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Coproduction of Public Leadership: the Engagement of Mayors with Citizens, Managers and Politicians in Local Governance

This paper studies how mayors engage with citizens, managers and politicians to coproduce public leadership in the pursuit of several local governance processes: agenda setting; institutional decision making; public services design and delivery. We draw on an extensive survey with answers from 1,119 Italian directly elected Mayors. Using exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis and then clustering, we shed a light on the existence of four different clusters of engagement who coproduce different types of public leadership: political managerialism oriented leadership; multi-actor and participatory leadership; centralised leadership; conventional leadership. Our findings show that centralised leadership is the most popular cluster among the four; female mayors tend to enact a more multi-actor and participatory type of leadership; leadership in rural areas is more conventional. Interestingly, some mayors prefer to engage with politicians for issues related to public service design and delivery rather than with managers. We discuss how our findings advance public administration theory, specifically the literatures on public leadership and on the relationship between politics and administration.

Keywords

1. Introduction

The debate on Public Leadership is getting increasing attention in public administration studies (e.g. Chapman, Getha-Taylor, Holmes, Jacobson, Morse, & Sowa, 2016; Crosby & Bryson, 2018; 't Hart, 2014; Hartley, 2018; Orr & Bennett, 2017; Ospina, 2017; Tummers & Knies, 2016; Van Wart, 2013), and with the rise of multi-actor and interactive governance (Bryson, Sancino, Benington, & Sørensen, 2017; Torfing, Peters, Pierre & Sørensen, 2012) the issue of how public and political leaders engage between them and with citizens has become one of the main areas of inquiry (e.g. Sancino, Meneguzzo, Braga, Esposito, 2018; Nabatchi, Sancino & Sicilia 2017).

This paper studies how mayors engage with citizens, managers and politicians to coproduce public leadership in the pursuit of several local governance processes. According to Ospina's (2017) claim to better integrate leadership and public administration studies, we follow a relational leadership perspective (e.g. Clark, Denham-Vaughan, & Chidiac, 2014), which is defined as "a social influence process through which emergent coordination… and change (e.g., new values, attitudes, approaches, behaviours, and ideologies) are constructed and produced" (Uhl-Bien, 2006: 665). The main idea behind this approach is that leadership is a relational phenomenon and a social process that results through interconnected relationships in highly interactive contexts between different actors (e.g. leaders and followers). In other words, leadership is coproduced through the interactions that make leadership happen.

Even if with different attitudes of relationality and different labels (Bolden, 2011) - such as for example collaborative (e.g. Vangen & Huxham, 2003), collective (e.g. Ospina & Foldy, 2015), distributed (e.g. Oborn, Barrett, & Dawson, 2013), shared (e.g. Hoch, Pearce, & Welzel, 2010), pluralised (White, Currie & Lockett, 2016), post-heroic (Fletcher, 2004) - the idea that leadership is embedded in networks of relationships and socially constructed (in our words coproduced), is now widely recognised in leadership studies (Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011; Fletcher, 2004).

If leadership is relational and given that time and attention are limited resources in the dynamics of leadership (Van Wart, 2011), engaging/giving more attention to a type of actor would have the effect of engaging /giving less attention to other actors with implications on the type of leadership that is enacted. This assumption prompted us to investigate whether there are different patterns of engagement among Italian mayors considering the three main categories of actors in local governance, namely: citizens, managers and politicians (in alphabetical order). More specifically, we were interested to explore how Italian mayors engage citizens, managers and politicians in local governance processes throughout the different stages of the policy cycle (agenda setting; institutional decision making; public services design and delivery) and if there are different engagement patterns. Finally, we wanted to explore if gender and being a Mayor in an urban vs. rural area could explain the different engagement patterns.

In a time of depoliticization (e.g. Wood & Flinders, 2014) and followership leading leadership (Kellerman, 2008), rise of technocratic power in governance (Habermas, 2015), increasing request of citizens to be more involved with government (Jakobsen, James, Moynihan, & Nabatchi, 2016), it is interesting to study the relative importance of different categories of actors in coproducing public leadership. Similarly, given the importance of the rural vs. urban variable to explain the outcomes of the results of Brexit and Trump's election (Rachman, 2018) as well as the different degree of masculinity in Western and non-Western societies (AbouAssi, Bauer & Johnston, 2018), it is quite important to understand if public leadership differ in rural vs. urban areas and between men and women.

This paper provides an empirical contribution drawing on an extensive survey with answers from 1,119 Italian directly elected Mayors. Italy can be considered the most exemplary European case study in terms of importance of the role played by the Mayor in local governance (Heinelt, Magnier, Cabria, & Reynaert, 2018; Sancino & Castellani, 2016). Using exploratory and confirmatory factor

analysis and then clustering, we shed a light on the existence of four different clusters of engagement which are presented later in the paper. Moreover, in theoretical terms we contribute to public administration theory by expanding the literatures on public leadership and on the relationship between politics and administration.

