

GERMANY: ADMINISTRATION MEETS COMMUNITY

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1. Introduction

In Germany the role of the citizen is a topical issue. Following the reunification of Germany, there have been several indications of *Politikverdrossenheit*. Polls show that people have become more dissatisfied with the political system. Not only in the Eastern, but also in the Western part of Germany, although here to a lesser extent, dissatisfaction with politics and political distrust seem to have grown (Pickel and Walz 1997). In connection with this, local government may be of particular relevance. Local government can provide a context for closing the growing gap between citizens and the central government.

In the first part the structure of German local government is discussed. The second part focuses on the relations between citizens and local government. Two cities have been studied, namely Nürtingen and Leipzig. Both cities have been awarded a prize in a competition around the theme *Bürgerorientierte Kommune*, organized by the *Bertelsmann Stiftung*. Experiences in these cities may show us new strategies to involve citizens in (local) public administration.

Nürtingen

Nürtingen has almost 40,000 inhabitants and is located near Stuttgart. The town has a rather homogeneous population and is economically prosperous. The state Baden-Württemberg is fairly affluent, as is the town of Nürtingen. The unemployment rate was 4.3% in 2000 (Website Statistisches Landesamt Baden-Württemberg), which is far below the German average and even for the Western part of Germany relatively low. As to local politics, the Christian Democratic Party is the largest party on the local council, where it holds 12 of the 37 seats. The Social Democratic Party (SPD) has 7 seats. A large group of independent candidates holds another 9 seats. The Green Party and the liberal Free Democratic Party (FDP) co-operate with local parties and, by doing so, have acquired 3 and 2 seats respectively. A local party focusing on young people is the *Junge Bürger Nürtingen*. This party occupies 3 seats. Finally, the extreme right-wing *Republikaner* are represented by 1 member (Web-site community of Nürtingen, September 2000).

Leipzig

The second city under study is the city of Leipzig, a *Kreisfreie Stad* situated in Sachsen, in the former German Democratic Republic. The city has almost 500.000 inhabitants. Ten years after the unification of Germany, there are a great deal of economic problems in Leipzig. Most importantly, there is a lot of unemployment. In 2000, 18.5% of the population was unemployed (Web-site community of Leipzig, September 2000). Regarding local politics, there are three large political parties: the Christian Democrats, the Social Democrats and the Democratic Socialists (PDS). In the council (71 seats) these parties have 23, 20 and 19 seats respectively. The Green Party (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen) has 5 seats. Die 'Bürgerfraktion', a combination of the liberals and two small local parties, has 4 seats.

2. Local government in Germany

a. Local government: history and contemporary administrative structure

The basic outline of the structure of local government was laid down after the Napoleonic Wars. Prussia's prime minister Von Stein gave more power to the institutions of local government, which became fairly autonomous. Von Stein created, as Gunlick notes, 'a national system of well ordered and state supervised local government that enjoyed considerable autonomy in an otherwise authoritarian framework of central administration' (Peters 1993: 101).

The most important administrative body was the local council. It was elected by property owners and salaried professionals. These councils had 'unrestricted power to decide on all matters of the commonwealth of the municipality' (Wollman 2000: 44). This council elected an executive board. The board had to handle local matters and could be put in charge of carrying out duties for the national government. Most other German states followed the example of Prussia and implemented comparable charters; consequently, Von Stein's model became predominant in the German states.

The aim of Von Stein's policy was to 'modernise the outdated state structure' and, more importantly, 'to invigorate society' (Wollman 2000: 44). It was hoped that the 'sleeping energy of passive subjects' would be awoken (Norton 1994: 238). The local autonomy implemented by Von Stein was aimed at educating citizens. By engaging citizens in the local administration, the quality and therefore the strength of society was hoped to be improved.

After the Second World War, West Germany adopted a federal constitution with four layers of government: (1) the federal government (*Bund*), (2) the governments of the states (*Länder*), (3) the regional governments of the counties (*Landkreisen*) and (4) the local governments of the municipalities (*Gemeinden*). Within the *Länder* the *Landkreisen* have a generally supervisory function over the *Gemeinden*. The larger cities are exempted from this rule. These larger municipalities have the status of county; they are *Kreisfreie Gemeinden* that perform both the functions of the local and regional levels of government. The cities of Hamburg, Bremen and Berlin also have the functions of *Länder*. They are *Gemeinde*, *Kreis* and *Land* in one. Within large cities, functions of local government are often delegated to districts (*Bezirke*).

