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Symposium on The Transformation of Urban Political Leadership in Western Europe

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From 'Great' Leaders to Building Networks: The Emergence of a New Urban Leadership in Southern Europe?

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Introduction

This article looks at the emergence of a new local political leadership, especially during the period marked by the transformation of state power and the process of European integration. A comparative approach is adopted that examines the changes in the global framework of the distribution of power, which especially affects the new multi-level form of political regulation at work in Western democracies. In their introduction Borraz and John refer to the hypothesis that there exists different ways of building local leadership in Northern and Southern Europe. Building on the classic work of Tarrow concerning central-periphery relationships in France and in Italy (1977), they remind us of the local leader's pivotal role in accessing resources and favourable decisions from central government and the consequent personalization of political leadership. Such a position was expressed particularly clearly in the work of Page (1991), who contrasted the Southern model of local government with that of Northern Europe, whose autonomous tradition of local government created what is considered to be a more 'soft' and more 'efficient' form of leadership.

In the context of the countries studied here, significant changes can be noted in the way that local elites now govern public affairs, especially in terms of the introduction of innovative management methods around what is called 'proximity democracy'. A comparative sociological perspective on local power enables us to put forward at least two hypotheses about the political effects of the changes in the methods of public decision-making. The first hypothesis concerns the issue of local government as opposed to local governance, the emergence of which is noticeable in new forms of local public management which establish a more flexible territorial administrative system (Le Galès, 1995; Borraz, 1998). The second hypothesis deals with the transformation of local elites and their way of exercising power. This hypothesis claims that political leadership is not only centred on the administrative and sectorial management of public services, but rather on political decisions that are aimed at governing territories (Genieys *et al.*, 2000). Thus, in dealing with institutional changes, the new local leaders have often established themselves as genuine territorial entrepreneurs. It is possible that this new political role of elites is more common in rural areas than in cities (Genieys, 1997; 2003). It is therefore necessary to show that new local political leaders are more affected by the different dimensions of territory in relation to social, political and symbolic interests. This hypothesis is based upon the following premise: local political leadership changes because those who are engaged in politics are confronted with new challenges (Jessop, 1996). Faced with institutional changes, territory becomes a resource and a major constraint on the political actions of the local elites. Consequently, it is also useful to put forward the hypothesis that the emergence of a type of leadership that is oriented towards the building of territories is what differentiates the countries of Northern and Southern Europe.

There are three kinds of argument that allow us to define the parameters of the emergence of a new type of local leadership. The first is linked to reforms of

management and looks at the processes of 'privatization' and 'externalization' of services that allow local elites to re-centre their activities on strategic and political matters. The second concerns the appearance of a new kind of political participation and its relationship to decentralization and the type of citizenship that results. Finally, the third line of argument discusses the emergence of new methods for political decisions and the capacity of local leaders to give collective meaning to their respective territories.

Two different conceptions of local power

In terms of local power, Spain continues to differ from France, although there has been a certain degree of convergence over time. Whilst in France the model of peripheral power built around the figure of the notable was considered inevitable (Grémion, 1976), in Spain the authoritarian Franco regime (1939–75) left no room for local power. The endemic political and administrative weakness of local communities was reinforced by stringent financial constraints. At the same time, since the beginning of the 1980s, both France and Spain have experienced greater diversification at the local level, with central power becoming more peripheral. In addition, both political regimes have been confronted with the process of European integration. Here, the implementation of reforms has been conditioned both by differing time-scales and by different institutional realities. Spain only became a member of the European Union in 1986, whereas France was one of the founding members. The territorial reform of the state is regarded by the Spanish as a great transformation, moving from a centralized and non-democratic form of policy-making to a highly diverse and polycentric one. The invention of the hybrid institutional structure known as the 'autonomous state' clearly reflects this process (Cuchillo, 1993; Aja, 1994; Fundación Encuentro, 1997; Genieys, 1997; 1998). On the other hand, since 1982, the French state has embarked, not without difficulties, upon a decentralization process initiated from the political centre (d'Arcy and Baena del Alcazar, 1986). At the dawn of the new millennium, issues remain to be resolved about the extent of local autonomy and influence.

Indeed, neoliberal ideology and multi-level governance both affect the dynamics of the political institutions in these two countries. Therefore, taking a comparative perspective, one can try to reconsider the relationship between the actors and the institutions in order to ask questions regarding the converging processes underway today in France and Spain. To do this it is necessary to assess the sociological contribution to local political life as it interacts with public policies. At this level of detail, the comparison between Spain and France becomes heuristic as we cannot study all of the potential leadership processes and their interactions with institutions, as well as the relationships with the local environment. It is therefore necessary to understand how in both France and Spain the institutional changes were part of the emergence of a type of political leadership, and also how it worked in the opposite way, especially in Spain. Here, certain forms of political leadership give rise to particular kinds of political institutions. However, this is not another case of the 'innovative leadership' which marked the regime change (Linz, 1993). Instead, local public policy-making and new management methods have been just as important in political terms for elected representatives seeking legitimacy.

