

Leadership and Decision-Making Strengths and Weaknesses of Israeli Local Government Leaders¹

Leadership and Decision-Making In Israel Local Government²

David Shalom

Abstract

This article examines the impact of local leadership on decision-making in local government, based on the premise that success or failure of local government is, among other factors, the product of the character of its leaders' decision-making. The study indicates that decision-making of local leaders is a core factor in the success or failure of local government. "Strong" local governments were found to exhibit strongly-led leadership that was professional, operated within budget, was more open to consultation and more inclusionary. Weaker local governments exhibited core leadership faults in decision-making, such as strategic decisions resting on intuition, lack of caution, over-optimism, lack of skill navigating among key players, surrender to pressures, difficulty consulting others and an over-centralized leadership style, poor staff management, insufficient utilization of professional ranks, reversals of decisions and lack of purposefulness. Moreover, the research revealed: Strong local councils were typified by integration of or a combination of all four classic leadership models – strategic, managerial, political and layman leadership in their decision-making processes. By doing so they bring the strong points of each model into play (and avoiding the specific pitfalls each carried). The research labels this new leadership model the Integrated MPLS Leadership Style. (Key words: **decision-making, leadership, local government, Israel local government, local leadership**)

Theoretical Background

"Correct decision-making is the most important aspect of leadership. All the other elements – from conceptualization of ideas and their dissemination, to surrounding oneself with good people – hinge on correct decision-making" (Guliani, 2005, p 111). From the 1990s the interrelationship of administration and politics and the importance of administrative leadership in decision-making have been recognized, in addition to political leadership (Van Wart, 2003). Studies have demonstrated that leadership is a key element in the complex game of local government and is essential in order to serve the public good (Coulson, 2007). A British study revealed that leaders who seek

¹ Based on a PhD on *Local Decision-Making – Characteristics of Decision Making in Local Government in Israel (The Jewish Sector)* – January 2010, advisor Dr. Shimon Rozevitch, Bar-Ilan University. Special thanks to Professor Samuel Lehman-Wilzig for his professional input, guidance and advice.

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to assist the community need to be accessible to the public and make the public a partner in crystallization of policy recommendations, void of a narrow political perspective. Such leaders must present an ongoing and focused guiding position for local decision-making in order to achieve their objectives in a world that is complex and uncertain (Greasley & Stoker, 2008). Good leadership should take decisions that reflect a broad vision and clear objectives, and employ long-term budgeting processes that involve and engage council members and employees. In such processes, stable managerial leadership with ongoing commitment and consistency is paramount (Kerslake, 2007). A study among more than 2,700 heads and leaders of local government in Europe reveals the importance study participants assign having a clear vision, in administering a city (Haus & Sweeting, 2006b). In another study, possessing a strategy was perceived as the vehicle by which local governments are moved forward (Derely, 2003).

Local decision-making circles have widened in recent years to include additional players in the decision-making process, making strong leadership a necessity – guiding decision-making and mediating between key interest groups (see the leadership of the mayor of the Kiev municipality, in Kolisnichenko et al, 2005). Mayors of local government today have become political agents with a coordinating and consolidating role, who must forge a consensus among rival players around a common denominator of the major players. Effective leadership needs to establish and develop commitment to an agreed course of action among all, particularly among the constituency (Svara, 1990; Franek, 2005; Svara, 2006; Haus & Sweeting, 2006). Good local leadership needs to operate in three realms: the political sphere; the administrative sphere and in the community.

The research literature points to a number of possible failures leaders can encounter in decision-making, such as: myopic (short-term) thinking, over-optimism and disregard for the ramifications of strategic decisions (Messick & Bazerman 1996; Das & Teng, 1999); flawed management of decision-making processes and reliance on intuition (Daft, 2001; Forman & Selly, 2002; Anderson, 2002 ;Van Wart, 2003 ; Grunig & Kuhn, 2005; Goodwin, 2009); excessive self-confidence (Shapira, 2000); failure to engage others in decision-making (Selart, 2005); defects in application of discretion and lack of practical intelligence (Salter & Highhouse, 2009); a flawed ability to influence others and gain their support (Anderson, 2009; Simon, 1987); capitulation to pressure and alien interests (Mintz, 2004); and postponement of decisions and inability to follow-through on decisions as taken (Mintzberg et al, 2006).

Researchers suggests a number of approaches to or models of leadership in local government: layman rule, managerial rule and political rule. Under *layman rule*, elected members of the community are actively and effectively involved in decision-making. Under *professional rule*, politicians (including full-time mayors) lack, in many cases, expertise and professional knowledge in administrative and governmental issues, and therefore need to depend on the advice of experts Under *political leadership* elected officials set policy, initiate decisions, budget resources, achieve compromises and engage the constituency – in short, "make things happen" (Mouritzen & Svara, 2002).

Under *political-administrative leadership*, mayors direct the administration to realize political objectives. Under *public leadership*, mayors mobilize the public for political objectives. Managerial leadership is based on ongoing administration (Haus & Sweeting, 2006).