The paper is structured as follows. The next section briefly provides a conceptual backdrop on mayoral leadership and on the issue of mayoral engagement of citizens, managers, and politicians in local governance. The third section presents the methodology and the setting of our research. Then findings and discussion are presented in the fourth and fifth sections. The last section exposes our contributions and conclusions and highlights limits of our research, suggesting also some hints for future research.

2. Theoretical Background

Mayoral Leadership

The study of mayors and their leadership can be described as relatively new, despite being part of the well-developed and vast research on public and political leadership. Indeed, the first analysis of mayors' roles and leadership styles were conducted 'in the late 1950s and early 1960s generally in the form of case studies of individual mayors' (Persons, 1985: 205), but it's only in the 1970s that the topic started to develop significantly in the United States and, then, worldwide. As Persons (1985: 205–206) pointed out, two were the main bodies of the literature and reasons for this interest: on the one hand, the development of models of mayoral leadership and, on the other hand, the analysis of 'the impact of black mayors (…) [and] the question of what difference a black mayor would make on the general governance of urban centers'. Although the latter can explain the reason why American researchers firstly have focused on and developed the topic, it's the former that has spread worldwide and that has gained particular attentions in these last decades.

Mayors are the most visible public leaders in cities and communities (Latham, McCormack, McNamara, & McNeill, 2009), with an increasing influence also at the regional, national and global scale (Acuto, 2013; Barber, 2013; Beer, Ayres, Clower, Faller, & Sancino, 2018). Therefore, it cannot astonish that the issue of mayoral leadership has been receiving considerable critical attention, especially in recent years (e.g. Bäck, Heinelt & Magnier, 2006; Jan Verheul & Schaap, 2010; Heinelt et al. 2018).

However, playing this important role brings to deal with 'diverse questions of leadership and the resulting pitfalls and challenges', as pointed out by Jan Verheul & Schaap (2010: 450). According to these authors, mayors must face and balance three crucial dilemmas:

1. The necessity of creating a sense of community (a local identity) even though multiple inclusions and multiple identities characterize local communities.

2. The tension between the need for strong leadership and the interdependent, networked character of society.

3. The fact that leaders are expected to be strong and, at the same time, they should stand accountable.

These dilemmas - especially the demand for both a strong mayoral leadership and a shared-power, collective one (Steyvers, 2012) - create fundamental challenges in terms of mayoral leadership. The review of the main literature on this field highlights that there are at least three main perspectives used to study the topic: the formal perspective, the behavioural perspective and the mix of the two.

The formal perspective is mainly concerned with the electoral and governance arrangements of the mayor (e.g. Sancino & Castellani, 2016; Wollmann, 2004). In terms of mayoral leadership, two principal typologies can be identified (Steyvers, 2012): the strong leadership, when the mayor is often directly-elected, dominates the council and the administration and has a presidential or

notable role (for example in Southern Europe and mayor council government system in US and Canada); and the weak leadership, where the leadership is often shared among different actors and committees (North Europe) or mostly delegated to a city manager with the mayor playing mainly an ambassadorial role (for example the council-manager government form in US and Ireland).

The behavioural perspective focuses on the roles and relationships of the mayor. In this respect, Svara (1987, 2003) – among others - pointed out that the type and effectiveness of the mayoral leadership depends on three factors: the roles that the mayor performs, how well she performs them and her ability to promote a 'facilitative leadership model'. More recently, Hlepas, Chantzaras & Getimis (2018) identified four-ideal types of mayors: the *visionary*, the *city boss*, the *consensus facilitator* and the *protector*, drawing this distinction from two dimensions: the 'time horizon of leadership' (i.e. leadership orientation, namely a strategic versus a reproductive orientation) and the exercise of power (namely an authoritarian versus a cooperative way of acting).

Other authors have taken a mixed perspective. Basing their analysis on the mayors' agenda setting, network building and task accomplishing processes, Kotter & Lawrence (1974) identified five 'mayoral types': the ceremonial pattern, the caretaker mayor, the personality/individualist, the executive, and the program entrepreneur. Avellaneda has studied how mayoral qualifications affect the municipal performance (Avellaneda, 2008) and mayoral decision making under different conditions of issue salience, context, and constraint (Avellaneda, 2013). Our study also takes a mixed perspective: we recognise the importance of the relationships that mayors create with other actors as in behavioural type of studies, but we also recognise – in a way more attuned to the formal perspective – that Mayors can engage different actors for doing different local governance processes. In the next section we present our framework of analysis and clarify how we advance the literature.

