

COMPARATIVE REVIEW OF COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE MODELS AND PRACTICES IN CROATIA, SERBIA, SWEDEN, SWITZERLAND AND BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

FINAL REPORT

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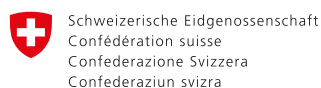
Title: Rethinking Local Community in Bosnia and Herzegovina – A Comparative Overview and Assessment of Community Governance Models and Practices in Croatia, Serbia, Sweden, Switzerland and Bosnia and Herzegovina

The project “*Strengthening the Role of Local Communities (Mjesne zajednice/MZs) in BiH*” is a joint initiative by the Governments of Switzerland and Sweden, implemented by UNDP in BiH in partnership with domestic authorities.

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Preface



We are pleased to present to you the brand new research report *Capturing Community Governance Models and Practices from Croatia, Serbia, Sweden, Switzerland and Bosnia and Herzegovina*. This comprehensive report provides valuable information and examples on how community governance in these countries functions and is organised and we hope that many of you will find this inspiring.

There are approximately 2,587 local communities (*mjesne zajednice*) in Bosnia and Herzegovina today, all of varying status, size and capacity. However, regardless of their differences, local communities have something in common: they are all at the 'front door' between citizens and local governments and act as local engines for community development and as facilitators of service delivery to citizens.

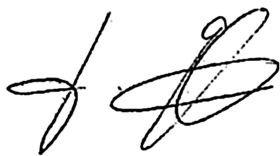
At a time when citizens, local government and socioeconomic stakeholders in the country are recognising that the old ways of (*non*) functioning of local communities are insufficient for the future, the Government of Switzerland and the Government of Sweden are willing to support efforts aimed at the modernisation and revitalisation of local communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

As we embark together on a journey to transform local communities into democratic spaces with renewed civic engagement, enhanced decision-making, responsible citizens and vibrant communities, we believe that best practice and experiences from other countries can offer an important perspective and inspire ideas for the possible future role and responsibilities of local communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Yet even with the variety of examples, findings and lessons learned that are provided through this comprehensive report one particular question continues to resonate: "As the need for recasting local communities becomes ever more acute, which is the right model and recipe for Bosnia and Herzegovina?"

We remain confident that the answer to this question will soon to be found through joint discussions with all of you.

Whichever future path local communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina decide to take, we believe that young people hold the key to vibrant, inclusive and modern twenty first century communities. Enabling communities to lead local renewal initiatives using a neighbourhood scale approach is the most effective way to ensure the creation of the conditions that will allow people to thrive in the villages and cities of the future.

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink.

Joseph Guntern,
Director of Cooperation
Embassy of Switzerland in Bosnia and Herzegovina

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink.

Marie Bergström,
Counsellor/Head of Development Cooperation
Embassy of Sweden in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Executive Summary

This comparative research project was undertaken with the aim to gain an insight into different modes of sub-municipal or community governance to inform future work on strengthening local communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). It was conducted as part of the UNDP BiH project '*Strengthening Local Communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina*', which is financed jointly by the governments of Switzerland and Sweden and implemented by UNDP BiH.

The work of community of sub-municipal governance units in Croatia, Serbia, Sweden and Switzerland was scrutinised, focusing on their legal and institutional set-up, resources and the functions they perform. Desk research, legal analysis and surveys involving local government representatives along with case study research was carried out in these four countries. The insights gathered were then compared with BiH through the utilisation of an empirical study on sub-municipal governance that was conducted in 2014 by the Center for Social Research 'Analitika'.

The findings of the research conducted in the individual countries is summarised below.

Switzerland

In general, local government does not establish sub-municipal units of governance in *Switzerland*. In the cities, quarter associations that are organised on territorial grounds represent the interests of their members and the residents of a community. Such organisations usually organise socio-cultural activities, but also consult with local authorities on issues pertinent to their community. Complementary organisations, such as community houses or 'meeting places', run by community associations, foster social interaction between residents. Local governments may have agreements with quarter associations or community houses whereby they finance their activities. They may also establish other top-down mechanisms at the quarter level for consulting with residents and soliciting their views and ideas. Social cohesion seems to be the purpose underlying of many quarter based activities and initiatives.

Sweden

Local governments in Sweden can establish neighbourhood/district committees to bring government closer to citizens, especially in the larger cities. These bodies usually operate with a council made up of political party representatives, chosen by the local government assembly, and an administration in charge of service delivery. In some cities, they may also have a mandate to engage citizens through consultation. Other municipalities may have established neighbourhood/district councils comprised of political party representatives chosen by the municipal assembly. Such territorially defined bodies do not have a mandate to deliver services but are rather a mechanism for soliciting local views on issues. Established on a voluntary basis in different cities and municipalities because of substantial local government amalgamation that ended in the 1970s, District/neighbourhood bodies have been discontinued in many Swedish municipalities mainly due to concerns relating to efficiency and service equitability.

Serbia

In Serbia, mesne zajednice (MZs) were established in rural areas as units of *community self-governance* and are optional in cities. MZs have directly elected representative bodies (usually councils) and can include both political party and independent candidates. MZs can raise substantial revenue through sources such as citizen self-contribution and therefore should be able to a considerable extent to regulate their own activities;

however, their autonomy is considered limited in practice. This relates to the tendency of local government to prescribe their work and apply considerable financial control over their activities. The autonomy of MZs has been the subject of decisions by the Constitutional Court whereby local governments have been prevented from meddling in the affairs of MZs, especially the appointment or dismissal of their representatives. The MZs scrutinised in the case studies show that in practice while they are able to deliver smaller communal services in rural areas a substantial part of their work appears to revolve around communicating the needs of residents to the local authorities and coordinating between citizens, local authorities and different service providers.

Croatia

Although the notion of community self-governance is still incorporated in the relevant legislation in Croatia, *mesne zajednice* (MZs), as a legacy of the former Yugoslavia period, have been abandoned and local boards (and in some cities quarters) established instead. Boards are considered forms of direct citizen participation, but they do not have a role as a service provider in the community. Rather, these bodies consult with and solicit citizen opinion on issues important to the community. In some cities, boards and quarters are in charge of limited communal actions and communal and infrastructure projects for which local government designates specific funds. The boards/quarters depend on local government funding and their overall autonomy is generally limited, because of strong local government oversight.

Unsurprisingly, as the idea of community self-governance also prevails in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), there are a number of similarities with Croatia and Serbia when comparing these countries to BiH. Yet given the differences in the legal framework in the Federation of BiH (FBiH), Republika Srpska (RS) and District Brcko (BD) the form of organisation of MZs, including their legal status and work, are regulated somewhat differently. Empirical research shows that MZs in BiH, especially those in rural areas, are able to mobilise communities around important issues and in the absence of vital communal services can themselves provide such services. Yet they also face a multitude of similar challenges. There is a tendency to define their work in very broad terms, as in Serbia. MZs in BiH, like those in Croatia, tend to be highly dependent on municipal finance and therefore have only limited independence from local government, especially in RS. The politicisation of MZ councils and the frequent absence of mechanisms of accountability to the community are additional problems.

A comparison of the five countries yielded a number of specific dilemmas regarding the work of community/sub-municipal self-governance. One of them relates to the idea of community self-governance (*mjesna samouprava* - which is used in reference to these bodies in legislation in Croatia, Serbia and BiH), given that the autonomy of such bodies is limited to a considerable extent in all three countries. In other words, there is a discrepancy between the concept of self-governance and the extent of the autonomy that these units can exercise in practise.

There are important issues related to the legitimacy of sub-municipal governance in each of the countries discussed. Namely, political party dominated modes of election and the extent to which they truly represent the wider community may bring into question the legitimacy of such bodies in BiH, Croatia and Serbia. The model of indirect election of district committee/council representatives in Sweden is questioned by some, because this can in practise lead to greater distance between residents and representatives. The fact that not many residents in some cities in Switzerland, at least in some of the case studies, were able or interested in participating brings the representativeness of quarter based initiatives into question. Therefore, it is about finding the right approach to engage a wider community of stakeholders.

Another related issue is that of their very purpose and the functions they ought to perform. The key dilemma in Sweden essentially lies between centralisation and decentralisation: whether or not there should be district committees in the first place and whether they can ensure an efficient and equitable level of services for all residents, irrespective of location. In the other countries, decentralisation or delegation of services to such bodies

is not an official policy: while MZs do deliver some communal or administrative services in BiH and Croatia, usually in rural areas, such services are organised in the absence of formal service provision. In this sense, any potential consideration of service delivery, especially in larger cities or in remote areas, has to take into account local needs and criteria such as efficiency, the capacity to deliver the service and equity in service provision.

In many of the case studies, a significant role that community level organisations did appear to assume was that of social interaction through socio-cultural activities. Based on the idea that citizens have a tendency to identify with their place of residence, activities such as fairs, workshops and other cultural and recreational events tend to foster social interaction and place based cohesion. This can also translate into collective action beyond the social realm or, in other words, social participation may become political. Case studies in Switzerland in particular showed that local government fosters socio-cultural activities and financially supports quarter based initiatives, community associations and 'houses' that gather residents around diverse activities; these were also present in various forms in the other countries studied.

Moreover, it appears that in all of the case studies local government considered community level organisations as important interlocutors and intermediaries able to help identify local needs, set priorities for a given locality and legitimise certain community interventions through consultation. Regardless of the fact that the effectiveness of such a function can in some instances be reduced by the perception of politicisation among residents, the role of an intermediary is more or less institutionalised. Some local authorities, for the sake of accountability and legitimacy, are looking for ways to ensure that the priorities set for a given community are truly representative of the needs of its citizens. In light of the strong perception of politicisation of community governance units, that may discourage citizen involvement due to the belief that their requests or proposals will be dismissed, evidently there is a need to ensure that priorities have been set neutral of particular interests in the countries of the region.

Yet the role of an intermediary or advisory body does not necessarily allow for true deliberation or citizen influence in local affairs. In Switzerland, if no consensus is reached between local authorities and residents such an influence in the decision-making process can be ensured through direct democratic means. There is a general discussion in Sweden on whether or not deeper participation or influence is needed, considering democracy is seen to rest on the premise of output legitimacy and that the consultative mechanisms through which the views of citizens are solicited may already be part of a district committee's mandate.

The experiences of BiH, Serbia and Croatia where more deliberative forms of citizen participation, such as citizen assemblies, do not appear to be that common or effective any more raises the question of whether or not such mechanisms are meaningfully organised in the first place (e.g. using appropriate formats and methods). It also raises the question of whether or not their use is appropriate, considering the level of influence that residents are able to exert through them. In some cases, interlocutors stressed that issues are more easily solved through political links and this in turn may affect citizen interest in engaging in the work of community governance units.

In general, what is discernable from a comparison of the five countries is that in all of the case studies the very purpose of community governance is not clear-cut. In Sweden, for instance, the role of district committees and councils is well defined, although there may be discussion on whether such a role is always needed. In the case studies in Switzerland, the idea of independent community associations that organise around community interests appears to have a clear-cut mode of community organisation; this applies both nominally and in practise and may be complemented by top-down local government initiatives. However, in BiH and Croatia such units do not appear to live up to the purpose of direct citizen participation. They instead represent or relay the interests of a community (with uncertain legitimacy, given the low voter turnout) to local government. In Serbia, there is incongruity between MZs as units of community self-governance that ought to be autonomous of local government and the actual extent of autonomy they exercise in practise. In general, the countries of the region

may need to revisit the purpose and functions of community self-governance units, as there are discrepancies between their hypothetical and actual roles.

The four identified roles below are based on comparative analysis and concern the potential role that MZs could take on in BiH. The roles that different MZs take on would depend on the local context and need; moreover, such roles are not mutually exclusive and there may be significant overlap or synergy between them.

- **Option 1:** MZs as advocates for community interest.
- **Option 2:** MZs as venues for service facilitation or service delivery.
- **Option 3:** MZs as socio-cultural community centres.
- **Option 4:** MZs as venues for citizen engagement.

Furthermore, a number of identified crosscutting issues and principles should be considered when it comes to the effective execution of the roles identified above; these include representativeness, inclusion, independence, transparency of work and active community outreach and community cooperation.

1.

Introduction

1. Introduction

In 2014, the Center for Social Research 'Analitika' conducted empirical research into local communities (*mjesne zajednice* – MZs) in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) in order to gain a systematic insight into the ways in which they operate and the types of activities they perform in communities throughout the country.¹ The research uncovered a number of challenges pertaining to the conditions under which MZs operate and also pointed to some interesting practices that highlight the importance of the different functions that such bodies have in different areas of the country. According to the research findings, local communities in BiH have significant potential to take on an active role in the community: be it the role of mediator between citizens and local government, a community mobiliser around important issues or a service provider. However, they also face a number of challenges that include a lack of clarity regarding their formal status and competencies, unsustainable financial models and weak capacities, a lack of transparency in the election of their representatives and the frequent absence of mechanisms of accountability to local residents. Moreover, MZs in BiH are far from homogeneous. Their diversity in terms of the purpose they serve in a community is not always a result of the different institutional and organisational set-up in a given context, but can also be attributed to differences in local needs.

To better understand the available options for organising the work of MZs in BiH and to ensure their sound functioning, a follow-up comparative research project looking for comparative insights into local community governance in the region (Croatia and Serbia) and other European countries (Sweden and Switzerland) was implemented in 2015. The countries from former Yugoslavia were chosen because of a similar historical legacy of MZ development and work. Both are similar to BiH in terms of general size and the scope of local governance, but have interesting differences in terms of how sub-municipal bodies are regulated and organised. The insights from Sweden and Switzerland are beneficial because of their common traditions of strong local democracy and good governance, but also because of the highly divergent forms of community or sub-municipal governance organisation in these two countries. The ultimate aim of the comparative study is to provide recommendations on how MZs in BiH can be strengthened in terms of important aspects of their work, such as their operation, financing, service delivery, coordination and citizen engagement. This report presents the results of the research.

