

G. Terizakis

Offenbach case study report

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1. Introduction

The case report provides a brief summary of our empirical findings on fiscal policy in Offenbach. The first two chapters are based on statistical data and existing literature, and describe the socio-economic situation, the political actor constellation and the fiscal challenges faced by Offenbach. Chapters four and five review our own empirical findings on how local actors perceive fiscal problems and their causes as well their views on the local scope of action and the concrete consolidation measures, including the assumed impacts. These chapters are descriptive only and include several quotations and data derived from our MAXQDA analysis as illustrations. In the following chapters, the relevant analyses and interpretations of researchers are discussed. We also discuss the policy and leadership styles, the different kinds of legitimacy, the local political culture and knowledge types influencing fiscal policymaking. In chapter eight a new perspective will be added that of new actions related to social cohesion and economic development. A detailed discussion of our theoretical and methodological approaches, see our scientific book publication (Stolzenberg et al. 2016). As of November 28, 2016, the empirical corpus of the Offenbach case includes:

- interviews with 10 actors: the newly elected deputy mayor of economics, the head of the financial department, the head of the economic department, three councillors from the majority and the opposition, including two party leaders, and representatives of the supervisory authority, an interest group (chamber of commerce) and a social welfare organisation
- 353 texts from the local press, party manifestos, coalition treaties, press releases and publications of interest groups

2. Socioeconomic features of the City of Offenbach

The city of Offenbach (with a population of 120,988 that is increasing slightly, Bertelsmann Stiftung) is a city in the prosperous region of the Frankfurt/Rhine-Main area, located in the south of the state of Hesse in the center of Germany. This favorable position involves access to national (Autobahn, railways) and international (Airport, internet hub) infrastructure. Moreover, important production plants in the leather¹ and (printing) machine industries are still located in Offenbach, although they have suffered from severe economic restructuring. The specific challenge for Offenbach was and still is the major economic restructuring that is changing the economic and social structure of the city and profoundly influencing the fiscal situation.

Offenbach is in fact an old city, first mentioned in the 9th century. Apart from being the domicile of the local ruler, Offenbach was always a small town, the background for today's compact city center (Giese 2010: 21, AS&P 2015). It is striking that the city has been (and still is) a hub for migration since the middle ages and a central place for the Huguenots in Germany. The high influx of migrants is a tradition, as the rate of migrants is among the

¹ Offenbach was a center of leather production in Germany, as one expert who was interviewed underlined: "Offenbach was the City of leather" (I6)

highest in Germany (57% in 2013, AS&P 2015: 29). Even in the European context, the amount of migrants born abroad is one of the highest among Europe: Offenbach has the tenth highest rate among European cities in the year 2013 (see code: urb_cpocb, <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/de/web/cities/data/database>, access on 2017, February 21st). Current development shows a high influx of "people on the move" as a continuation of this tradition. In short, Offenbach is one of the most diverse cities in Germany (see Körner-Blätgen and Sturm 2016: 12).

The rapid and heavy industrialization at the beginning of the 20th century marks the rise of Offenbach to a major city in Hesse. This was an outstanding success story in the 1920s (Giese 2010: 254) and Offenbach became "the Hessian industrial city per se/Hessische Industriestadt schlechthin" (ibidem 255). Offenbach became a city of blue-collar workers and, not surprisingly, a city of the workers movement and the Social Democratic Party. This success story led to the population exceeding 100,000 in 1954 (ibidem 406), which shows that today the city of Offenbach has a whole new complexion.

It was (and still is) a feature of this industrialization that several industrial fields developed in parallel and no dependence on one central company occurred. Nevertheless, a shift towards service industries has taken place in recent years. The proximity to Frankfurt, the old rival city, is double-edged: On the one hand, as a global player Frankfurt is important to the local economy, because it attracts companies to the wider region (and to Offenbach) such as Hyundai in the Kaiserlei area. On the other hand, it is a tough competitor that ignores the needs of the smaller neighboring towns, like the need for affordable rents for housing (ibidem 322). In addition, some important service providers are located in Offenbach, such as the German Meteorological Office (Deutscher Wetter Dienst) or airport services.

Right from the beginning of industrialization, the image of a city of heavy work and smokers was a burden. The image of the city was and still is a central topic in local politics. The assumption is that a better image would lead to economic prosperity (ibidem 403) or that the negative image is a hindrance to attracting a new and "economically healthy" population (AS&P 2015: 11). The newest variation of the image politics is the search for the creative class (AS&P 2015: 51) which is already being attracted by the establishment of the University of Art and Design in 1970 (<http://www.hfg-offenbach.de/en/pages/university#about>).²

Apart from these policies, the use of the city and especially of the city center has been the focus of local debates. In summary, the use of the city space is far short of expectations. For example, the new office buildings in the city center are still a symbol of incorrect decisions, and could never be a serious competitor for the office building in Frankfurt (Biedermann et al. 2014). The financialization of the city center failed because the partly empty buildings strengthen the negative image of the city (ibidem). This negative image is mirrored by the absence of Offenbach from any relevant city ranking. Thus, the city quality of life has been important since its industrialization, as Offenbach provides a compact town with green areas and a river as an attractive environment (Giese 2010: 255). After years of unsatisfactory developments, strategies for new economic success have emerged, e.g. through the

² An interview with a designer from Offenbach had the headline: "Offenbach is more stylish than Frankfurt". This shows that the Offenbach is recognized nationwide in the designer and creative worker scene as a new hub in this field (Drabant Pérez 2016).

development of a local master plan (AS&P 2015) and other planning measures (Modellvorhaben at the Federal Institute for Urban research and planning/BBSR). The master plan is being carried out by the chamber of commerce and is supported by the municipality, local politics and the citizens. The central pillars of the plan are the two policy fields: economic development and housing. This should address the problems of the specific/special social structure of the city, which is seen as a major challenge in overcoming fiscal and economic problems.

Despite these efforts, the key socio-economic data show that there is still a considerably economic lag compared with the average for Hesse (and especially Frankfurt) and Germany (see Table 1). Offenbach is still a workers' city, with a population with significantly lower incomes and a significantly higher proportion of social welfare recipients compared with the rest of the region and Germany. Another challenge is that the city's budget is heavily burdened by the local hospital, which is faced with fiscal problems. The gross debt of Offenbach before the hospital problem was €650 million (June 30, 2011, Stadt Offenbach 2012: 99). In 2015, the gross debt passed the threshold of €1 billion. It is striking that hospital costs dominated local debates until 2013.

Table 1: Socio-economic data of the city of Offenbach

		Offenbach	Hesse	Germany
unemployment rate	in %	10.7	5.6	6.5
social welfare rate	in %	10.8	3.7	4.5
disposable household income	in € per capita	17,399	20,452	19,933
primary household income	in € per capita	20,981	24,938	23,278
employees in industrial sector	in %	35.4	17.7	20.4
employees in service sector	in %	81.4	77.2	73.4

Sources: unemployment rate and social welfare rate (12/2013): Bundesagentur für Arbeit; disposable household income (2011): Statistische Ämter der Länder 2012, employees in economic sectors (2012): Statistische Ämter des Bundes und der Länder 2012.

3. Municipality of Offenbach: Political leadership and the fiscal problem

The city of Offenbach is a stronghold of the Social Democratic Party (SPD). It has been in charge for many decades, in recent years in a coalition with the Green Party. The outcome of the local elections in 2011 showed the first signs of a change in this constellation. The Social Democratic Party needed the support of the Green Party and a small conservative citizen movement (Freie Wähler) in order to stay in power. The 2016 local elections gave birth to a new coalition, which changed the political landscape of the city: The Christian Democratic Party entered into a coalition with the Green Party and the Free Democrats (neoliberal). This coalition faces a Social Democratic Lord Mayor who has been in charge since 2005.

