Local political leaders in city government are experiencing an unprecedented period of austerity through which they must navigate and at the same time, develop the strength and resilience of their communities. The current period of austerity while severe is not unique for city leaders to experience and austerity is a periodic feature of the local political landscape (Wolman, 1986, Dollery, et al, 2006, Lowndes and Pratchett, 2012). Leading cities through austerity, however, will be a key focus for local political leaders for the foreseeable future which means they must develop and adopt policies within a context of uncertainty and change (see, John 1999). Central government not only imposes austerity policies that effect its own resources, which can have an effect on local government indirectly, it also can and does, impose austerity policies directly on local government as well – either as a response to global economic downturn by reducing central support for local government, or as part of an ideological policy approach. It is therefore vital for us to understand how city leaders, across Europe, develop strategies for leading through times of austerity.

Austerity is not the simple context within which city leaders operate, it is the dominate policy framework which shapes the way in which city leaders can respond to issues arising from the complex governing networks within which they must operate (Kooiman, 2003, Stoker, 2004). City leaders must manage the varying pressures of urbanisation, globalisation, Europeanisation and demands for increasing and more complex service provision (Denters and Rose, 2005). They must also respond to demands from communities for greater participation within local decision-making and greater responsiveness from political leaders to their views and opinions (Denters and Rose, 2005). These factors are not a new concern for city leaders, rather than have formed long-standing features of the environment within which city leaders have had to operate and pre-date the current economic crisis. But as a result of the global economic downturn city leaders face these factors with reduced resources and capacity. In these circumstances, the political choices that local political leaders make matter far more than ever. The effectiveness of the response from local elected political leaders to the pressures for reductions in public provision at a time of growing demand will depend on the strategies they develop in an already established and long-standing situation of operating in complex and evolving governance networks (see, Stoker, 2011). In such networks city leaders must wield influence rather than power over a range of external network organisations and partners.

Crucial to understanding how elected city leaders are responding to austerity and for drawing lessons from their activities is to recognise that city leaders, across Europe, operate within differing constitutional settlements. The pattern of relationships between central and local government in any given national context and constitutional framework within which it sits, means that local government is granted differing powers, responsibilities, roles and functions, which reflect its purpose and position in a nation’s governing system (Goldsmith and Page, 2010, Swianiewicz, 2010, passim). Moreover, historical, political, social, economic and cultural factors alongside pressures for change from other tiers of government and the public shape, the nature
of the responses available to city leaders to be able to govern effectively to tackle austerity pressures. The strategies city leaders develop to tackle problems associated with and shaped by austerity will therefore themselves be shaped and bounded by the nature of the local government system within which they operate. Understanding the similarities and distinctions between the way city leaders respond to austerity – taking into account party political ideology (see Ware, 1996, Back, 2003, Copus, 2004, Leach, 2006, Guerin and Kerrouche, 2008, Egner, Sweeting and Klok, 2013) – set within their own national governing context, will help promote policy transfer, within and between local government in both a national and international setting (see, Borraz and John, 2004).

In addition to the vertical power relationships above, the effectiveness of any city leader’s strategies will also rest on horizontal power relationships and also on their own institutional position within local government. Mouritzen and Svara (2002) make a distinction between the institutional positions of the: ‘ceremonial mayor’, ‘committee system’, ‘collegiate system’ and ‘strong mayor’ and these types of political leader wield different horizontal powers / influence and have different horizontal relationships. These horizontal factors shape the leaders responses to austerity and other policy problems which will depend on how leaders have attained and maintain their position (appointed, indirectly elected, directly elected, with a fixed mandate or open for recall) and whether or not they have to share executive power with others. Where leaders have substantial institutional leeway in horizontal relationships we would expect to see the specific polices and responses of city leaders matter more than where they have to share power with others. Moreover, it is possible to test this notion in countries, such as England, where there is more than one model of political leadership: directly elected mayors and indirectly elected council leaders.

Categorisations of cross-European local government systems, provide a framework within which to explore the effectiveness, or otherwise, of the political strategies developed by city leaders in response to co austerity (Page and Goldsmith, 1987, Hesse and Sharpe, 1991, Goldsmith and Page, 2010, Swianiewicz, forthcoming). Thus, local government occupies a varied and dynamic position in the governance of European states with differing and developing roles, powers, functions and responsibilities, all of which shape the way in which city leaders respond to the pressures of austerity and interact within governing networks locally, regionally and nationally. City leaders in their turn have different leeway within different local government systems to be able to make a difference.