Other scholars have suggested additional types of leadership: 1. *Visionary leader* – a strong and innovative leader who sets long-term goals and strategy to achieve them. 2. *A weak leader* – who maintains the status quo, is unable to administer a complex coalition and is unable to deal effectively with change. 3. *An adaptive and consensus-based leader* – who is able to convince others but tends to bend under pressure and fails due to inability to make clear strategic decisions. 4. A strong 'urban boss' leader – a self-reliant leader who depends less on others to actualize his policies. The research suggests that the most successful leadership type is a combination of group leadership (in the council) together with a visionary leader with consensus-building abilities (Stewart, et al, 2004). And there are other types raised by the research literature: the political leader, the ceremonial leader, the inclusionary leader; the authoritative leader (as well as the previous typologies): leaders who are independent, caring [for others], entrepreneurial (Haus & Sweeting, 2006b); reflexive leadership that draws its strength from the public and know-how it can input, leadership that rests on the local administrative network (Askim & Baldersheim, 2007). Local leadership is defined and shaped by the character and circumstance of its locality, and the kind of leadership demanded in a given locality is not a constant and may change over time. Leadership styles and models that may work in one locality, may fail in another.

Local government in Europe has undergone salient structural changes to ensure stable local government that can address complex economic challenges and a growing number of players (Wollmann, 2004, 2008). A clear delineation can be seen between north and south: Southern Europe is typified by a system of strong personal leadership of the mayors, paralleled by weak legal autonomy of local government and elected officials. In the north – local leadership is relatively weak, and operates in the shadow of strong dominant national political parties and stronger government controls (Haus & Sweeting, 2006b).

The three primary approaches to leadership – layman, managerial and political – are expressed in different countries in the following manner (each with its own pitfalls): *Layman rule* is populist leadership that responds to pressures from the grass roots and reflects the demands of the residents, but is liable to neglect addressing long-term problems of the municipality. An extreme example of this kind of leadership is Ireland and Sweden (Mouritzen & Svava, 2002; Montin, 2005). In *professional rule*, the decision-making of politicians in local government rests on a professional system and strategic thinking, its operation focused on providing fair steady, consistent and coherent services and intelligent utilization of resources (Mouritzen & Svava, 2002). This approach is reflected in the reform carried out in Germany in the 1990s in the framework of establishing a New Public Administration (Wollmann, 2008; Stewart, et al, 2004). Lastly there is political leadership –

which in the United States varies from state to state but in most the mayor is a core player in initiating policy (Mouritzen & Svara, 2002; Desantis & Renner, 2002; Svara, 2003). A political leadership style is also true in Italy and England (Haus & Sweeting, 2006). In 1998 a study in Great Britain found that effective leadership and the power to make decisions rests on leaders who know where they are going and have the power and authority to do so (Coulson, 2007). It has been found that strengthening local leadership and engaging key players in setting policy improves political stability, administrative performance and quality of services and willingness to take bold long-term decisions (Leese, 2007). Another British study found that strong mayors have better decision-making abilities, rely on the correct machinery, project their leadership more forcefully in the community, and are able to mobilize cooperation and commitment and win favor for their decisions (Greasley & Stoker, 2008). Similar findings were registered in Germany (Wollmann, 2004), France (Mouritzen & Svara, 2002) and Poland – where the most common leadership type was centralized – the urban boss with a vision (Stewart et al, 2004).

The manner in which local leadership is elected impacts on the stature and abilities of such officials to make decisions and carry them through. Election reform in England and Germany clarified to mayors who was responsible for decision-making and implementation – leading mayors to concentrate more on developing a local vision than on party politics (Svara 2006). At the same time, the new system required mayors to deal with a large number of parties, and they found it difficult to forge a broad coalition. To take decision-making forward, they had to bridge the positions of the primary players institute set procedures for decision-making, engage the community in decision-making, and formulate a vision and framework for development of their municipalities (Mouritzen & Svara, 2002; Haus & Klausen, 2004; Stewart, et al 2004). Direct elections also created difficulties in decision-making that emanated from mayors who lacked a majority on their council. In Poland, for example, only seven large municipalities out of 42 cities enjoyed a clear majority on their city councils (Swianiecicz & Mielczarek, 2005).

In Israel, which has direct elections of the heads of local governments (since 1978), mayors are delegated power to take and implement decisions (although a large percent of their operating budgets remained in the hands of ministers as part of the national budget). As a result, the personality of mayors and council heads (henceforth, mayors) and their decisions play a dramatic role in the operation of constituencies as a whole. Mayors construct vision and policy according to their own personal values and outlook, set the agenda and strategy for implementation. The mayor controls the administrative machinery and also chairs the municipal council. A study of local leadership in the Yerucham local council revealed two types of local leadership. The first was a *Transactional leadership* style that lacked any long-term vision to which the council is committed (that guide decision-making), that operated by creating new realities and then evaluate their impact, in lieu of orderly processes. There is no orderly decision-making and implementation processes; leadership was centralized, and typified by 'direct politicking' – responding directly with immediate responses ('patch-work' management) to

residents' demands. The second was *Transformational leadership* style that championed orderly governance, operating according to a vision and engaging the citizenry and other agents in decision-making (Dahan, 2009). Israeli politicians and administrators on the whole (including those at the local government level) have been described as individuals who seek personal empowerment, operate to maintain the status quo; lack the full picture or a long-term perspective; focus on achievements during their own tenure in office; lack a sense of collective responsibility and prefer to pursue narrow interests (Koversky, in Shinhar and Yarkoni, 1993).