The comparison entails an analysis of the legal and institutional frameworks that regulate local communities in the four countries, the procedures relating to local community operations and the diverse roles they play in the community as well as their capacities and funding. The research consisted of a combination of secondary and primary analysis, including desk research, legal analysis, a survey involving local government representatives from the four countries, community governance case studies and interviews conducted with representatives of such units as well as local governance experts. Further in the text, we first outline the analytical and methodological framework and this is followed by individual country chapters and a comparative overview of BiH. The report concludes with recommendations on how to improve community governance in BiH.

This comparative review on community governance in Croatia, Serbia, Sweden and Switzerland was undertaken in order to inform future work aimed at revitalising local communities in BiH. It was conducted for UNDP BiH as part of the multi-year project '*Strengthening Local Communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina*', which is financed jointly by the governments of Switzerland and Sweden and implemented by the UNDP.

¹ Mirna Jusic, "Local Communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Challenges and Prospects for Institutional Development", Sarajevo: Center for Social Research Analitika, 2014.

2.

Analytical and
Methodological
Framework

2. Analytical and Methodological Framework

The definition of community governance employed in this study is purposefully broad and encompasses both bodies of sub-municipal governance and political decentralisation, which can be established top-down or through different forms of bottom-up neighbourhood or community organisation. In other words, irrespective of the form, units of interest tend to organise residents around common and territorially bound interests at the sub-municipal level. Thus, this definition is perhaps closest to how Chaskin defines neighbourhood based governance.

“...the engagement of neighbourhood level mechanisms and processes to guide civic participation, planning, decision-making, coordination and implementation of activities within the neighbourhood, to represent neighbourhood interests to actors beyond it and to identify and organise accountability and responsibility for action undertaken.”²

The analytical framework outlined in the UNDP BiH Terms of Reference for this assignment and those of the Analitika study³ were followed in the course of this research. The analysis focused on a number of key dimensions of the functioning of community governance in each of the four countries:

- **legal basis for community governance**, including establishment, legal status, organs, elections, decision-making procedures and local government oversight;
- **resources and capacities of community governments**, including funding, staffing, premises and technical capacities;
- **services (and other functions)** provided by community governments, including the types of services provided, funding modalities and variations in service delivery in rural/urban areas;
- **cooperation and coordination**, including cooperation among community governments, interaction with local governments and higher levels of government, cooperation with non-governmental organisations, the private sector and the media;
- **mechanisms for citizen participation in local decision-making**, including formal and informal mechanisms, their effectiveness, efficiency and outreach and any innovative solutions for citizen engagement.

In order to collect the necessary information for this comparative research, a number of data gathering methods, as presented in Table 1 and outlined in further detail below, were used.

² Robert J. Chaskin, “Fostering Neighborhood Democracy: Legitimacy and Accountability within Loosely Coupled Systems”, *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 32, no. 2, 2003, p. 162.

³ For more information see Jusic, “Local Communities in BiH”, pp. 29-30.

Technique	Scope
Analysis of secondary resources	Review of available secondary literature (articles and reports), websites and statistical data on community governance in the four countries.
Analysis of the legal framework	Review of relevant state level laws and policies as well as local and community governance acts for the case studies.
Surveys involving local government	Electronic/email surveys sent to 2,248 local governments in the four countries.
In-depth case studies	18 case studies in the four countries, interviews with 55 persons (representatives of community governance organisations and local government).
Interviews with experts	Interviews conducted with seven experts on community and local governance from the four countries.

Table 1: Overview of data gathering techniques

First, an in-depth desk review of the existing literature and an analysis of secondary sources was conducted. This meant gathering any available reports or other accounts published on community governance in the four countries. In addition, laws regulating community governance as well as available local acts and policies were gathered and analysed.

In order to gain a systematic insight into the functioning of community governance units in the four countries, an electronic survey that reflected the analytical categories above and took into account the specific forms of community governance was developed and administered. The survey entailed twenty-nine questions, most of them closed-ended. It was prepared in English, German, French, Swedish, Croatian and Serbian and sent to the email addresses of representatives of local governments (mainly the spokespersons of local government units). A few rounds of reminders were subsequently sent via email. Table 2, below, gives an overview of the number of surveys sent and the number of surveys received per country.

Country	Number of surveys sent	Number of surveys received	Response rate (%)	Number of reminders sent
Serbia	144	28	19.4%	3
Croatia	529	96	18.1%	3
Switzerland	1,296 ⁴	82	6.3%	2
Sweden	279	41	14.7%	2
Total	2,248	247	11%	10

Table 2: Number of surveys sent and received ⁵

Case studies were conducted in each country in order to gain a deeper insight into the ways community governance functions and to gather data on the different aspects of its work. Given the limited duration of the assignment (from October 2015 until mid-January 2016), case selection relied predominantly on desk research, web search and in part on the incoming surveys. Similar to Analitika's approach in the MZ study for BiH from 2014, the idea was to select examples of three to four active community governance units in each country.⁶

⁴ Due to the large number of local governments (more than 2,500) and the extensive decentralization in Switzerland those localities that have a population of less than 1,000 and are thus unlikely to have territorially-defined community organizations were dismissed.

⁵ The number of surveys sent to local governments does not correspond in full to the total number of local governments in the surveyed countries because email addresses were not available or did not function for a few local government units in each country.

⁶ As explained in Analitika's 2014 study, reliance on community organizations active in realms such as citizen engagement, service delivery or performance of other community tasks is not uncommon to other studies in this realm. However, as in Analitika's study, the label "best cases" is not applied here either, as the lack of reliable information across localities and the exploratory nature of the research does not allow for such qualifications, especially as organizations may only nominally be comparable. Jusic, *Local Communities in BiH*, p. 34.

Special attention was paid to ensuring diversity in terms of how local communities were constituted and functioned and their range of activities (e.g. service delivery, coordination and citizen participation) as well as the differences between urban and rural communities. Representatives of community governance units (selecting different types of units where possible) were interviewed in individual localities in order to gather as many different insights as possible from a range of local representatives. Field visits were planned for each country, with the proximity between localities (without compromising the diversity of experience) and the availability of interlocutors as objective criteria.

Switzerland

Quarter associations in Switzerland (territorially defined non-governmental organisations usually located in towns and cities) are a common form of community governance. Yet community governance is not restricted to the quarter associations as there are other interesting models of community governance. These include, but are not limited to, umbrella associations for an entire city area, *quarter contracts* that rely on citizen participation in individual quarters to identify priority projects and *quarter community centres* that organise social and cultural activities. Given the great number of municipalities (more than 2,500), the basis for selecting the community governance units was the difference in their type and mode of organisation in a given municipality/city/town and their range of activities.

Here it is important to mention that quarter associations are usually found in cities and that cities in Switzerland are rather small: for example, among the twenty largest cities in Switzerland are ten cities with a population of between 30,000 and 45,000.⁷ In fact, web search repeatedly yielded results about quarter associations or other forms of organisation at the quarter level from larger cities with a population of at least 30,000; this may not come as a surprise given the fact that smaller municipalities may not have a need for community governance structures: Citizens in an estimated 81.9 per cent of Swiss municipalities also have access to so-called local assemblies, structures usually formed in addition to the local parliament, where citizens are able to vote directly on local decisions, such as the local budget. Such structures are rare in the larger cities: according to estimates, such structures only exist in 10 per cent of cities with a population over 20,000.⁸ Thus, the selected case studies were those where quarter associations or other forms of quarter organisations were present.

The four case study localities where field visits were undertaken were Basel, Geneva, Vernier and Lucerne. **Basel** was chosen as it has active quarter associations and so-called quarter secretariats, the latter are associations made up of more quarter associations and other NGOs active in a given city area. Moreover, there are so-called quarter 'meeting-places' (*treff-punkte*) that are run by non-profit associations and provide socio-cultural activities in the quarter. Basel was also an interesting case because it has developed extensive policies toward the quarters and provided financing for quarter bodies.

Lucerne has very old and very active quarter associations, which are also united under an umbrella organisation (*Dachverband der Quartiervereine*). They appear to have active cooperation with the local authorities and are recognised by them as interlocutors. Some quarter associations also run 'treff-punkte', as in Basel.

The city of **Geneva** has introduced so-called *contrats de quartier* (quarter contracts), which are instruments designed to encourage citizen participation in planning processes. They have specific bodies (assemblies or committees) that work on defining priorities within a given city area. Although not physical organisations, they appeared to be an interesting and different model of how community governance works. Similar to Basel, Geneva

7 See the data of the Swiss Statistical Office. Office fédéral de la statistique OFS, *Population résidante permanente selon l'âge, par canton, district et commune*, (su-f-01.02.01.02.50), 2010-2014. Available from <<http://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/portal/fr/index/themen/01/02/blank/key/bevoelkerungsstand/02.Document.152072.xls>>

8 For more detail see Andreas Ladner and Julien Fiechter, "The Influence of Direct Democracy on Political Interest, Electoral Turnout and Other Forms of Citizens' Participation in Swiss Municipalities", *Local Government Studies* 38, no. 4, 2012, pp. 439-440.

also supports so-called *maisons de quartier* or community centres that host a range of socio-cultural activities.

Vernier, a municipality near Geneva, has the longest tradition of *contrats de quartier* in Switzerland and has been implementing them for more than ten years. However, there are certain variations in the ways contracts operate in comparison to Geneva.

Sweden

A number of municipalities in Sweden have retained the institution *stadsdelsnämnd* or *kommundelsnämnd* (neighbourhood committee). These are sub-municipal/district units usually tasked with providing local government services or a *kommundelsrad* (neighbourhood council), which is an advisory body made up of local politicians from a given city area. We were able to identify 16 municipalities out of 290 that still had either a committee or a council. Other cases were selected on the basis of whether they had neighbourhood committees or councils and their proximity to Gothenburg, given the territorial size of Sweden and the fact that it was the first choice based on insights from secondary literature.

Gothenburg has the function of a *stadsdelsnämnd* and is responsible for the delivery of various services. Moreover, the city has a proactive approach toward citizen engagement and has worked on developing participatory processes (so-called 'city dialogues'). **Jonköping** has neighbourhood councils comprised of local political representatives, which appear to be active. These units are not in charge of service delivery, but participate in a number of planning processes in the city. **Vetlanda** is a smaller more rural community that also has neighbourhood councils with advisory functions that appear to be active. **Boras**, a smaller town that had *kommundelsnamnd* or neighbourhood committees, was initially chosen but later dropped as a case because the town subsequently decided that as of January 2017 it would abolish its neighbourhood committees.

Croatia

The predominant form of sub-municipal governance in Croatia is *mjesni odbori* (local boards), although some larger cities have also introduced a second tier structure of *gradska četvrt* or *kotar* (quarter). **Rijeka** was the first case selected, because it is frequently heralded in secondary sources as a good example of local community organisation. Local boards are considered active and the City appears to have a very proactive approach toward them. Moreover, it has instituted the 'small communal actions' model for financing local boards.

Zagreb was chosen as the second case because a number of authors have written about the 'Zagreb model' (both in terms of its combining quarters and local boards and in relation to its financing model 'small communal actions' with a given percentage of the city budget allocated for sub-municipal governance). The town of **Kastav**, a smaller municipality in Croatia, was selected as it has active local boards that frequently meet and publish reports on their work.

Serbia

In Serbia, the available literature and experts pointed to Vojvodina as having very active local communities. Given the geographic size of Serbia, we settled solely for MZs from Vojvodina opting for cases in its rural and urban areas. **Subotica** was the first choice in Serbia, given the level of activity of its local communities (own websites, published annual accounts and regular citizen hearings) and the City's apparent proactive approach toward local communities. The City of **Pancevo** has a department for MZs within the local government and seems to have institutionalised the work of MZs extensively. It also has local community offices within MZs (*mesne kancelarije*). Its local communities appear to be very active, some of them with their own websites or Facebook pages. Moreover, a representative of the City that responded to the survey pointed to interesting and

active cases of MZs within their territory. The City of Zrenjanin was selected as it also has very active MZs, territorial local community offices and a municipal department in charge of local community functioning. The Municipality of **Kula** is close to Subotica and appears to have exceptionally active MZs, all of which have their own regularly updated websites. Kula stood out in this regard from other similar smaller municipalities considered.

Table 3, below, provides an overview of the main characteristics of the case studies.

Country	City	Population	Type of unit	Number of units	Average population size by unit (estimate)
Croatia	Kastav	8,891	Mjesni odbor	5	1,778
	Rijeka	128,624	Mjesni odbor	34	3,783
	Zagreb	790,017	Gradska četvrt	17	46,471
			Gradski odbor	217	1,640
Serbia	Pančevo	90,776	Mesna zajednica	17	5,339
	Subotica	141,554	Mesna zajednica	19	7,450
	Zrenjanin	76,511	Mesna zajednica	14	5,465
Sweden	Jönköping	61,559	Kommundelsråd	10	6,155
	Göteborg	541,145	Staddelsnamnd	10	54,114
	Vetlanda	26,647	Kommundelsråd	9	2,960
Switzerland	Basel	175,560	Quartierverein	17	10,327
			Stadtteilsekretariate/ Quartier Koordination	3	58,520
			Quartiertreffpunkt	15	11,704
	Geneva	197,376	Contrat de quartier	3	65,792
			Maison de quartier et centre de loisir	23	8,581
	Luzern	81,057	Quartierverein	21	3,859
			Quartierarbeit	7	11,580
	Vernier	35,327	Contrat de quartier	4	8,831

Table 3: Main characteristics of the case study localities and community units⁹

In addition to local government and local community representatives in the different localities visited, local experts knowledgeable on community governance in the respective countries were interviewed face to face or via Skype. Sixty-two interlocutors were interviewed in the four countries as part of the research process. In Annex 1, Table 1 provides an overview of the profiles of the interlocutors per locality.