Within this framework, the German constitution allows the municipalities a high degree of autonomy. This is regulated by Article 28 of the federal constitution. According to Article 28, local governments have the right 'to regulate all matters of the local community in their own responsibility within the frame of the law' (Wollman 2000: 47). However, most local responsibilities have been delegated by either the federal or the central government. With respect to these responsibilities, the municipalities mostly act as administrative agents. In some fields, such as public health, the organisation of elections, taxation and building, local government is closely supervised (Peters 1993: 102). In other fields, such as public utilities, public transport, health care, fire services, housing and road maintenance, basic standards are laid down in law, but within these limits, municipalities can follow their own policy (Peters 1993: 102).

The structure of local finance is also determined in greater part by the *Land*. The municipalities derive some 35 % of their income from a share in the federal and state tax revenues. Some 50 % of their income comes from local taxes, fees and charges. The most important source of the second category is the business tax, the revenues of which the municipalities have to share with the *Länder*.

In West Germany, the number of municipalities was strongly reduced in the 1960s and 1970s. In the 1960s there were almost 24,000 municipalities, whose boundaries originated in the nineteenth century or earlier (Wollman 2000: 48). This situation gave cause for reform to increase the efficiency of local government. In the northern part of Germany, larger municipalities were created. In Nordrheinland-Westfalen, for example, the municipalities now have on average no less than 43,000 inhabitants. In Southern Germany more and smaller municipalities were allowed to retain their own mayor and local council. However, they have had to share their administration with other small municipalities (Wollman 2000: 48). As a consequence of the reforms, the number of municipalities was reduced from 24,371 to 8,512. The number of *Kreisfreie Gemeinden* was slightly reduced from 141 to 91 (Grunow 1991: 74, OECD 1997: 180). In 1992, 6,403 East German municipalities were added to this number, 24 of which were non-county municipalities (OECD 1997 :180).

A characteristic of German local governments is that, within the different *Länder*, different forms of local institutions are found. In West Germany, the forms of local government vary between the different occupational zones of the postwar period, and in most cases they reflect the structure of local government in the country that once occupied the zone. In the former German Democratic Republic, a completely different system of local government was implemented. This country became a 'centralised democracy', as it called itself. Local government lost most of its competence (Staatscommissie dualisme en lokale democratie 1999: 133).

b. Administrative structure and local politics

A municipality has a local council elected by the population. The election system is based upon proportional representation and people vote for party lists. Besides these common characteristics, a wide range of different administrative structures can be observed in the German states. Each *Land* has its own structure of local government. However, some patterns can be observed. These patterns are related to the different occupational zones in West Germany after the Second World War. Four models of local government can be distinguished.

The *Norddeutsche Ratsverfassung* is related to the English governmental structure. It is predominant in the part of Germany that was once occupied by the British and to which Nordrheinland-Westfalen and Niedersachsen belonged. Patterned on the Anglo-Saxon tradition, a strict separation is made between politics and administration. There is a mayor (*Bürgermeister*), who chairs the local council, and a chief executive official, the city manager (*Staddirektor*), who heads the local civil service. Both officials are elected by the local council (Staatscommissie dualisme en lokale democratie 1999: 134).

In the *Süddeutsche Ratsverfassung* the mayor is not chosen by the local council, but by the population. The mayor has a great number of responsibilities. He or she chairs the local council and all committees, leads the administration and is the official representative of the municipality. This type of local government can be found in

Baden-Württemberg and Bayern. When electing the local council, voters have more than one vote. They can vote for different parties and can give at most three votes to one candidate. The local council cannot dismiss the mayor and the mayor can not call new elections for the local council.

This form of local government is closely related to the *Bürgermeisterverfassung* which can be found in Rheinland-Pfalz, Saarland and the villages of Schleswig Holstein. In this *Land*, the mayor also has many responsibilities that he or she can perform independently of the local council. Originally the mayor was not chosen by the population though, but by the local council.

In the *Magistratsverfassung*, the hierarchical relationship between aldermen (*Beigeordneten*) and mayor, predominant in the other forms of local government, is absent. In this type of local government, which is found in Hessen and the cities of Schleswig-Holstein, the aldermen and mayor form a *college*. The mayor does chair the council of aldermen, but is regarded a *primus inter pares*. The power of the mayor is limited further, because he or she does not chair the local council. Rather, the local council chooses its own chairperson (Staatscommissie dualisme en lokale democratie 1999: 134).

