn't normal, is it? Remember how politicians fall out of favour, no, here the Mayor hasn't lost favour. The surveys say so, the average citizen, the citizens of the whole city of Alcobendas still believe in the current Mayor (Councillor for Town Planning)

group of councillors.

This situation is encouraged by the autonomy of local government, which signifies that there exists minimum intervention from other administrative levels in the day-to-day affairs of the local administration while, on the other hand, the penetration of local pressure groups linked to economic interests is practically non-existent. This facilitates the control of the administrative organisation by political and bureaucratic elites, in such a way that the Mayor and a group of councillors maintain control of local public policies.

Despite the institutional framework favouring the exercise of a presidentialist leadership, the Mayor works with a government team which takes decisions collectively, although there exists a differentiation in the role of the councillors. Although, from a formal point of view, all decisions are of collective responsibility, a nucleus of action has been formed so that, together with the political leaders, some key bureaucrats at the head of certain services are important actors in the decision-making processes and maintain close relations with the political leaders. This derives from the organisation of seminars attended by councillors, managers and specialist technical staff to exchange experiences, which permits managers to internalise political objectives and elected postholders to identify their technical viability. In this sense, there exists constant support from the managers to the elected postholders, a support which is not founded on partisan loyalty.

⁹ "...the Mayor has been vital, due to his authority, but not a decreed authority...he is a more political than managerial Mayor, but he has been sensitive to these things and has supported them personally..." (Deputy Mayor).

Moreover, electoral success in the local sphere is affected by the capacity which the municipal organisation has not only to define public problems, and consequently to elaborate the necessary public policies, but also by the capacity for organisational innovation which facilitates the success of those policies. In Alcobendas, within the nucleus of councillors, the Councillor for Public Finance has control of the policy of modernisation, which attempts to affect all administrative units. In this way, a leadership of management with powers of expenditure is produced. The success of the reform stems not only from political leadership, but also from that of management and the fact that economic resources are placed at its disposal.

Furthermore, the taking of control by the Deputy Mayor signifies the introduction of rationalism into management; a search is made for instruments tested in private organisations, such as, among others, management by objectives, strategic planning, the redesign of procedures and quality¹⁰. All the proposals for modernisation come from the nucleus of the Department of Public Finance, whose role and legitimacy (on the basis of results) is progressively strengthened for the generation of new proposals.

On this point, it is necessary to emphasise the important role played by the Deputy Mayor, as Councillor for Public Finance, who combines political leadership with professionalisation, dedicating part of his time to technical tasks. However, in percentage terms, the activity to which he dedicates most time is political activity, and concretely the search for information (from other Public Administrations, local civil society, the political party,

¹⁰ "...those of us here, at least in Alcobendas, none of us came from the public sector and, although we knew something, we knew how badly the municipal government functioned..." (Deputy Mayor).

etc.), providing information and taking decisions in conjunction with other actors.

In the role of Deputy Mayor there is a certain isomorphism with other figures existing in countries with Anglo-Saxon traditions and Northern European countries. Thus, in the sphere of medium-sized North American cities, there exists the figure of the “City Manager”, who is an administrative leader but is in constant interaction with local politicians, and has an important role in the local government process. He or she exercises an important influence on the elaboration and implementation of local public policies, while at the same time takes charge of the establishment of organisational designs, as instruments which facilitate the achievement of the objectives of local public policies.

The constant factor in the process of governance in Alcobendas is the collaboration between political leaders and the municipal bureaucracy, although their role has been different, in the search for a common objective: the innovative behaviour of the entire municipal organisation, in order to match its performance to the existing challenges. This collaboration is deliberately sought via joint activities such as the holding of joint seminars attended by elected postholders, managers and members of the Plenary Session, the discussion of visions with managers, the undertaking of “political” evaluations complemented by the evaluation of managers and the political control of the processes of implementation.

6. Final considerations.

A process of administrative modernisation is not a process of autonomous innovation which affects only the administrative subsystem. Administrative modernisation is an instrument which contributes to governance and, consequently, can be relocated in its context, since it awards the political-administrative system an important role in the process. Thus, the analysis of a process of local governance permits not only the explanation of aspects regarding its structures of actors and their behaviour, which influence the public decision-making processes and the transformation of the local Public Administration, but also the understanding of the evolution and consolidation of local governments from merely administrative bodies under the tutelage of other levels of government to Public Administrations which generate administrative policies and actions of local interest on the basis of political leadership, particularly in medium-sized cities, in a period of important political, social and economic changes.

As has been argued from the outset, a process of administrative modernisation cannot be the result of the application, from within the organisation, of managerialist models, but instead must be derived from a form of governance, understood as a set of interactions between a political-administrative system and its environment; a process of administrative modernisation must be a response derived from the demands of governance. This does not signify that innovations in public management are only the consequence of the adoption of a specific structure of governance, since the very model of management also affects that structure.

Thus, on the purely theoretical plane, it can be argued that, in the urban sphere, governance and a new local public management are intermingled in a dialectical relation. The patterns of interaction inseparable from a model

of governance are only possible if there exists organisational congruence, that is to say, the adoption of a behaviour by the innovative administrative organisation in order to constantly improve its capacity to relate to the actors with which it interacts, which means that administrative modernisation is also the modernisation of the social environment with which the Administration relates. It is clear that the changes or transformations in administrative organisations constitute at the same time a problem and an instrument of governance, given the central position which the Public Administrations occupy in the urban contexts of advanced societies. Thus, an initial reflection leads us to affirm that a process of administrative modernisation is merely an instrument which facilitates the governance of the city, at the same time that modernising actions are the consequence of a regime of governance. This is achieved through the adjustment of administrative action to the specific expectations of society and demands the achievement of such expectations in the context of a political, social and economic scenario in which the socio-institutional model of public organisations, as the axis upon which the sustainability of the welfare state pivots is questioned by the consolidation of other actors. The foreseeable consequence is that the development of the administrative structures inseparable from a process of modernisation is linked to the model of governance and becomes an essential element in the operationalisation of that process.

There exists an intersection between governance and innovation, insofar as both are mechanisms in the exercise of government. On the one hand, governments are receptive to pursuing innovative strategies for the implementation of public policies and programmes. This involves the necessary adaptation, firstly, of administrative structures and processes and the permanent transformation of the capacity of the administrative

apparatus to manage effectively in a changing environment. The existence of networks demands the adaptation of management tools to interorganisational networks. The administrative capacities and abilities required are different to those associated with traditional public management based on hierarchies and procedural formalism.

In both cases, the concept of governance is of operational usefulness to relocate the study of a process of administrative modernisation or set of innovative forms of acting by public organisations, since it is evident that the process of modernisation produces interactions between local society and its political-administrative system, both immersed in wider cultural, political, social and economic processes. With regard to the transformations of the administrative apparatus, administrative modernisation does not only seek effectiveness in the provision of public services, but also becomes an agent of change and contributes to the forming of an image of innovation in the management of structural change in the set of actors in the locality, and thus a policy of modernisation becomes a problem of governance. At the local level the limits between the political-administrative system and civil society become more permeable and consequently, above all in medium-sized cities, policies of administrative modernisation are more visible and have greater impact on citizens; as a result, these modernising actions are of central interest on the political agenda. The same does not occur in the central and regional administrations, where actions taken in the administrative apparatus are not so determinant in the winning of elections.

7. References.

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