In this context, we compare the French and the Spanish situations to show how the forms of local government have evolved. We emphasize the importance of organizational and management methods. From this perspective, decentralization has taken place in three stages. The first relates to the democratization of local power which occurred in Spain at the time when there emerged a new local political elite (Capo *et al.*, 1988; Subirats and Valles, 1990). The second stage concerns the consolidation of the local democratic institutions between the 1980s and 1990s, which started a period of internal reorganization and an expansion of public policies (Brugué and Gomà, 1998;

Gomà and Subirats, 1998). Finally, the third stage emerged when this continuous growth came up against new challenges that arose in the 1990s and that continue to be relevant today. Despite very different starting points, these stages can also be used to contextualize changes in France. Indeed, it was not until the decentralization laws were put in place (1982/1983) that the rules regarding local power were progressively modified (Mabileau, 1993). The emergence of new elected representatives — such as that of an entrepreneurial or managerial mayor — were established (Lorrain, 1993; Faure, 1994), and new methods of managing public territories were put into place (Duran and Thoenig, 1996). Finally, during the 1990s, these changes in public actions had effects on the decisions of the elected representatives (Balme *et al.*, 1999; Genieys *et al.*, 2000). Consequently, a question emerged regarding the territorialization of the process of trans-sectorial policy-making, which came about with the emergence of new leadership forms (Genieys, 2003). From this standpoint, we will attempt to ascertain whether these temporary concomitant changes can be regarded as a progressive convergence of local leadership forms in both countries. We can also ask ourselves if it is now possible to look at this model of governing as being exclusive to Southern Europe.

The convergence of local government methods in Southern Europe: a Franco-Spanish comparison

In Southern Europe, France has been the historic organizational point of reference for administrative reformers and its model was adopted in Spain with some significant variations, particularly during the non-democratic periods of its recent past. This relationship became apparent during the last decade of the Franco regime, with its successive borrowing of ‘Gaullist’ public policies by modernizers in the central administration, all of which was done in the name of efficiency, not democracy. However, these recent transfers have an older history, going back to the beginning of the nineteenth century, when Spain was inspired by the French municipal and departmental model (d’Arcy and Baena del Alcazar, 1986; Vandelli, 1991). At that time, Spain remained very fragmented, with only 14% of Spanish towns having over 5,000 inhabitants. The attempts to answer this problem, in particular by grouping towns, always failed in both countries due to the commitment of the people and the local elites to the municipal power structure. At the same time, attempts to ‘municipalize’ certain residential areas looking for political independence, but whose financial viability was uncertain, were incredibly successful. A sort of subordination arose between the outskirts of towns and town centres. However, the relationship of local power structures to their institutional and financial environment (state and local powers of different territorial levels) differentiate the two national contexts as much as do the various individual local communities.

Transition and institutional changes

While French towns in the 1930s had a low rate of urbanization compared to Northern European countries, the post-war era in France is characterized by an unprecedented boom in urbanization. The reconstruction period of the 1950s and 1960s was characterized by the expansion of cities, interaction between central resources and local demands, the construction of facilities and the implementation of a modernization project. The application of standardized norms, produced by the state, was legitimized by a fairly general consensus amongst elected representatives, was based on the guarantee of ‘general interest’ and was linked to both the local and the sectoral systems of public intervention. It was the era of the ‘mayors-who-build’, characterized by an incessant cross-fertilization between the administration and elected representatives, in which the concurrent mandates of the latter made up an essential resource (Crozier and

Thoenig, 1975). The relationship of the local politicians with an increasingly diverse citizenry was based essentially on the access to facilities by users and on increasing contacts with large organizations, such as political parties, unions and neo-corporatist organizations, which shared the same organization methods structured between the centre and the periphery. While this *modus operandi* of local governments proved to be undeniably efficient in the big cities, it slowly descended into a crisis in the 1970s due to the pronounced distance between politicians and social and economic interests.¹

The elections in 1977 marked a turning point. The newly elected representatives, mayors and deputy mayors, came from the opposition party and were often opposed to the political-administrative model inherited from Gaullism and to the planning designs of the central state. As a result, in many cases, they reversed existing priorities in favour of more local autonomy, and allowed for enhanced participation of organized interests in the definition of public problems and in the search for solutions. It was to some extent inevitable that such changes led to the politicization of the municipal executives, since the capacity of municipal governments to mobilize and arbitrate became paramount in a situation where it was more important to make effective choices than to launch grand projects; to achieve the largest consensus possible among the population; and to try and obtain financial and human resources from beyond the community in order to accomplish unplanned projects. The organization of local administration no longer took place according to the relationship with the state administration, but went on to take into consideration the local constraints on municipal action towards its citizens (Lorrain, 1989).

In Spain, the period between 1975 and 1979 was characterized by the democratization of local political life, which was confirmed on 3 April 1979 with free elections. This process ended an intense struggle that had been going on during the final years of the Franco regime, with activist neighbourhood associations, cultural associations and certain protest movements ensuring real citizen participation on a local scale. The 1978 Constitution established the territorial organization of the state in autonomous communities, provinces and local communities (article 137). Unlike the autonomous communities (historical regions and nationalities), the local entities (Aja, 1992; Garcia, 1992) had no real legislative power but autonomy within the legislative framework established by the state and the autonomous communities. The constitution failed to clarify whether the mayors should be elected according to a direct or indirect suffrage. However, previous local legislation had opted for a method of indirect suffrage for the mayors by town councillors, who are elected by a proportional representation voting system with a pre-established list. The higher someone is on the list, the higher the chances he or she has of being elected. Each municipality forms its own municipal district.

Internal organization and the growth of public policies: 1980-90

The period between 1980 and 1990 was characterized by major changes in the organization of municipal executives and in their relationship with the administration, which had become territorial. If the weight of institutional and political history differs, the definition of the new challenges regarding the renewal of the democratic functioning on a local scale does show certain similarities.