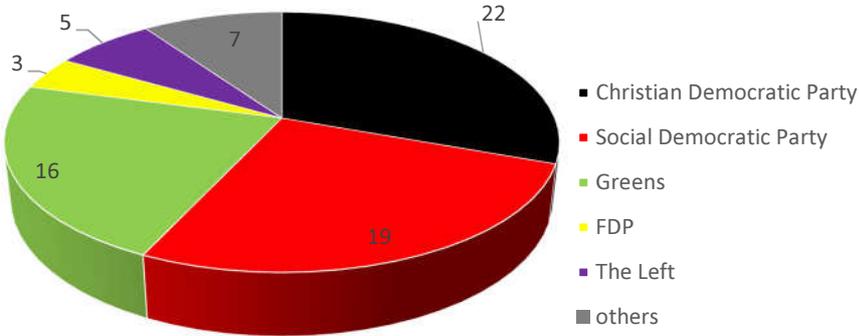
The lines of conflict between the main parties are mainly related to the economic and fiscal situation and the strategies for coping with it. For instance, the dual role of the Lord Mayor

who was also treasurer in the years 2012-2014 was a major area of dispute. The Christians Democrats took over the treasury after the installation of the new coalition. Then again, there are topics that produce a strong consensus among all parties, such as education. Schools as infrastructure are undisputed among all political actors.

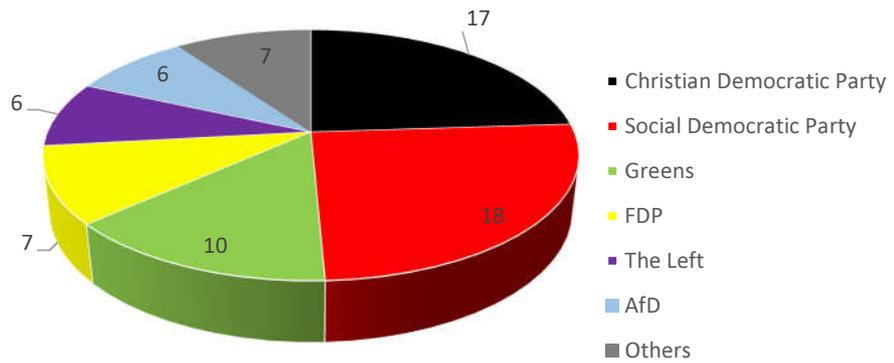
In contrast with our other cases, in Hesse a collegiate governing body (“Magistrat”) is responsible for the executive functions and the mayor is a “collegiate leader” (Heinelt and Hlepas 2006) and primus inter pares in this governing body.³ Beside this institutional specificity, we can conclude that Offenbach has a specific actor constellation which can hardly be compared with the other cases. First, the dual role of the Lord Mayor (as mayor and treasurer) had problematic implications because it caused strong attacks by the opposition and even from parts of the council coalition against the Lord Mayor and the implementation of the bailout program, criticism which happened in all the cases. Now the functions are separated again, but with strong leaders from different parties. This will be a challenging situation for Offenbach for participation in the bailout program and the strategy for coping with it. The necessary strategic decisions could be jeopardized in the game of party politics.

Second, as has already been mentioned, the actor constellation is causing strong conflicts: the dual functions, the hospital, the development of former industrial areas – there are numerous controversial issues. Third, the discontinuity in the actors involved and the high level of fragmentation in the city council are another specific constellation in Offenbach. All in all, the decline of the Social Democratic Party is causing turbulence, which is continuing. There is (as yet) no new power constellation, and these blockades are a burden for a city with interesting potentials.

Figure 1: Distribution of seats on the Offenbach city council after the local government elections in 2011 and 2016

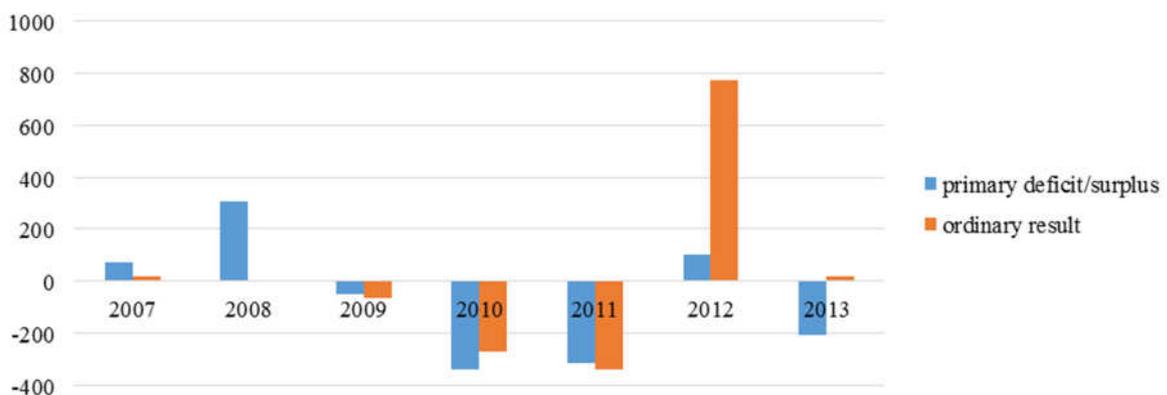


³ The mayor and other full-time and honorary members are part of the collegial body, which decides by majority on all executive tasks. The vote of the mayor decides in a tied vote.



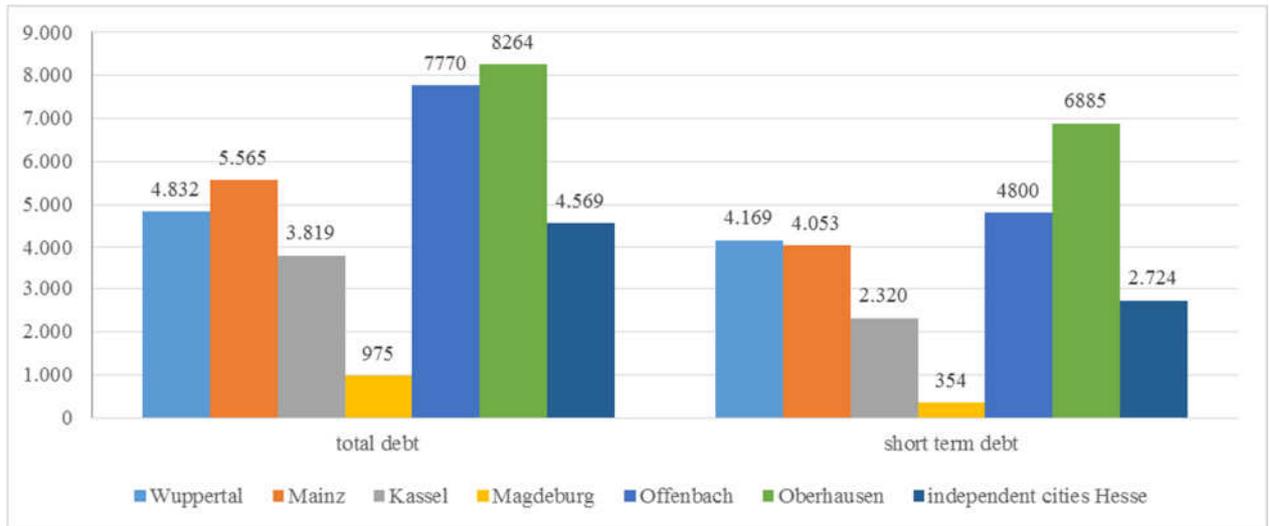
The fiscal situation of the municipality prior to the implementation of the bailout fund in 2012 will be described below. We will compare the fiscal data for Offenbach with our other cases and with other comparable independent cities in the federal state of Hesse (Darmstadt, Kassel and Wiesbaden, except Frankfurt am Main). The first observation is that the fiscal challenges facing Offenbach are less serious than in Wuppertal or Mainz. The city had primary surpluses with the exception of 2009 to 2011, when the crisis hit the municipal budget (Figure 2). The amount of total and short-term debt per capita is higher than in other cases (except Oberhausen) and the average of the independent cities in Hesse (Figure 3). The collection rates for business taxes are similar to the Hessian average and close to the rates for the other cases. In contrast to that, real property tax is lower than in the other independent cities in Hesse (Figure 4). In addition, the statistics of the revenue side show that total revenues (with the exception of Wuppertal), tax revenues and business tax revenues are average compared with the other cases and other independent cities. The social challenges we have described affect the budget, as social spending is far higher than the average for cities in Hesse. This is also the case for other the spending while expenditure of staff is lower than for all other cases and the Hessian average as high amount of municipal services are located in municipal owed companies. The following table shows the specific constellation in Offenbach: high social expenditures and investments and quite moderate costs for administration in the diagrammed year.