⁹ Data was gathered from the following websites:

<<http://www.kastav.hr/ustrojstvo-grada/mjesni-odbori/>>, <<http://www.rijeka.hr/lgs.axd?t=16&id=66186>>, <http://www1.zagreb.hr/zgstat/documents/POPIS%202011/GZ_stanovnistvo_kucanstva_stanovi/Popis2011_StanoyniciKucanstvaStanovi_GradZagreb.pdf>, <<http://www.zagreb.hr/default.aspx?id=6>>, <http://www.dzs.hr/Eng/censuses/census2011/results/htm/E01_01_01/e01_01_01_zup08_3735.html>, <<http://pod2.stat.gov.rs/ObjavljenePublikacije/Popis2011/Knjiga20.pdf>>, <http://www.pancevo.rs/Mesne_zajednice-234-1>, <<http://www.subotica.rs/index/page/lg/sr/id/8113>>, <<http://www.zrenjanin.rs/1-23-0-0/Gradske-mesne-zajednice>>, <http://www.scb.se/en/_Finding-statistics/Statistics-by-subject-area/Population/Population-composition/Population-statistics/Aktuell-Pong/25795/Yearly-statistics--Municipalities-Counties-and-the-whole-country/159277/> <<http://www.statistik.bs.ch/dms/statistik/tabellen/01/1/t01-0-03.xlsx>>, <<http://www.entwicklung.bs.ch/stadtteile/quartierarbeit-mitwirkung/quartierorganisationen.html>>, <http://www.ge.ch/statistique/domaines/01/01_02_1/tableaux.asp>, <<http://www.ville-geneve.ch/themes/social/action-proximite/contrats-quartier/>>, <<http://www.ville-geneve.ch/themes/petite-enfance-jeunesse-loisirs/lieux-loisirs/maisons-quartier-centres-loisirs/>>, <https://www.pxweb.bfs.admin.ch/Selection.aspx?px_language=de&px_db=px-x-0102010000_104&px_tableid=px-x-0102010000_104&px_x-0102010000_104.px&px_type=PX>, <<http://www.quartiere-stadtluzern.ch/de/quartiere/>>, <<http://www.vernier.ch/fr/portrait/statistiques/population/>>, <http://www.vernier.ch/fr/prestations/toutesprestations/?dienst_id=20187>

3.

Sub-municipal and Community Governance Bodies in Switzerland

3. Sub-municipal and Community Governance Bodies in Switzerland

In Switzerland, local governments have generally not set up community governance units or territorially defined sub-municipal units that are regulated by local government law or local acts. In fact, the most frequently encountered types of bodies that could be designated as community governance units were so-called *quarter associations* (known as *Quartiervereine* in German-speaking parts of the country, *Ortsvereine* or 'associations of the place' in some villages or *associations de quartier* in the French-speaking parts of the country). An exception is the City of Lugano in the Italian-speaking canton of Ticino, where the local government has established quarter committees as consultative bodies that act as interlocutors between citizens and the city government.¹⁰

Quarter associations in some towns in Switzerland can also be part of a larger umbrella association. These larger associations either represent all quarter associations in a town/city, such as in the case of Lucerne, or represent different associations in a given quarter or city area, including, as was the case of Bern, other associations and political parties. This is usually with the aim to represent member interests in a given area.¹¹ Such umbrella bodies can also have an explicit mandate to facilitate citizen participation through institutionalised processes, as in the City of Basel.

Through specific policies and/or programmes on community building or the development of town or city areas, some cities have encouraged other forms of community organisation such as, for example, 'meeting places' (*treffpunkte*) or 'quarter houses' (*maison de quartier*, *Quartierszentrum*). Such community centres are usually run by quarter associations or other NGOs and organise a number of recreational and socio-cultural activities. Quarter associations can play a complementary role to such community centres and each has its own respective functions that shape everyday life in the neighbourhood, especially in the larger cities.

Some municipalities or cities have introduced planning processes (quarter contracts or *cotrats du quartier*) that can comprise committees that meet regularly in order to discuss projects to be implemented in a given locality, as is the case in Geneva, Vernier and some other cities in Switzerland. Although not a typical community governance unit, these processes allow for citizen participation at the quarter level and are thus considered in more detail further in this report.

In general, the Swiss approach to community/quarter governance in cities appears to rest on the numerous forms of activity and access to social interaction and political participation that citizens have at their disposal. Community centres and meeting places facilitate social participation through socio-cultural activities. Whereas quarter associations or umbrella quarter organisations, some of them recognised by city policy as a link between residents and local authorities, as well as additional top-down mechanisms that cities have introduced to gather input from citizens (e.g. quarter contracts and city offices in quarters) facilitate political participation. Given that the political influence of citizens is guaranteed through mechanisms of direct democracy at the local level, the underlying aim of such quarter level initiatives in many instances appears to be one of social cohesion and support through stronger identification with the quarter.

10 For more, see City of Lugano, "Quarter committees". Available from <<http://www.lugano.ch/citta-amministrazione/quartieri/commissioni-di-quartiere.html>>

11 For example, according to the Statute of the Federation of Quarter Associations of the City of Lucerne (*Verband der Quartiervereine der Stadt Luzern*), this association aims to unite quarter associations of the city and agglomerate in order to preserve city-wide interests. *Verband der Quartiervereine der Stadt Luzern*, "Statuten", 2009, Art. 2.

Quarter associations as primary modes of organisation at the quarter/neighbourhood level are addressed in more detail later in the text together with other modes of community organisation, especially those covered as part of the case study research.

3.1. Legal Basis of Community Governance

3.1.1. Establishment and Legal Status

The establishment and work of quarter associations is regulated by articles 60-79 of the Swiss Civil Code. According to the Code, associations with a “political, religious, scientific, cultural, charitable, social or other non-commercial purpose” acquire the status of a legal person as soon as an intent to establish becomes apparent from the association’s written statute. The statute should stipulate the *purpose, resources* and *organisation* of the association. Once the statute is ratified and a committee has been appointed the association can enter the commercial register,¹² which is obligatory in the event that the association conducts any commercial operations in order to meet its purpose or is subject to audit requirements.¹³

The statutes of the quarter associations in Switzerland analysed usually stipulated that the association is politically and religiously neutral. They also usually define the physical area of their activity (i.e. the number of streets or neighbourhood) and as such are geographically delineated bodies.¹⁴ In line with the Civil Code, the statute states the purpose of their work: for example, “to maintain the quarter’s life, the preservation and promotion of quality of life in the quarter and to protect the interests of all local residents¹⁵ [...] to maintain and further cultural and social life [...] represent the interests of the residents [...] towards authorities and private entities and is committed to the quality of life and housing” in the quarter.¹⁶

3.1.2. Organs

An association as such is made up of its **members**. New members can be admitted at any time and have the legal right to resign.¹⁷ The association’s statute may also foresee grounds for the exclusion of members; if this is not the case then exclusion, “requires a resolution by the members and good cause.”¹⁸ According to some of the statutes of the quarter associations scrutinised, members can in some cases only be natural persons whereas in others both natural and legal persons are permitted.¹⁹ In some cases, the committee decides on memberships and declares its decision at the general assembly.²⁰ However, the aforementioned umbrella organisations or unions of quarters or city areas usually only permit members that are legal persons (other organisations).

The most important organs of an association are the **general assembly** of members and the aforementioned **committee**. According to the Civil Code, the general assembly is, “the supreme governing body of the association”. It makes decisions on admission and exclusion from membership, is responsible for appointing the committee and decides on all matters that other governing bodies cannot decide on. It is responsible for supervising the governing bodies and may dismiss them, “whenever justified by good cause.”²¹ Moreover, it can pass

¹² “Swiss Civil Code”, 1907, Articles 60-61.

¹³ *Ibid*, Art. 61.

¹⁴ For example, see the Statute of the *Quartierverein* ‘Littau-Dorf’, City of Lucerne, Articles 1-2. Available from <<http://qv-littaudorf.ch/data/documents/Statuten%20des%20Quartiervereins%20Littau.pdf>>; also see, for example, the Statute of the “neutral quarter association” Gundeldingen in Basel, Articles 1-2. Available from <<http://www.nqv-gundeldingen.ch/2008.Statuten.pdf>>

¹⁵ Statute of *Quartierverein* ‘Littau-Dorf’, City of Lucerne, Art. 3.

¹⁶ Statute of the “neutral quarter association” Gundeldingen in Basel, Art. 2.

¹⁷ Article 70 of the Swiss Civil Code.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, Art. 72

¹⁹ For example, according to Article 4 of the Statute of the quarter ‘Littau-Dorf’ in Lucerne, both legal and natural persons can be members. Moreover, members can be ‘families’ or ‘households’ where a maximum of two persons are allowed per family or households.

²⁰ Article 6 of the Statute of the quarter ‘Littau-Dorf’ in Lucerne.

²¹ Articles 65.1-3 of the Swiss Civil Code.

resolutions (through a majority vote of the members present).²²

The general assembly is convened by the committee and there are statutes that stipulate the rules according to which general meetings must be convened; moreover, a general assembly has to be summoned if one-fifth (20%) of members make such a request.²³ All members at the assembly have equal voting rights.²⁴ Individual quarter statutes prescribe how frequently the general assembly convenes, usually at least once or twice a year.²⁵ Furthermore, quarter statutes can prescribe that an annual report is presented at the general assembly.²⁶

The **committee**, on the other hand, “is entitled and obliged [...] to manage and represent the association” in line with the statute of the association.²⁷ It is responsible for the commercial bookkeeping and accounting of the association.²⁸ Individual statutes of quarter associations define the number of representatives and the work of the committee. For example, it may represent the interests of the association and implement the general assembly’s resolutions.²⁹ Individual committee members can be selected by the committee to fulfil particular functions within the association, such as the president who represents the association in front of the authorities and his or her vice president, the secretary in charge of correspondence and the treasurer in charge of bookkeeping.³⁰

The statutes of quarter associations can allow for the establishment of other bodies if required. Such bodies can be internal audit bodies or thematic commissions.³¹

In general, the level of activity of an association depends on the level of interest among persons or entities that become members and/or participate in its bodies. In some of the interviews conducted with interlocutors, they spoke of oscillations in interest where an association might lose or gain members over time. However, annual membership fees are, at least in the case studies, low (usually 22 to 45 EUR) and as such, at least according to some local interlocutors, should not pose a barrier to involvement in the association.

3.1.3. Elections

According to the Swiss Civil Code, the general assembly elects (and can dissolve) the committee, but the specifics of elections are not prescribed.³² Statutes of quarter associations prescribe this in more detail, for example, some stipulate public elections at the general assembly (and a general public vote on resolutions) and the election of committees, unless the committee or a certain part of the members present demand a secret ballot.³³ Statutes also stipulate the number of votes required, such as an absolute majority or a relative majority. They usually stipulate that the committee choose functionaries such as the president, vice-president and others who usually make up the committee.³⁴

In the case of umbrella associations, our case study of the quarter secretariats in Basel showed that they are comprised of various organisations, including quarter associations, from a city area and that every organisa-

22 Ibid, articles 66-67.

23 Ibid, Article 64.

24 Article 67.1. of the Swiss Civil Code.

25 See, for example, Article 10 of the Statute of the quarter ‘Littau-Dorf’ in Lucerne, which foresees that the “association’s year begins and ends with the general assembly.” Or see Article 12 of the Statute of the “neutral quarter association” Gundeldingen in Basel, which foresees an assembly once a year within the first six months.

26 See, for example, Article 15 of the Statute of the “neutral quarter association” Gundeldingen in Basel.

27 Article 69 of the Swiss Civil Code.

28 Ibid, Article 69a.

29 See Article 15 of the Statute of the quarter ‘Littau-Dorf’, Lucerne.

30 Ibid, Articles 16 and 17.

31 See, for example, Article 9 of the Statute of the quarter association ‘Littau-Dorf’, which envisages “auditors of accounts” and “commissions.”

32 Article 65. 1. Of the Swiss Civil Code.

33 See Article 23 of the Statute of the quarter ‘Littau-Dorf’, Lucerne. Also see Article 17 of the Statute of the “neutral quarter association” Gundeldingen in Basel.

34 See articles 16 and 17 of the Statute of the quarter ‘Littau-Dorf’, Lucerne.

tion is a member of the assembly with delegates who represent it when voting for the committee. The case study research shows that serving as a representative on a committee is entirely voluntary. As such, the representativeness of different community groups (elderly, youth, migrants, etc.) may not necessarily be involved as persons may not be interested in or able to take part. As one interlocutor explained, the idea of volunteering through a quarter association may not be the preferred form of social engagement. This is especially true for groups that rely on different thematic, family or other types of networks. Moreover, as quarter associations may have other legal persons as their members, representation of small business and other organisations in the committee may depend on availability and the level of interest.

3.1.4. Decision-making Procedures

As stated above, the general assembly makes decisions on admission and exclusion of members and decides on all matters on which other governing bodies cannot decide. However, the committee makes all the decision on the day-to-day operations of the association.

3.1.5. Local Government Oversight

Since the work of quarter associations is regulated by the Swiss Civil Code, they are not liable to local government for their general work and operations. They may be liable to local government only in the case of a specific relationship, such as receiving grants from the local government for the fulfilment of certain tasks.