In Spain, as in France, the new municipalities, boosted by their new legitimacy (free elections in Spain, decentralization in France), quickly sought to gain autonomy and a certain degree of initiative in the field of public services in order to provide welfare services effectively. This pressing objective involved rebuilding the internal organization of the local authority along with the recruitment of highly-skilled technical

1 What Olivier Borraz (1998) calls 'divergence' is characterized by at least two major traits: the large difference between the structure of local government actions (based on a sectorial model and state technocracy), and the local expression of an increasing number of new challenges.

personnel. In Spain recruitment was direct,² whereas in France it involved, on the one hand, developing new territorial public functions and, on the other, recruiting staff members in direct contact with the mayor. Needless to say, in both contexts, municipalities came to be equipped with administration and technical resources to a degree that had been legally impossible up until then.

With this diversity of local entities and the variability of their skills, it is hard to make a general assessment of local policy-making during this period. Brugué and Gomà (1998) suggest an initial distinction between the policies of economic promotion, the policies leading to the creation of a local welfare state, and the policies of urban development. What characterizes the Spanish system in this period are the enormous differences between communities. Some became strongly involved in the setting of these policies, while others failed to develop any. As far as France is concerned, it is the issue of coordination, internally as well as externally, which rapidly grew and legitimized new methods of state intervention based on explicit negotiation and the formalization of contracts. In both cases, the relationships between policy and management priorities came to be a major theme in the reformulation of local public policy.

Managerial-type politicians and politicized managers

The budget transfer that accompanied the 1982 law in France put management skills at the heart of the debate among the municipal executives as well as in the negotiation between the different levels of government. The big cities quickly found themselves in a powerful position compared to other local entities. Even though the use of budgets was strongly constrained by the transfer of competences, city social services paradoxically often have greater room for manoeuvre in redistribution (and therefore political choice) than the *départements*. Even if the social budget of the latter is proportionally much larger, it has a more limited scope for action as laid down by law.

In this context, several types of elected representatives have appeared on the political stage: from the elected 'entrepreneur' to the elected 'administrator'. For example, the mayor of Nîmes in 1983 (chief executive officer of a large textile company) suggested applying the production methods of large Japanese companies in his municipal administration. In certain cases, this overlapping of the public and private, and especially hybrid management practices, led to court cases, initiated particularly by the regional audit office, and contributed to the legislating of municipal political life. The financial service became a key element in the municipal organization, linked a little later with that of personnel. The recruitment of key directors in the municipality became explicitly political, the ideological suitability of current projects becoming an essential criterion which all the directors of the territorial public functions took on board, from then on, in their career plan, and which also became a major element in the relationship between the mayor and the councillors. The multiplication of contractual public policies between the public authorities and the state, and the involvement in European programmes based on mixed financing with complex budgetary management procedures, increased these hybrid trends between politics and management until the mid-1990s.

In Spain, the weakness of the inherited administrative structures led to an accelerated professionalization of mayors and their advisers. At the same time, with the exception of large cities, the local elected representatives divided their time between their professional commitments, their municipal work (often the equivalent of two working days) and their party activities. In exceptional circumstances, a mayor who plays an important role in his autonomous community could also take on the role of deputy

2 With the exception of certain administrative local figures such as '*el secretario*' or '*el interventor*'.

mayor, but would not attach central or regional government executive functions as is the case in France. Local government tended to be organized along the lines of a division between political and managerial functions. Since the 1980s, some municipalities have employed a professional manager to take charge of the setting up and coordinating actions under the mayor's or deputy's supervision. In terms of administrative and technical personnel, the human resources inherited from the 'old regime' were considered insufficient and in need of new professionals. This integration of new actors also brought in some key reforms in the internal management, especially in terms of budget, management of human resources, computerization of services and evaluation of projects undertaken. However, the priority given to producing new services as well as to internal management produced an unexpected effect. This was the simultaneous emergence of political administrators and politicized administrators. This situation is very similar to what had happened in France after 1977. The mayors and deputies of large French cities decided to dedicate themselves completely to municipal obligations. If they had an urban political project and they wanted to control it, they put all their time into making it happen. Therefore, there was a need in this professional field to have the communities led by politically trustworthy personnel with good technical skills. These two phenomena created tensions insofar as the elected representatives lost their strategic vision of action and their capacity to 'do politics' in the classical sense of the term. At the same time, close relationships developed between the more senior civil servants and the elected representatives, an alliance with an impact on policy-making that was often badly viewed by the more junior municipal staff.

The decentralization process and the autonomy process: towards new forms of participation?

In the beginning of the 1980s, the territorial reform of state organization created a large political 'building site' in Spain, much more so than in France. The starting points were obviously very different. However, and despite the large difference in institutional logics, the problems (in terms of local public policy) in their general formulation progressively converged. The 1982 law in France is regarded, in the context of local government's transformation, as a milestone in the relationship between the value of policies and the mobilization of general interests. The decentralization laws introduced two new perspectives: those of contract plans, which come to be decisive for the contract initiated by the state; and those of chartered developments, which allow *départements* or regions to negotiate territorial contracts with the communities. Thus, the use of contracts was not limited to the central state and extended very quickly to other public authorities. In reaffirming the autonomy of different levels of local government, this law quickly demonstrated an important contradiction: while the need for efficiency called for the grouping together of communities (especially the 36,000 communes), the recognition of autonomy reinforced, in most cases, centrifugal tendencies. Simultaneously, the contract-based process between the state and the communities and then between the communities themselves, initiated a new way of making public decisions through negotiation. In this reorientation, a return to the dialogue between municipal governments and organized citizen groups slowly became a source of political legitimacy within new institutions where the territorial boundaries and the traditional spaces of political representation were called into question.