In the 1990s some major reforms in local government took place in all (West) German *Länder*, partly following the new municipal charter that was adopted in the first democratically elected parliament of the German Democratic Republic (after 'the Wende' in 1989). The reforms included the introduction of a directly elected mayor and the possibility of a local referendum.

The current political situation varies across large and small municipalities. After the creation of the German Federal Republic, an attempt was made to depoliticise local government. In most municipalities independent candidates and weakly organised local associations competed with each other in local elections. This situation still exists in many small municipalities in the countryside. In the larger urban municipalities, the national political parties, and sometimes local political groups, have come to dominate the political process. Usually the mayor is a member of or sympathises with the ruling party. Nevertheless, competition between Social Democrats and Christian Democrats is mostly absent and large coalitions of the two parties are often formed. In cases these coalitions are not formed, the differences in policy between municipalities led by Social Democrats or Christian Democrats are small or non-existent (Peters 1993: 112-113).

The situation in the Eastern part of Germany is less diverse. After 'the Wende', the East German government implemented a law that allowed for a high degree of local autonomy. By means of this law, the centralism of the East German state was abolished. Later, after the reunification with West Germany, the German *Länder* in the East adopted the *Süddeutsche Ratsverfassung* (Staatscommissie dualisme en lokale democratie 1999: 134-5).

3. Local government – citizens relations

a. General developments

In the German state tradition the citizen is viewed not as an atomistic individual, but as 'a member of an essentially organic society that exists in a more or less formalised

relationship to the state' (Loughlin and Peters 1997: 48). The concept of the commune (*Kommune*) represents the idea of an organic society or community at the local level. In this tradition, we see strong and recurrent attention for the involvement of citizens in municipal affairs.

Certain forms of citizen participation are or were originally linked to the specific constitution of the *Land*. For example, in the *Süddeutsche Ratsverfassung* several direct democratic instruments are laid down (Staatscommissie dualisme en lokale democratie 1999). Important issues have to be discussed in a citizen assembly or conference (*Bürgerversammlung*). A citizen assembly has to be convened by the mayor once a year, or if at least 10% of the electorate requested this. Furthermore, citizens have the right to ask the municipal council to address a certain issue. This right can also be directed against a decision that has already been made by the council or the council committee. The request has to be supported by at least 30 % of the electorate. Finally, there is the possibility of a referendum. A referendum can be initiated either by (a two-thirds majority of) the municipal council or by the citizenry (at least 15% of the electorate).

Various institutional means for participation were introduced in different periods of local government reform. The social and political activism in the 1960s and early 1970s contributed to the institutionalisation of various models for public involvement (*Bürgerbeteiligung*). Rucht (1982) describes six popular models:

1. *Advokatenplanung*: officials act as 'counsel' for a district or neighbourhood;
2. *Planungsbeirat*: an advisory committee for planning issues, composed of interested lay people;
3. *Planungszelle*: an aselect jury of citizens that addresses an issue for a short period only;
4. *Bezirksverwaltung*: territorial decentralisation to district committees or councils;
5. *Bürgerforum*: an institutional platform for discussions between the city administration and the citizenry;
6. *Gemeinwesenarbeit*: the facilitation of self-help activities for socially and economically weak groups.

Most of these models can be seen as facilitating 'deliberative democracy', in that they further public deliberation between citizens and officials about public issues. In the early 1990s various forms of 'plebiscitary democracy' were introduced, in which the citizens, as voters, have a direct say in public decision-making. In this period, the binding local referendum was laid down in the constitution of all East German and West German *Länder*. This was stimulated by the developments in East Germany. Inspired by the democratic experience of the overthrow of the communist regime, the first democratically elected Parliament of the German Democratic Republic included the referendum in its municipal charter (Wollmann, 2000). Also, the directly elected mayor was introduced, although this was partly inspired by managerial considerations regarding the strong mayor model (Wollmann, 2000). Some *Länder*, particularly in the East, provided for the possibility of the recall of a mayor by means of a local referendum.