The Civil Code regulates the means of accountability, including the obligation to submit accounts for full external audit in the event of turnover or assets above a given amount for two successive financial years or an average annual turnover of fifty fulltime employees.³⁵ Furthermore, a member or creditor of the association can apply for a court order to take the necessary measures in the event that the association does not have one of its prescribed governing bodies. In such cases, the court can determine a time limit for the resolution of the situation or appoint an administrator. The association bears the costs if such a measure is prescribed by the court.³⁶ Members can, within one month of learning about any resolution of the association that infringes upon the law or the association's statute, also challenge this action in court.³⁷

Naturally, in cases where the city establishes neighbourhood initiatives or programmes (e.g. quarter contracts) it oversees their work. As one municipal representative stated, it is more about supervision of the processes (i.e. the methods used and outreach). However, it is still the residents that ultimately provide the input in the form of project ideas. Similarly, where the municipality or city provides mandates to external actors, such as associations for tasks of various sorts (e.g. running community houses or serving as an information platform), associations have to conform to the mandate in terms of the processes. Yet a number of interlocutors stressed that they are the ones to determine the type of activities that will be performed in the community. In other words, while many initiatives may be governed top-down they still rely on local ideas and local needs for substance.

³⁵ Article 69b of the Swiss Civil Code.

³⁶ Ibid, Article 69c.

³⁷ Ibid, Article 75.

3.2. Resources of Community Governance: Finance, Staffing and Capacities

3.2.1. Resources of Quarter Associations and other Quarter level Organisations

The basic source of income of quarter associations in Switzerland, as may be foreseen by their statutes, is their membership fee.³⁸ Further means can be stipulated in the statutes of the associations, such as voluntary contributions, proceeds from the activities they may perform or income from property or other assets.³⁹ The staffing of community governance units or quarter associations in Switzerland depends on the scope of their work. Most often, committee members are volunteers.

The quarter associations may, depending on the type of policies cities have established in relation to such entities, also draw funding from the municipal/city budget. The City of Lucerne, for example, has introduced a budget line for the improvement of quarter life of 75,000 CHF (circa 67,800 EUR) that is divided up between quarter associations on an annual basis. According to city policy, this funding allows the quarter associations to support projects and events in the quarter as well as cover some of their operational costs.⁴⁰ According to one interlocutor, not all quarters receive the same amount. There is a formula for the allocation of funding that takes into account the size of a quarter as well by the type of activities performed and allows for smaller quarters to receive more funding, because they cannot attract as many members. Essentially, the aim of such policies is not to ensure that quarters become more balanced but rather to allow, “for the respective original characteristics of the quarters to remain intact and for the deprived quarters to carefully recover.”⁴¹

According to one interlocutor from Lucerne, such funds are foreseen for different quarter activities as opposed to paying for premises or salaries because most associations do not have their own but rather use city premises for their meetings and activities. They rely on volunteers and only cover the costs (telephone and transport) incurred by those persons organising quarter activities.

Other sources of income for quarter associations may stem from sponsorship or donations from the private sector or other donors, the renting of premises (in the case they have them) or, as in the case of some quarter associations in Lucerne, the sale of advertising space in their quarter newspaper to local businesses.

In Lucerne, one of the quarter associations visited is located in a quarter meeting place/centre that caters to the needs of the community. As explained by the local interlocutors, the City decides on the allocation of such premises to given quarter associations in line with their location, for example, because they are situated in a poor area. Others, such as those located in the city centre, may be allowed to meet in premises of the city administration free of charge. As explained by one local respondent, quarter associations’ funding does not allow them take a lease on a regular basis.

3.2.2. Resources for Socio-cultural activities

Cities tend to finance a substantial part of their budget where community houses or ‘meeting places’ have been set up. In Basel, for example, the City finances a large part of the operational expenses of fifteen quarter ‘meeting place’ facilities, including staff and activities for the community. Yet the association that runs this community house also raises funds through renting out its facilities, project donations, membership fees and other contributions. According to one meeting place visited, while half of the annual budget is financed through

38 Ibid, Article 71.

39 See, for example, Article 26 of the Statute of the quarter ‘Littau-Dorf’, Lucerne. Also see Article 22 of the Statute of the “neutral quarter association” Gundeldingen in Basel.

40 City of Lucerne, “*Quartier- und Stadtteilpolitik*” [Quarter and city part policy], 2011, p. 6.

41 Ibid, p. 7.

the canton/city budget a large portion comes from renting out their premises. Moreover, the association participates in a canton/city project fund that associations can apply to for funding the implementation of projects. The association has a number of professional employees as well as interns.

There is a similar situation for the *maison de quartier* or quarter houses in Geneva where staff salaries are ensured through a designated foundation for the animation of socio-cultural life and a departmental budget for public education. The City provides the premises for the associations running the houses, subsidises some of the salaries of facilitators working on socio-cultural activities and operating costs or allocates one-off financial support for specific projects.⁴² The houses can engage other staff through their budget (e.g. a gardener). According to an interlocutor, a negative aspect is that although people are invited to propose their own activities it is a challenge to receive new ideas from the community; therefore, the community is not just a consumer of other ideas but also proposes own projects. Furthermore, while a community house can organise a number of activities using its own budget it has to rely on additional volunteers in such instances and therefore it may prove difficult to raise extra money for such initiatives.

The City of Lucerne has introduced special 'project pool' funding to an annual amount of 75,000 CHF (circa 67,800 EUR). It is open to a wider number of stakeholders from the quarters, including quarter associations, and is foreseen for socio-cultural activities such as quarter celebrations, exhibitions and events to welcome new residents. Projects need to fulfil the criteria of enhancing quarter life, relate to a larger group of quarter residents and foster or rely on voluntary work in the quarter.⁴³

3.2.3. Funding Participatory Processes: Quarter Secretariats and *Contrat de Quartier*

Some local governments in Switzerland have adopted innovative policies to foster citizen engagement at the quarter level that entail funding for different participatory mechanisms. One example is the quarter secretariats that were established in Basel in 2000 as umbrella associations that represent a given city area and its organisations. They have been granted a mandate by the City to inform residents and to facilitate citizen engagement. According to a representative of one secretariat, 75 per cent of their budget stems from the City and the other 25 per cent is ensured through donations.

Moreover, the City of Basel adopted a special credit line for projects of quarter-secretariats and quarter 'meeting places' in 2014 for the years 2014-2016 to the amount of 100,000 CHF (circa 90,400 EUR) per year. This credit line is to allow the aforementioned fifteen quarter meeting places, the two quarter secretariats and a quarter coordination body (a body similar to the quarter secretariat) to, "realise new, innovative or participatory projects that are not already subsidised by the Canton/City of Basel." A jury decides which applications by these bodies will be supported based on the criteria of innovation, desired effect for the benefit of local residents and the contribution to increasing the quality of life in the quarter.⁴⁴

Another interesting finance mechanism is the *contrat de quartier* (quarter contract) found in Geneva, Vernier and some other municipalities in the cantons of Geneva and Vaud, which is envisaged as a tool for quarter level citizen participation in proposing local projects. In Vernier, a *project group* made up of residents elected at a first quarter level citizen assembly considers projects initiated by residents. A project accepted by the project group

42 For more detail see City of Geneva, "*Maisons de quartier et centres de loisirs*", 2015. Available from <<http://www.ville-geneve.ch/themes/petite-enfance-jeunesse-loisirs/jeunesse/partenaires/maisons-quartier-centres-loisirs/>>

43 City of Lucerne, "*Information, Dialog, Mitbestimmung: Leitfaden zur Kommunikation und Zusammenarbeit mit den Quartieren*" [Information, Dialogue, Participation: Guidelines for the Communication and Cooperation with Quarters], February 2015, second edition.

44 Presiding department of the Canton/City of Basel, Office for Canton and City Development, "*Rahmenkredit Projekte Quartiertreffpunkte, Stadtteilsekretariate und Quartierkoordination*" [Credit line for projects of quarter meeting places, city-part secretariats and quarter-coordination], 14 April 2014.

is considered for financing by a *piloting committee*, which is made up of representatives of the Municipality, associations, citizens and experts. Every quarter contract receives 60,000 CHF (circa 54,245 EUR) a year from the Municipality, of which 10,000 CHF (circa 9,000 EUR) is spent on the functioning of the mechanism. Since 2005, the Municipality has financed 170 such projects.⁴⁵

As part of the budgetary resources designated for contracts, persons that lead a session or a meeting of the project group receive compensation of 50 CHF (circa 45 EUR), which essentially allows them to organise their time in order to be able to participate. Each contract has a coordinator, a member of the project group, who is paid 300 CHF a month and is in charge of communicating with different stakeholders. According to a municipal representative, as projects are validated experts within municipal departments (e.g. architects and communication specialists) are at the disposal of citizens to help set up the projects. Moreover, mechanisms receive support from two municipal administrators who help facilitate the processes. A contract in a visited locality had its own premises and first project, which was created as a contact point for residents and as a space to host a range of socio-cultural activities (e.g. knitting club and IT courses).

The model for financing contracts in Geneva is somewhat different to the one in Vernier. According to an interlocutor, contracts do not automatically have a designated budget. Instead, they have a budget for running contracts that is part of the administrative council budget and is envisaged for the functioning of and communication surrounding a contracts. Once a contract proposes a project the city departments consider it and give their technical opinion. If it is seen as beneficial then the city department sectorally responsible for the project will implement it with funds from its budget. If projects are larger and financially more significant then the city council votes on them. The city departments take care of the contract in terms of staffing and each designates 5 per cent of one person's time to participate in contract committees once a month. Administrative support is also provided by a designated department that, *inter alia*, facilitates the process.

3.3. Service Delivery and other Tasks/Activities

Quarter associations are not envisaged as service providers as such in Switzerland and services are usually not stipulated in their statute, as it is up to the local authorities to deliver services. In practice, they seem to be engaged predominantly in socio-cultural activities such as organising different events in the community and in communicating with the local authorities. As explained by two representatives of a quarter association in Lucerne, they mainly interact with local authorities concerning issues such as traffic and parking or organise cultural events that often foster interaction between residents.

One representative stated, "We try to integrate persons who recently moved here and try to assist them. It is a pleasure to give people the possibility to meet."

The case study research suggests that there is no transfer of competencies to quarter associations to deliver specific services. However, according to some local interlocutors, task delegation can occur within the realm of consultation with local quarter associations. One representative of a quarter association in Lucerne cited the example of the City changing public lighting in quarters and quarter associations organising meetings where representatives of the city administration explained the process and timeframe to residents.

In the case of quarter secretariats in Basel, the task is formalised by city policies: they have the defined mandate to act as a two-way information platform between the City and residents of a given city area. They also help to facilitate participatory processes.

45 Ville de Vernier, "10 Ans de Contrats de Quartier a Vernier" [10 years of quarter contracts in Vernier], 2015.

Associations in charge of running community centres or meeting places may have a specific mandate. They can organise a number of socio-cultural and recreational activities that can be facilitated by professional animators. A quarter association in Lucerne implements activities in the centre/meeting place where it resides, including language courses for the large immigrant community in the quarter. In the case of one visited quarter meeting place in Basel, the association that runs the meeting place set up this institution some twenty years ago in response to an initiative by residents with children who wanted to have a place to meet. Their tasks as a community centre/meeting place are also specified in an agreement with the Canton, which co-finances their work. However, agreements are not content specific and, as explained by a respondent, rely on the wider concept of developing the community and engaging in education. While it has to be open for a minimum of fourteen hours a week the *treffpunkt* can decide on the activities run during this time.

According to a representative, their activities are mostly socio-cultural in nature and have the objective of promoting interactivity and education. At the beginning, most activities were centred around parents with children. In the meantime, the community house has embraced a number of new weekly initiatives such as recreational courses for the elderly that allow for socialising, noon lunches where families cook and mingle, and youth meetings where young people engage in creative activities using the centres' premises free-of-charge. They are also planning activities for refugees in the quarter. In addition to socio-cultural activities, they inform citizens about what is going on in the community and provide support for the organisation of various events. According to the representative, the *treffpunkt* has become an important place where people spend an increasing amount of their time. They highlight having been able to involve persons of different age groups as a particular success.

This is similar to the model of the *maison de quartier* in the City of Geneva where, according to a maison representative, a city policy defines the tasks of all quarter houses in Geneva. An association can apply to have their own quarter house and if their request is granted then they receive funding from the City to establish and run the house. *Maisons* also implement socio-cultural activities such as recreational activities for children, youth and the elderly, providing space for different groups or organisations to run their respective activities, organise gatherings and public celebrations. The *maison* has its own professional animators that suggest activities that are then approved by the association's committee. Residents can also propose project ideas for consideration by the association. According to a representative, the focus is on social cohesion, empowerment and social interaction through social participation and as such the community houses are open to all groups. According to an interlocutor, this is also a basic condition of the City. Outreach is ensured through their website. As in Basel, a representative of one community house stressed that they are free to decide on their own activities.

3.4. Coordination and Cooperation

Community governance in its various shapes and forms in Switzerland rests on the principle of coordination and cooperation between stakeholders in the community. Some cities boast interesting institutionalised modes of cooperation between different organisations. In the case of Lucerne, for example, quarters comprise a larger union or federation of quarter associations (*Verband*). This is similar to Zurich, where a quarter conference (*Quartierkonferenz*) has been established as an umbrella organisation. In both cases, such a union is a separate association with quarter associations as its members.

As quarter associations essentially represent the interests of a locality they usually interact with the local authorities. In some cases, such interaction is prescribed by a local policy and is often an attempt to institutionalise the linking function between local authorities and citizens performed by such associations. An interesting example is a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between the City of Zurich and the Conference of Quarter Associations, which details the principles of cooperation between the city administration and the quarter associations as conference members.

According to this document, the City, “recognises the quarter association as an important mouthpiece of the quarters and population.”

