

Politics/Administration Harmony in the City of Bach?

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Jean-Claude Garcia-Zamor, The Leipzig Model: Myth or Reality? A Study of City Management in the Former East Germany (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2008). 300 pp. \$39.95 (paper), ISBN: 9780761838906.

In his introduction, Jean-Claude Garcia-Zamor offers a brief definition of his subject: "The Leipzig Model that is the topic of the book is a managerial tool that advances the concepts of cooperation, consensus-building, and tolerance of other people's opinions" (1). Those concepts did operate in Leipzig city governance after the fall of the Berlin Wall exposed the hollow shell of the former East Germany. But the model is a managerial tool only to the extent that one can create and manipulate a political culture, as we learn from the people whom Garcia-Zamor interviewed.

Teaching summers at Leipzig University since 1999 enabled Garcia-Zamor to interview many of the leading officials in the city administration at the time. The "Leipzig Model," as it was dubbed in the press, had gotten national attention for achievements exceeding even those of West German cities. Most significant among those was the acquisition of the new BMW plant, for which 250 cities all over Europe had competed, a success that Garcia-Zamor credits to the "efficiency and professionalism" of the "Leipzig bureaucracy" (4).

Before addressing that bureaucracy, he describes, in chapter 1, how East German bureaucrats were hired primarily on the basis of loyalty to the Soviet-steered Socialist Unity Party. Because the party needed to claim zero unemployment, the bureaucracy was substantially overstaffed: 12 percent of the East German workforce was employed in the bureaucracy, compared to 7 percent in the West. While the West's bureaucracy was highly professional, the East's was about 55 percent working class or farmers, which made it quite representative of a "State of Workers and Farmers," as the German Democratic Republic (GDR) described itself, but hardly professional.

To compensate for such a lack of bureaucratic professionalism after unification, when local self-government was reinstated, many experienced West German administrators came to help their East German "brothers." (For such tours of duty, they received what they called "bush money," bonuses for working in the "Wild East bush.") East Germany was better off for getting all this help (not to mention huge financial support), and, as Garcia-Zamor reminds us, the East Germans had never wanted a "revolution," merely more or less radical reform, and therefore had no one in place to take up leadership.

In chapter 2, "Politics and Human Rights," Garcia-Zamor explains that cleaning up the former and instituting the latter required the removal of all of the Socialist Unity Party judges and prosecutors as well as, of course, the Stasi (Secret Police), which, it turned out, had infested even the church, whose basements had housed the dissidents' meetings. Garcia-Zamor is right that the West German takeover of so many leading bureaucratic positions left no opportunity for East Germans to develop their own new bureaucratic self-confidence and identity. But the chaotic circumstances after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the serious lack of professionalism really left no time for that.

In chapter 3, "Ethics in a Society in Transformation," Garcia-Zamor elaborates on the hiring practices in the GDR bureaucracy. These were based on party and personal loyalty, which he rightly terms an "ethical failure"—the higher-ups skimmed whatever they could and hired folks to cover for them at the lower levels. "The BMW case," which he introduces here, demonstrates to him that a newly ethical administration also means a more efficient bureaucracy. Probably so, but apart from a sizable Western subsidy for infrastructure improvements in the area, BMW went to Leipzig for several other reasons: a highly skilled workforce that was willing to work around the clock and for lower wages than in any of the other contending cities; no language problem; BMWs made here could continue

to be marketed as "Made in Germany"; proximity to BMW's Munich home; abundant housing and cultural amenities; and, of course, an eminently accommodating city administration. To attract BMW, city officials established a public-private partnership with a firm that would train employees for work at BMW and similar plants to return Saxony to its former auto manufacturing glory.

In chapter 4, "The City of Leipzig," Garcia-Zamor turns to this glorious past, which he portrays as integral to the civic culture that is the driving force for such model city administration. Since the 1400s, Leipzig had been a royal and then an imperial marketplace, with the biggest German trade fairs. It was central in modern development, too, as Europe's first rail lines linked Leipzig and Dresden in 1834. It has a resonant music history (Bach among others) and Germany's second-oldest university (Goethe went there). It played a central role in the Reformation following Luther's nearby protests and, most recently, of course, it played the pivotal role in protests against the GDR government. And, in post-Wall times, Leipzig has made the strongest comeback of any East German city.