In Spain, decentralization took place within the political transition, followed by a democratic consolidation. It promoted bureaucratic reform and an improvement of public services and, at the same time, provided opportunities for wider participation. In most large cities with suburban neighbourhoods requiring specific intervention methods, decentralization created a potential for this participation and facilitated contacts between the municipal administration and neighbourhood associations. The

questions concerning different ways of using local democracy and the relationships between elected representatives and organized citizen groups were important elements of the process of decentralization in Spain. Decentralization was institutionalized with the creation of district councils and other means of representation for the local citizenry. The development of social and cultural services allowed for the creation of a network for civic and care centres, and service companies with close relations with the district administration, in order to cut down and simplify the time taken to complete bureaucratic procedures that were, up until then, rather long and tedious. The two most common means of reinforcing the links between local government and citizens were the decentralization process and the forums uniting elected representatives and associations and representatives of special interest groups. The participation formulae vary according to the size of the area and the possibilities of informal contact or direct participation in the information commissions where the municipal projects are discussed. Some large municipalities developed a complete communication policy with press agencies, municipal papers, the radio and local television. Using opinion polls regularly, and installing complaint books and participative budgets became fairly frequent practices. Less frequent have been the use of local referendums and the institutionalization of the local ombudsman to defend citizen rights.

The gradual end of the continual growth model and the future challenges: 1990-2000

In the mid-1990s, the general feeling in Spain was that this continuous growth of spending characterized an era whose end was nigh. Despite its growth in absolute terms, local administration spending went from 10% of total public spending in 1974 to only 12% in 2000, with the autonomous communities going from nil to 27% of total public spending over the same period. But as the question of municipal power was not part of the agenda of autonomous and central governments, local governments put in place some new forms of intervention allowing them to maintain a presence in the key parts of welfare policies. In this distinct but complementary logic, a real political desire emerged to improve the quality of democratic debates, working with new forms of participation and dialogue. In France, the electoral context at the local level was marked by an increase of protest votes, which largely contributed to renewed citizen participation in the implementation of public policy. The proximity law of 2002 is a reflection of this.

Managerial logic and externalism

The progressive adoption of a 'Gerencialization' model, associating public and private sectors in public decisions, tried to resolve the tension between the political and administrative dimensions of municipal policies. This Gerencialization came from the necessity to differentiate between technical and political roles. There were two objectives: first, to lighten the workload of elected representatives and, second, to redirect these functions towards a political relationship with the citizens by means of political parties or institutions whose involvement could be effective on a local level. Gerencialization adopts several different methods from the most personalized and centralized (a manager leading most of the structure), to the most service-based and divided (having just as many managers as sectors in the municipality). In the case of Barcelona, service directors work with the territorial directors, which is the consequence of the division of the city into districts (Ajuntament de Barcelona, 1999). Based on this, a complex matrix structure emerges, whereby technicians and elected representatives have to learn to develop their own action plans while respecting the functions and roles of each person. Contrary to the inherited model of the bureaucratic monopoly in the running of public services, the majority of local governments opted for a combination of the direct running of certain public services and the externalization of others, under diverse legal forms, to private or semi-public organizations.

The French case has many similarities with these general trends. The rise of cities and their current development are proceeding in this direction. Indeed, after decentralization came the re-politicization of municipal policy-making, with technical functions being transferred to 'intercommunal' bodies. The functions of elected representatives have changed to those of regulators of interests and choice. This also led to a growing externalization towards private or semi-public actors of duties which, up until then, had been carried out by the municipal services, particularly in the management of utilities.

In the Spanish context, externalization was not so much the result of a technical change in public management, but rather the result of the need to find alternatives to the running of public services by traditional municipal methods. However, externalization demands that the local administration has the capacity to oversee the public, private or semi-private organization networks that take responsibility for supplying quality services to citizens and acting on behalf of the administration. This change in the traditional functions implies, like in the French example, a real challenge for some local governments who are obliged to transfer this type of function to supra-municipal entities like the province or county (*comarca*) in Catalonia. Indeed, in France, many urban projects clearly reflect this phenomenon (Pinson, 1999).

The policies of democratic participation

The re-politicization of mayors and their deputies involves the development of a new participation policy that aims to involve the citizens in considering complex questions affecting local government. Up to now, a number of experiments in contacting and getting closer to the citizens have been tried, but with little success in obtaining any real citizen involvement in solving complex public problems.

In France, the law of 2002 on proximity tried to fix the rules for citizen participation. Many elected representatives anticipated the voting rights of this law by setting up neighbourhood committees. However, this form of participation cannot only be summarized in this way. Mayors, as well as councillors, find they desperately need to get back in touch with public interests that, on the one hand, are becoming increasingly fragmented and imperceptible and, on the other, demand to be taken into consideration at the territorial level. Decentralization appears to be a slightly 'out of touch' answer in the light of this demand. A new division of labour has emerged between elected representatives and technicians, with the former taking charge of the production of the processes, while technicians increasingly find themselves in the position of organizers of 'meeting points' between the municipality and the citizens, between service providers and users, and also between the demands of the population and the resources available (competences, finance) to answer such demands (Gaudin, 1999).

Traditionally, the political groups who head local authorities are in charge of adopting decisions concerning the community, whereas the opportunities for community participation are very limited and confined to those administrative procedures set out by legislation or district laws. However, these decisions directly affect the conditions of the lives of individual citizens who have much to gain in participating in this decision-making process. With institutions often not allowing for an open democratic debate, certain administrations made efforts to open up new paths for participation. To do this, they have mainly mobilized 'citizen councils', an instrument for citizen participation which functions like a popular jury and which allows for the combination of contributions of technical knowledge with those based on the expression of the collective interests of the population. This technique, which was first developed in Germany, has been developed in many places in Spain, principally in the Basque Country and Catalonia (Font, 1996). The use of other instruments, like consensus conferences and deliberative investigations, are similar in nature.