This MoU also sets out the principles of cooperation and the work of the quarter associations:⁴⁶

- membership fees set to allow for the involvement of all socioeconomic groups;
- no bias pertaining to the composition of the associations’ committees, paying special attention to independence from political parties and the integration of all groups;
- websites are updated with statutes, annual reports and committee contacts;
- efforts are made on issues of concern to members and to impartially, thoroughly and in a timely manner clarify the concerns and demands with the city administration;
- establish a constructive dialogue with all stakeholders engaged, ensuring that the problems and concerns are, as far as possible, first discussed with those persons or institutions directly involved prior to public scrutiny;
- committees/presidents vouch to comply with confidentiality or embargoes on disclosure when certain facts are communicated to them under such a condition;
- ensure that the events they organise on issues of public interest are made public (on the web and in the media);
- that associations try to mediate conflicts between quarter residents and the City;
- that important information (i.e. local issues) is relayed to the relevant city departments on time.

The principles regarding cooperation with the city administration are set forth in this MoU:⁴⁷

- associations’ have the right to timely notification on important developments, as the city recognises them as important venues for representation of the quarter population;
- timely notification on a public project that could change the appearance or functionality of the quarter, where associations should be able to give their opinion on the project;
- appointing a contact in each department to provide associations with information;
- the possibility of quarter based consultation with the City concerning larger public projects, based on a demand by a quarter association;
- the City is to consult with associations in order to resolve issues where specific local/personal knowledge is needed;
- the City is to inform construction firms that they must notify associations on time about planned work in a locality.

Another example of government policy on cooperation with quarters is the *Citywide Concept for Quarter-secretariats Basel*, which was adopted by the Canton/City of Basel. It stipulates that quarter secretariats are the, “interface between the administration and the quarter” at the level of the city’s three electoral areas.⁴⁸

This document, *inter alia*, defines the principles of co-financing of the quarter secretariats by the Canton as well as their aims and duties. The primary idea is that these units serve to, “improve the communication between the quarter and the administration” so that existing problems or issues are addressed quickly by both sides. As such, quarter secretariats are to, *inter alia*, mediate between the concerns of the quarter and the administration and operate a platform for information exchange such as hearings, informative meetings or events.⁴⁹

46 City of Zurich, “Vereinbarung zwischen der Stadt Zürich und den in der Zürcher Quartierkonferenz zusammengeschlossenen Quartiervereinen” [Agreement between the City of Zurich and the Quarter Associations that are Members of the Zurich Quarter Conference] 2011, Part I, articles 1-9.

47 Ibid, Part II, articles 1-6.

48 Presiding department of the Canton/City of Basel, Office for Canton and City Development, Gesamtstädtisches Konzept Quartiersekretariate Basel [Citywide concept on Quartersecretariats Basel], first adopted in 2004 and amended in 2009, Part 1.

49 Ibid, art. Part 3, Article 3.1-3.3.3.

According to a representative, the whole idea behind establishing quarter secretariats stems from a 1990s project implemented in the city “Werkstatt Basel” (Basel workshop), where citizens could become involved in smaller projects. As a result, secretariats were set up as units that represent a given city area; they boast membership of many quarter based organisations and cover large city areas (circa 50,000 persons). Today, the secretariats serve as an intermediary between the authorities and citizens and as venues for engagement. They relay information between the City/Canton and quarter associations and help concerned residents communicate their requests or complaints to the right address as well as help them to find out how a problem can be solved. They provide advice concerning implementation of participatory processes. Outreach is guaranteed through a website and their premises, while they may also be able to share information through quarter association newspapers. They also organise roundtables on given local issues or informational meetings that are open to the community.

As social cohesion appears to be at the forefront of many city policies focused on quarters there are attempts to strengthen complementary efforts at the quarter level. Lucerne, for example, has also adopted a comprehensive quarter and city area policy. This policy fosters multiple and complementary access points for people to engage in their quarter and to ensure that, “the great potential of voluntary work is used better.” This, *inter alia*, is to be done through the improvement of cooperation and coordination between the quarters and the City. It also involves mechanisms to help city quarters better address local concerns, while increasing the knowledge of the local administration on processes and issues in various quarters. The policy also focuses on the improvement and optimisation of current services, bodies and structures in the area of quarter policy, “structurally building on the existing or supplementing quarter work relating to children and adolescents.” The principle of subsidiarity is to apply to the content of such endeavors, meaning that the quarter entities are the ones that are to determine what types of activities are needed.⁵⁰

In fact, a number of different types of structures and bodies in Lucerne work on a complementary basis. In addition to a relevant contact point for quarter related issues within the city administration, there are seven quarter offices for ‘quarter work’ (*die Quartierarbeit*). This relates primarily to recreational activities with children and youth outside of school, support for other age groups, networking functions and serves as a link between the quarter and the administration. Such offices direct matters and requests from the quarter to the relevant city departments and gives quarter actors, such as quarter associations, feedback from the administration.⁵¹ In one case, because of their complementary nature, such a quarter office was integrated into a quarter centre that organises socio-cultural activities.⁵² There are also quarter meeting places or centres where socio-cultural activities take place. Last but not least, there are the quarter associations that act as the, ‘traditional interlocutor of the city’. They provide information and activities for residents and also have their own umbrella organisation (*Verband*).⁵³

According to an interlocutor from a quarter association in Lucerne, “the City is most often receptive towards our requests and takes them into account in its decision-making.” The interlocutor added that cooperation is present, “purely from an economic point of view. It is positive when both sides work together because they can incorporate their costs and save resources.”

In some cases, cooperation is institutionalised. Quarter associations cooperate with other associations as part of a wider umbrella organisation for a given area of the city or given quarter, as in Basel and Lucerne. According to a local interlocutor from Lucerne, the umbrella association organises annual meetings where all associations report on their problems in a given quarter. The umbrella organisation also discusses issues that relate to all quarter associations, such as traffic concerns.

50 City of Lucerne, “*Bericht und Antrag an den Grossen Stadtrat von Luzern vom 13. Juli 2011*” [Report and proposal to the City council of Lucerne from 13 July 2011], 2011, p. 3.

51 City of Lucerne, “*Leitfaden zur Kommunikation und Zusammenarbeit mit den Quartieren*” [Guidance for Communication and Cooperation with Quarters], April 2015.

52 City of Lucerne, “*Der MaiHof: Ein starkes Quartierzentrum entsteht*” [‘Der MaiHof’: A strong quarter center is emerging], 23 May 2013.

53 City of Lucerne, “*Quartiervereine*” [Quarter associations], 2015.

In many cities, quarter associations and quarter meeting places work together. In the City of Basel, quarter secretariats cooperate with quarter meeting places (*Quartiertreffpunkte*) in a given area.⁵⁴ This was reiterated by a representative of a quarter meeting place. Quarter meeting places also cooperate with a number of other stakeholders, including the church on work with youth, another association on a large manifestation at the beginning of January where children can learn local crafts and to work with different materials. Coordination is also at the core of the *maison de quartier* model in Geneva. According to one interlocutor, networks are easily established between local quarter organisations and the maison as they work on different projects and activities. The same is the case in Lucerne where, according to a representative of a quarter association, there is cooperation with a local community house that works on integration issues.

In the case of Vernier, where quarter contracts have been established in different quarters, the contract itself is not only a tool for participation but also for coordination. The contract is made up of a resident led project group and a piloting committee comprised, amongst others, of representatives of the municipal administration, political parties, NGOs and social services. The piloting committee validates projects prepared by the project group. In this sense, a number of stakeholders are involved in designing and deciding on small projects.

Moreover, coordination is rooted in delegation.

According to an interlocutor active on a quarter contract, “We are always involved. For instance, if someone sends a request directly to authorities they direct the resident to first contact the *contrat quartier* [...] They always inform us and delegate such requests so that we in the community can evaluate them first.”

In essence, the drive for cooperation (articulated in some policies as an ambition to moderate any conflict before it occurs) seems to be at the very heart of the complementary and usually multiple mechanisms of interaction with the local population in Swiss cities. These are usually both bottom-up (e.g. quarter associations and community centres) and top-down (e.g. quarter offices, institutionalised consultative mechanisms, and quarter contracts).

3.5. Mechanisms for Citizen Participation in Local Decision-making

Switzerland is famous for its frequent use of mechanisms of direct democracy, including referenda and initiatives that citizens can make use of to influence decisions. It is therefore quite singular in relation to other European countries in this respect. Referendums and initiatives are also widespread at the local level. Through referendums, citizens have the right to retract decisions brought by local authorities (local parliament, executive or local assembly) and can submit their own proposals through initiatives. There are so-called local or direct democratic assemblies in many municipalities in Switzerland comprised of citizens who have, *inter alia*, the “function of controlling and directing the executive.”⁵⁵ These are known as *Gemeindeversammlung* in German-speaking regions, *assemblée communale* in French-speaking regions and *assemblea comunale* in the Italian-speaking regions).

Table 4, below, illustrates data collected through a survey with a 58 per cent response rate in 2009 on the existence and use of direct democracy mechanisms at the local level in Switzerland.

54 Article 3.3.4. of the Canton/City of Basel Citywide Concept on Quartersecretariats Basel.

55 Denters et al. (ed.), “Direct Democratic Participation in Switzerland”, *Size and Local Democracy*, Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2014, p. 279; Andreas Ladner and Julien Fiechter, “The Influence of Direct Democracy on Political Interest, Electoral Turnout and Other Forms of Citizens’ Participation in Swiss Municipalities”, *Local Government Studies* 38, no. 4, 2012, pp. 439–440.

	Percentage of municipalities with either an assembly or parliament			Percentage of municipalities with direct democracy instruments (referendum and/or initiative)		
Municipal population size	Local assembly	Local parliament	N=	Existence	Use	N(exi)/N(use)
up to 249	94.9	5.1	119	55.5	23.2	119/69
250–499	88.0	12.0	175	65.7	11.7	175/120
500–999	86.3	13.7	256	78.1	24.5	256/204
1,000–1,999	82.5	17.5	279	79.5	30.4	279/237
2,000–4,999	83.5	16.5	309	83.2	43.2	309/266
5,000–9,999	76.4	23.6	110	90.0	51.5	110/103
10,000–19,999	40.7	59.3	59	94.9	75.9	59/58
20,000 and more	10.5	89.5	19	100.0	85.0	19/20
All municipalities	81.9	18.1	1,326	77.9	35.4	1,326/1,077

Table 4: *Frequency of direct democracy instruments in municipalities in Switzerland*

Source: Ladner and Fiechter (2012), p. 439.

As can be discerned from the table, the majority of surveyed municipalities (over 80%) have local assemblies as mechanisms for direct voting on local issues. This instrument has, according to Ladner and Fiechter, faced criticism, “because of the low and presumably selective mobilisation of citizens and the potentially distorted decisions resulting from this situation.” Moreover, the quality of deliberation at such assemblies is questionable as it can potentially be attributed to similar instruments in small closed-off and close-knit communities.⁵⁶

Its existence, alongside other mechanisms of direct democracy, is crucial for understanding why there is not a great emphasis on participation through quarter level bodies. This is especially the case in smaller municipalities that represent single villages or communities where residents in effect have a direct say over issues of concern to them. According to one interviewed expert, politics is closer to citizens in smaller close-knit communities and citizen engagement of the kind that takes place through quarters in the larger cities relies on networks. Thus, it is of no surprise that quarter level governance, with its role to represent the community of a given neighbourhood and in some cases communicate with city level administrations on pertinent issues, is common in the larger cities but less so in the municipalities.

Besides mechanisms of direct democracy, relevant sectoral laws (usually adopted at the cantonal level) also stipulate that residents of a given area must be consulted about public construction and other projects. In this respect, quarter associations may serve as partners to consult on specific projects for a given area. For example, the City of Zurich has adopted a so-called checklist on participation wherein quarter associations, as representatives of the interests of the quarter population, are seen as “important partners in quarter relevant projects.” Individual persons can also be included in juries that decide on construction projects as experts from the quarter or as quarter representatives.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Ladner and Fiechter, “*The Influence of Direct Democracy*”, p. 440.

⁵⁷ City of Zurich, “*Mitwirkungs- und Beteiligungsprozesse Checkliste*” [Check list for participation and engagement processes], 2006, pp. 13–14, p. 20.

Cities can also involve citizens in other ways. One example is the case of Lucerne where the city administration organises annual conferences where quarter relevant topics are discussed and projects presented. Topics for discussion can be proposed to the relevant contact point for quarters within the city administration or the administration's offices in the quarters.⁵⁸

In relation to participation through quarter associations, as non-governmental organisations they are not guaranteed the opportunity to participate in or to be consulted about local decisions unless local government recognises them as bodies that facilitate or ought to facilitate participation at the community level. As previously mentioned, quarter statutes define the purpose of the work of the associations yet these statutes do not specifically stipulate any participatory mechanisms that are at the disposal of citizens. Citizens or organisations who are members of a quarter association can vote at the general assembly and in this way influence the work of the association; however, participation beyond this in local decision-making processes is not ensured specifically for quarter associations.

However, as stated by two interlocutors from two quarter associations, citizens can approach them with their requests and these are then discussed by the committee of the quarter associations. According to one representative, such requests are considered in terms of whether or not they are of interest to all quarter residents. If an issue is private then they try to help the person find a solution, but if it is something of interest to all residents then they become engaged, write requests and contact the city in order to discuss the issue. Another interlocutor explained, "we try to be a mediator towards the city." In other words, quarter associations are there, in essence, to represent the interests of a given quarter towards the local authorities.

Yet not all quarter associations necessarily have an imperative or a mission to engage citizen participation on political issues. As voiced by an interlocutor from a quarter association in Lucerne, "We do not have a lot of experience with political debate, debate around different issues. We are primarily a cultural organisation."