Local Governance and the Mayoral Engagement of Citizens, Politicians and Public Managers:

Framework of Analysis

Mayors are central leaders in local governance. The latter can be defined as the practice (or way of governing) of a local government characterised by the steering and involvement – both formally and informally – of relevant actors with the aim of achieving institutional and democratic outcomes (e.g. Rhodes, 1996; Stoker, 2003, 2011).

Specifically, drawing from the works of several authors who have distinguished among different stages of the policy cycle in (local) governance, such as Avellaneda (2013), Edelenbos (1999), Fung (2006), Ingold & Leifeld (2016), Jakobsen et al. (2016), Nabatchi, Sancino & Sicilia (2017), Svara (1999), Svara & Denhardt (2010), we can identify four main processes of local governance occurring at different stages of the policy cycle (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003): agenda setting (definition of the priorities of the municipality); institutional decision making (definition of the policies of the municipality – policy formulation); public services design (design of the public services – policy implementation); public services delivery (delivery of the public services – policy implementation). This taxonomy – like in Svara & Denhardt (2010) - has the merit of including public policy and management processes and not just mainly public (service) management processes as in Jakobsen et al. (2016) or Nabatchi et al. (2017) or just mainly public policy and decision making processes as in Avallaneda (2013) and Fung (2006). We also overcome Svara & Denhardt (2010) by referring more explicitly at the idea of a (local) policy cycle as in Svara (1999). Scholars have always discussed the issue of participation in local governance arenas (Van Damme & Brans, 2012): who should be involved, when and how (e.g. Bryson et al. 2012). As observed by Jann & Wegrich (2006, 45-46), 'actors within and outside government constantly seek to influence and collectively shape' local governance.

In this paper, we follow 't Hart (2014) and we investigate how much and for doing what (agenda setting; institutional decision making; public service design and delivery) mayors engage with citizens, managers and politicians. 't Hart (2014) assumes the existence of three forms of public leadership to implement an effective governance: political, administrative (or bureaucratic) and civic. The first sphere consists of all political players of a place, e.g. the mayor, the council, the cabinet; the second consists of the senior public administrators who manage public organizations, and thus sometimes called public managers; the last one consists of all actors 'outside the governmental system' ('t Hart & Uhr, 2008: 8; 't Hart, 2014: 33).

Investigating the (mayoral) engagement of citizens, managers and politicians recognises the overlapping role of politicians and managers and the complementary view of politics and administration (Svara, 1999), but it advances that view also recognising the contribution of citizen co-production (Nabatchi et al. 2017).

The study of mayors' relationships has recently bloomed. To name a few, Denters (2006) have studied mayoral relationships with councillors, Alba & Navarro (2006) with local administrators (managers in our own language in this paper), Navarro, Karlsson, Magre, & Reinholde (2018) with politicians and managers, Hlepas et al. (2018) with other municipalities and stakeholders, and Haus & Sweeting (2006) with citizens. However, so far no studies have investigated in the same survey mayoral relationships with citizens, managers and politicians in different local governance processes. This is a contribution of our paper which is relevant, because as observed by Van Wart (2011), where leaders put their attention and engagement, for example if they are too busy in addressing external issues and creating and managing external relationships that they neglect the ones within the organization, is a crucial dynamic of leadership that may determine different outcomes.

3. Methodology

Given the exploratory nature of the research question, we developed a survey which aimed to investigate how much and when mayors involve politicians, managers and citizens in the agenda setting, institutional decision making, public services design and delivery.

In this section, we present the data collection process and the methodological design of the paper.

Research setting

Italy is one of the European Countries with the *strong-mayor government form* (Mouritzen & Svara, 2002) and mayors are directly elected by citizens since 1993. Therefore, in Italy, the need of creating a balance between a strong-centralized leadership and participative-shared-collective one is crucial (Haus & Erling Klausen, 2011; Larsen, 2000; Sancino & Castellani, 2016). Recent research have confirmed the central role of Italian Mayors in local governance (e.g. Denters, Steyvers, Klok, & Cermak, 2018). Finally, Italy is also an interesting context because of its large base of mayors (7,960), which makes possible to identify different patterns of engagement put in place by mayors.

Survey and data collection

We designed a survey to collect information on how much and when mayors engage politicians, public managers and citizens in the four main stages of local governance: agenda setting, decision-making, public services design and delivery. Table 1 lists the items of the survey divided according to each type of actors involved and the theoretical references considered for their definition.