The workshop will explore how the varying roles, powers and constitutional status of local government and the powers and functions granted to it and to city leaders, affect the latter’s ability to govern and steer communities through austerity. It will also explore the strategies leaders develop to influence the activities and policies of a range of players within complex governing networks – individually and collectively in this changing environment. It will also explore and account for how far different local government powers and roles help or hinder the process of city leadership engagement in governance networks. The link between austerity and governance is thus a crucial part of the workshop. Austerity puts pressure on the default of in-house solutions resulting in local government looking for alternative providers and new partners in promoting and pursuing political solutions to policy problems. Moreover, in periods of sustained austerity, policy learning, policy communication and an understanding of the strengths and weakness of policy transfer as a process, can enhance organisational and

In times of austerity and given the increasing complexity of governance networks, the issue of policy diffusion and learning as a strategy for effective leadership becomes increasingly prominent. In ensuring that city leaders learn and develop from the experience of other city leaders, across Europe, we need to look closely at the system similarities between countries, as policies are more likely to be transferred between countries that share common features (Peters 1997, Evans 2009). But, it is also necessary to consider system distinctions, as well as similarities, to see if these are barriers to the transfer of learning between cities leaders in different European countries or not. It is necessary to consider system similarities and differences and the effect they have on policy transfer as the relevance of system characteristics is underlined by contemporary policies, such as New Public Management and multi-level governance, which have been adopted in local government systems across Europe (Kersting and Vetter 2003, Denters and Rose 2005, Pollitt and Bouckaert 2011).

Thus, the linkages must be drawn between what makes a policy innovation introduced by one city leader – or a group of leaders - transfer within the same country and to other countries and what restricts transference – between and within countries? That analysis leads us to consider the more specific processes involved and what strategies are used by city leaders in developing policy solutions in times of austerity, that transfer to other settings and what explanations exist for the transfer, or otherwise, of policy initiatives between city leaders.

The workshop therefore has four distinct, but inter-linked dimensions which papers will explore:

1. The strategies that city leaders develop to steer their cities and communities though periods of sustained austerity: a policy dimension
2. The use, by city leaders of their elected office to engage with, influence and shape governance networks: a political dimension
3. The national constitutional status and powers of local government and the institutional position of city leaders within it and how they help or hinder them in responding to austerity: a constitutional dimension
4. The ability to learn, disseminate learning and adopt learning from other settings and experiences: a learning transfer dimension

The papers presented at the workshop will be asked to address a number of questions (though not all in each paper) which reflect these dimensions and through them assess the success or failure of city leadership, in various contexts, in navigating and governing through austerity.

Papers will be asked to address and explore the following:

- how city leaders engage in governance networks to shape policy responses to austerity and pursue economic growth;
- what strategies city leaders devise to enhance governing capacity to solve complex issues in times of austerity;
- how city leaders employ a democratic mandate to construct coalitions around policy problems;
- what factors stimulate or hinder the influence and effectiveness of city leaders in governance networks?
- what strategies do leaders develop to enhance their influence in
The workshop builds on three specific strands of research and publications and is designed to foster integration of those different bodies of work so as to provide a fuller framework within which to explore the contemporary policy problems, solutions and settings of city leadership across Europe.

The first strand develops from the work of Baldersheim, Daloz, 2003; Haus, Heinelt and Stewart, 2004; Lowndes and Leach, 2004; Borraz and John, 2004; Berg and Rao (2005); Back, 2005; Haus; and Sweeting, 2006, all of whom conceptualised and categorised developments in local political leadership, but not set within the specific policy problem of sustained austerity. In addition, empirical studies have explored the influences on local political leader’s ability to bring about change and to shape their cities and communities and how vertical and horizontal power linkages affect that ability – but again, not within a specific policy environment (Steyvers, et al 2008; Copus, 2006 and 2011; Steyvers, forthcoming 2014).

The second strand of the workshop aims to strengthen and develop from the literature on local political leadership, in the first strand, so as to fully and specifically deal with the effectiveness or otherwise of city leaders within different constitutional settings. Drawing the linkages and lessons from differing systems is something which the research and literature has not yet fully achieved. Indeed, the literature that categorises local government systems does not then go onto relate the effects of the systemic and constitutional / political differences on the ability of city leaders, or other political leaders, to deal with policy problems or learn from their colleague in other countries (see, Page and Goldsmith, 1987; Hesse and Sharpe, 1991; Goldsmith and Page, 2010; Baldersheim and Rose, 2010; Swianiewicz, forthcoming).

The third strand by building on the work of the policy transfer literature and the critiques of that literature, the workshop will add a valuable dimension to how we understand the pressures and challenges faced by elected city leaders and how they learn and pass on learning. It will also develop a framework within which to understand the specific policy learning requirements of elected politicians and the barriers and stimulus to city leaders transferring policy and learning and in being open to adopt, adapt and experiment with new ideas from other settings. Specifically the workshop will aim to assess the veracity of claims that transfer between systems with similar characteristics are more prone to policy transfer initiatives than others (Peters 1997; Evans 2009). Moreover, by deploying the ideas around policy transfer and diffusion through the workshop questions and dimensions above, to the specifics of austerity and the powers of city leaders, the workshop will explain the spread and adoption of policy ideas from one context to another (Marsh and Sharman 2009; Stone 2012).