The Research

The research at hand seeks to answer three core questions: What is the impact of leadership on decision-making in local governance Is there any linkage between the type of leadership exercised by a given mayor and the performance of their councils? How is success in decision-making of local leadership expressed and what are their primary failures?

Evaluation of Decisions: Theory does not provide a clear-cut answer. Good decisions are defined as actions that maximize expected benefits (Doyle & Thomason, 1999); Anderson, 2002): "Decisions that prove themselves by their results" (Fox, 2008). These results can be examined only in retrospect – whether they brought the expected benefit– the council's success for failure. Together with the Israel's Ministry of Interior, the author established 'success-failure criteria' to identify or define "strong" and "weak" councils. "Strong (successful) councils" are ones that are governed responsibly and enjoy economic stability. "Weak (unsuccessful or failed) councils" are ones that operate repeatedly at a deficit, who have been appointed an external auditor to oversee their operations.

Leadership of Local Government: To examine the nature of successful and failed local leadership, the influence of 12 mayors on decision-making was examined including the following parameters: the degree of their influence on council members, on the professional level, on initiation of decisions, on the decision-making process and on the nature of implementation. Participants in the study included heads of strong and weak councils – among the latter, both serving mayors and past mayors.

Methodology

The research was based on qualitative field research.

Research Population and Data Collection:

Senior officials at the Ministry of Interior provided advice in choosing three 'strong' councils (Local Government document, 25.12.2006) and three 'weak' councils with an appointed external auditor, of similar size and in the center of the country. "Weak' council status was based on other criteria such as: size of the community, extent of the local tax base (e.g. independent sources of revenue besides government budgets and local property taxes on residents), expenditures per capita, socio-economic status of the population and other

indexes. Thus, there could be a gap between good fiscal management and poor general management, and vice-versa (see Efrati et al, 2004).

Insert Table 1: Mayors Studied *

Insert Table 1: General Data on Municipalities Studied

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“Weak” Municipalities	Number*	The mayors and years in office	“Strong” Municipalities	Number*	The mayors and years in office
Or Yehuda	1	Attorney Yitzhak Bukovza (1978-1993, 1998-2007)	Nes Ziona	10	Yossi Shvo (1993-2008, reelected in 2008)
	2	Tamir Shabi (1993-1998)			
	3	David Yosef (2007-2008, reelected in 2008)			
Bnei Brak	4	Mordechai Karelitz (1997-2003)	Natanya	11	Miriam Faierberg (1998-2008, reelected in 2008)
	5	Yissachar Frankental (2003-2008)			
Mevaseret Zion	6	Eli Moyal (1992-1999)	Shoham	12	Gil Livneh (2003-2008, reelected in 2008)
	7	Attorney Daniel Azriel (1999-2003)			
	8	Carmi Gilon (2003- 2/2007)			
	9	Aryeh Shamam (2/2007-2008, reelected in 2008)			

* The numbers cite in parentheses (in the body of the article) identify the author of the comment among the leaders participating in the study, as set forth in the chart above.

Table 2: General Data on Municipalities Studied

Strong	Population	Socio-	Weak	Population	Socio-
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Municipalities		economic Rank	Municipalities		economic Rank
Natanya	201,106	5	Bnei Brak	158,0832	2
Nes Ziona	33,953	7	Or Yehuda	34,262	5
Shoham	18,353	8	Mevasseret Zion	25,470	8

Research Tools

The study was conducted, for the most part, in the course of 2008 elections. Input was gathered from four types of complimentary sources: 1. Interviews with mayors, elected officials and senior administrators in local government, and interviews with senior administrators in the Ministry of Interior. Total number of interviews: 106. 2. a semi-structured questionnaire that was filled out by the participants, at the close of each interview. 3. Observation of council meetings in operation. 4. Gathering primary material, including state comptroller reports on the performance of local government and Ministry of Interior reports on the same, protocols from deliberations in the Knesset's Domestic Affairs Committee, and more.

Research Findings*

The influence of local leaders on decision-making was measured according to four leadership archetypes. The impact of each type of leader on decision-making was examined in depth in the course of the research. The city Bnei Brak, however, constitutes a relatively unique case due to the ultra-Orthodox composition of its residents.³

Strategic Leadership:

Strengths in Leadership: Ongoing, stable and strong leadership guided by a vision; where policy and goals guide the various ranks within local government, providing continuity and smooth operation in decision-making, as well as avoiding disruption of policy lines following transfer of leadership to a different mayor (5). Strategic leadership deals with development of the city, bolstering and maintaining its public image and long-term strategic issues, irrespective of reelection issues in the future (11). A leader with vision is

³ The intricacies of Bnei Brak's unique political culture are beyond the scope of this article. Suffice it to say, rabbinical authorities of two major factions (theological and politic splits) serve as power brokers in local politics. The leadership and clout local leaders wield derives from their respective patron's prestige and authority, more than from popular support. While these spiritual leaders do not intervene in daily administration, they are consulted on all substantive issues. Bnei Brak had a unique 'rotation system' between these two parties and the fact no mayor served more than one term led to mismanagement and myopic outlooks, including irresponsible fiscal policies such as huge loans, that were simply passed on to the 'rival' mayor next term.

generally one who leads strategic decisions, and is not involved in decision-making at the operational level (5).