However, there are political issues that they do engage in, such as traffic and parking issues. Moreover, the association becomes engaged in local referendums centred on major capital investment projects. Another association representative cited a similar engagement, stating that they work with the city administration to resolve issues related to traffic and parking in their quarter.

According to one interlocutor, "If there is something that pertains to us, the city authorities have to ask us what we think about it and how it would impact the life of people in the quarter."

A representative of a meeting place visited in Basel reiterated this, citing cooperation with local authorities concerning public transport in the quarter. They were also consulted about the development of a green area in the quarter, "There is always a wish of the authorities to meet the needs of residents."

Local authorities in some cities in Switzerland have adopted different policies that facilitate the involvement of quarter associations and thus their members in local decision-making processes. An example is the previously mentioned *Citywide Concept for Quarter secretariats Basel*, which recognises quarter secretariats made up of quarter associations as an interface for interaction between the quarter population and the city administration. The quarter secretariat thus becomes a venue through which concerns at the community level are, *inter alia*, communicated through an 'information platform' that the secretariat maintains in the form of hearings or informative events.⁵⁹ In a similar way, the previously mentioned MoU between the City of Zurich and the 'Conference of Quarter Associations' stipulates a similar role. Quarter associations that are members of the Conference may demand consultation with the city administration concerning major public projects to take place in the quarter.⁶⁰

58 City of Lucerne, "Guidelines for the Communication and Cooperation with Quarters".

59 Ibid, art. Part 3, art.3.1-3.3.3.

60 City of Zurich, "Agreement between the City of Zurich and the Quarter Associations that are Members of the Zurich Quarter Conference", Part II, articles 1-6.

In some cities, as in Lucerne, local authorities may take part in annual assemblies of quarter associations. At such events, according to one interlocutor, city council representatives respond to questions that members ask and are updated on what is happening in the quarter. According to a city publication, the city council takes part in the annual delegate assembly of the umbrella organisation of quarter associations and, when possible, also participates in the annual general assemblies of individual quarter associations.

“With its membership in the quarter association, the quarter population contributes to the quarters and can communicate issues of the quarters directly to the council persons of the city at the delegate and general assemblies.”⁶¹

As one interviewed expert explained, there is a culture of constant negotiation in Switzerland that also becomes apparent in relations between communities and higher levels of government. Negotiation through debate continues until a solution is found. Thus, it comes as no surprise that consulting with quarter associations has become the norm. The expert provided an example of residents and authorities negotiating over the height and appearance of new high-rises in a neighbourhood. Ultimately, the authorities have to take local opinion into account and find a compromise with local residents; dissatisfied citizens can always pull the lever of direct democracy to halt an unfavourable decision.

3.5.1. Citizens initiating Participatory Processes: The case of Basel

An interesting example of institutionalised participation can be found in the Canton/City of Basel, where the previously mentioned quarter secretariats are used by citizens as ‘official contact points’ to file a written request for a participatory process towards the relevant city level department in charge of quarter level processes (*Kontaktstelle für Quartierarbeit*).⁶² What should follow, up to six weeks after such a request is filed, is a meeting between the initiators, the relevant quarter secretariat and representatives of the responsible department within the city administration. The involved parties then clarify the scope of action and develop concrete recommendations for a participatory process, which can represent a one-off situation or a process that can last for several years. Such recommendations must then be confirmed by the relevant city department and through a decision of the assembly of the members of the relevant quarter secretariat. Following a positive decision, all parties work on the implementation of the participatory process. The initiator can repeat the request to modify the participatory process in the event of a negative decision/vote.

A representative stated that the effects of participation depend on the type of process. There is usually great acceptance through participation in small projects where, “people in the quarter engage and take on responsibility.” However, the more abstract a planning process is the more problems there are in terms of the willingness of people to be engaged and the increased resources and time required. Yet the representative added that overall, “participation has spread and strengthened.”

There is also the legal requirement for a hearing in line with the Constitution of the Canton/City of Basel, which stipulates that, “the state involves the quarter population in its opinion and will formation, provided their interests have been especially affected.”⁶³

Here, participation is consultative in nature. A related decision on the participation of the quarter population in the city stipulates that, “the competent authority listens to the quarter population.” This occurs through quarter level associations.⁶⁴

61 Canton/City of Basel, “*Leitfaden zur Mitwirkung der Quartierbevölkerung in der Stadt Basel*” [Guidelines for the participation of the quarter population in the City of Basel], 2015.

62 Ibid.

63 Article 55 of the Verfassung des Kantons Basel-Stadt vom 23. März 2005 [Constitution of the Canton Basel-City], IV. 6. Mitwirkung Quartiere [Participation of quarters].

64 Articles 1 and 5 of the Canton/City of Basel, Verordnung über die Mitwirkung der Quartierbevölkerung, 22. Mai 2007 (Stand 1. Januar 2012) [Regulation on the participation of the quarter population, as of January 2012].

Their task, according to a representative of a quarter secretariat, is mandated by the aforementioned Constitution of the City of Basel, which guarantees the right to participate. This does not only apply to citizens that have the right to vote but also those that do not, such as migrants. “This is why these structures were established [...] our job is the facilitation and following of participatory processes.” The latter is done mainly through information sharing between the quarter and the local authorities.

3.5.2. *Contrats de Quartier* as Tools for Citizen Participation: Vernier and Geneva

As is the case in Vernier and Geneva, Quarter contracts offer citizens the possibility to propose small-scale projects to be financed by the municipality. In Vernier, such “tools of participatory democracy”⁶⁵ are implemented by the Municipality in order to foster neighbourhood dynamics, improve the quality of life and contribute toward an increased sense of security.⁶⁶ Another reason for their establishment was “the fragmentation of the city into extremely heterogeneous urban units”, which merited a policy response at the local government level. Four thematic areas are favoured: 1) prevention of delinquency and public security, 2) social action, integration and work, 3) education, hobbies, sports and culture and 4) housing and the living environment.⁶⁷

The first contract came to life in 2005 in one city quarter, followed by a quarter each year in 2008, 2010, 2011 and 2012.⁶⁸ Vernier was the first Swiss city to introduce them and, according to the local authorities, inspired similar projects in Geneva, Onex, Carouge and Lancy in Geneva, and Lausanne in the Vaud Canton.⁶⁹ All have introduced *contracts* in the meantime.

The participatory process through quarter contracts in Vernier work in the following way:

- the Municipal Council designates a budget each year for projects in a given quarter;
- an interested resident deposits a project proposal;
- a project group assesses the project in line with the general aims of the contract;
- the project group analyses the needs, contacts prospective partners, drafts a budget and an action plan;
- a piloting committee supports the project;
- project realisation and evaluation ensues (see Image 1 below).⁷⁰

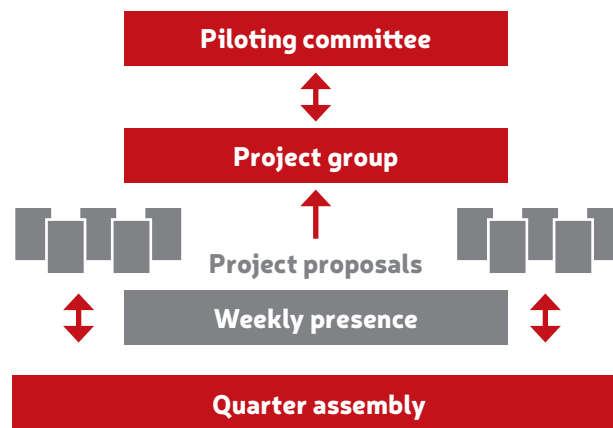


Image 1:
The quarter contract
process in Vernier
Source: Municipality
of Vernier, 2011.⁷¹

65 City of Vernier, “Le Contrat de Quartier” [The Quarter Contract], 2011, p. 1.

66 Ibid, p. 3.

67 Ibid, p. 2.

68 Ibid, p. 2.

69 Ibid, p. 3.

70 Ibid, p. 4.

71 Ibid, p. 5.

The **quarter assembly** convenes quarter residents and takes place once a year. Its role, *inter alia*, is to make the contract visible, inform the population about the activities undertaken and to listen and gather information. According to local authorities, assemblies gather between 100 and 300 persons each year.⁷² Members of the project group are designated at the assembly and anyone is able to apply to be a member. According to a local interlocutor, assemblies are open to all residents, “This is where we find volunteers and ideas for projects.”

The **project group** is the core of the contract and is comprised of five to fifteen quarter residents. While the group decides on its organisational modalities it has to designate one or more coordinator to communicate with other stakeholders as well as a sub-group on communication in order to ensure contract visibility. The project group establishes working groups for individual projects, is in charge of preparing annual programmes and budgets, organising the annual general assembly in the quarter and for relaying to residents what actions have been taken as part of the contract. It is to ensure ‘permanence’ at the premises of the *contract de quartier* or other locality that is frequented on a weekly basis and, “establish itself as a close interlocutor and foster visibility in the perimeter of its activity.” A municipal representative stressed the autonomy of its work stating that the municipality helps facilitate processes but the group makes decisions on projects and other issues.

The **piloting committee** validates projects, allocates resources for their realisation and proposes an annual budget to the municipal council. The committee is made up of two representatives from the municipal administrative council, (including the mayor - chosen on an annual basis), a member from each party represented on the municipal council, a representative of the tenant’s association, a member of the trader’s association in the quarter, a representative of social workers in the quarter, a representative from an association in the quarter and a resident from the quarter. Unlike the project group, the piloting committee is determined through a municipal decision.⁷³

In addition to the assembly, outreach of contracts is ensured through flyers, municipal quarter contract websites and Facebook websites, which are updated by residents, as well as a city newsletter. Project ideas can be submitted via the Internet and, according to an interlocutor, there are clear instructions on how to fill out and upload a project form. Outreach is also ensured through representatives of the quarters being available to residents during regular hours at given quarter premises.

Local authorities claim that the effects of the contracts ensure, “substantial delegation of competencies and large decision-making autonomy to the residents”. According to data from 2011, 100 per cent of the proposed projects have been validated since 2005.⁷⁴ Through case study research, it appears that the contracts offer residents a chance to decide; however, this applies mainly to small-scale projects such as celebrations, sporting events and the construction of, for example, walkways or sports terrains. In other words, citizens cannot necessarily engage in decision-making or governance related to larger issues within the quarter. Yet according to one municipal representative, some have used the contract as a means to communicate longer term or large-scale issues.

Moreover, external and internal audits of the processes have found positive effects. These include the inclusive reinforcement of citizenship, because they are open to all nationalities residing in a given territory, and new collaborative dynamics between different groups with an accent on interculturalism and the creation of new synergies and regular encounters between residents. The latter is achieved through, for example, the creation of a residents’ association and discussion as a means to mitigate conflict and find constructive solutions to local issues.⁷⁵ According to a municipal representative, contracts bring citizens, politicians and the administration closer together and fosters trust between them. An interlocutor from a quarter contract stressed that another

⁷² Ibid, p. 5.

⁷³ Ibid, pp. 4-6.

⁷⁴ Ibid, p. 2.

⁷⁵ Ibid, p. 9.

achievement was the continuation of projects that proved to be successful and thus their achieved sustainability.

Yet the engagement of citizens in project groups depends on their willingness, interest and ability to engage. This means that the representativeness of different groups in the population (e.g. young and old, men and women) is not necessarily guaranteed in practice. According to a municipal representative, it is contingent on the interest and availability of individuals because of its voluntary nature and therefore only a small number from a given quarter actually participate in the contracts (some 20%). The same representative also stated that many foreign or new residents use the *contract* to better integrate into the community and this help foster a sense of belonging. The projects also help integrate different generations (e.g. through computer courses). A quarter contract representative reiterated that the greatest challenge remains how to stimulate young people and other groups that rarely become involved in different volunteer works to propose projects. According to the representative, “We wait for project proposals, we are the receivers of ideas or requests of citizens [...] if they ohave nothing to propose then we do not have anything to do.”

Quarter contracts were established in Geneva in 2007. According to a city representative, as a way to make dialogue between the community and the local authorities more constructive, “We wanted to formalise a platform that would encourage citizens to have a more active relationship with their community.” According to another city representative, such a policy was a response to volunteerism and strong local bonds that already existed in the quarters. This interface makes it easier to ask citizens what they need or would like to change in their community.

Similar to Vernier, Geneva contracts consist of a piloting committee with directors from different departments within the city administration, a resident led coordination committee (with some 13 to 14 members) and a citizen assembly. The coordination committee manages thematic working groups that work on respective projects and each quarter has its own coordinator. Residents who apply to be members of thematic groups within the committees deal with the burning issues in a quarter, such as security. In terms of outreach, there is a quarter blog, the city page on quarters and annual assemblies where citizens are informed. Flyers are also distributed through the post to citizens.

According to a local interlocutor, contracts have helped raise awareness among residents and residents are now able to express their opinions in their quarter and contribute to a sense of belonging in a given locality. A negative side is the fact that those who are not interested or able to participate in meetings are essentially excluded from the process. According to a municipal officer who works on participatory processes in the quarters, the department ensures that the interests of the public are represented through the quarter contract projects; however, it is a difficult task to empower and include people where, for example, 150 persons gather at an assembly in a quarter of 10,000 residents. Their work in this sense consists of expanding activities as well as local contacts on the ground. This is aimed at ensuring that it is not just a minority of citizens that dictates what is to be done in the community. It has the legitimacy to do so through this mechanism.

According to one interlocutor involved, educating and finding ways to reach out to each individual resident is very important.

“This requires significant resources to activate them, to make them engaged, especially in a society that is rather individualistic and with a comfortable lifestyle [...] it is a paradox that this may be easier in some communities and countries that are less well-off.”

The interlocutor believed that the contract works as a process in itself by allowing residents to be informed about what is going on in the city and through this help some to become more active.