Towards a new form of local political leadership: from personal power to territorial power

In this second part of our comparison, it is important to return to the alleged specific character of local political leaderships in Southern Europe, which takes the form of a very personalized political domination. Of course, vote-catching (clientelism) and '*caciquismo*' still represent important methods of legitimizing local power in Southern Europe. Certain authors have shown how this traditional approach to political life has responded to political modernization (Briquet, 1997) or, more specifically, how a strategy of vote-catching for a party founded on the relationships of horizontal power has recently developed (Cazorla, 1998). This has to do with the emergence of new ways of constructing local political leadership around territorial mobilization. The hypothesis is based on the following premise: local political leadership changes because those who make policies are confronted with new challenges. With these institutional changes, territory becomes a resource and a central constraint in the political action of local elected representatives. In order to back up this hypothesis, we aim to show how, from the beginning of the 1980s in France, as in Spain, the great figures of local power faded away. Next, it is important to emphasize the changing nature of local government through the involvement of local social networks. Finally, we insist on the role of institutional changes and territorial constraints in the formation of new political leaderships.

'Great figures' or 'major local political projects': the end of the personalization of local power?

Local political life in France, as in Spain, assures big benefits for the mayors, since policies are highly visible for the majority of citizens. In this respect, it has often been affirmed that local policies are often known due to some outstanding politician whose political career remains well established in people's minds because of the transformation of the city's history. Many significant examples can be cited: in France, Gaston Deferre in Marseille, Jacques Chaban-Delmas in Bordeaux, the Baudis family in Toulouse or Pierre Mauroy in Lille; in Spain, Enrique Tierno Galvan in Madrid, Pasqual Maragall in Barcelona, Francisco Vazquez in La Coruña and Rita Barberá in Valencia. With the decentralization policies and the creation of high-level local executives, the phenomenon of giving local power to one person took a new turn. In France, there was the emergence of the new 'strongholds' led by regional presidents, and, in Spain, there was the entrance on the national political scene of powerful presidents from autonomous communities. From this, one might have inferred a stronger personalization of local power.

The success of these great figures of local political life is reflected in the strong degree of electoral loyalty, ensuring successive terms in office.³ With decentralization, the presidentialization of local government reinforces the power of the elected representatives (Mabileau, 1993). The mayors' power therefore becomes archetypical of Southern Europe, where the politicians' influence is reinforced by their considerable ability to distribute political resources. This form of presidentialism has an institutional founding insofar as the leader of a local executive has the exclusive ability to choose executive commissions and to delegate power to manage the municipal districts.⁴ Some authors have shown that the mayor's power is, nevertheless, conditioned by the overall

3 The classical works of Jacques Lagroye about Chaban-Delmas in Bordeaux analyse perfectly the local social conditions that contribute to the construction of strongly personalized power (Lagroye, 1973).

4 Regarding this, see the remark of Olivier Borraz (1998: 15) who backs up the idea that the mayor's power is shared among his assistants.

configuration of the political system (such as the electoral system, the type of political responsibility, the degree of financial autonomy, etc), which introduces constraints on local government (Mabileau and Sorbets, 1989). Other research looks at the question of the depersonalization of the power of local elites, emphasizing the transformation of their political activity and asking what will become of the notables' power (Grémion and Muller, 1990; Alliès, 1991). This transfiguration of local power is therefore seen, particularly in France, as the result of the emergence of new ways of understanding political life (Garraud, 1989; Fontaine and Le Bart, 1994). The local elected representative can no longer behave as a professional politician, but must also show his or her entrepreneurial skills in order to rearrange local 'micro-corporatism' (Lorrain, 1993; Faure, 1994). In this new reality of local power, it almost seems that the level of skills has supplanted the personalization of local power. Christian Le Bart, in his (1992) study of the political images developed by the local elected representatives, effectively shows that a rhetorical change structured the local power. It should be pointed out that this communication policy was highly valued by the mayors in urban areas in France as well as in Spain.⁵

A change in the construction methods for local leadership can be seen to result from the emergence of 'large urban projects': policies for urban development or even the organization of big international events. Thus, in order to exist politically, mayors cannot just take pride in having a personal influence on power, used in the strictest sense of the word — power over — and founded on their social position as a notable; they must also make sure that their image is associated with major projects happening in their city. Therefore, to show their political leadership on a national, and even a European level, many mayors do not just put forward their position of power (the number of mandates in France and a position in the party in Spain), but increasingly underline their ability to be visionaries, capable of foreseeing and deciding their city's future. Hence, leadership rests on designing initiatives and being innovative about local projects. In short, it is necessary to emerge on the local political scene as an actor capable of being the promoter of political change. This transformation of the mayor's power can be seen simultaneously in Spain and in France, as is shown in the specific examples of Barcelona and Montpellier in the 1980s and 1990s. Gilles Pinson shows that in certain cases the projects are not only 'symbolic' instruments, but that they also lead to transformations in local public policies.

The case of the mayor of Barcelona, Pasqual Maragall,⁶ is particularly exemplary, showing how his political leadership was reinforced because he put in place policies for large projects. The launch of a project, such as the organization of the Olympic Games in 1992, gave the mayor of Barcelona a reason to push new policies for the transformation of the historic urban area. From this perspective, the erstwhile mayor of Barcelona has now gone down in the history of the city, alongside those who took advantage of the Universal Exhibitions of 1888 and 1929. The same logic that inspired the Olympic Games in 1992 has continued with the UNESCO-backed Forum of 2004, with the result that the city has been able to finish the urban transformation of its coastal seafront. In other less visible cases, the local administration also acts on the urban development and the promotion of territories, but more under the dependence of the private sector or other public sectors like universities. In Barcelona, the project for a 'Barcelona Aeronautics and Space' platform involved 35 companies and the three levels of Spanish administration (central, autonomous and local) in the construction of Airbus.⁷ This project was conceived by the Polytechnic University with the idea of transferring the project and its benefits to the local civil society.