Despite its richness, the literature on policy transfer and diffusion is weak with regard to explaining how transfer occurs and why policies are transferred to one context and not to another (see, Stone 2012; Benson and
Jordan 2011, Marsh and Sharman, 2009). An important addition to be made by the workshop is in its focus on differing systemic city leadership powers set in governance networks in times of austerity. By taking such an approach explanations can be developed as to why some policies and practices of city leaders transfer and why others do not. It does this because the impact of austerity produces an urgency to learning for city leaders and for developing successful approaches and avoiding the unsuccessful. Thus, conditions are created that are favourable to transfer and which expose reasons why it does and does not occur more fully. Finally, by focusing on specific political actors a range of issues will be uncovered that relate to, political ideology and beliefs, party politics, single party or coalition ruling administrations and oppositions, inter and intra-party dynamics and personalities in local politics, that can give insights to policy transfer and diffusion.

The workshop will attract scholars interested in the wider fields of multilevel governance, policy studies, political leadership and comparative politics. With regard to the specific focus on local governance and the role of political leadership it is particularly suited for the members of the ECPR standing group on Local Government and Politics and expert and/or standing groups of related organisations such as EGPA, EURA, IPSA, APSA or UAR. The research also has close links to the comparative research of the Eurolocal group and the current project ‘political leaders in European Cities’ (follow-up research on mayoral leadership in 2014 in approximately 15 countries after a first round of data collection in 2004). Given our own academic networks and knowledge of the appropriate field of research we are confident that the following below will be interested in the subject of the workshop (the list is a strong representation from established researchers, early career researchers and PhD students). We would also like to attract participants that are representative of the European political science community with regard to other relevant dimensions (gender, geographical location of institution, etc.).

Academics and researchers and are likely to be drawn from amongst the following:

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>Adam Gendzwill</td>
<td>Warsaw University</td>
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<td>Anders Lidstrom</td>
<td>Umea University, Sweden</td>
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<td>Angelica Vetter</td>
<td>University of Stuttgart, Germany</td>
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<td>Annick Magnier</td>
<td>University of Florence, Italy</td>
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<td>Audun Offerdal</td>
<td>University of Bergen, Norway</td>
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<td>Bas Denters</td>
<td>University of Twente, Netherlands</td>
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<td>Björn Egner</td>
<td>Darmstadt University of Technology, Germany</td>
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<td>Carlos Alba</td>
<td>Autonomous University of Madrid, Spain</td>
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<td>Daniel Kuebler</td>
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<td>David Karlsson</td>
<td>University of Gothenburg, Sweden</td>
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<td>David Sweeting</td>
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<td>Dieter Bruneel</td>
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<td>Eric Kerrouche</td>
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<td>Filip De Rynck</td>
<td>Ghent University College, Belgium</td>
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<td>Gabor Soos</td>
<td>University of Budapest, Hungary</td>
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<td>Gilles Pinson</td>
<td>University of Saint-Etienne, France</td>
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The workshop welcomes theoretical papers aimed at conceptualising the role of city leaders, across local government systems in Europe. It also seeks papers which deploy empirical analyses of the role of city leaders, the institutional arrangements within which they operate, the changing context of local government with which they have to contend and the complex governance arena within which they must interact with others. Empirical papers should aim to apply their data to theoretical models designed to illuminate and dissect the multi-faceted roles of city leaders; papers which examine and explore developments in the powers, process and approaches of city leadership to up-date and improve existing frameworks will be particularly welcomed. The proposers also welcome case-study papers and papers that present a historical analysis of the developing context and role of...
city leadership within times of austerity and which analyse the institutional and constitutional arrangements within which they conduct their activities. Papers aiming to address methodological concerns, particularly those related to comparative study, are also welcome. For the purposes of the workshop ‘comparative’ will mean: firstly, comparisons between countries; and, secondly, comparison between different levels of local government within countries – district municipalities and counties / upper and lower tier local government where such systems exist.

Funding:

Most participants can be expected to be able to attract funding from their own national research agencies. The following bodies have a record of supporting academic workshops and conferences of the nature of the ECPR joint sessions and for supporting the development of young emerging academics and researchers and so will be approached for funding support: Economic and Social Research Council; Leverhulme Trust; Rowntree Foundation; Joint University Council, Public Administration Committee; Political Studies Association, British Academy, the regional Funds for Scientific Research in Belgium, the University Foundation or the Special Research Funds of the various Universities.

Biographical notes:

Colin Copus is Professor of Local Politics and Director of the Local Governance Research Unit in the Department of Politics and Public Policy, De Montfort University, England. His academic interests are central-local relationships and the constitutional status of local government, local party politics, local political leadership, local policy development and the changing role of the councillor. Most recent relevant publications include: Copus, C., D. Sweeting and M. Wingfield (2013), Repoliticising and redemocratising local democracy and the public realm: why we need councillors and councils, Policy & Politics 43: 3,389–408


Kristof Steyvers is Associate Professor at the Department of Political Science of Ghent University (Belgium). His research is conducted in the context of the Centre for Local Politics and the Urban Policy Research Centre at the University. His research focus is on local political leadership, elections and parties at the local level, local government reform, urban politics and policy and comparative local politics.

Most recent relevant publications include:


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