Insert Table 1 here

The survey was distributed by email to all the Italian municipalities (7,960) and 1119 mayors' answers were collected in two rounds. The percentage of responses (14.05%) is comparable to similar studies (Harzing, 1997, Giacomini, Sancino & Simonetto, 2018). Our sample is composed by 161 women (14.4%) and 958 men (85.6%). According to the Italian Ministry of Agriculture's classification of territories, a total of 1002 majors (89.5%) are located in areas classified by the ministry of agriculture as rural, while the remaining 117 (10.5%) are located in areas defined as urban. We assessed the representativeness of our sample controlling for mayors' gender and the rural vs urban location of the municipality. Both the chi-squared tests confirmed that there was not a significant difference between the composition of the sample and of the population.

Data analysis - Exploratory factor analysis

We first conducted an exploratory factor analysis to evaluate the validity and reliability of the measurement model. We assessed the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin measure of factorial simplicity (Kaiser, 1974) and the Bartlett's test of sphericity to confirm that the correlation matrix is not an identity matrix (Dziuban & Shirkey, 1974). A principal components analysis was chosen as exploratory factor technique since it is able to account for the largest proportion of total variance in the dataset and does not suffer from factor indeterminacy issue (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010: 106–107). We used a varimax rotation in order to achieve a simple factorial structure and the results were compared with a non-orthogonal rotation. The correlations between factors extracted with an oblimin rotation where assessed against the ±.32 threshold

(Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007: 646), to avoid the risk of an overlap between factors higher than 10%.

We assessed factor loadings for convergent validity. Although our large sample would require a limited factor loading (.30) to reach significance (Hair et al., 2010: 116), we adopted a more conservative approach. The assessment of discriminant validity was conducted to avoid cross factor loadings did not differ more than .20. The subsequent analysis of items' communalities, i.e. 'the amount of variance accounted for by the factor solution for each variable' (Hair et al., 2010: 118) was conducted to verify they were below the .50 threshold. The assessment of internal reliability was conducted though the estimation of Cronbach's alphas (Hinkin, 1998). We present the results of exploratory factor analysis in the findings section.

Data analysis - Confirmatory factor analysis

We assessed for convergent validity following the procedure suggested by Hair et al. (2010: 678–680): we built a factor model with the items selected from the exploratory factor analysis and we assessed if their factor loadings were higher than .40 (Ertz, Karakas, & Sarigöllü, 2016). Besides controlling for goodness of fit parameters (chi squared, chi-squared/degrees of freedom, CFI, AGFI, RMSEA, PCLOSE) according to Hu and Bentler (1999) recommendations, we measured the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each factor: a value greater than .50 means that the variance explained by a factor is larger than the error. A further check on reliability was conducted comparing the Construct Reliability of each factor with the cut-off value of .7.

An analysis of discriminant validity was conducted checking if the AVE values of the factors were higher than the squared correlation between any two items.

To control for common method bias, i.e. the existence of a single factor able to account for the

majority of the variance in the model, the Harman's test was performed (Fuller, Simmering, Atinc, Atinc, & Babin, 2016). Furthermore, we assessed the effects of a single unmeasured latent factor on all the items retained in the confirmatory factor analysis (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003), to establish if there may be measurement errors equally distributed on all the items. The goodness of fit indexes and the regression weights of the model with the common method factor were compared with the correspondent parameters of the model without common method factor.

We finally extracted the factors using the regression scores.

Data analysis - Clustering

A cluster analysis was performed on the factor scores extracted from the confirmatory factor analysis. We adopted here the two-step approach as suggested by Hair et al. (2010: 508), to limit the weaknesses of a single approach and to check for validity: a hierarchical clustering method was used to define the correct number of clusters, and a non-hierarchical method was applied to refine cluster memberships. To minimize inter-cluster variance and produce clusters with similar number of observations, the Ward method was used (Mojena, 1977) with Minkowski distance measure (Murtagh & Contreras, 2012). To define the optimal solution, we analysed the level of dissimilarity between groups and we compared it with the dendrogram (Ketchen & Shook, 1996).

The solution obtained with the hierarchical clustering method was then used to generate cluster seeds for the K-means algorithm.

We then proceeded to the interpretation and validation of the generated clusters. We assessed cluster stability measuring the consistency of clusters across the solution generated with the two different algorithms and an ANOVA was used to measure the significance of the difference

between cluster variables.

As a final point, in order to assess criterion validity an ANOVA was conducted on variable not used in the clustering and deemed to assume different values across the cluster.

The final cluster solution found was profiled analysing the differences exhibited by the clusters on the gender and geographical location variables.

4. Findings

The collected data were re-elaborated first through the use of factor analysis and subsequently through clustering.

Exploratory factor analysis

The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin measure of factorial simplicity showed an adequate level (.72) to conduct factorial analysis. The Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant confirming that the correlation matrix is not an identity matrix.