Figure 2: Primary deficit/surplus and ordinary result in Euro per capita



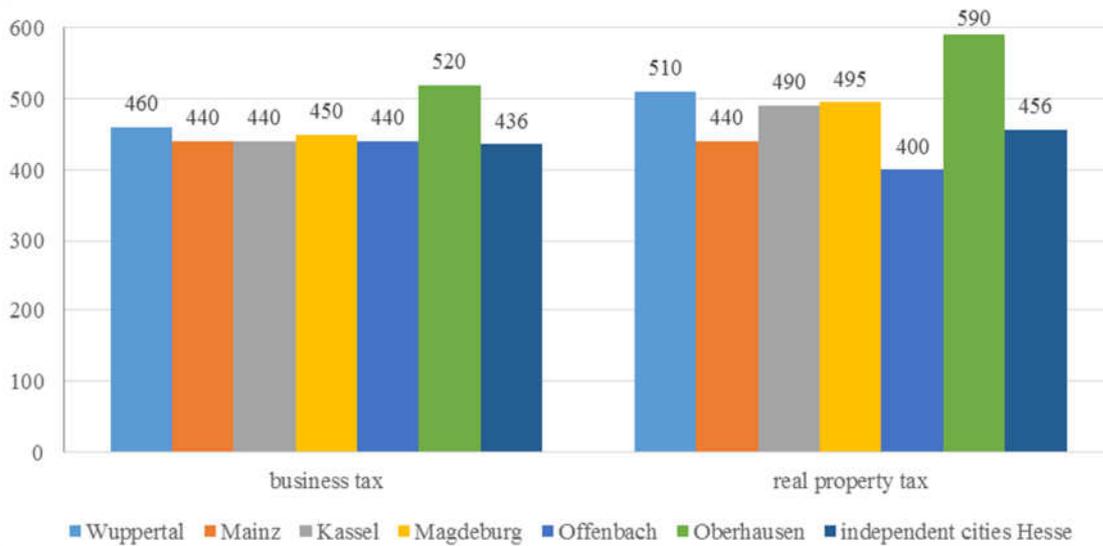
Source: Bertelsmann Stiftung 2013

Figure 3: Total and short-term debt of local government in comparison in Euro per capita in 2012



Source: Bertelsmann Stiftung 2013

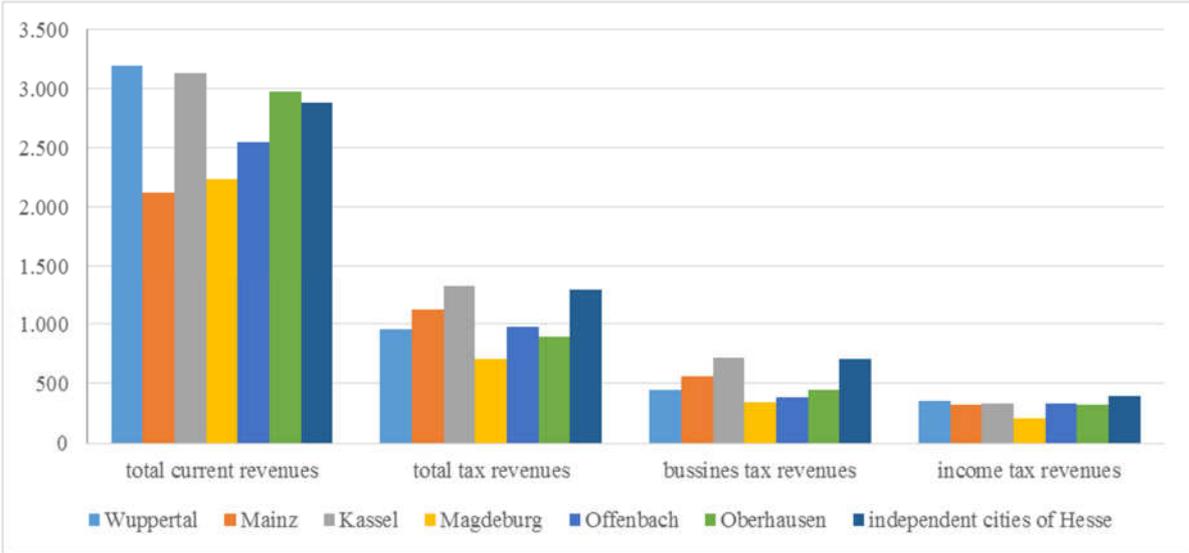
Figure 4: Collection rates of local government taxes in comparison in 2012



Bertelsmann Stiftung 2013

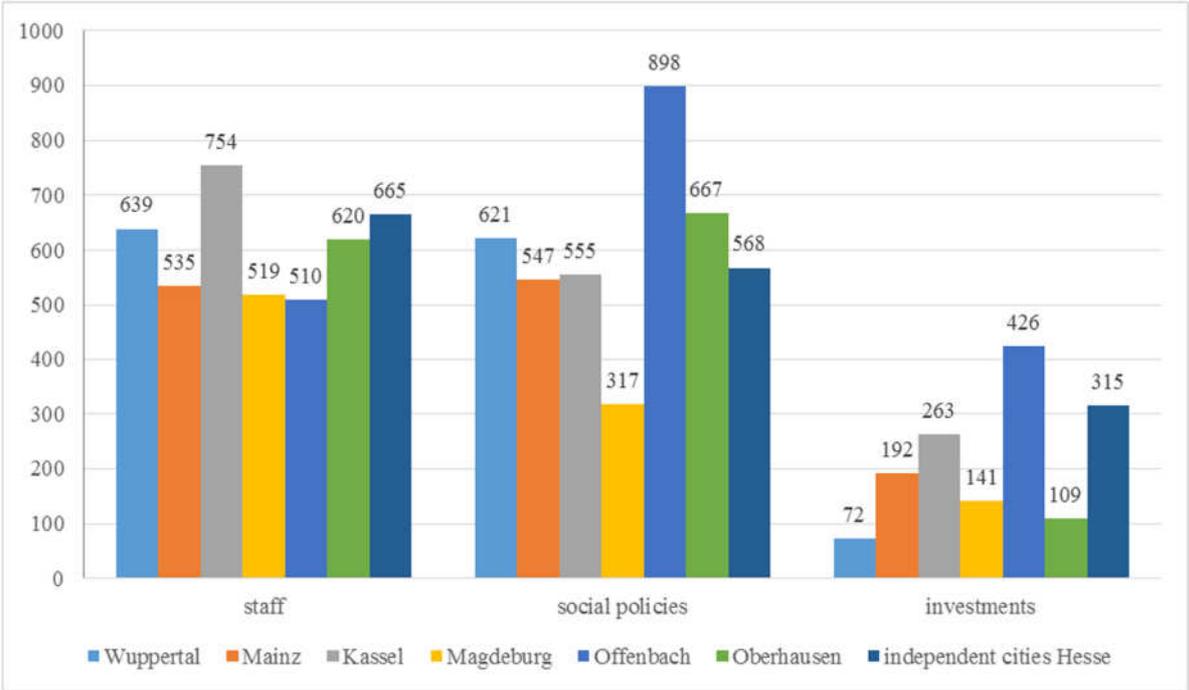
Source:

Figure 5: Revenues of local government in comparison in Euro per capita in 2012



Source: Bertelsmann Stiftung 2013

Figure 6: Spending of local government in Wuppertal in comparison in Euro per capita in 2012



Source: Bertelsmann Stiftung 2013

4. Problem perceptions and causes

Table 2 shows the codings of reasons for the fiscal problems, with different sub-codes in the city of Offenbach. Endoge nous and exogenous reasons are equally addressed. The dominant endogenous cause of the fiscal and economic situation of the city is the hospital, which has dominated the local discourse for several years. Thus, Offenbach is a city with long experience in cutbacks. Indeed, cutbacks were a central issue for the municipality (BSL 2014:

16). The field of exogenous causes involves different areas such as social security spending. Economic restructuring is a major cause, as is migration into the city, which is seen as challenge in economic terms. The fiscal crisis is not especially central to the local discourse.

Table 2: Causes of the economic and fiscal problems of Offenbach

Endogenous causes			8
	Housing		13
	EVO		1
	Schultheisweiher (Lake)		1
	Blockades		2
	Public works department		1
	(Sport)clubs		5
	Hospital		51
	Schools		24
Exogenous causes			0
	Upper level government		4
	European level		0
	National/Federal level		12
		Social expenses	15
		Solidarpakt II (solidarity pact)	3
	State level		11
		Cutbacks	5
	Socio economic conditions		1
	Migration		18
	Social expenses		12
	Economic restructuring		19
	Unemployment		15
	Financial crisis		3

The following direct quotations (Table 3) include some trenchant statements by different actor groups on the endogenous causes of the fiscal crisis. The endogenous causes are articulated by the opposition towards the Social Democratic and Green Party coalition. A partly aggressive personalized rhetoric underlines criticism of the mistakes regarding the hospital or local clubs (especially sports clubs). Moreover, the tendency to overcome challenges by new spending is the major issue for most actors. Thus, the actors in charge underline the specific social situation as an explanation of the fiscal situation in the city, which became a "successful" narrative towards upper level actors, as we will see below.

Table 3: Different types of endogenous causes

Actor	Segment	document group
I1	Traditionally, Offenbach is a social democratic dominated municipality. Except for a short period between 1977 and 1985, when the majority was held by Christian	Interviews

	Democratic Union and Free Democratic Party, Offenbach has been closely connected with the Social Democratic Party. Especially until 1991 goods and services were handled in a careless fashion. This has led to massive criticism followed by slight adjustments put through by the Social Democratic Party mayor Gerhard Grandke. But if you already have a high level, it is hard to change it.	
D1	Also Steffen Höhne has revealed that he is rather pessimistic about the future of Offenbach. The city has a negative image in the Rhine Main Area, in the other parts of Germany rather a non-image. You may know where Offenbach is located geographically, but you have no idea about it. There is certainly some sort of potential given the proximity to Frankfurt, its economic impact and the huge rent problem there. Still the demand for governance has to be taken into account. For instance, without public funding of cultural activities nothing is going to happen. At the same time Höhne warns against overestimating the effect of cultural and creative industries.	Press and media
D2	Some municipalities are in a precarious financial situation. In public debates and among policy makers the issue of consolidation through cuts in public spending is being widely neglected. Sustainable consolidation can only be successful if politics departs from the method of “a lot helps a lot” and tries to orient fiscal spending to meeting measurable targets. For this purpose the business sector can contribute with its experience in the governance and management of firms.	Interest group
D3	The city’s liabilities amount – not counting the hospital and the publicly owned company – to €650 million. Only through early payment from the local equalization program was the planned budget deficit of €73.5 million achieved in 2011. Without this special effect it would have been around €100 million Euros. These numbers should lead to a decision for a policy of cutbacks and a reduction of fiscal payments to a minimum in terms of investments in schools and kindergartens or in the infrastructure of our municipality.	Parties and lists

Table 4 lists quotations on the exogenous causes, including the different sub-codes of fiscal problems. As in Mainz, the local actors criticize the federal state for cutbacks in the equalization scheme, which has caused a reduction in state grants compared with before the bailout program was introduced. Hence, the administration and the majority blame the federal and the state level for fiscal problems and the opposition offers the criticism that the local government does not recognize its own shortcomings. Thus, the exogenous causes show greater variety in comparison with the endogenous ones, and focus on the local hospital.

Table 4: Exogenous causes of the fiscal crisis – selected quotations

Actor	Segment	Document Group
D4	Without a financial contribution from the federal level Offenbach will not be able to overcome its financial calamity. This was stated by Lord Mayor and treasurer Horst Schneider to the city council assembly when he introduced the supplementary budget and two year budget for 2014/2015. The municipality is making a great effort to carry out structural transformation and to become an attractive location for companies and families. However, support for structural wellbeing is not free.	Administration
D6	The federal state of Hesse should not be permitted to consolidate its budget at the cost of the municipalities. In the equalization scheme we need stronger emphasis on the so-called social equalization of burdens!!!	Council Minutes
D7	“Finally the state has recognized that the problems of Offenbach are structural and not due to local mismanagement. However, we are critical of the fact that the state is making no useful proposals for a long-term solution. Offenbach will – taking all	Parties and lists

	constraints into consideration – not be able to tackle the problems by itself,” states Susanne Schmitt leader of the Greens faction on the Offenbach Council.	
D8	“Offenbach’s unbalanced budget is well known to everyone. [...] “Also, we will not balance the budget by selling all public property, stopping all investments and cancel all voluntary services. It is a systemic failure.”	Parties and lists
D9	The budgetary position is basically the result of federal obligations for which Offenbach has not received appropriate compensation, and the city cannot make further cutbacks.	Parties and lists
I2	The so called principle of related actions and (“Konnexitätsprinzip”) is not maintained.	Interviews
D10	The IHK’s future in Offenbach is certainly not determined only by local stakeholders and actors. Instead global and national megatrends in economic development play a distinctive role. They stand as a framework for regional development. The current global debt crisis, for instance, is not a short-term cyclical, but rather a long-term structural issue. All these major trends challenge enterprises in the local IHK county. On the one hand, all firms must face this challenge. On the other hand, local stakeholders from politics, economy and civil society cannot affect them.	Interest groups

Despite the fact that socioeconomic restructuring is an exogenous cause, arguments in this category will be presented separately, because they relate to a separate and intense discussion in Offenbach that refers to specific local conditions. The former city of workers became the centre of unemployment and migration forces that came like a challenge from outside into the city, which will be illustrated by the following citations.