For Garcia-Zamor, this special civic culture trumped partisan politics among city council members, who thus came to agree to unusually entrepreneurial governing. "This book," he claims, "will fill an important gap in local administration scholarship. It is one of the first to consider in details [*sic*] the dynamics of culture and commerce in local government" (80).

It is true that Leipzig has a long and illustrious cultural history, but that is a claim many other German cities can make. And Garcia-Zamor is certainly right to note that Germans prefer consensus over conflict, but then again, Leipzigers were the leaders in pro-democracy demonstrations. The "revolution" of 1989 came out of protests centered around the St. Nicholas Church, and perhaps this is the "civic" energy that should be stressed.

It was during the competition for the BMW plant that city leaders, tired of their East German "loser" image, conjured up this proud history. Primary among these leaders was the first post-Wall mayor, Hinrich Lehmann-Grube, a West German jurist and longtime mayor of Hanover, who saw coming to Leipzig as an entrepreneurial opportunity. His successor, Wolfgang Tiefensee, was a local who had been prominent in the reform movement there.

Much of the information about the mayors' performance, and that of the Leipzig Model, comes from Garcia-Zamor's interviews of 24 participants in these post-Wall governance efforts, including both mayors. These interviewees almost unequivocally credit the

mayors for the Leipzig Model, generally giving more credit to Lehmann-Grube than to his hand-picked successor. To them, the Leipzig Model represents a "political" style or "decision-making" process that strove to overcome conflict and create consensus by putting the needs of the city above the interests of the political parties. The general sentiment seems to be that such an approach worked for the first few years, a time so near chaos that, as in similar crises, it simply forced everyone to subordinate all other interests to a united effort to overcome it.

Trying to come to terms with this crisis also involved creating new governance structures for East German cities, which Garcia-Zamor turns to in chapter 5, "The Structure of Leipzig City Government." In GDR times, cities had been mere arms of the national party government—rather stunted arms at that, with about 500 employees. Now Leipzig adopted, first, a model akin to the American weak-mayor form and then a strong-mayor one. This "strong" position allowed the second mayor to sustain a consensus through a "grand coalition" between the two largest parties, the Social Democrats and the Christian Democrats, but this harmony soon succumbed to partisan discord.

In chapter 6, "The Leipzig Model of Management," Garcia-Zamor notes that the model emerged at a specific moment when fundamental changes were under way that made it possible. But this time has passed, as the interviews make clear. The model really lasted only as long as did the revolutionary enthusiasm engendered by the fall of the Wall, as the former city council president observed. Today, as the interviews attest, it is partisan politics as usual.

While Garcia-Zamor does not mention this, the Leipzig Model may be viewed as an urban reprisal of the much-touted "German Model," the long-successful social market economy that prided itself on a harmonious consensus between (the economic needs of) capital and (the social needs of) labor. Perhaps the very effort of the West to "harmonize" the East, economically and socially, has extended this German Model too near the breaking point.

We can similarly answer the titular question, "Is the Leipzig Model Myth or Reality?" The interviews suggest that it was a reality as long as that enthusiasm lasted; today, it is part of that myth of those first few postrevolutionary and foundational years, as Garcia-Zamor himself acknowledges.

And what does all this have to do with city management? The Leipzig Model is really more about political management as exercised by these two mayors. Or, as Tiefensee says, it was a model of "political culture" (2) that the first mayor created and Tiefensee sought

to sustain. Garcia-Zamor stretches the model to apply to city management as well as politics, it appears, because these political leaders engaged their administrations and councils in economic development, a market function that in Germany, unlike the United States, is not generally a city government function. This is why the BMW case looms so large—these political leaders were able to align both the city administration and the city council cooperatively behind an effort to attract this new plant.

But that has little to do with city management and more to do with contingency leadership at the political level. Both of these mayors understood that, given the local history of and pride in civic autonomy, industrial innovation, and “can-do” attitude, economic entrepreneurialism (particularly in the auto industry) was the likeliest way to rebuild the city and stanch the westward emigration. The lessons to be learned, therefore, really pertain to leadership and (organizational) culture and remind us that these, too, are contingent.

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