5 Recent writings confirm that traces can also be found of these new forms of personalization of the municipal government in Italy, as can be seen by the experience of the mayor of Naples (Mattina and Allum, 2000).

6 Socialist mayor of Barcelona from 1983 to 1997.

7 The same sort of project was undertaken in France by the city of Toulouse for Ariane Espace.

The communication policies and the urban development projects of the mayor of Montpellier, Georges Frêche, are on a much smaller scale,⁸ even if they consist of fostering the image of a European city. The local development policy put in place was based on three complementary dimensions, linked to the mayor's image and the prestige of the city. The first dimension is the creation of 'developmentalist' tools which the new economy would have to use in order to form a town with high-tech industrial research and development facilities.⁹ The second dimension concerns an extremely varied cultural policy with the organizations of numerous festivals (*Montpellier Danse, Radio-France Internationale, Festival du Cinéma Méditerranéen*). The third dimension consisted of making large changes in the city's urban landscape by building the Opera of the Corum, the Antigone area and Port-Mariane. These priority dimensions of municipal policy have become a major factor in creating an image of the mayor as an entrepreneur in an international metropolis (Nay, 1994). With this reputation, Frêche was then able to equip the city for 10 years with a communication policy, calling it a dynamic, developing and modern city: 'Montpellier, the entrepreneurial city' (1982), 'Montpellier, the exceptional city' (1985), 'Montpellier, the town with high-tech industrial research and development facilities' (1986), 'Montpellier the Eurocity' (1990). All the same, in the case of Montpellier, the personalization of political leadership was reinforced due to political conflicts between the mayor and the chairs of the regional and departmental offices.

If it is undeniable that this strategy of creating big projects backed by an effective communication policy tends to personalize (in many ways) the power of the mayors; it grants, in turn, a distinct capacity to a territory. In order to succeed, it is essential to have a good relationship with the local administration as well as with the private sector. The candidates for leadership must be able to take advantage of their ability to generate collective actions and mobilization beyond their place of election.

An adaptive leadership: from local government to local governance

Besides a modification in the methods of personalization used by the local elected representatives, the countries of Southern Europe have also witnessed a progressive transformation of local government itself. For some writers, European cities seem to have entered into the era of urban governance (Bagnasco and Le Galès, 1997). Looked at in this perspective, the more general concept of local governance gives us the idea that it is only possible to govern through a series of networks that are free from the state's supervision (Le Galès, 1995). The result is the end of hierarchy in managing public affairs. This, then, leaves room for a new form of government which, for some, goes further than the simple definition of the doctrines of the new public management. In practice, it is defined by the establishment of new rules and patterns, such as the negotiation between diverse players forming a network or the introduction of a new strategy of territorial promotion with the interaction of different political and social players. For certain researchers, governance is defined in local political life by an ability of certain groups of 'stakeholders' to influence decision-making.¹⁰ In this context, the

8 In our opinion, Georges Frêche is one of the French mayors who has done most to try and make a fusion between his own personal image and that of the city which he has governed since 1977. The book he wrote in 1990 is a model of the genre, where he confuses his political career with the urban transformation of the city that is successively presented as a model of a 'Eurocity' or even as 'the Florence of the 21st century'.

9 This plan is made up of five specific areas: *Euromédecine* (medical research), *Agropolis* (food processing), *Antenna* (cable and TV), *Informatique*, *Héliopolis* (tourism and leisure). Back-up tools for these place were also set up, such as the Cap Alpha enterprise zone, the company of mixed economics of Montpellier (la SERM) as well as associations for canvassing and network set-ups (Nay, 1994: 48).

10 For Bovaird *et al.* (2002: 13) 'local governance involves six groups of stake holders: citizens, the voluntary sector, business, media, higher levels of government and local authorities'.

institutional barriers progressively fade out and the solution to political problems are determined by the citizens. Starting from there, the leadership of local elected representatives is characterized by a stronger interdependence, reciprocity and co-responsibility. For Heifetz (1997), leadership is the wide mobilization of those who participate in the definition of public problems, of those who look for solutions and who move ahead in order to accomplish their objectives. This approach towards leadership in the framework of local governance is therefore profoundly different from the approach where leadership emanates from the exceptional personality of the leader. It is therefore necessary to show how, in Spain, power is divided between the communities and stakeholders. How does a redistribution of functions between the administrations operate? Can one affirm that political representatives have changed their interventionist way of governing for a style more suited to the demands of society?

Several recent changes show that Spain is going in this direction, even if it is difficult to talk of a complete rupture with the political practices known in the era of local government. Indeed, local and regional public policies became important in a different way, particularly with regard to public services, often going beyond the powers which are legally attributed (an example being with the house-call services for elderly people).¹¹ At the same time, these same administrations have developed new forms of representation for interest groups in local communities, therefore defining new development strategies for an exclusive territory.¹² All the same, the fact of intervening in unknown territories obliges them to be moderate and careful. Also, we see in Spain a greater collaboration between the public and the private sector in the framework of defining and setting up public projects, as can be seen in the development of horizontal networks between the different local actors. These new networks form just as easily with the entrepreneurial sectors as with the non-profit sectors and even with the local associative ones. Along the same lines, cooperative networks emerge between the administrations on the same level, such as those which group together cities and small communities. All in all, one observes increasing interdependence between the protagonists of political life at an infra-national level. This phenomenon is confirmed by the implementation of the large projects mentioned above. We can also find an example of these new practices in the setting up of strategic plans. Indeed, if historically the city council is the motor behind this planning, making sure the necessary financial resources are found and using its own expertise, today it also integrates many other stakeholders in this process. Finally, the latter element confirms the hypothesis of local governance residing in the development of vertical or multi-level networks. This allows for the collaboration and the involvement of, and in, other political administrative levels. This type of multi-level relationship is particularly strong in the implementation of territorial policies (Brugué and Gomà, 1998) or in European policies (Brugué *et al.*, 2000).