Table 5: Exogenous causes: socio-economic conditions

Actor	Segment	Document group
D4	We should be optimistic about the success of the structural transformation: [...] “I am really looking forward to the coming years. We live in a booming region and for many Offenbach is like an undiscovered jewel,” says Schneider.	Press release City of Offenbach
D12	The Offenbach dilemma is hard to resolve. Structural change also costs money.	Press release city of Offenbach
D6	The intensified poverty migration from Romania and Bulgaria will confront Offenbach with enormous challenges if it comes to financial problems [...]. A correlation exists between rising welfare spending and budgetary imbalances. [...] They follow the socio-economic change in society and produce new social risks.	Council minutes
I3	We are a city with a difficult social structure, which results from the economic development of Offenbach. [...] This has led to the fact that Offenbach has a large unskilled workforce, who now receive social assistance. This has increased Offenbach's spending for social welfare. At the same time, old industries have disappeared. The structural change in Offenbach to a modern service-oriented economy was not the smoothest.	Interviews
I4	We now have people from 150 nations and a high unemployment rate, because sufficient assistance was not put into place for education, as it is today. And this is now causing us huge problems.	Interviews
I5	The issue is that everything is socially deprived. Once we were a town of workers, and now we are nearly a city with an unemployed population. Up to 40,000 jobs disappeared.	Interviews

I6	Well, Offenbach is an arrival city. At the recent Biennale in Venice Offenbach is the arrival city because of the many nationalities and the internal connection. But this also causes huge problems with a high proportion of people on welfare. This is a massive burden for Offenbach's budget.	Interviews
I1	It is an old industrial town where in the 1970s and 1980s the signs of change were misjudged because we were still concentrating on producing goods instead of on providing services. This change in the economic structure was not judged correctly by all parties. My party, the Christian Democratic Union, was also part of it. Simple workers who had always found a job as a hand, storeman or unskilled worker are in serious trouble now.	Interviews
D1	The high proportion of foreigners could provide a certain image potential. However, this has to be considered without any multicultural romance.	Press and media
D13	The problem is that the municipal fiscal equalization scheme has no impact on the structural change that is taking place in Offenbach. The industrial origin of Offenbach may be comparable with Kassel. But Kassel was in luck [...]. We have €50 million in local business tax, they get €150 million. If we had this amount here, we would not be in trouble.	Press and media
D14	In his writing Rhein cites the "exceptionally high burden in the social realm" as a major cause for the financial plight of the city. Beside the highest unemployment rate in Hesse it has the highest share of immigrants, particularly within the young population and the related expenditures for care, education and training of children and youths. Such a social and demographic structure requires special assistance. Through such expenditures for equal opportunity and education, the city is making a substantial contribution to society as a whole and thus to the integration of immigrants, writes Rhein. He further admits, that "the current financial equalisation scheme of the federal state and the state Hesse does not provide sufficient assistance for dealing appropriately with the problems." However, Rhein criticizes the fact that the city invested in projects like the "Klimapfad" or "Hafen2", although this was not particularly necessary".	Press and media

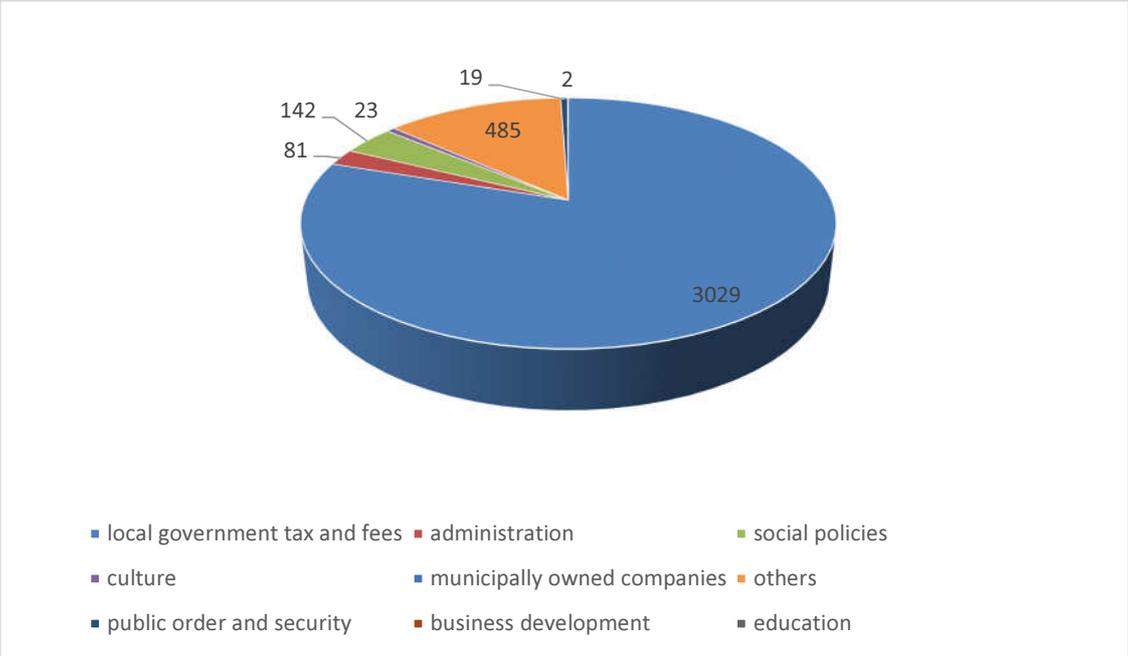
5. Scope and means of action: Evaluation, performance, impact

The bailout program for Offenbach from 2013 consists of 48 measures combined with 211 Million Euro funding from the program (BSL 2014) which most of them are related to cutbacks. Offenbach is an exceptional case with regard to these measures, as most of them base on the assumption that the city will increase its tax income in coming years. Unlike Oberhausen, difficult areas like social policy and education are not involved. Thus, the attempt to modernize administration and increase efficiency is not new. Since the beginning of 2000, the administration has reduced its personnel by 25% (Barthel and Spiegel 2008: 280). This was achieved through the strong leadership of the Lord Mayor and not simply by implementing new public management models (ibidem 288). This should enforce learning mechanisms within the administration. Nevertheless, the city of Offenbach has among the highest per capita debt in Germany today, about €8500 per capita (Ernst and Young 2016). Unlike the other cases, the local government and the council factions debate the advantages and disadvantages of the bailout program intensively. It is a debate about the "logic" of the program and its suitability to the specific structural conditions in Offenbach (unemployment, migration, economic restructuring, and the city's own shortcomings). Thus, the municipal leadership obtained extra time to meet the bailout targets, which is remarkable. Affected by the intense debate about the hospital, the council and magistrates were quite critical of the

program, and even the coalition labelled it as a “Schirmchen/micro bailout program” (D 22) with a low level of impact on the fiscal situation. Nevertheless, not a single measure became a symbolic conflict, as in the other cases. The measures taken are very technical and focus on efficiency gains within the administration which seems to follow the assumption of hoping for a better future. Insofar the cutbacks are lowest common denominator in a conflictual political landscape. In comparison with our other cases the amount of all consolidation measures is lower, almost the half compared to other cases (674 Euro per capita, 1.201 in Mainz and 1.126 in Wuppertal).

The local government follows the strategy of underlining the specific situation of Offenbach towards Hesse and combines it with their experience in reducing cost in the administration. Major issues except of the cutbacks in the administration were schools, the conversion of harbour area and local taxes.