Weaknesses in Leadership: Weaknesses in leadership is typified by decisions-making without sufficiently taking into account budgetary limitations, lack of caution, unbridled and uncritical optimism, over-confidence and a 'performance-focused' attitude (2) – a path that is liable to lead local governments down the road to huge deficits. Leadership that lacks strategic perspective (broad thinking in decision-making) will be overly focused on management of ongoing operations (9).

Among the key mistakes made cited vis-à-vis strategic leadership, emphasized by local leaders was the tendency to focus on long-term processes while ignoring immediate ongoing needs (2), and letting the desire to realize one's visions (for example, educational goals) get out of hand, without taking into account other needs (8).

Public Leadership and Layman Leadership:

Strengths in Leadership: Strong leaders of this type are well-connected to the public on a personal level, attentive to residents and have a lot of knowledge about how their communities function, as a basis for decision-making (11). Such are almost un-swayed by pressures from the public, although they are attentive to their needs, and public services drive their decision-making (10, 11, 12). This leadership style engages residents in decision-making to gain public understanding of such moves and build public consensus. This is reflected in a more cautious tempo in decision-making, but enhances prospects of achieving one's goals.

Weaknesses in Leadership: Too much of such a 'grass-roots' approach can subject a leader to political pressures and other demands: Among the concrete examples given were decisions to forgive outstanding debts for local taxes without the approval of the Ministry of Interior and against norms of proper administration, and decisions on allocation of land without bringing the decision to the council plenum (1). A leader who consults pressure groups too much is likely to slow down decision-making processes and 'invite' additional pressures, raising the risk of taking unpopular decisions (2). Excessive consideration, compromise and engagement of constituents in decision-making as a process that emerges 'from the grass-roots upward' can be perceived as weakness – as capitulation to the demands of specific sectors or interest groups within the community (12).

Lack of experience in public office, lack of decisiveness, lack of authority and over-sensitivity for public opinion – trying to please everyone, capitulation to pressure from interest groups (9), involving family in decision-making, attempting to please cronies and constantly maneuvering among powerful interests (6) will have a negative impact on decision-making.

It seems that longtime mayors take public opinion less into account and do not make the public party to their decisions (1), while relatively new mayors are more attentive to and influenced by the demands of the population. Yet,

it is possible that new mayors will take decisions to please the public with populist moves (3). On the other hand, mayors who lack contact with the public and the ability to 'sell' their decisions (2) will find it difficult to administer. Such leaders may be viewed as engaging residents in decision-making only for appearance sake as part of selling themselves, not as a genuine part of their operations (11).

Local leaders cited the following as key mistakes in decision-making: capitulating to pressures; exhibiting lack of sensitivity towards the media; lack of patience towards residents (1); focus on advancing projects and less on communication with the public; responding to immediate desires of constituents; investing too much time addressing the needs of weaker elements of the population (2); difficulty standing up to pressure (6); inability to listen, and insufficient engagement of others (8).

Political Leadership:

In Israel, mayors play a significant and central role in decision-making processes in their respective communities and the mayor is expected in the political culture to be a dominant figure, able to sway members of the council. The mayor is generally involved in decision-making processes, and most decisions reflect the position of the mayor, with members of his faction and the coalition falling into line, accordingly (10, 11). Mayors set the tone (e.g. the mayor is 'first violin') in decision-making, and such mayors need to have influence on members of the coalition for their objectives to be fully realized (12). A mayor can adopt a very centralized leadership style and can enlist various agents beyond local politics (ministers and national institutions) to assist him advance his or her goals.

Strengths in Leadership: Political leaders will demonstrate political maneuverability, will forge strong coalitions and "cook" decisions in advance to ensure their support. Political experience, the ability to apply personal charm and convince others are important attributes for local leaders in building a full coalition and ensuring matters of principle will pass easily. In other words, among political leaders, most of the decision-making process will take place 'behind the scenes' and will be formally adopted unanimously after everything has been hammered out in advance. Decisions will be advanced by adopting an attentive and inclusive, convincing and charismatic stance – taking steps to appear friendly and cordial, respectful of others, galvanizing support through a sense of unity and avoiding antagonism (6, 10, 11). Political leadership can ideologically be 'flexible' – avoiding appearing centralized and striving to seem eager to reach a decision that will be acceptable by all parties. On the other hand, the inability to exercise a dominant position (while this may be viewed as a weakness) may create calm working relationships that make decision-making by consensus possible and enhance implementation (12). In local governance, a political leader derives clout from outside the local political arena, as well – power accrued from the national political arena, which can assist decision-making (10, 11). That is it is important that mayors be respected beyond their respective municipalities, held in high regard by members of the government and heads of the economy for their good judgment because such respect will impact on the weight they carry in their

localities. Likewise, leadership can emanate to a large extent on a new mayor's record in a previous career (for example a former diplomat or ex-security services chief), from such an individuals' first-hand knowledge of the public sector and their personal networking abilities. Moreover, various systems and outside organization are likely to cooperate with such a leader assist the mayor in advancing his or her decisions (8).