We did not impose the number of factors to extract and the solution able to explain the largest amount of variance in the sample (66.36%) has four factors. The results of the exploratory analysis with the factor loadings and the Cronbach's alphas are shown in Table 2.

Insert Table 2 here

The factors related to Citizens and Managers were retained with the loss of two items as we will

discuss after. Conversely, the items related to the engagement of politicians loaded on two different factors. A first factor, named *Strategic Politicians*, grouped together the items related to the involvement of politicians in the decision making (POLENG1 and POLENG2) while the second factor, named *Executive Politicians,* grouped together the items related to the co-design and co-delivery of public services with politicians (POLENG3 and POLENG4). As anticipated by the labels used, this split of the factor related to the involvement of politicians could be due to the different roles that these actors may play in the local authority. We will further examine this matter in the discussions.

The correlations between factors extracted with an oblimin rotation were lower than ±.32 threshold (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007: 646), avoiding the risk of an overlap between factors. The highest correlation in our sample is .273 thus confirming the possibility to adopt an orthogonal rotation. The communalities were all higher than .5.

Following a conservative approach, we assessed factor loadings for convergent validity. Although our large sample would require a limited factor loading (.30) to reach significance (Hair et al., 2010: 116), our indicators showed loadings higher than .6, excluding just two items, PMENG1 and PMENG2, which presented high cross factor loadings. The assessment of discriminant validity confirmed that those two items should be dropped from the final solution, as their cross factor loadings did not differ more than .20. This choice was confirmed also by the analysis of items' communalities: for both the items, the communalities were below the .50 threshold (as shown in Table 2).

The assessment of internal reliability revealed that all the factors have good Cronbach's alphas (Hinkin, 1998), with the minimum level registered for Factor 2 (.733), above the .7 threshold suggested by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994).

Confirmatory factor analysis

The results of the confirmatory factor analysis are reported in Figure 1, showing standardized coefficients for the regression weights (single edged arrows), the correlations (double edged arrows) and the variances (besides the factors, items and error terms). The levels of significance for all the regression weights and the correlations are <.001.

Insert Figure 1 here

The chi-squared of the model was 73.1 with 28 degrees of freedom. As suggested by Hair et al. (2010: 640), the p-value associated to the chi-squared test, although significant, does not provide reliable information for large sample like ours. According to the thresholds suggested by (Hu & Bentler, 1999), our model presented a good level of fit: chi-squared/degrees of freedom = 2.610; CFI = .962; AGFI = .946; RMSEA = .038; PCLOSE = .968; and SRMR = .058.

The regression weights of the items related to Strategic Politicians, Executive Politicians and Managers are all above .70 which is considered an ideal level (Hair et al., 2010: 678). The same level is reached by two items of the factor Citizens, CITENG3 and CITENG4. The modification indexes of the model showed that introducing a correlation between the error terms of the other two items, CITENG1 and CITENG2, would yield an improvement of the model fit. Nevertheless, this choice reduced slightly their loadings: while CITENG1 (.54) is above the .50 threshold (Hair et al., 2010: 678), CITENG2 is .47 which is deemed acceptable (Ertz et al., 2016). The correlations between the error terms remained low (.39).

The squared correlations between factors are shown in Table 3, which reports also the Composite

reliability and AVE for each factor. All the factors showed a good reliability with Composite Reliability values above .7. The AVE values were all higher than the corresponding values of the Maximum Squared Variance, indicating that the model had a good discriminant validity. Finally, the evaluation of convergent validity reported AVE values higher than .5 for Managers, Strategic Politicians and Executive Politicians. Although the AVE for citizens was .499, the high value of composite reliability (.789) confirmed the model reached a good convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Insert Table 3 here

The Harman's test for common method bias showed that a single factor was not able to account for the majority of the variance in the model (31.86%). To complement this test, we added to the confirmatory factor model a single latent factor, named Common Method Factor, linked to all the observed measures constraining the measurement factor loadings to be equal. The test of chi-squared change between the initial model and the model with the Common Method Factor showed no significant difference (p = .409), confirming that common method variance is distributed equally across the items of the survey. The differences between the factor loadings of the two models were all very low (< .075), with the exception of POLENG2 (.221), but its factor loading on Strategic Politicians in the model with the common method factor remained considerably higher (.628) than the loading in the model without the common method factor, testifying that that the difference did not affect the estimates.

Clustering

The four factorial variables—Strategic Politicians, Executive Politicians, Managers and Citizens —were used to categorize mayors into distinct groups. Combining the inspection of the dendrogram with the computation of a dissimilarity measure, a solution with four clusters was selected as the most appropriate. The resulting profiles of clusters were discussed between the four authors to refine their interpretation.