Figure 7: Consolidation measures implemented in Euro per capita 2012-2021



Source: Stadt Offenbach 2013

The bailout program and the local implementation probably have no long-term impact on fiscal policies and other policy fields as they are. Supervisors and administrative leadership emphasize that no weighty consolidation means were implemented in Offenbach. Therefore, the bailout program seems to be a necessity, which reduces local government debt without offering a real chance for change. For example, one third of the measures adopted are related to political decision taken at the state level. Finally, the budget for cultural and sports activities is still untouched, although it is part of the voluntary activities of the municipality.

6. Public debate

Although the level of fiscal consolidation was comparatively low in Offenbach, the public debate was visible, quite conflictual and antagonistic. Especially one issue, the

communalization of the hospitals, was a major topic on the political agenda, and shaped discussions throughout almost the entire research period. Now this issue is over, and even the experts interviewed did not mention it as a central issue. Nevertheless, it seems that the involvement of actors from all groups and the consensus of the past leads to an intensive discussion about "who is to be blamed?"

Besides, the intensity of the debates reflects a relatively silent civil society, as the conflicts are part of the political game (e.g. in the council, party publications) or in the local media. An exception is organized interest groups like trade unions and the chamber of commerce. Unlike the other cases, the civil society was not able to raise its voice in the public debate. But it is interesting that Offenbach has quite flourishing civil society organizations, which will be shown in chapter 8.

Despite these interesting features of the lively and intense local debate, the MAXQDA-analysis of actors in the press (Table 6) shows results similar to the other cases. The most active actor in the local debate is the mayor who has a dual position as deputy mayor for economics. The other most cited actors are heads of council factions. Moreover, collective actors such as clubs or trade unions are part of the local discourse, and show the high diversity, even fragmentation, of the local debates. Last, but not least, the collegiate governing body ("Magistrat") is the collective actor with the highest score, with 206 entries, but it includes single persons and the collective body, and is thus not part of the statistics.

Overall, the public debate is conflict oriented. The actors use the media to attack their opponents. However, it is remarkable that cooperation, e.g. in the working group of the council for the bailout program (AG Schutzschirm), is possible. The mismanagement in the past shapes the current debate, and a noisy opposition is visible inside and outside the council. The measures discussed are not comparable to the other German cases. Nevertheless, Offenbach is optimistic due to the dynamic area which secures economic wellbeing as a "by-product". Strategic choices for using this location are also visible and have been well established for years. Nevertheless, the dependency upon decisions taken in other municipalities seems to be obvious.

Table 6: Actors with most press articles quoting or paraphrasing their statements⁴

Actor	Codings	Codings in %	Documents	Actor group	Position	Opposition /majority	Party
Horst Schneider	50	23.3	45	local politicians	Lord Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Economics	majority	Social Democratic Party
Michael Beseler	35	16.3	21	Local politicians	Deputy Mayor of Economics until 2011	Majority	Social Democratic Party
Peter Freier	22	10.2	20	Local politicians	Councillor (and current Deputy Mayor of Economics)	Opposition	Christian Democratic Union
Oliver	18	8.4	18	Local	Councillor	Opposition	Free

⁴ The grey lines are the interviewees.

Stirböck				politicians			Democ ratic Party
Andreas Schneider	17	7.9	17	Local politicians	councillor	Majority	Social Democ ratic Party
Clubs	11	5.1	11	Interest groups	Civil society		
Susanne Schmitt	9	4.2	8	Local politicians	Councillor	Majority	Green party
Johannes Baron	9	4.2	9	Supervision			Free Democ ratic Party
AG Schutzschirm	8	3.7	8	Local politicians			
Felix Schwenke	7	3.3	7	Local politician	Councillor	Majority	Social Democ ratic Party
Others	29	13.7	29				

7. Political system: Legitimacy and transparency, political culture, policy style, knowledge, leadership

The policy style is strictly top-down, and the administrative leadership, mainly the mayor and the deputy mayor for economics, control fiscal policies, partly with lack of transparency. In contrast to Mainz and Wuppertal, the council including the majority of the Social Democratic Party, the Green Party and the Citizen Union (Frei Wähler) seems to be side-lined in the first phases of decision-making concerning participation in the program. It was a solo effort by the Lord Mayor and he forced it, risking the resistance of parts of his own party. The administration only includes the council when there is a legal need to do so. Probably, this policy style also caused some of the disagreements within the coalition and even within the Social Democratic Party. Nevertheless, the opposition Christian Democratic Union and Free Democratic Party make proposal for measures but only the coalition voted for participation in the bailout program.

Moreover, the political culture is contradictive and conflictual. Indeed, participation in the bailout program was a decision of the unanimous majority in the council and the debates about the shortcoming of local politics, especially the hospital, show a high potential for conflicts. The opposition tries to be as sharply rhetorical as possible in order to demonstrate the point of disagreement with the coalition. Finally, they abstained in the vote on the program (in previous years before the vote against the draft budget), whereas the left vote against it. It is striking that the same event at the same meeting causes completely different reactions (see the last two citations).

The administrative leadership seems to have had experience with reforms and cutbacks within their organisation. Insofar, they act as a silent force in the background. The political leadership gains some strategic victories, like the recognition of Offenbach as a special case of the bailout program, but also some major defeats. In the beginning, an authoritarian attitude prevailed as the Mayor decided to hold the dual position, including the deputy mayor for

economics. Complete domination of fiscal policy by one person was the outcome, and this caused strong reactions. These attitudes changed during the research period as was the case with the tendency to emphasize success stories after the negative hospital debate. For instance, the council enforced an “AG Schutzschirm” in 2013, a permanent working group on the bailout program. Another example is the broad inter-party coalition which supported a master plan for the urban development in Offenbach. The chamber of commerce is responsible for it but permitted citizen participation in this process.

The dominant role of the municipal leadership emphasizes that institutional and steering knowledge are again the most important knowledge types. On the one hand, this is convincing, as the administration was the only actor which knew which conditions had to be fulfilled and which means could be implemented in the bailout program. On the other hand, the local government has not activated local knowledge as a source of citizen engagement or decentralized self-organizing.

Table 7: Political culture and leadership style

Actor	Segment	Document group
I3	There was nothing particularly controversial in the economic policy direction. [...] What is essential for success is that the responsible mayor makes it his topic and his life.	Interviews
D15	Parliamentary party leader of the Christian Democratic Union Peter Freier stretches out his hand in this situation. Like Free Democratic Party colleague Oliver Stirböck he suggests cross-faction and cross-party collaboration. For the first time this is supported by the coalition.	Press and media
D16	“I defend the voluntary services with my teeth and claws.”. Thus, the treasurer dissolved suspected fears of the representatives.	Press and media
D17	On 13 December a decision will be taken: Will there be a majority for the bailout fund in cooperation with the state of Hesse? Mayor Horst Schneider (Social Democratic Party) puts a gun to the heads of his allies from Social Democratic Party and Green Party in the coalition. He believes that he can count on the votes of the opposition.	Press and media
D18	Schneider tries to create a crisis scenario that makes him look like a strong man in the increasing financial crisis. Schneider does not give priority to the overhaul of the budget but to other expensive projects like the construction of an elementary school in the new harbor district. Such an ego trip would not promote the welfare of the local community.	Press and media
D19	Offenbach should be in the bailout fund at all costs.	Press and media
D20	Mayor Peter Schneider (Green party) said with satisfaction that the parties have reached a consensus after a long discussion. It is remarkable that not only the coalition of Social Democratic Party and Freie Wähler, but also the Christian Democratic Union were involved in the bailout fund working group.	Press and media
D21	Free Democratic Party faction leader Oliver Stirböck described the bailout fund proposal as insane. During the most difficult financial situation since 1945 the parties Social Democratic Party, Green Party, Freie Wähler and oppositional Christian Democratic Union are operating more against each other than together. The figures presented by Schneider were not only optimistic, but also fake.	Press and media

8. New actions

Metropolitan and urban areas were always seen as a nucleus of innovative practices referring either to economic growth or social integration (e.g. Komminos 2002). By readjusting their fiscal situation cities are trying to find new ways of addressing specific problems such as the ones mentioned above, and the data and discourses advise all actors that fiscal consolidation is not enough but has to be complemented by policy innovation focused on economic development (ibidem) as well as social cohesion by local initiatives (Bakker et al 2012). To achieve this kind of policy innovation the formation of new local initiatives aimed at mobilising endogenous locally embedded potentials in these two fields seems to be crucial.