Weaknesses in Leadership: Excessive consulting with others can be interpreted as foot-dragging and indecisiveness in decision-making and undermine the status of the mayor as the local 'sheriff', even if the leader is motivated by desires to base decision-making on mediation and preservation of a maximum of interests (12). When an elected mayor is an 'outsider' who is not part of the internal political workings of the council, operating without the support a faction and without creating a coalition, such a 'newcomer' will find it difficult to operate politically in making decisions, particularly substantive ones. Political maneuvering in the face of a strong opposition, various factions and local media will require a substantial effort to prevail, at the expense of ongoing management of the local council. (7). When a leader is perceived as inexperienced, the ability to play the political game and reach decisions will be effected (8). When a majority of the coalition is ensured, a mayor is liable to make decisions 'on the fly' based on superficial or insufficient mastery of the issue. Such leadership will not feel the need to convince-the-unconvinced, may try to bulldoze through a 'unanimous' vote of approval or even try to dodge or detour the council's approval entirely (11). An overly powerful menacing-leader may make council members reluctant to criticize the mayor out of fear of reprisal – personal or factional – becoming rubber stamps of the mayor's wishes (11). Such a position can lead the council and its constituency in the wrong direction and even climax in economic collapse (2). The weakness of this kind of leadership may also expressed in taking decisions independently, without considering the political environment (4). Political management of decision-making will, by nature, be less orderly from a professional standpoint, and decisions are liable to be less clear-cut in the way they are stated (6).

Among the key mistakes of a political leadership style cited by local leaders were clashes with the opposition, lack of moderation (1); inability to separate local politics from national politics⁴, (2); difficulty withstanding political pressures (6); lack of political skills (8).

Managerial and Professional Leadership:

Strengths: Such leadership is typified by professional (e.g. 'businesslike') decision-making void of alien interests, rigorously stays within the law and norms of proper administration (3, 9) has the ability to separate cardinal and marginal issues (11); decisions are 'up-front', honest and non-manipulative, and their implementation is monitored as an integral part of the organizational routine (8, 10, 12). Managerial leaders can exhibit command skills and administrative expertise (10), have prior managerial experience in senior

⁴ A mayor who belongs to a weak party on the national level. The informant was speaking of a case where the mayor who won local elections belonged to a party (the Labor Party) that the local population (overwhelming Likud) did *not* support in national elections)

positions in the municipality (11) or business experience elsewhere (9). Their decisions reflect a fiscal-business orientation, a high level of commitment to meeting objectives and remaining within budget (5, 9, 10), including decisiveness in following reorganization plans designed to cure chronic deficits (9, 1) and courage to take unpopular-but-necessary steps to broaden the tax base in this endeavor (1). Such leaders play a dominant role, acting in keeping with their goals and operational plans, seeking to provide good service while demonstrating openness, the ability to explain their position and convince other and mobilize them to support their goals. Managerial leaders project authoritativeness – standing behind their decisions and withstanding pressures, including ones that involve budget cuts and economy moves. Such leaders are perceived as knowledgeable in decision-making, whose decisions will be guided by preplanning and staff work and based on gathering relevant data from professional echelons and analysis of the various alternatives (8, 10, 11), and there aren't many. This type of management has been found, for the most part, to have a centralized approach to decision-making, to conduct consultation with administrators, to exhibit in-depth detail-oriented involvement, and decisiveness and cognizance where their decisions seek to go (4, 10). Such a leader can be perceived as robust, determined ('a bulldozer'), a know-it-all, focused and 'the boss' who makes the decisions. While such a mayor can appoint good experts (without ulterior motives) and consult with them, the managerial leader is the one who ultimately guides things and has the final word (11). A managerial leader can also adopt an 'inclusive' approach by inviting residents and experts to sit on various forums (9), or adopt a decentralized approach that delegates authority to such professional echelons, while the leader reserves using his authority to dealing with issues of principle and solving substantive problems (5). The decisions are already formulated in the mind of this kind of leader, although at times they must, be implemented as passed, as is demanded. (3).

Weaknesses: Leaders don't always understand the role of professional echelons and what they can contribute to decision-making processes – particularly the council's-treasurer. Leaders who don't trust their own managerial levels, may use independent ('outside') experts to sway decision-making (8). In extreme cases, intervention in the workings of the administration in setting time schedules and criticism of implementation of decisions – over-involvement – can lead to a mayor being viewed as a *de facto* director-general (10). An over-dominant mayor can run into difficulties with the senior managerial echelons of his or her administration – in an extreme case, the turnover of six director-generals during one mayor's tenure (11). Appointment of a strong professional director-general and a good professional team can facilitate mayors realizing their visions. Yet, when mayors hold the reins too tightly, are overbearing vis-à-vis their own staff (based on their own personal expertise), and play the know-it-all and remains impervious to hearing other opinions and when experts (for example, legal advisors) are not part of decision-making, there will be problems reaching well-based decisions (1). Negative over-centralized leadership can lead to a 'solo performance' rather than mayors playing a 'lead role' among a full cast of actors (2). Moreover, consulting and involving others in decision-making

processes is of little use when leaders assume decisions they take will be automatically carried out (8).