In the course of the 1990s, new managerial steering conceptions (New Public Management) became more prominent in German local government. Within the NPM

perspective, the citizen is primarily seen as a consumer or a client, not a political actor. Initiatives to involve citizens are inspired by a marketing approach. According to Wollmann (2000), the NPM approach has been mainly employed for cost-cutting purposes. It remains to be seen whether NPM in German local government will lead to a shift in government-citizen relations, which in the last decades have been strongly orientated to the involvement of citizens as political participants.

b. Nürtingen

Administrative structure and local politics

The executive of Nürtingen consists of a first mayor (*Oberbürgermeister*), a mayor (*Bürgermeister*) and an alderman (*Technischer Beigeordneter*). Each of these officials is responsible for a range of policy fields and heads a *Dezernat* in which the departments involved in these policy fields are combined. Of the three officials, the mayor is the only one official who is affiliated to a political party, namely the Christian Democrats. The two other officials, the first mayor and the alderman, are not members of a political party.

Nürtingen belongs to the *Süddeutsche Ratsverfassung*. The first mayor is chosen by the people for a period of eight years. The first mayor has a rather strong position. This strong position not only follows from his electoral mandate, he or she also has a lot of power. First of all, the first mayor is the chairman and a member of the local council and all of its committees. Apart from preparing and chairing the meetings of the local council, he can also take part in the discussion. Second, like the first mayor, the mayor and the alderman, he directs his own *Dezernat*. Third, he represents the municipality, for instance, during important negotiations.

The mayor and the alderman are chosen by the local council for a period of eight years, but they are not members of the local council. They can take part in discussions, but only have an advisory role (*Staatscommissie dualisme en lokale democratie 2000*). The members of the local council are chosen by the population for a period of five years. The council handles all matters that are not the explicit tasks of the first mayor or that have been delegated to him by the local council. Moreover, the local council monitors the execution of its decisions by the mayors and alderman. They can install committees to prepare decisions and can even delegate their power to these committees. The members of the committees are chosen by and from the local council.

A communitarian approach

In the 1980s, just as in most other West German communities, Nürtingen introduced various formal rights that enable people to participate in local politics. These rights include the right to take part in planning procedures, to petition the local council and participate in council meetings.

In the 1990s, Nürtingen added several policies aimed at increasing the involvement of citizens in local affairs. People are stimulated to join all kinds of associations and active citizens can take part in decision-making procedures. The representatives of the local government in Nürtingen with whom we spoke regard the building of a new town hall in the early nineties as the start of these initiatives. Originally, the new town hall was meant to house all the different departments of the municipality. However, the council feared that this would lead to isolation from the local community. It was therefore decided that the local library should be housed in the new town hall as well. Furthermore, a community centre for citizens, both young and old, was installed.

The building of the new town hall also gave rise to initiatives to involve citizens in local affairs. In line with communitarian ideology, these initiatives were aimed at improving the quality of local society. The town was to become a community where the people could pursue their common goals and be active in public life. While globalisation and individualisation cause people to become ever more separated from one another, Nürtingen wants to offer a sense of community and an environment where people feel they belong to. This ideology lies at the heart of the problem definition as formulated by the mayor. Citizens are therefore not approached as customers (*Kunden*) of an otherwise anonymous local government, but treated as actors (*Akteure*) in a vibrant local community. The slogan of the new approach, 'Organizing community, involving citizens, connecting generations', reflects this approach. The communitarian approach seems to find wide support in the different political parties in Nürtingen. The primary aim of increasing local participation does not seem to be to improve government policy, but the quality of life in the local community.

Initiatives

Several projects have been initiated to reach these goals. In these projects, the emphasis lies on new methods which go beyond 'classical' forms of citizen participation. The community centre (*Bürgertreff*), located in the town hall, is the nerve centre of citizen participation. The co-ordinator of this centre is a social worker with a career as an activist. In the centre, several citizen initiatives take place. People can participate in local affairs or just come to have a good time. Not the results of local participation, but the intrinsic value of participation itself is of central importance. The importance attached to self-governance also shows in the fact that the *Bürgertreff* gets its own budget, which may be spent in whatever way the active citizens desire. The *Bürgertreff* also functions as the volunteers centre of Nürtingen.

Since 1996 a yearly social conference (*Sozialkonferenz*) is organised. During these conferences, social policies are discussed. The meetings do not have the traditional form of a discussion in which people listen to an expert and react to the expert's suggestions. Rather the meeting and the conference are prepared together with citizens. People can also decide upon the subjects to be discussed. The aim of the conference is to formulate projects that may help to solve the problems detected during the conference. After the conference, these projects are further developed by experts and citizens together, but are decided upon by the local council. Moreover, the citizens also co-operate with experts during the implementation of projects.