The German cities addressed social cohesion a long time ago, and it has been highly institutionalized since the 1970s (Blanke et al. 1987: 421). It seems that this constellation has been slightly challenging in recent years. Nevertheless, the general impression is that municipalities are following this path in dealing with social cohesion. This is in particular the case in the field of local economic development, a well-developed policy field. Municipal economic agencies are working in an institutionalized and professional way with close ties to local companies and local business networks in order to apply municipal strategies for local economic development (Haus et al. 2005: 132ff. and 210 ff.). Insofar, and in contrast to the Greek cases, these two fields are well developed and innovations are moderate.

a. Social cohesion: New actions, innovation

The issue of social cohesion is of major relevance for the local discourse. Every actor is aware of it and refers to it. Nevertheless, we can detect that the traditional discourse (unemployment, social welfare) and the new challenges (migration) seem to be quite unconnected, although Offenbach is an “arrival city” with a long tradition. More than that, integration policy is a “Chefsache“ in Offenbach (HMJIE 2012: 23).

In the field of traditional social cohesion policies, the “Soziale Stadt” projects are outstanding. An interesting and innovative feature in one of the projects are the neighbourhood centres (Stadtteilzentren), for example in the “Mathildenviertel”, where they focus on young people (see BBSR 2015). This nationwide recognized project provides rooms for families from the neighbourhood with a lack of space. Beside this traditional initiative, a plethora of new initiatives has emerged in Offenbach in recent years. Their thematic focus is related to migration and social insecurity. New networks like “Offenbach Solidarisch/Solidary Offenbach”, the German-wide platform “Los!”, the network “Frühe Hilfen (Early support)” or the play “Broken Hartz⁵”, performed by affected amateur actors, which gained nationwide publicity when it was broadcast by national public TV broadcaster ZDF. Moreover, the municipality of Offenbach is active in applying for EU funds, and is running an FEAD (Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived) project. This project focuses on street work activities and providing information to targeted groups, which is a new feature in the field of social work. This direct contact with the people affected is bringing new insights for the municipality and the partners involved (Caritas and Diakonisches Werk). Other projects like

⁵ Hartz sounds like the English "hearts" but literally refers to the reform of the social benefits.

“Gemeinsam für Integration in Offenbach” and “KiESEL” focus on youth work and education. Besides, education remains is major issue for the most of the project as they relate their activities to it. Last but not least, and as in the case of Kassel, Offenbach is a “Modellregion Integration/model region for Integration”, funded by the state of Hesse (HMJIE 2012). More than 140 different nations live in Offenbach, and are generating a rising population for the city. As in Kassel, the cooperation between municipal and civil society actors is the basis for different programs, including and focusing inter alia on education. The follow up program “WIR” started and cooperates with the long-established “Arbeitskreis Integration/municipal working group on integration”.

b. Economic development: New actions, innovation

The economic development of the city is of major importance and a strategic key element for every political party. The potentials are well known, as Offenbach is located in the Rhein/Main area and close to Frankfurt. For instance, Frankfurt investors plan to build a multipurpose hall at the Kaiserlei, an area close to Frankfurt but within the borders of the Offenbach municipality. Thus, this old approach is trying to take windfall profits from the prosperous neighbor. This is problematic for two reasons: First, the strong dependence on the development in Frankfurt and second the city image of Offenbach. The second problem has been known since the beginning of activities by a professional marketing activist of the municipality (Giese 2010). Until today, this is a central challenge for new strategies.

The development of different areas of the city is a central concern of the Lord Mayor. Nevertheless, a coalition of chamber of commerce, local companies and different political players is fostering a master plan for the whole city, which is today an undisputed basis for the further development of the city. The two fields, housing and the local economy, are the central pillars and the suggested plans are guidelines for local debates. Another major issue is the search for the creative class. Offenbach provides interesting surroundings as it changes from an industrial city to a service-oriented city. The process of transformation (with limited fiscal options) should be transformed into a test field for young and well-educated people.

Table 8: New approaches and innovation

Actor	Segment	Document group
I6	The innovation is that we have worked together in the creation process and want to work together in the implementation process too. The stabilization of residential districts is another socio-political starting point which has surprised me. People with good income and good education who move to Offenbach promote stabilization of the urban society and individual residential districts. The most difficult issue is the downward spiral in the residential districts. Several residential districts in Offenbach displayed a tendency towards a downward spiral which was not gentrification. [...] This imbalance will perhaps be fixed when the relative amount of people who are dependent on public services decreases and the budgetary situation changes accordingly.	Interviews

17	There is a strong culture of networking in Offenbach. [...] That is a culture of cooperation with the city which makes meetings possible where we discuss how to pattern the cohabitation in a good way.	Interviews
13	It is an image problem on a large scale. Fifteen or eighteen years ago many big companies moved to Offenbach because of qualities like very fast building permissions, high security and a good quality-price ratio on the property market. These companies said they would be equally well connected to Frankfurt City as from any other area of Frankfurt. In addition Offenbach is better, cheaper and they would be better placed here. That is quality. But of course this quality decreased over time. Thus, it was necessary to create a master plan.	Interviews

9. Conclusions

Offenbach is a case that is strongly affected by an antagonistic political culture (often communicated via the press), specific challenges to economic restructuring, the social structure of the inhabitants, a central dominant political party and cases of mismanagement in the past. “Greek conditions/Griechische Verhältnisse” has become a common phrase in local discourse, referring to the fact that Offenbach has to borrow money in order to fulfil its obligations even when the municipality has cut back on personnel (see D 22). Another feature of the specific status of the city is the sustained effort to control the debt. It is central for all political actors to gain the ability to act again (see for example OP March 18, 2013). Although Offenbach is a challenged city compared with their regional environment, the actors have a competitive approach, and evaluate all issues in terms of a successful/unsuccessful criterion.

The contribution of the bailout program to fiscal consolidation in Offenbach seems to be comparatively limited as a big amount "diapers" in the hospital. The city benefited from the experience in the past of efficiency gains within the administration, but the municipal attempts to consolidate the budget within the framework of the bailout program are weaker than in for example Mainz or Wuppertal, although higher than in Kassel. Even the current budget has caused conflictual discussions in the council, as it foresees employing new personnel in the administration (see Frankfurter Reckmann 2016). The argument between the major parties changes: the Social Democratic Party complains about the missing will for cutbacks and the Christian Democratic Party hints at the new task of the administration. Nevertheless, the strict top-down policy and the authoritarian leadership have caused major conflicts in local politics, even within the Lord Mayor’s party and the council coalition. The opposition drastically attacked the coalition and especially the Lord Mayor, but finally agreed to be part of a working group for the bailout program. This seems to be a pattern of the local discourse: First strong conflicts and then a switch into consensus mode.