In the French case, even if convergent elements are found, it must be pointed out that political science research has shown, from the outset, a reluctance to approach the transformation of local government through the prism of policy networks (Le Galès and Thatcher, 1995).¹³ On the other hand, in the transformation of local government, the question arises about the negotiated management of public policies (*Pôle Sud*, 1996). The new urban policies are therefore a useful empirical reality through which to observe such changes. From this viewpoint, these studies particularly insist on the new learning process of rules and norms. Certain writers emphasize that the practice of negotiated

11 In France, a first kind of new local policies showed that this phenomenon is also visible in policy areas as diverse as city policies or even local development policies (Balme *et al.*, 1998).

12 This observation also applies in France as is shown in the particular role of the French prefects in the implementation of the law about town suburbs (Baraize, 2001).

13 In this respect, the recent issue of the political science review *Pôle Sud* can be cited, being dedicated to 'Who governs the cities?', where it completely obviates this type of approach and only proposes to analyse the transformation of the governing of cities through the prism of municipal government (Joana, 2000).

relations implicitly leads to a new form of personalization of power.¹⁴ Some empirical studies comparing urban policies during the 1990s show how the implementation of partnerships between public and private actors attests to the introduction of a local governance close to the one which was found in Spain. Indeed, the work of Jérôme Dubois, which compares urban development policies carried out in Montpellier and Aix-en-Provence, shows how local power has once more found a certain degree of autonomy (1997).

Through the analysis over time of successful urban development projects, we were able to show how the state, historically the initiator of this type of policy, is progressively losing control to the advantage of local actors. In various cases, the local elected representatives who are in charge of the project strategically involve citizens in the discussion fora concerning urban development planning. In addition, partnerships between the public and private actors played a very important role. A real coalition of interest could be observed in the setting up of these policies.¹⁵ Other political analysts show that local governance leads to the emergence of a new type of personnel, such as project developers or even 'technotables',¹⁶ who play a central role in the new negotiated procedures of local public decisions. In other words, to govern by contract alone makes policy-making too technical, leading to citizen discontent and to the tactical withdrawal of the elected representatives. From this point of view, we have shown how, on the contrary, certain local elected representatives would like to affirm their leadership, taking advantage of this new situation to 'substantivize' the territory (Genieys *et al.*, 2000).

Institutional barriers and territorial constraints

Two types of political fields exist where we have been able to observe the redefinition of political leadership: the transformations of local institutions and the new relationship that the local elites have had with their territories. Of course, regarding the changes in political institutions, there is a difference between Spain and France, as in Spain the autonomous communities were created *ex nihilo* by the Constitution in 1978, whereas in France the regional institutions emerged after a long gestation period. All the same, common points can be found between France and Spain, especially in the feeble definition of the intermediary levels between the local and the regional administrations. There is the problem of institutional lay-outs, creating a political space where new political leadership linked to the construction of transversal networks can emerge.

In Spain, as in France, the administrative map is characterized by its complexity, its fragmentation and the atomization of government levels. The expression 'local government' describes more than 9,000 entities in Spain, the majority of which are municipal (more than 36,000 in France). Therefore, if the two basic levels of government are the regions and the local communities, another intermediary level exists which is occupied by the *diputaciones provinciales* and the *consejos comarcales* in Catalonia.¹⁷ These

14 Jean Pierre Gaudin (1999: 20) admits that 'contract negotiation increases the value of what one may call the inter-strategic knowledge, particularly when territorial or sectorial decompartmentalization is at stake'.

15 Jérôme Dubois (1997: 321-2) concludes with the following observation: 'if the examples of Aix and Montpellier are relevant and adaptable, the local field is therefore no more than a battlefield between the multiple players, with often different origins and interests, being carefully watched by the mayor referee with a power nevertheless linked to search of support'.

16 According to Jean Pierre Gaudin (1999: 196), these new local elites will be made up of 'the entrepreneurs of mediation' who, due to particular political resources (knowledge, expertise abilities, network linked to the personal itinerary and individual posture of the broker) have a pivotal role in the accreditation and negotiation process of public policies.

17 The number of government levels can even be larger in certain cases. Thus, for example, for a resident of Barcelona, we can identify nine administration levels: the European Union, the central state, the autonomous community, the diputacion provincial, the consejo comarcal, the metropolitan entities, the mancomunidades de municipios, the municipality and the municipal districts.

multiple divisions cause political power at the local level to be closely linked to other institutional levels and municipalities which they must involve through the creation of networks in order to offer services. From this viewpoint, the construction of municipal leadership becomes contingent on this new institutional reality. On top of that, the identity and functions of these new entities have not yet been well-defined as their levels of skill vary spatially. For example, there are presently 43 diputaciones out of a total of 50 provinces because seven of the autonomous communities are uniprovincial. All in all, the administration system suffers from a multi-level and complex superimposition without the supra-municipal elements being clearly defined, as can be seen in the case of the consejo comarcal in Barcelona and, at the same time, the configuration of *mancomunidades* (service communities) in the same metropolitan territory of Barcelona. Another example is the creation of several seaside zones in the form of a consortium to promote tourism, whereas in rural zones territorial networks were created to develop new economic zones of activity.