4.

Sub-municipal and Community Governance Bodies in Sweden

4. Sub-municipal and Community Governance Bodies in Sweden

Local government in Sweden is in charge of a number of important public tasks that are financed predominantly from locally levied taxes, including education, public utilities and social services. Municipal and regional authorities employ around a quarter of the workforce in Sweden.⁷⁶ Swedish municipalities are recognised as an example of politically and functionally strong local government in Europe and are among the most financially independent.⁷⁷

The 1991 Local Government Act gives municipal councils the power to determine the institutional structure and organisation of the local authority, which has led to different set-ups in practice.⁷⁸ Municipalities have a local parliament (council), an executive committee and a number of other sectoral committees comprised of representatives from all political parties represented in the local parliament. The high number of both directly and indirectly elected political representatives is very characteristic of local democracy in Sweden. According to some authors, this is thanks to the high number of executive committees in municipalities. However, their number has decreased somewhat in recent years as a result of the professionalization of representatives in line with the new public management philosophy and the difficulty of recruiting qualified and interested representatives in smaller municipalities. Informally, the system is described as 'quasi-parliamentary', as each municipality is in actuality ruled by a majority party or coalition. Some authors go so far as to describe the system as, "a heavily party politicised parliamentary democracy with a dominant mayor like leader."⁷⁹

Local government in Sweden underwent significant amalgamation between the 1950s and 1970s as their number was reduced from over 2,000 to 290. During the amalgamation reforms, the average municipal population was increased from around 1,500 to 29,000 persons. Wollman argues that in order to offset the losses of participatory citizen rights that entailed after the large-scale local government amalgamation legislation in late 1970s allowed for the establishment of so-called neighbourhood or 'district committees' (NCs) at the sub-municipal level.⁸⁰ Such bodies were thus created top-down and set up by those municipalities that wanted to introduce them. Instead of being only structured by sector, committees were structured territorially. According to Bäck, almost every second municipality had introduced or was considering introducing NCs in 1985. A total of 32 municipalities had a type of NC at one point or another, with the establishment of such bodies peaking in the late 1980s. In most, these NCs did not cover the entire municipal territory.⁸¹

However, systems of 'neighbourhood decentralisation' started to disintegrate at the beginning of the 1990s and many municipalities decided to shut them down. Some authors argue that neighbourhood reforms supposed to bring citizens and their representatives closer together did not achieve their goal. They argued that 'profounder' local democracy and involved citizen engagement were not observed, but rather emphasis was given

76 David Karlsson and Stig Montin, "Solving Municipal Paradoxes: Challenges for Swedish Local Democracy, Local Politics and Governance", March 2014, p. 125.

77 Hellmut Wollman, "Local Government Reforms in Great Britain, Sweden, Germany and France: Between Multi-Function and Single-Purpose Organisations", *Local Government Studies* 30, No.4, 2004, p. 647.

78 Wollman, "Local Government Reforms," pp. 647-648.

79 Karlsson and Montin, "Solving Municipal Paradoxes", pp. 128-129.

80 Wollman, "Local Government Reforms", p. 648. According to the Law on Local Bodies of 1979, which made such organisation possible. Henry Bäck, "Fragmentation and consolidation in the big city: Neighbourhood decentralization in six Scandinavian cities", paper submitted to the ECPR Joint Session of Workshops, Turin, March 23-27, 2002, pages 5 and 8.

81 Bäck, "Fragmentation and consolidation in the big city", pp. 5-6.

to economic efficiency⁸² or was discharged because of the financial crisis of the early 1990s⁸³ that, “forced both national and local government to reduce welfare services and public jobs in order to cut public spending.”⁸⁴

By our own estimates, based on secondary analysis of municipal websites and incoming surveys, sixteen municipalities, mostly large cities, still have some form of established neighbourhood level structure. Their forms and function vary. In some instances they are called *kommundelsnämnd* or *stadsdelsnämnd/stadsområdesnämnd*, which translates into *municipal or city neighbourhood committee* (as mentioned by Bäck et al.) and can be found as such in nine municipalities. Other municipalities have so-called *kommundelsråd* (municipal neighbourhood councils). The main difference between districts and councils is that the former are in charge of service delivery and the latter are territorially defined advisory bodies comprised of political representatives.

We focus on both types of bodies in the subsequent text. In some parts of the country, mostly rural areas, citizens can organise around so-called *samhällsförening* (community associations), which are civil society organisations of a socio-cultural profile. Although the research focus was predominantly on committees and councils these units were occasionally mentioned in relation to one of the case studies in the Municipality of Vetlanda.

4.1. Legal Basis of Community Governance

4.1.1. Establishment

The option to establish territorially defined committees/councils was first introduced through the 1979 Law on Local Bodies. According to this Law, the city council can establish district/neighbourhood committees or councils.⁸⁵ Such bodies can, *inter alia*, be responsible for the delivery of a given set of tasks that are determined by the local council in one part of the municipality. They either have their own administration and authority to enforce or come under the responsibility of a social, environmental and health, planning and traffic or school committee or other sectoral committee. Under the Constitution, the power of a state administrative authority can be subjugated to the NC only if the local authorities permit this.⁸⁶

According to Bäck, the establishment of such bodies in the Swedish cities studied (Stockholm and Gothenburg) can be interpreted more as an effort by these cities to implement their tasks (i.e. deliver services) rather than an effort aimed at local neighbourhood self-government oriented towards the needs of the local community. He refers to the distinction made in community governance literature between local differentiation and state integration; he places cities in Sweden in the latter category.⁸⁷

Such a distinction can in fact be illustrated in the case of Gothenburg. NCs in Gothenburg were established as a decentralised mode of governance with delegated responsibility for service provision. In 2011, twenty-one NCs were transformed into ten. The original NCs were established in the early 1990s with the aim of fostering local democracy and bringing government closer to the people, but also to adapt governance to cater for differences in the local context.

82 Ibid, p. 6.

83 Ibid, p. 7.

84 Karlsson and Montin, “*Solving Municipal Paradoxes*”, pp. 125-126.

85 See Article 1 of the “*Lag (1979:408) om vissa lokala organ i kommunerna*” [Law on Local Bodies], 1979. Available from <http://www.riksdagen.se/sv/Dokument-Lagar/Lagar/Svenskforfattningssamling/Lag-1979408om-vissa-lokala_sfs-1979-408/>

86 Ibid, articles 2 and 3.

87 Bäck, “*Fragmentation and consolidation in the big city*”, p. 17.

According to a municipal representative, “It was a question of far reaching decentralisation.”

The reorganisation in 2011 happened primarily because, as one interlocutor noted, “all Gothenburgians should be met and addressed the same, irrespective of where in the city they lived. And with twenty-one districts this was not the case. So we needed to change this.”

Another NC representative from Gothenburg added, “When the twenty-one *stadsdels* were created [...] the idea was to let a thousand flowers blossom, that all of the *stadsdel* should be different and adjust to their locality and its inhabitants. What happened up until 2011 was that there was a wish for more equal and equitable services and for it to not matter where you live in terms of the service you are provided. So, in a way, it [decentralisation] has reverted a bit and we are more governed, but I still think we have big mandates.”

One NC representative described their NC, in this sense and in light of the primary focus of NCs in Gothenburg being on service delivery, as being part of, “an administrative distribution of the execution of welfare.” Where equality in service provision appears to take precedence over differentiation.

In Jonköping, there are ten *kommundelsråd* bodies that are advisory in nature, without decision-making powers, executive functions or an administration. The idea, according to a neighbourhood council representative, is primarily to bring democracy closer to out-of-centre areas.

Another neighbourhood council representative described it as giving a political voice to the citizens of a given area that prior to the amalgamations of the 1970s used to be its own municipality and had a strong local identity. In a sense, the representative sees these bodies as being in place to ‘compensate’ for the loss of former sovereignty.

This was confirmed by a municipal representative according to whom the idea behind the organisation was to meet the demands of those interest groups, including the old authorities in previous municipalities, who had opposed the merger. Thus, the establishment of such bodies was a reaction to municipal reform and a means of maintaining a level of decentralised influence. Interestingly, the Municipality used to have more such bodies; however, centrally located neighbourhood councils were abolished and now only remain in the outer areas. According to one interlocutor, it was difficult to engage citizens and get nominations for seats in the neighbourhood council in central Jonköping. This could be attributed in part to the small distance to the elected municipal politicians and municipal administration. According to one interlocutor, given the difficulty of recruiting political representatives for these bodies, even the current councils were close to abolishment. The municipal parliamentary committee proposed such an option, but the municipal authorities eventually decided to keep them.

Vetlanda has nine *kommundelsråd*, which are bodies that are also of a consultative nature with no decision-making powers on issues in a given area. As in Jonköping, the interlocutors described these bodies as a legacy of the 1970s amalgamation. They stated that the previous municipalities that had lost their sovereignty wanted to be able to exercise some influence in the now much larger municipality and to level out the centralisation. As such, they are territorial representations of former municipalities. Unlike Jonköping, there was a slight reorganisation and increase in the number of these bodies from eight to nine in 2007.

In Vetlanda, as part of the case study research, a representative of a *sockenråd* (the equivalent of a parish council), a form of community civil society organisation usually established in rural areas, was interviewed. In contrast to neighbourhood councils that are essentially political councils established by the municipality, this community organisation is a non-profit that operates on a voluntary basis and is therefore similar to the quarter associations in Switzerland. According to the interlocutor, such organisations can be found in various rural areas in Sweden and often have long traditions and some historical standing. In this particular case, although an independent organisation, the *sockenråd* is incorporated into a wider umbrella NGO from that particular

community (a *hembygdsförening* or 'home-based' association). It is registered as an association, because the overarching regulation for particular aspects of any legal entity that works at the state level applies to this type of organisation; however, there is no particular law on non-profit associations. As such, they can be set up by individuals or public or private entities.⁸⁸

4.1.2. Legal Status

Neighbourhood committees are essentially a part of local government and as such are yet another committee, besides the sectoral committees, that report to the municipal council. In this sense, they do not have a separate legal status from the municipality.

However, community associations or *förening*, as is the case with the community association in a rural part of the Municipality of Vetlanda, are considered separate legal entities (although legal rules governing associations in Sweden are unwritten and rely on case law). In order to become established, they need to have a statute as a basis.⁸⁹

4.1.3. Organs

In Swedish municipalities, it is essentially up to the municipal assembly to decide which committees need to be established. Thus, the organisation of municipalities varies, as is the case by extension with neighbourhood committees. Committees are responsible for administering and implementing assembly decisions. The committee engages administrators who implement the activities, albeit elected representatives that take on the responsibility for implementation.⁹⁰ If the municipal assembly so decides, the committees can have one or more select committee. In the absence of a decision by the assembly, such committees can decide to establish select committees by themselves.⁹¹

In Gothenburg, the NC is made up of a political council and a city area administration (*stadsdelsförvaltning*). Decisions and tasks are decided on by political representatives in the district council, while the administration, as an executive body, carries out the work of the council and executes its decisions. According to one NC representative, the administration consists of officials recruited by a human resources department within the district administration. Other district employees such as, for example, employees in schools or homes for the elderly are also recruited independently.

According to a NC representative, the president of the council has the role to lead, prepare, plan and monitor the work of the NC. Moreover, the president has two colleagues in the presidency: one from the majority and one from the opposition. As such, the president works closely with a district director that he/she appoints and has the power to dismiss. The director is in turn responsible for the management of the administration and has a number of heads or managers as well as a controller within the administration.

In the case of consultative bodies, such as the one in Vetlanda, the only organ is the council whose five representatives administrate their own work. The council has its own president, who calls the council sessions. This is similar to Jonköping, where neighbourhood councils have eleven representatives, with a president and two vice presidents: a majority vice-president and an opposition vice-president.

88 Council of Europe, "Associations and Foundations" (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 1998), pp. 226-227.

89 Ibid, p. 227.

90 Government Offices of Sweden, Local government in Sweden – organization, activities and finance, 2005, p. 9.

91 The Swedish Local Government Act, SFS 1991:900 with amendments 1991:1774, 1992:355, 1993:1295, 1994:690, 1994:691, 1994:998, 1995:84, 1995:297, 1997:166, 1997:550, 1997:615, 1997:826, 1998:70, 1998:765, 1999:308, 1999:621, 2000:111, 2000:889, 2002:249, 2002:438, 2002:835, 2003:196 and 2003:519. Chapter 6, sections 20-22.

When it comes to non-profit associations that can relay the interests of a given geographic community to the local authorities, as is the case with the *sockenråd* in Vetlanda, such organisations usually have a board and a general assembly/meeting that elects the board members. Moreover, association statutes may require an internal control function.⁹²

4.1.4. Elections

Members as well as alternates of district committees are elected by the municipal assembly, which also decides on their number. Alternates who are not serving can attend committee meetings, but the assembly decides to what extent they are entitled to take part in the discussion. The assembly also determines the terms of office of the committees. Moreover, the assembly also appoints the chairperson and the vice chairperson from among the members of the committee.⁹³

According to Bäck, the rule for election to district committees in Sweden is indirect elections via the municipal council. Moreover, “opposition to direct neighbourhood elections has been especially strong in Sweden.” While several commissions of the central government have proposed the option of direct elections and several municipalities have applied for exemption from the rules to have district neighbourhood elections (e.g. the City of Stockholm) these requests have been turned down.⁹⁴ However, evaluations from the late 1990s and early 2000s by certain authors that investigated the relationship between committee representatives and citizens show that NC political representatives in some areas were able to “develop extensive contacts with neighbourhood communities” despite not having been directly elected.⁹⁵

Indirect elections are also the rule in Gothenburg. Representatives are nominated by parties and approved by the municipal parliament and, according to one interlocutor, “in the same political party constellation as in the municipal government.” As explained by one NC representative, there is currently a majority in the city and thus also in the districts of the Social Democrats, the Greens, the Feminist Initiative and the Left Party. The opposition is centre right and includes another block of parties. The same constellation of political representation and plurality is reflected in the district council. However, there are some differences as there are fewer elected officials in the NC councils than in the municipal government. Members of the NC council are permanent and substitutes/alternates, for example, in one visited NC there were eleven regular and eleven substitute politicians.