The seeds of the hierarchical methods were introduced in a k-means clustering algorithm. The resulting cluster solution was cross-validated comparing hierarchical solution with the non-hierarchical cluster assignments. Only the 18.8% of the observations changed cluster membership which is considered a stable solution (Hair et al., 2010: 512).

The profiles of the clusters across the four clustering variables are reported in Table 4. The ANOVA on all the mean differences between clusters proved to be significant ($p < 0.000$). Also the ANOVA conducted on an item excluded from the analysis during the exploratory factor analysis (PMENG1) to test for criterion validity was significant ($p < 0.000$).

Insert Table 4 here

Figure 2 represents the clusters' profiles on radar charts rescaling the values from 0 to 1.

Insert Figure 2 here

The pattern of engagement of mayors in the first cluster is described as 'political managerialism-oriented leadership'. These mayors (33%) generally have a good propensity to collaborate with the other actors identified, especially with the executive politicians who share the process of co-design and co-delivering of public services within the municipal board.

The second cluster is composed by the 19% of mayors and has lower values for what concerns the executive politicians, but at the same time presents high values of involvement of the other three groups of actors. We named this cluster 'conventional leadership' because it resembles the type of engagement which is expected by mayors in Italy according to the legislation and to the current dominant narratives regarding public leadership.

The third cluster has the second largest dimension (26% of mayors) and is that composed of mayors less likely to involve politicians, public managers and citizens and is named 'Centralized leadership'. This group presents the lowest levels of involvement of all the actors mentioned. The only modest exception is the involvement of the executive politicians, which, although lower than that declared by the mayors of the other clusters, does not present a noticeable difference with the general average.

The last cluster depicts behaviours of mayors (22%) more oriented towards co-operation with all the actors and this pattern is named 'multi-actor and participatory leadership'. In essence, these mayors are keen on addressing the positions of all the internal and external actors of the municipality. For each of the categories of actors involved mayors in this cluster show the highest level of involvement in comparison with the other clusters. In particular, they demonstrate high levels of involvement of citizens and elected politicians. Hence, this last cluster is named 'multi-actor and participatory leadership'.

5. Discussions

Our findings provide interesting insights from several perspectives. First, from the exploratory factor analysis it emerges that if citizens are engaged by the mayor, this is generally done across all the stages of the policy cycle (agenda setting; institutional decision making; public services design; public services delivery). This is not true for managers who are mainly engaged for policy implementation (public services design and delivery). Moreover, there are two different and separated ways of engaging politicians. Mayors engage them either to define and take decisions (strategic politicians) or to co-design and co-deliver public services (executive politicians). All together our findings contrast with Navarro et al. (2018) who found a higher engagement of managers than politicians in terms of time dedicated by Italian mayors, while implicitly confirm those of Denters et al. (2018) and more generally the literature on local governance in terms of recognition of the role of citizens.

A second finding advances a debate in public administration studies, namely the dichotomy and complementary view of politics and administration (Svara, 1998; 1999; 2001). While the role of managers is normally deemed remarkable also in agenda setting and institutional decision making (e.g. Schnapp, 2000), this does not find support in our data. Quite oppositely, our findings pave the way to the existence of a type of public leadership in policy implementation largely relying upon executive politicians rather than on managers. This could certainly be partly explained by the hybrid role of politicians in Italian municipalities below than 5,000 inhabitants, very well represented in our sample. This finding deserves further exploration and consideration also in other administrative settings.

Third, the emergence of two clusters are particularly surprising, mainly because we did not expect to find them. They show the existence of two highly contrasting/opposite patterns of

engagement: (1) the multi-actor and participatory leadership cluster, where mayors strongly engage with all other actors considered (politicians, public managers and citizens); (2) the centralised leadership cluster, where mayors scarcely engage with all other actors considered (citizens, managers and politicians).

There are thus two main and opposite attitudes of mayors: to centralize leadership or to share, distribute it. The first relates with the traditional idea of the individual leader, the 'Great Man' who takes top-down decisions and who has distinctive characteristics that allow him/her to be, or not, an effective leader. The second relates to the idea that leadership is a group participative activity and scholars have named this new style of leadership in various ways.