In France, even if there have been many institutional reforms, notably at the intermunicipal level, the emergence of a new local political leadership seems established. A number of studies have shown that it is the gap between territorial functions and pre-existing institutions that offered space for new forms of political domination (Faure, 1997; Genieys *et al.*, 2000). Indeed, in French local political life since the 1990s, these changes were linked to the generalization of the intermunicipality in an urban milieu or even in a rural milieu (the policy of 'regional contracts'). For Alain Faure (2001: 11): 'unquestionably, the local political system is going through a great territorial torment, a torment paradoxically confronted by the globalization process which also relies heavily on the dynamics of the land, the network of territories and of urban modernity'. Everything therefore happens as if the local elected representatives, carried away by these new contingencies, felt obliged to rethink the elementary basis of their political action.¹⁸ The implementation of the intermunicipal links, even if it remains 'an unfinished power' (Le Saout, 2000), is a field of investigation in which we are able to see strategies of local leadership constitution in action. In order to reach government positions in these structures, the local elected representatives must have two different roles: one concerning political management, another related to the ability to aggregate interests with the aim of project promotion (Baraize and Négrier, 2001). The study which was carried out in eight different French urban settings (the Paris suburbs, Marseille, Bordeaux, Montpellier, Béziers, Chambéry and Voiron) raises the question as to the possible links between this new institutional system and the emergence of a new type of local elected representative. Without really being able to decide on an answer, the study showed that the extension of the power of local elected representatives is not a given outcome, no matter what the political tactics already in place are. From this viewpoint, the case of the city suburbs in Montpellier is paradigmatic in the sense that George Frêche's victory turned into a half-failure (Négrier, 2001).¹⁹ The creation of metropolitan zones also allows us to see how the mayors of these urban communities try, in the context of international economic competition, to build up a new form of leadership. In comparing the case of Bologna (Italy) and Lyon (France), French researchers analysed how the mayors of these large cities turn into metropolitan political entrepreneurs playing the double role of 'the politician and the technocrat' (Jouve and Lefèvre, 1999). Their comparative sociological study of the leaders in question, Mr Noir and W. Vitali, ends in the following way:

18 Olivier Borraz (2000: 25), in a review article on the redefinition of local government frameworks, wonders about the necessity of an analytical slackening between the behaviour of the elected representatives and the institutions to which they belong.

19 The initial project defended by the mayor of Montpellier was made up of 48 districts. Contested by the mobilization of local elected representatives, the project was brought before the *Conseil d'Etat* which rejected it. The project that was supported in the end involves 38 districts.

These urban elites stand apart due to their questioning of the traditional legitimacy gained by the parties, and due to their search for legitimacy that can be qualified as territorial. Such legitimacy is increasingly based on public policies that are implemented in specific local contexts. For these new elites, it is necessary to make their territory a collective player for which they will have the leadership, and in order to do this they continue integrating the local political culture from which they themselves are partly the product (*ibid.*: 193–4).

In our work on local elected representatives facing the development of new policies, we analysed how some decision-makers took advantage of this political situation to impose their leadership on a given territory (Genieys, 1997; 1999; Genieys and Smith, 1998). Based on several studies carried out in the field, such as on the ‘Cathare Country’ (in the département of Aude) and ‘the Baronies in the Drome region’ (in the département of the Drôme), we showed how certain local elected representatives (mayors of small communities and/or departmental councillors) were able to mobilize and even invent new forms of public policy to reinforce the territory. In the cases we studied, and where European policies play a particular role, the local elected representatives, confronted with the multiplicity of the local government institutions, innovate in two ways: by creating public decision-making networks that allow their decisions to be remembered in areas beyond their district; and by building references to the historical past of these territories. With regard to the construction of a local development project about the imaginary territory of the Cathars, the analysis of the actions of elected representatives allows us to see how a local elected representative imposes his leadership through new political practices. The relationship with the administrative departments decentralized from the state, but also with the local administrations, changes by having a global approach to local public policies (Genieys, 1999). The local elected representative is in a position to assert his or her leadership by reinforcing the role of the territory and by playing on the institutional ‘interstices’ which appeared with the process of decentralization in France.

In conclusion, despite still very strong institutional forces, it can be said that, particularly in the Spanish and French regions, there has been some convergence in the exercise of power at the local level. Indeed, our comparative study of the transformation of urban government practices emphasizes the current similarities of the two contexts. It seems that in France, as in Spain, the institutional transformation of local political life has created different roles: on the one hand, a barrier has emerged, especially in terms of the clarity of the system, while on the other, a window of opportunity has opened up for local elected representatives looking for new ways to legitimize their power. But, as Robert Starratt (1993: 4) has pointed out, we can all agree that these candidates for leadership find themselves confronted with a ‘real authenticity challenge’ as long as their intervention must answer the need for identity diffused in the heart of the present local political life. The mobilization of new local political decision-making networks, the work on territorial representations, and the promotion of project policies progressively contribute to the depersonalization of the power of local leaders. It is because of this that local political power is currently being redefined in Southern Europe. From this standpoint, it is no longer the search for personalized power, or even for vote-catching, linked to the end of a state institutionalization process (Grémion, 1976; Allières, 1982) which dominates in these two countries. It is rather the ability that certain leaders have to add value to them through public policy. This innovation, in terms of constructing political action, is contingent on the widening of the geopolitical framework (European Union, economic globalization). In this framework, territorial restructuring of the state is now underway through the mediation of territorial leadership.

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