Without consulting relevant professionals, decision-making processes are not orderly, reflect lack of economic thinking in decision-making and difficulty to make decisions when budgets are tight or there are other constraints (8). When decisions are taken hastily, based on a mayor's position only – lacking depth or consideration of their ramifications, sometimes they simply won't get implemented (6, 9). Another negative expression of this leadership style is a 'barge ahead' mentality where mayors view their municipality's bureaucratic machinery as a burden that holds up progress, and when those in the implementation echelons avoid confronting such mayors (3). A short tenure and an election year as well can be expressed in leadership that makes hasty and short-sighted decisions, with scant consultation with professional agents, without gathering data, relying on personal information and changing decisions, without any examination of applicability of the decision, based on swift and immediate implementation of decisions (3, 6). Sometimes decision-making processes are superfluous, lack substance and meaning and deal with issues that have already been addressed (9). This style of leadership is liable to be viewed as irresponsible, lacking transparency, secretive ('hiding information' from the public), based on insufficient expertise, a centralist 'one-man-show or limited to 'putting out fires' (7). It seems that as mayors gain experience, this kind of behavior in decision-making subsides.

Among the major mistakes that local leaders cited were a tendency to deal with marginal issues at the beginning of one's tenure; taking decision under pressure of time (1); insufficient weight to fiscal facets; poor evaluation of time schedules for realization of plans; over-optimism; too much focus on implementation and too little emphasis on management; impatience in managing processes; over-dependence on the authority of strong staff members among the professional echelons; a centralized approach to decision-making that leads professional staff retreating in the face of the mayor and refraining from participating in decision-making (2); ignoring budget limitations and knowingly creating deficits (8).

Insert Table 3: Summery of Evaluation of Leadership and Its Impact on Decision-Making in All Local Authorities (Adjusted Average of Elected Officials and Senior Managers)

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Evaluation of Leadership	Weak Municipalities	Strong Municipalities
Weak	44.68%	2.38%
Medium	31.25%	9.52%
High	24.07%	88.1%

The findings indicate that in strong Municipalities, local leadership (mayors) are perceived as more dominant compared to weak Municipalities, although in

weak Municipalities former mayors are perceived as more dominant than those currently in office.

Insert Table 4: Summery of Quality Evaluation of Decision-Making Processes in Different Forums

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		Strong Municipalities	Weak Municipalities
Forums	The Municipal Council	7.68	5.81
	The Executive Committee	2.55	1.91
	Managers	5.96	3.88

The findings show that in strong municipalities demonstrate a much higher scale in the quality of their decision-making at all levels of local administration in all the forums where local leadership is involved.

Discussion and Analysis of Findings

It seems that in all the Municipalities examined, the mayor is the dominant player in local decision-making. He is usually the individual who initiates decisions, guides the professional echelon in crystallizing how decisions are formulated and defined, and champions the decision until it can receive an overwhelming majority in the council plenum. The status of the mayor is similar to that of mayors in municipalities in the United States and elsewhere (Desantis & Renner, 2002; Mouritzen & Svava, 2002) and as strong and autonomous as the heads of local governments one finds in European countries other than Israel (Svava, 2004 ;Haus & Sweeting, 2006 ;Wollmann, 2004, 2008 and others). The dominant position of mayors in making local decisions was found in all the Israeli Municipalities – but dominance was the product of the mayor's personal makeup, not differences in the character of the Municipality (strong or weak, large or small). Political leadership or public leadership typologies as defined by Haus & Sweeting (2006) were not found to be present in Israel; political-administrative leadership was common. The research identified a combination of layman rule, and political / managerial leadership styles (Mouritzen & Svava, 2002).

In contrast with 'weak' Municipalities, however, 'strong' Municipalities, leadership is generally stable (Kerslake, 2007). All the mayors of strong Municipalities (and part of the weak ones, in the present and the past) are typified by a high level of service-orientation, by a desire to engage residents in local decision-making (Haus & Sweeting, 2006) and desire to contribute to the wellbeing of the community (Franek, 2005). Such mayors usually succeed in garnering commitment and affection of the public and rest on machinery suitable for decision-making (Greasley & Stoker, 2008). The mayors of strong Municipalities have a positive impact on work processes and on their councils' performance (Svava, 1990; Coulson, 2007) and reciprocal relationships between mayors and the professional echelons are visible. It

seems that local leaders make decisions in response to demands from the public, while the professional echelons respond accordingly and focus on the means required to implement decisions (Mouritzen & Svava, 2002). Leaders of strong Municipalities, for the most part, demonstrate responsibility in decision-making and succeed in assuring the resources needed to carry them out (Stewart, et al, 2004). Such leaders exhibit a task-oriented and "protocol-oriented" (e.g. exhibit respect for rules and regulations) leadership style (Haus & Klausen, 2004) as well as 'reflexive' leadership (Askim & Baldersheim, 2007).

Summary of the findings indicates that there are shared characteristics among *strong Municipalities* include the following: They were typified by previous administrative experience, reliance on expertise of the professional echelons and staff operations and backed and respected those with professional expertise, maintained good managerial practices and high working standards. They demonstrated a commitment to work within the budget, a fiscal- or business-oriented perspective, a 'practical' businesslike approach, a high level of service orientation, and a high level of involvement in the workings of the city/community. Strong leaders were capable of consult with and being attentive to others and open to new ideas. At the same time, they possessed the ability to withstand pressure, work according to an overarching vision and working plans while exhibiting care for small details. Such strong leaders took upon themselves to guide the professional echelons and council members in decision-making, possessed the personal ability to 'bring people on board' and gain their support for decisions, had the ability to forge a broad coalition and find a common denominator before voting on issues.