In the different neighbourhoods so-called future work groups (*Zukunftswerkstätten*) are active. The work groups consist of a few members of the local council, representatives of the church and other associations as well as people from the neighbourhood. The work groups are meant to be representative of the neighbourhood. They come together and discuss the future of the neighbourhood. All kinds of ideas are brought forward. For example, neighbourhoods may wish better traffic connections with the city centre, a community centre or childcare centres. The policy suggestions these discussions yield are taken to the local council, which decides which of them will be implemented. Certainly, not all ideas are adopted. Some of them are too costly, while practical considerations make that others cannot be implemented. Nevertheless, according to the mayor, this does not lead to

frustrations, because the whole process and the reactions of the local council makes people realise that their ideas are taken seriously.

In order to promote local participation, an attempt is made to stimulate the development of a social culture of participation. People have to have the feeling that their participation in local affairs is appreciated. Several measures are taken to achieve this aim. First, every year the local council gives citizens who are active in voluntary work a passport (*Freiwilligenpas*) with all kinds of tickets. These tickets can be used to go to a theatre performance, the swimming pool or other activities. With the tickets, the council wants to show its appreciation for the volunteers. Moreover, school-children are stimulated to become active. They get a diary, the '*Tu was Tagebuch*', in which they can write down what kind of activities they are involved in. At the end of the year the children get a certificate for their activities.

Small and big democracy

Tensions can arise between the participation of citizens and the wishes of the elected members of the local council or the professionals in the local administration. In this respect, a distinction is made between 'small' and 'big' forms of democracy. Small democracy (*Kleine Demokratie*) refers to the activities of citizens in the different projects, such as the social conference or the future work groups. These projects are aimed at the formulation of problems and policy proposals.

After the small democracy has generated ideas, the big democracy (*Grosse Demokratie*) decides which of these will be implemented. The final decision remains with the big democracy of the local government, but many ideas are generated in the small democracy process of citizen involvement. The politicians have a limited role in the small democracy. They are informed about what is going on in the small democracy and there may be informal interactions between politicians and citizens, but they do not interfere.

There are certainly problems. There may exist a tension between the citizen's wishes and the actual decisions made by the local council. However, as stated earlier, tension does not have to lead to frustration, as long as people feel that they are taken seriously by the decision-makers. Another problem is that participation rates are often not very high. For example, in one of the neighbourhood workshops usually no more than five people are permanently involved. Other people only occasionally take part in the projects. This low turnout could be explained by the tendency in contemporary society of people to be more selective about what issues they become involved in and how much time they spend on participation. People are prepared to participate if a certain issue is of direct relevance to them. In that case, they invest a limited amount of time in order to provide a concrete contribution.

Problems within the local administration are also mentioned. Although ever more departments support the involvement of citizens in their policy field, there are still some departments that are, at best, not very enthusiastic about citizen involvement. However, also in these departments, finance for example, attempts are made to involve citizens in policy-making.

b. Leipzig

Background: structure and culture of administration and local politics

The general structure of the municipal government in Leipzig is comparable to that of Nürtingen. The executive consists of a first mayor (*Oberbürgermeister*), who is chosen by the population for a period of six years, a mayor (*Bürgermeister*) and seven aldermen (*Beigeordnete*), all of whom are chosen by the municipal council.

The citizenry of Leipzig played an important role during the political turnover in East Germany in November 1989 ('die Wende'). Around this time, various citizen associations (*Bürgervereine*) were active. To a large extent, these still form an important part of the 'civil society' in Leipzig.

After the 'Wende', the city administration concentrated its efforts on the revitalisation of the city, in particular its infrastructure. In this period, a need for improving the communication between the administration and the citizenry became apparent. Priorities of and policy measures taken by the administration were not always understood by the community.

The structure and culture of the city administration were formed in the time of the German Democratic Republic. As a result, both in the administration and in politics a culture of open, business-like discussion has still to be developed. Moreover, due to past cuts in expenditures and reductions in personnel, a risk-avoiding culture has thrived. The city staff always tended to shield itself behind its formal assignments and professional expertise, which can conflict with the views the citizens hold.

Citizens can make use of several institutionalized means of exerting influence on local decision-making. There are district committees (*Stadtbezirksbeiräte*) which have advisory powers. Their importance as democratic channels is limited, because the committees have no real say in the setting of the agenda and the formulation of projects and policies; this is done by the city administration. Furthermore, the members of the committees are not elected by the citizens, but nominated by the political parties. Recently, the citizens associations have tried to put forward their own candidates, which might result in an improvement of the committees as democratic channels.