Fourth, our findings are surprising also in relation to our control variables (gender, urban vs. rural, and geographic areas). While there are not fundamental and strong differences amongst clusters, there are still some interesting insights. More precisely, in the cluster 'political managerialism-oriented leadership' and even more in the cluster 'centralized leadership' it is possible to notice a percentage of female mayors below the average of respondents. Therefore, female mayors seem to be more akin to a multi-actor and participatory type of public leadership or to a more conventional type of public leadership. This seems to confirm previous research outcomes which found that men tend to behave in a more autocratic and task-oriented manner, i.e. masculine approach, whereas women tend to adopt a more participative, democratic and people-oriented manner, i.e. feminine approach (e.g. Appelbaum, Audet, & Miller, 2003; Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Jago & Vroom, 1982). However, this finding call for further investigation as certain scholars pointed out that the link between gender and the associated type of leadership should not be taken for granted since leadership is situational and context-dependent (Ferreira & Gyourko, 2014; Gagliarducci & Paserman, 2012; Gartzia & Van Engen, 2012) and, hence, male leaders can lead in a feminine manner and vice versa, or they should lead

in similar ways when they assume the same role in the same context (Alonso-Almeida & Bremser, 2015: 57 paraphrasing Eagli & Carli, 2007).

Fifth, looking at our clusters and to the degree of urbanization it emerges that mayors who exercise their role in rural areas tend to lead in a more conventional way. Fifth, Mayors who exercise their role in Southern Italy tend to lead in a more multi-actor and participatory way. This could seem counter-intuitive as usually the multi-actor and participatory leadership is associated with a positive view of public governance while Southern Italy tends historically to perform (at an aggregate level) relatively worse than other parts of Italy (Putnam, Leonardi & Nanetti, 1994). There may be different reasons: our mayors could have "cheated" in the survey replying what they would have been expected to reply, they could have actually tried to engage more because the informal context of Southern Italy (as described by Putnam et al., 1994) stimulates them to be more collaborative or there could be some other social phenomena that we are not aware of. Surely this is a result that needs further exploration.

Finally, comparing the cluster named 'conventional leadership' with the one labelled 'political managerialism oriented leadership' it appears that a kind of replacement effect takes place. Looking at the different patterns of engagement what seems to change the membership between these two clusters is the engagement of executive politicians rather than managers in the stages of public services design and public services delivery. So, there seems to be mayors who prefer to design and to deliver public services with executive politicians rather than with managers. The role of politicians in public management type of processes—so not public policy formulation— is a neglected area of enquiry and theorization which our empirical findings point to the need for a better understanding.

6. Conclusions

This paper investigated the mayoral engagement of citizens, managers and politicians in several local governance processes. We moved from the recognition that leadership is relational and socially constructed, so different types of public leadership can be coproduced depending on the local governance process and on the intensity and the type of the actors engaged.

This study contributes to public administration theory advancing literature on public leadership and leadership studies by showing that, given that time and attention are limited resources and different actors may have different logics and expectations, leadership is a social process that results from interactions where engaging/giving more attention to certain actors has implications in terms of the leadership which is enacted.

Our findings also contributed to research on the relationship between politics and administration, a topic rather neglected in public administration theory, by highlighting that the role and consequences of citizen engagement in the interactions between politicians and managers needs to be taken into account. Specifically, while the overlapping roles of politicians and managers in governance are acknowledged (Svara, 1999), additional empirical studies are needed to disguise the different combinations of engagement that may occur across the policy cycle with citizens also entering in these interactions with politicians and managers.

Investigating the relationships between a leader and other leaders or followers is thus a promising area of enquiry as, even with a micro level of analysis, the empirical understanding of the relative importance of different actors in governance can shed a light on important themes and trends occurring at a macro-level, such as the rise of technocracy and followership. In this respect, our paper provides an attempt to bridge micro and macro levels of analysis and debates within public administration studies (Moynihan, 2018).

Finally, while we highlighted the existence of four different clusters, future studies might take a longitudinal approach and to consider if, how and why some leaders might change their

engagement styles.

This paper has several limitations. First, even if with an extensive dataset, it is a based on data from a single country. Future comparative studies could further provide empirical base to challenge the generalizability of these results. Moreover, given the quantitative nature of the study, we assumed the existence of three main categories of actors (citizens, managers, and politicians), while of course we recognise the existence of different subgroups of actors within these categories. Future studies might continue to investigate this topic by employing also qualitative and mixed methods: particularly, social network analysis seems a promising approach to study engagement.