Weak Municipalities: It is difficult to find one leadership style that typifies the tenures of all the leaders. Some had higher education (lawyers, for example), others had administrative and command experience (including a former head of the GSS) – that is, they were people who were well-respected on a national level, had a high level of service-orientation and so forth. Yet, it appears that the policy decision-making and strategy formulation of these leaders relied on their own logic and intuition, a methodology that came into conflict with systematic and rational processes of decision-making (also found⁵ by Goodwin, 2009 ;Forman & Selly, 2002 ;Anderson, 2002 ;Daft, 2001 ; Grunig & Kuhn, 2005). Such leadership sparked criticism, and even led to the intervention of the Ministry of Interior. Ultimately, such measures led these leaders to realize, in retrospect, the mistakes they had been making in decision-making processes. This type of behavior emanated to a large extent from their lack of trust in the professional echelons, but also their centralized leadership styles.

From analysis of the findings, a number of difficulties and mistakes in the way local leadership in Israel operated became apparent – some that the interviewees themselves cited vis-à-vis their own behavior: *The strategic perspective*: working without a vision or strategic thinking – focusing on

⁵ All references to other scholars - in parentheses in the Discussion and Analysis of Findings - refer to findings that appear in the research literature in the works of others.

performance instead of advancing policy initiatives (Svara, 2006), lack of consideration for the future and disregard for the ramifications of strategic decisions (Messick & Bezerman, 1996), over-optimism about their ability to control the ramifications of their decisions in the future (Das & Teng, 1999), long-term thinking and disregard for short-term realities, failure to examine the impact of decisions (Mintzberg et al, 2006). *The public perspective:* capitulation to pressures and alien interest (Mintz, 2004) too much weight to public opinion ('pandering to the public'), putting off decisions and foot-dragging in making decisions, lack of decisiveness and retreat from or changes in decisions already taken (Mintzberg et al, 2006). *The political aspect:* lack of political and public experience and difficulty 'playing the game', the imperative to ensure one's 'political survival', inexperience using one's weight to bring about adoption of a particular position; immoderation and failure to take into account the opinions of elected members of the council; acting too independently without cooperation with others (a 'soloist' approach); lack of teamwork, clashes with many other agents in local government and beyond (members of the council, the professional echelons, residents, government ministries, entrepreneurs) (Stewart, 2004). *The managerial aspect:* disorderly decision-making and absence of staff work, decision-making beyond the framework of the budget and without economic thinking, defective gathering of information and disregard for crucial information (Messick & Bazerman, 1996), irresponsibility and carelessness in decision making, performance-focused decision-making without sufficient weighing for all factors/forces ('putting out fires'), over-hasty and rash decision-making ('cutting corners' in the decision-making process), erroneous decisions at the beginning of one's tenure, lack of transparency, failure to consult with the professional echelons or involve them in decision-making, over confidence (Shapira, 1999), a centralized approach and running a 'one-man-show'.

Insert Table 4: Summery of Local Leadership and Its Impact on Decision-making – Strengths and Weaknesses

Table 5: Summery of Local Leadership and Its Impact on Decision-making – Strengths and Weaknesses

Strengths	Weaknesses
1. a vision and strategic thinking for the long-term; 2. decision-making based on goals and a working plan; 3. high personal intelligence and credentials for the job; 4. humanity and respect for others; 5. attentiveness to and consultation with others; 6. consultation with professional ranks and reliance on their assessments; 7. respect for professional echelon;	1. short-term thinking and lack of a strategic perspective; 2. long-term but unrealistic thinking; 3. failure to examine the ramifications of decisions; 4. focus on personal objectives – over-emphasis on 'action' (without prior thinking); 5. inexperience and lack of expertise; 6. impatience and lack of openness to criticism; 7. a conflict-driven confrontational and non-conciliatory approach;

8. charisma and ability to bring others 'on board'; 9. professional (managerial) experience and municipal experience; 10. a professional approach and in-depth examination of issues; 11. working within the law, according to administrative norms; 12. a business-economic orientation to thinking and decisions within budget parameters; 13. use of good judgment and a rational business-like approach to decision-making; 14. orderly systematic staff operations in decision-making; 15. preliminary preparations for decision-making – the ability to reach a consensus and forge a workable coalition; 16. a clear voice and ability to convince others; 17. political prowess and the ability to maneuver; 18. personal ties and a high level of respect – within local government and beyond; 19. support on the national political level; 20. fortitude and a high level of involvement; 21. a dominance stance in management; 22. ability to delegate authority to others; 23. objectives that serve the public-at-large, not sectarian interests; 24. focus on satisfying the public will; 25. ability to withstand pressures and threats, avoidance of bias and alien interests; 26. ability to make courageous ('unpopular') decisions; 27. success in implementation of decisions; 28. attentiveness to the public will and readiness to engage the public in decision-making.	8. lack of credibility and lack of transparency; 9. uneconomical thinking and deviation from budget limitations; 10. An over-optimistic approach to decision-making; 11. excessive self-confidence and lack of caution; 12. an excessive sense of urgency in planning and implementation; 13. lack of planning; 14. working under pressure and 'putting out fires'; 15. failure to consult others and lack of teamwork – one-sided autonomous action; 16. a centralized 'one-man-show'; 17. lack of political experience and difficulty playing the political game; 18. postponement of decisions, foot-dragging in decision-making, or a tendency to 'cut corners'; 19. making decisions too hastily, on superficial knowledge and systematic examination of decisions under discussion; 20. inability to engage the professional echelon in decision-making processes; 21. lack of deference for other elected officials and council members; 22. excessive focus on performance, insufficient focus on administration; 23. lack of determination, power projection ('display of determination') and engagement; 24. personal survival becoming a driving force; 25. surrender to pressures and alien interests; 26. excessive regard for public opinion ('pandering to the public'); 27. Failure to take responsibility and indecisiveness ('changes') in carrying out decisions taken.
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Summery and Conclusions