Citizens also have the possibility to file petitions (proposals, requests or objections) to a committee of the local council (*Petitionsausschuss*). On the web-site of the municipality one can find information on how to write a petition and the competence of the committee that handles the petitions.

Initiatives: the City Office

After the municipal elections in 1994, the city administration took initiatives for a dialogue with the citizenry. In 1998 the City Office (*Stadtbüro*) was established, with the aim of exploring new forms of civic involvement.

It is part of the Department of Communications and directly accountable to the first mayor. The general purpose of the City Office is to develop new forms of civic involvement and stimulate the dialogue between the local council, the administration, the citizens and their associations.

The City Office fulfils a 'platform function' and a 'contact function'. It is both a platform for citizen participation in planning and decision-making and a place where citizens can express their questions, complaints, problems or wishes. Although the contact function is seen as subordinate to the platform

function, initially the contact function stood publicly more in the foreground. An eye-catcher are the consultation hours, held monthly by the *Oberbürgermeister* and which form a direct channel from the citizens to the top of the city administration. In the course of time, the purpose of these consulting hours has been widened in scope to include the *Beigeordnete* and various agencies, and they have become more directly linked with the platform function. However, the contact function of the City Office may overlap with the intermediary role of the local councillors, for example when it comes to filing petitions.

A core idea in the work of the City Office is a 'change of perspective', which means that problem situations have to be seen from the perspective of the people involved. The professional knowledge of experts and the grassroots knowledge of the citizens have to be given equal weight. The City Office tries to function as an intermediary between citizens and the administration. It organises dialogues between experts and citizens, including those who have not succeeded in getting a hearing in the bureaucracy. In these dialogues the City Office fulfils the role of a moderator.

The City Office tries to get citizens involved in the formulation of plans and projects of the administration in an early phase. Administrative agencies do involve citizens in small-scale projects, especially in the implementation phase, but for the formulation and realisation of larger projects this is not the rule. The *Bürgervereine* in particular want to have a say in the bigger issues. Recently, the City Office has initiated a dialogue between the city administration and the citizens associations.

A volunteers agency has been established in order to offer citizens concrete opportunities to contribute to general well-being. The agency is backed by 40-60 associations in the city. This initiative meets the wishes of many people to see some direct results of their involvement.

4. Conclusion

Germany has experienced several waves of attention for citizen participation in local government. In the late 1970s and 1980s different forms of citizen participation were implemented. West German municipalities were active in the 'Erneuerung der Politik von Unten' (Hendriks en Tops 1997: 198). Several initiatives were taken to involve people in local affairs. Most importantly, procedures and facilities were made available for people to participate in planning procedures. In the early 1990s the ideas of the new public management became more important. The stress was put on an efficient delivery of services, and the citizen was increasingly regarded a customer of the government (Hendriks en Tops 1997). At the end of the 1990s, partly in reaction to the dominance of New Public Management, the two cities under study showed renewed attention for the role of citizens.

In these new initiatives, the emphasis lies on co-operation between citizens and the local administration. Civil servants are increasingly involving citizens in the formation of policies. Although they are often not very active, citizens are asked to make their wishes and demands known to civil servants, who incorporate these ideas in their policies. The strengthening of representative democracy as such gets less

attention. Not the direct links between politicians and the citizens, but rather those between civil servants and the citizens are strengthened. In both Nürtingen and Leipzig, the elected representatives seem to play a marginal role in the new participatory procedures.

In Nürtingen, the policy of involving citizens is based upon communitarian ideology. It expresses the belief that the local community should be seen as a community of citizens. This may have its roots in the organic view of the state in the Germanic state tradition. A participatory strategy is followed, not so much with the aim to improve the quality of municipal policies or political-administrative processes, but rather to improve the quality of the community as a place to live. In Leipzig, the City Office manifests a strategy that is both informational and participatory. This strategy is aimed at improving the problem-solving capacity of the municipality and the functioning of the municipal bureaucracy, in particular its openness and responsiveness to citizens' wishes.

There are common elements in the policies of the two city administrations. Most important, the initiatives taken in both cities are characterised by a close co-operation between civil servants (the professionals or experts) and citizens. A philosophy of a 'change of perspective', according to which the grassroots knowledge of people and the expert knowledge of professionals in public administration can complement each other, may characterize a new trend in the renewal of government-citizens relations in Germany.