Agenda setting and decision making is exclusively controlled by the administrative leadership and the Lord Mayor. The council had no influence on the consolidation program except the formal affirmation of the means. Although participation in the bailout fund is viewed as necessary even by the opposition, the concrete means were accomplished by the majority, a pattern similar to Mainz and Wuppertal. The dual function of the Lord Mayor as Deputy Mayor for economics was unhelpful. This tradition was invented by the Lord Mayor Grandke in the 1990s.

The competitively oriented language mentioned above is a remarkable outcome. Here regional affiliation seems to shape the city discourse, and the competitive language of the global plays in Frankfurt spills over to Offenbach. The search for a competitive advantage leads to three different perspectives: attracting the creative class, changing the image of the city, and making use of the high diversity of its population. First steps towards a new image are visible in a regional context: “Rüsselsheim will von Offenbach lernen/The city of Rüsselsheim wants to learn from Offenbach” (OP 21.5.2013); Rüsselsheim is a smaller city from the region with similar challenges.

10. Policy recommendations

Recommendations for local level actors (micro level)

Input legitimacy: The participation within and outside the administration in fiscal issues is an important feature in order to create a local acceptance of the measures taken.

Throughput legitimacy: Important strategic decision should be spread on and supported by several actors or even a broad coalition.

Output legitimacy: The exclusion of revenue-based consolidation measures is demanding for local governments, as the possibilities for efficiency measures and cutbacks are restricted after several years of consolidation.

Attempts at regional cooperation need the acceptance of all affected municipalities from the beginning.

Municipally owned companies should be restricted to their tasks in local public services, which do not overburden local steering capacities and the knowledge of local actors.

Political culture: Mayors and treasurers should cooperate with majority coalition in the council. Otherwise it is difficult to mobilize sufficient political support for consolidation policies.

Innovations are possible even under difficult circumstances. The need for a clear strategy and the involvement of local actors are prerequisites for success.

Use the network culture of the city in order to tackle new challenges like the new migration!

Policy style/

Leadership: Break up an encrusted political landscape! If you want to change a municipality in a fundamental way, you have to build broad coalitions.

The municipalities should not rely on the "principle of hope" in financial issues. Measures should base on realistic assumptions and fostering the undisputed potential of the city.

Recommendations for federal and Länder level actors (macro level)

Upper levels should acknowledge the unique characteristics of a given city, which can lead to challenges which uniquely vary under similar conditions.

Consolidation programs can strengthen the position of fiscal policy makers in local bargaining processes as well as their arguments, because they can refer to direct and short-term benefits of consolidation (triadic communication).

Consolidation programs should include socio-economic allocation criteria in addition to fiscal criteria!

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List of the interviewees

Name	Function
I1 Peter Freier	Head of caucus Christian Democratic party (CDU) and treasurer since July 2015

I2	Ursula Richter and Jens Wagner	Head of caucus of the Green party; general secretary of the Green Party
I3	Jürgen Amberger	Head of the department for economic and spatial development
I4	Ulla Pepler and Nadine Gersberg	Member and Chairman by seniority of the city council for the Social Democratic party; general secretary of the Social Democratic party
I5	Winfried Ermert	Head of financial department
I6	Frank Achenbach	Chamber of Commerce Offenbach
I7	Edith Heilos	Project coordinator of the European FEAD (Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived) project, Caritas Offenbach

List of documents

	Source/Actor	Group
D1	Claus Wolfschlag: Schockiert von Offenbach. In: Offenbach-Post January 20. 2011. p. 27	Press and media
D2	IHK Offenbach am Main-position paper: Nachhaltig stabile Finanzen stärken das Band zur Wirtschaft. March 15. 2012	Interest group
D3	Peter Freier, head of caucus Christian Democratic Union Offenbach and Stefan Grüttner, district chairman CDU Offenbach: Was man nicht hat, gibt man umso leichter aus. In: CDU KLARTEXT: 2011 (27)	Parties and lists
D4	City of Offenbach press release: Mehr Schulden trotz Einnahmepplus. Offenbach braucht mehr Entlastung von Bund und Land. October 7. 2013. Online access: https://www.offenbach.de/rathaus/rathaus-aktuell/archiv/jahr_2013/news_1441194778349.php	Administration
D6	Andreas Schneider, SPD head of caucus council of Offenbach speech on the budget for 2014/15. December 4. 2013. Online access: http://www.spd-offenbach.de/de/stellungnahme-des-fraktionsvorsitzenden-der-spd-andreas-schneider-zur-beratung-des-haushaltsplans-20142015-c-3796-2----10.html	Council minutes
D7	Green party parliamentary group in the Offenbach council: 40 Mio. Euro Landeshilfe lösen keine strukturellen Probleme. Press release: December 12. 2012. Online access: http://www.gruene-offenbach.de/fraktion/presse/presse-volltext/article/40_mio_EUR_landeshilfe_loesen_keine_strukturellen_probleme/	Parties and lists
D8	Andreas Schneider, SPD head of caucus council of Offenbach: Haushaltsgenehmigung des RPmacht strukturelle Probleme der Kommunalfinanzierung deutlich. Press release: December 4. 2013. Online access: http://www.spd-offenbach.de/de/haushaltsgenehmigung-des-rp-macht-strukturelle-probleme-der-kommunalfinanzierung-deutlich-c-3263-2----10.html	Parties and lists
D9	FDP Offenbach: CDU legt als Sparprogramm etikettiertes Ausgabenprogramm vor. Press release: January 18. 2011. Online access: http://fdp-of.de/meldung/cdu-legt-als-sparprogramm-etikettiertes-ausgabenprogramm-vor/	Parties and lists
D10	IHK Offenbach am Main paper: Zukunftsperspektiven für die Region Offenbach am Main. March 2012. p. 18	Interest group

D11	Jörg Muthorst: Zu wenig Spielraum. In: Frankfurter Rundschau October 1. 2011	Press and media
D12	City of Offenbach press release: Haushalt genehmigt: Investitionsverzicht und zusätzliche Einsparungen gefordert. June 18. 2012. Online access: https://www.offenbach.de/rathaus/rathaus-aktuell/archiv/jahr_2012/news_1441195277800.php	Administration
D13	Offenbach-Post: Offenbach muss hip werden. Interview of Matthias Dahmer und Thomas Kirstein with Tarek Al-Wazir. February 23. 2013. p. 39	Press and media
D14	Sigrid Aldehoff: 40 Millionen Euro für Offenbach. In: Frankfurter Rundschau December 20. 2012.	Press and media
D15	Jörg Muthorst: Opposition bietet Zusammenarbeit an. In: Frankfurter Rundschau December 10. 2011	Press and media
D16	Matthias Dahmer: Unterm Schirm verhandeln. In: Offenbach-Post. March 23. 2012. p. 27	Press and media
D17	Thomas Kirstein: Spaltender Schutzschirm. In: Offenbach-Post December 1. 2012	Press and media
D18	Anton Jakob Weinberger: Wider den Ego Trip. In: Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung December 1. 2012. p. 53	Press and media
D19	Jörh Muthorst: Hühnerhaufen. Comment on Offenbachs politics. In: Frankfurter Rundschau December 4. 2012	Press and media
D20	Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung: Mit dem vierten Antrag unter den Schutzschirm. February 8. 2013	Press and media
D21	Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung: Skepsis in Wiesbaden über Offenbcher Prognosen. February 9. 2013	Press and media
D22	Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung: Offenbach unter dem Schirm. June, 23. 2012	Press and media