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Table 1. Survey items

Components	Label	Items	Theoretical domain
POLENG	POLENG1	As a Mayor I always involve local politicians to define the agenda of my municipality	Agenda setting & Local Politicians engagement (Navarro et al., 2018; Svara, 1999)
	POLENG2	As a Mayor I always take decisions about municipal policies with local politicians	Decision Making & Local Politicians engagement (Navarro et al., 2018; Svara, 1999)
	POLENG3	As a Mayor I always involve local politicians when the municipality designs public services	Co-design & Local Politicians engagement (Navarro et al., 2018; Svara, 1999)
	POLENG4	As a Mayor I always involve local politicians when the municipality delivers public services	Co-delivery & Local Politicians engagement (Navarro et al., 2018; Svara, 1999)
PMENG	PMENG1	As a Mayor I always involve public managers to define the agenda of my municipality	Agenda setting & Public Managers engagement (Navarro et al., 2018; Svara, 1999)
	PMENG2	As a Mayor I always take decisions about municipal policies with public managers	Decision Making & Public Managers engagement (Navarro et al., 2018; Svara, 1999)
	PMENG3	As a Mayor I always work with public managers to design municipal services	Co-design & Public Managers engagement (Navarro et al., 2018; Svara, 1999)
	PMENG4	As a Mayor I always work with public managers to deliver municipal services	Co-delivery & Public Managers engagement (Navarro et al., 2018; Svara, 1999)
CITENG	CITENG1	As a Mayor I always involve citizens to define the agenda of my municipality	Agenda setting & Citizen engagement (Fung, 2006; 2009; Vetter et al., 2018))
	CITENG2	As a Mayor I always take decisions about local policies with citizens	Decision Making & Citizen Engagement (Fung, 2009; Vetter et al., 2018)
	CITENG3	As a Mayor I always involve citizens when my municipality designs public services	Co-Design & Citizen engagement (Jakobsen et al., 206; Nabatchi et al., 2017)
	CITENG4	As a Mayor I always involve citizens when my municipality delivers public services	Co-Delivery & Citizen engagement (Jakobsen et al., 2016; Nabatchi et al., 2017)

* Local Politicians = Councillors and Cabinet Members

Table 2. Exploratory factor analysis Rotated Component Matrix^a

	Components				Communalities	Notes
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**		
CITENG3	.789				.685	
CITENG1	.761				.613	
CITENG4	.729				.601	
CITENG2	.684				.522	
PMENG2	-.328			-.322	.250	Dropped because of high cross-factor loading and low communality
POLENG1		.870			.766	
POLENG2		.834			.723	
PMENG1	.401	.555			.508	Dropped because of high cross-factor loading and low communality
POLENG3			.894		.864	
POLENG4			.885		.858	
PMENG3				.871	.793	
PMENG4				.860	.783	
alphas	.779	.733	.877	.791		

Table 3. Composite Reliability, Average Variance Extracted, Maximum Squared Variance and correlations between factors

					Correlations			
Nr	Components	CR	AVE	MSV	Citizens	Managers	Strategic Politicians	Executive Politicians
1	Citizens	0.789	0.499	0.167	1			
4	Managers	0.795	0.661	0.142	0.362	1		
2	Strategic Politicians	0.770	0.627	0.075	0.273	0.252	1	
3	Executive Politicians	0.879	0.784	0.167	0.409	0.377	0.248	1

Table 4. Profiles of the five clusters

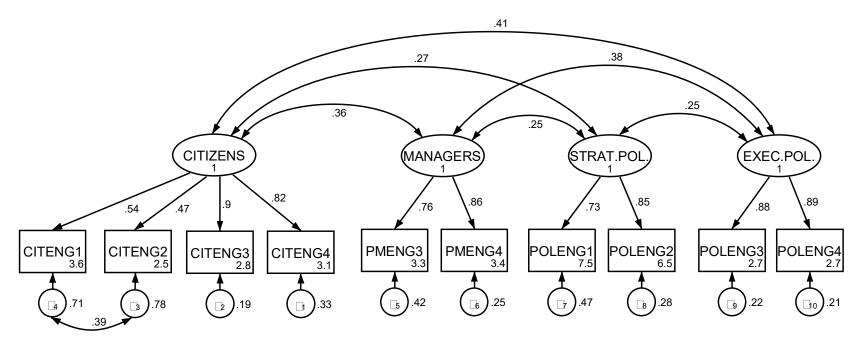| Nr	Cluster names	Total	%	Executive Politicians	Strategic Politicians	Managers	Citizens	Rural	Urban	Male	Female	North	Centre	South
1	Political managerialism-oriented leadership	370	33.07%	4.87	5.51	4.37	4.72	89%	11%	87%	13%	64%	15%	21%
2	Conventional leadership	216	19.30%	3.33	5.68	5.01	5.85	92%	8%	84%	16%	63%	18%	19%
3	Centralized leadership	292	26.09%	2.90	5.09	3.61	3.55	89%	11%	88%	12%	67%	14%	19%
4	Multi-actor and participatory leadership	241	21.54%	5.84	5.92	5.66	6.49	90%	10%	83%	17%	58%	12%	29%
	Total	1119												

Figure 1. Confirmatory factor analysis

Figure 2. Radar charts representing the profiles of the four clusters

Political managerialism-oriented leadership

Conventional leadership

Centralized leadership

Multi-actor and participatory leadership