Just as the course of human history and countries is the product of the decisions governments take, the state of local governments is, to a large degree, the product of the decisions of local leadership, whose decisions shape the future of their localities and the welfare of their communities. Poor decisions, particularly when such failures occur repeatedly over a period of time, can cause local government to fail in fulfilling key functions. Thus, this can impact negatively on providing services to residents and caring for the well being of members of the community in their daily life in important areas such as education, sanitation, environmental quality, culture, transportation and so forth. The mayors have an influential role in decision-making at the local level and their implementation. In democratic regimes, local leadership is elected precisely to guide their communities in strategic decision-making on behalf of the community, and shepherd others within their administration in carrying out decisions taken. Yet, even mayors with relevant schooling and command and administrative experience can err and cause damage in the short or the long run.

It is difficult to pinpoint a particular leadership style that enhances success in local governance that one can 'recommend'. Rather, one finds that often several leadership styles are combined in decision-making processes at the local level. The findings reveal that strong local Municipalities are typified by integration or a combination of all four leadership models raised in the research literature – strategic, managerial, political and layman leadership. In their decision-making processes, the research at hand shows Israeli heads of local government bring the strong points of each model into play. In other words: Each leadership style – no matter what its positive attributes, has both positive attributes but also inherent pitfalls that cannot be balanced when one leadership style is too dominant. When one element is too dominant – weakening the others, one encounters flaws in exercising leadership in decision-making and operation of local governance, resulting in weak Municipality, regardless of the leadership style practiced by the mayor. In essence, in strong Municipalities, the negative effects of a given leadership style tend to 'canceled out one another' or are meliorated by the mix of leadership styles.

The research findings also point to a linkage between local leadership that employs good judgment by engaging professionals and co-opting them as genuine partners in decision-making and implementation – and the success rate of such local Municipalities. Conversely, there is a linkage between failures of local leadership in decision-making, and failure of local Municipalities. Decision-making that is led by a strategic vision, that includes relevant players and the public in decision-making and that creates a consensus vis-à-vis decisions under deliberation emerge from the research as essential leadership attributes in the administration of complex municipal systems. In order to succeed and operate a local Municipality, local leaders need to exercise an Integrated MPLS Leadership Style.

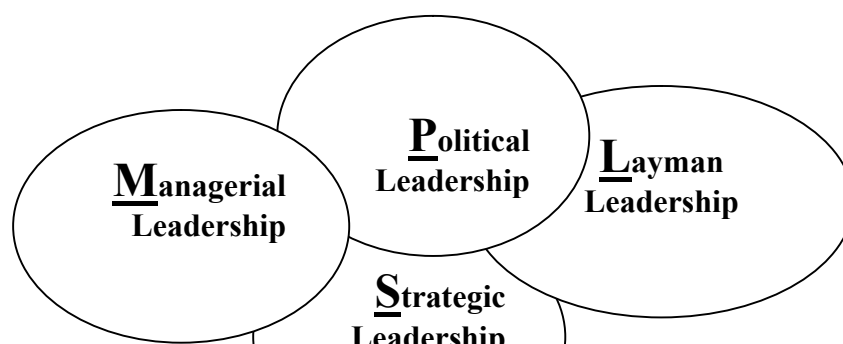


Figure 1: Schematic of the Integrated MPLS Leadership Model

Recommendations

One should moderate the power mayors to make decisions autonomously (often based on intuition) by structural limitations that will require them to follow an orderly stage-by-stage decision-making process (beginning with formulation of policy, data compilation, examination of the alternatives, engagement of the public and so forth) that will clarify the factors to be considered and the basis for the decision. Thus, one needs to strength the status the professional echelons within local government – as those players responsible for staff operations and maintenance of proper norms in decision-making processes. It is important to train local leaders in decision-making prior to them assuming the reins of local government. It is important to strength supervision at the ministerial level over decision-making at the local level, empowering the monitors with authority to halt/correct inappropriate decisions: that is, provisions need to be made for ministerial intervention where decisions were not taken according to stipulated procedures or decisions were marred by other failures discussed in the research.

Further Research

There is a need for further research on the intricacies and workings of local government and possible linkages between the character of local leadership (mayors' behavior) and the performance of local c Municipalities – including factors such as such leaders' education, prior experience, years of tenure and leadership styles and their possible linkage to quality and performance of local governments – whether they are strong or weak municipalities.

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Interviews:

Total 106 interviews, including: senior officials in the Ministry of Interior (director-generals in the past, director of the Local Government Authority, director of the comptroller's wing and others); mayors and heads of local councils – present and former (except Natanya), deputy-mayors, council members, deputy-generals of councils, treasurers, legal counselors, internal auditors and others (The author has the names of the interviewees and transcripts of verbatim quotes)

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