A common principle is that political representatives should be residents in city districts as a means to increase trust and enforce accountability; however, according to a couple of interlocutors, the strictness of such a policy is decided by the party to which they belong. As explained by one interlocutor, as people want to engage politically and assume the political positions and responsibility that comes with it difficulty arises in filling all the mandates in the council. NCs, “do not have that high of a status among politicians and it is generally where they would begin their political career. The selection has therefore decreased and the experience as well.”

According to an NC representative working in administration, “There is a tremendous commitment by our politicians, interest but also knowledge. They have knowledge, living here in the *stadsdel*, sending their children to schools in the *stadsdel*, maybe having their parent in an elderly care home here and that is an enormous strength.”

As such, the representation of a broad spectrum of interests from society is also a party driven issue. If a party, for example, promotes gender equality then there will be an equal representation of men and women.

92 Council of Europe, “Associations and Foundations”, pp. 226-227.

93 The Swedish Local Government Act, Chapter 6, sections 9, 11, 13 and 15.

94 Bäck, “Fragmentation and consolidation in the big city”, p. 11

95 Ibid, p. 12.

Representatives of two NCs that came from different political parties both stated that their party takes broad representation of the community into account.

In Jonkoping, each *råd* (council) has eleven political representatives (11 ordinary and 11 substitutes) that are reflective of the city district votes and not those of the city. According to one representative, such a system was introduced as a means to enhance local representation on a political party basis. Moreover, representatives must reside in the locality. Thus, the compilation of a council is not necessarily the same as in the city government. As in Gothenburg, they are nominated internally by a party and chosen after local elections before being appointed by the municipal parliament for a mandate of four years. A municipal representative stated that there is difficulty in appointing all of the mandates in all of the councils because of a lack of interest and possibly because of the consultative role of such bodies.

A representative of a neighbourhood council stated that the council represented a broad spectrum of interests. Another local interlocutor agreed that from a local party politics standpoint this was the case but added, "However, we have other ways to pursue and work with local democracy that you can say have a greater value and relevance, if you may, than the *kommundelsråd*."

In Vetlanda, the *kommundelsråd* is comprised of five seats. Unlike Jonkoping, they are to be representative of the political constellation in the municipal parliament. Local politicians in the *råd* are approved by the municipal parliament in connection with local elections. Those who sit in the *kommundelsråd* must also reside in the neighbourhood. As pointed out by one interlocutor, while there is representation its comprehensiveness is compromised by the fact that there are more parties than seats. However, as it is hard to recruit part-time politicians to stand for nomination, representation may deviate from that at the municipal level.

"There is not a lot of politics involved in their activities so they [parties looking to nominate officials for seats] have been able to be a bit generous in terms of offering party seats to another party if there is a potential candidate from that party willing to step in."

As in the two other cities, representation is party driven. In general, the interlocutors spoke more of political representation than representation of different groups.

In the case of the non-profit community organisation in Vetlanda, roughly 450 reside in the community and there are between seven and eight members of the governing board. According to one representative, representation is good and wide enough as this is a 'cohesive' small village community. Members of the governing board are nominated and elected by citizens in the village, but the process itself is informal and the organisation essentially asks for and receives nominations from the community.

"Of course, if there were twenty people that would want to join the governing board of the *sockenråd* we would be more meticulous with the elections and nominations, but this has not really been the case."

4.1.5. Decision-making Procedures

The Law on local government defines the decision-making procedures of all committees, including district committees. According to the Law, the committees are to decide on the time and place of the meeting and it can be requested by one-third of the committee members or the chairman.⁹⁶ Decisions may only be made if more than half of the committee members are present.⁹⁷ In case of voting, when it comes to decision-making it is open and according to a straight majority.⁹⁸

96 The Swedish Local Government Act, Chapter 6, section 18.

97 Ibid, Chapter 6, section 23.

98 Ibid, Chapter 5, sections 42-43.

Meetings are to be recorded by camera and, if the municipal assembly consents, may also be open to the public.⁹⁹ Outsiders, such as members of the assembly, another committee, auditors, municipal employees or special experts, can attend meetings in order to provide the committee with pertinent information. If the committee so decides, such outsiders can participate in the deliberations but cannot make decisions.¹⁰⁰

The actual provisions on working procedures of committees are decided by the standing orders of the assembly.¹⁰¹ Local government law prescribes the kind of decision-making powers that cannot be delegated to the committees.¹⁰² In the three municipalities studied, the local governments adopted statutes that regulate and define the work of the district and the council and must be adhered to when such bodies bring decisions.

An interlocutor in Gothenburg explained that decisions and tasks are decided by the district committee (which meets once a month) according to the principles of democratic voting. The committee brings decisions on tasks delegated to the district, including, amongst others, schools and welfare services. According to a municipal representative, they have to adhere to a statute of regulations and numerous valid directives and guidelines set by the city council but have the freedom to implement these as they see it fit within this process. An NC representative confirmed that directives/guidelines from the municipality must be followed regardless, but added that in many areas the *stadsdel* is often free to execute these as appropriate to the locality. One of the key decisions relates to the NC Goals and Orientation Plan, which is a main guiding document that, as one NC representative stated, later becomes their budget. This plan is based on a city plan that lists a number of key issues and priorities, but the city districts decide on which ones to focus, for example, improving health, safety or education. Although the *stadsdel* can adjust its activities to suit local conditions, the idea is, according to one representative, “that the core structure remains” or, as another explained, to “complement the overarching city and district plans”.

While decision-making is conducted by the committee, council level proposals can come from within the administration, from the presidium or from the city. According to a representative of an NC from the administration, there is a procedure for case management through which the administrative/executive body and the secretary of the district committee council must ensure that all cases and proposals are brought to the district council on time. Moreover, as one NC representative from the administration explained, the municipal and district councils decide on *what* should be done, while the director of the district administration and subordinate managers decide on *how* it should be done.

Decision-making differed in the two other municipalities where NCs have a consultative role. The district councils make decisions and administrate their own work. As explained by a district representative from Jonkoping, they usually have the same visions and ideas but a majority vote applies in the case of disagreement. Essentially, as they are a consultative body, their work relates to the concerns of citizens and passing these concerns on to the municipality or responding to requests from the municipality and its organs/councils for consultation. Sessions are held four times a year and neighbourhood councils follow municipal government statutes on the regulation of the *kommundelsråd*.

This is also the case in Vetlanda, where meetings are called four times a year and, as stipulated in the municipal statute of regulations, a meeting with the public is held once a year. Upon request, the council consults on behalf of the locality with the municipality or alternatively informs them, through the minutes of their sessions, about proposals within the locality. Issues can pertain to infrastructure, urban planning, internet provision or

99 Ibid, Chapter 6, section 19a.

100 Ibid, Chapter 6, section 19.

101 Ibid, Chapter 6, section 32.

102 These relate to “1) matters relating to the goal, focus, scope or quality of activities; 2) proposals or statements to the assembly and statements occasioned by an appeal having been lodged against a decision made by the committee as a whole or by the assembly; 3) matters relating to the exercise of authority in relation to individual persons, if they involve issues of principle or are otherwise of signal importance and 4) certain matters indicated in special provisions”. Ibid, Section 34.

other similar issues. According to one council representative, there is a “strong consensus mentality” within the council and, despite different political party affiliations, they make sure that all voices are heard. The well-being of the community takes precedence over political tensions.

A representative of an another council shared the same experience, “We are all on the same level here and we are very coordinated in the way we think, regardless of party politics, which is much more visible for politics on the municipal arena.”

On the other hand, a representative of a non-governmental community organisation in Vetlanda said that decision-making processes are often informal and frequently made in interaction with the village population and other associations within the community.

4.1.6. Local Government Oversight

Local government oversight over district committees in Sweden is strong, given that they are an integral part of municipal government and are tasked with the day-to-day operations of the municipality. A municipality’s executive committee supervises the work of the district committee.¹⁰³ The executive committee can request statements and information necessary for the conduct of its work from district committees.¹⁰⁴

According to the Law, committees, “shall ensure that activities are conducted in accordance with the goals and guidelines resolved on by the assembly and with the provisions applying to the activities. They shall also ensure that internal provisions are sufficient and that the activities are otherwise carried in a satisfactory manner.”¹⁰⁵

However, the executive committee is not entitled to intervene in the tasks of other committees (including district committees), despite being charged with supervising their activities.¹⁰⁶

The Law on local government extensively regulates the issues of financial accountability (i.e. bookkeeping and accountancy procedures) and financial reporting procedures, which are integrated into a joint annual report for all committees. This report is presented to the assembly and auditors for approval by the assembly prior to being made public.¹⁰⁷ The municipal assembly also decides on whether the general public should be allowed to ask questions regarding the annual report at a meeting of the assembly.¹⁰⁸ Moreover, when it comes to committee accounts it prescribes auditing procedures.¹⁰⁹ Auditors scrutinise the work of the committees on an annual basis and, “consider whether activities have lived up to the objectives established by the assembly, whether they have followed the relevant decisions, legislation and regulations and whether the financial accounts are true and fair. The auditors state whether they support or oppose a discharge from liability before the assembly takes its decision.”¹¹⁰

Furthermore, committees may also be subject to an assessment of their legality by the administrative county court, in line with the Law.¹¹¹ Each resident is entitled to have the legality of a decision reviewed by the court, which has the right to annul all or part of a decision.¹¹² Citizens also have the right to apply for an administrative appeal concerning decisions on social assistance or other decisions.¹¹³

103 Ibid, Chapter 6, section 1.

104 Ibid, Chapter 6, section 3.

105 Ibid, Chapter 6, section 7.

106 “Local government in Sweden”, p. 9.

107 The Swedish Local Government Act, Chapter 8, sections 14-19.

108 Ibid, Chapter 8, section 20.

109 Ibid, Chapter 9, section 9

110 “Local government in Sweden”, p. 13.

111 See, for example, Chapter 10 of the Local Government Act.

112 “Local Government in Sweden”, p. 13.

113 Ibid.

This was confirmed in the case of Gothenburg, where districts deliver a set of important services. The City regulates the work of local districts through a statute of regulations and a number of guidelines and directives.

According to a city government representative, “Districts have never been completely sovereign. They have always had to follow the directives decided by the municipal government; they have never had a choice not to. However, they are free to implement those directives in different ways, as they see fit. We have actively pursued the issue that all Gothenburgians should be met and addressed equally, which is also a requirement of the municipal law. The more we have driven this issue the more it may restrict and be perceived as restricting the sovereignty of districts.”

Thus, the oversight of districts is a central task for the City. This is done through a process of planning and budgeting as well as oversight of implementation. There are follow-up reports on the core tasks entrusted to the districts. Moreover, the City’s thematic departments work closely with the district offices in their respective areas of responsibility (e.g. social care). Here, reports on service provision are submitted to the municipal government. The City also coordinates with the sectoral heads of districts once a month. The city management office follows and oversees district activities, but also reports to municipal government on any problematic district activities.

Local government oversight of council work in Jonkoping and Vetlanda is very different from Gothenburg. According to different interlocutors from both municipalities and in accordance with the statute of regulations on NCs, municipal government oversight comes down to the district councils submitting the minutes for each of the four sessions they hold each year.

4.2. Resources and Capacities of Community Governance

District committees in Sweden are tasked with important local services and are granted resources from the municipal budget for their operation. They are to submit their budget proposals on an annual basis to the executive budget, which is voted on and adopted each year by the assembly by the end of November.¹¹⁴ Political committees of city districts are supported by an administration that is in charge of service delivery and also by administrative staff that support the work of the district committees. District committees usually have their own chief executive officers.¹¹⁵

Funding for NCs in Gothenburg comes from the municipal budget as well as from higher levels of government funding that the municipalities receive, which is then distributed down to the districts. Districts are financed through a resource distribution model that considers parameters such as the size and structure of the district population (e.g. age intervals) and the social weighting of the population consisting of seventeen social criteria (e.g. single parent households, the size of the population with special needs, elderly households).

According to a local government representative, earmarked state funding is distributed to the districts based on various parameters. One example is funding intended to improve the quality of middle school education. In this case, finances are distributed according to the volume of middle school pupils within the district. According to an NC representative, the districts also receive some funding from outside the resource distribution model. For example, one NC representative stated that the NC received smaller volumes of funding through residents’ fees for preschool and elderly care. For certain areas, such as the recent flux of immigration, municipalities can request additional funds from the state that are then provided to the districts as earmarked funding for a specified purpose.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, Chapter 8, sections 7-8.

¹¹⁵ Bäck, “*Fragmentation and consolidation in the big city*”, p. 12.

Procedurally, there is an overarching goals and orientation plan that the district councils can adjust to suit local conditions. According to an NC representative, the municipality sends the overarching plan to the administrative and executive body of the city districts approximately one month after the municipal budget has been decided. The council and administration adjust the plan by selecting local priorities (e.g. security, quality of educational and public health). The NC administration then prepares its own specific budget based on the budget envisaged by the municipality by incorporating a locally adjusted goals and orientation plan. This is then considered and approved by the municipal council.

According to the NC representative, “The local perspective is immensely important. Gothenburg is a polarised and segregated city. We cannot have a one-model-fits-all. We have to look at the local conditions and acknowledge the large differences. We must ensure that we do not enhance segregation and polarisation. Instead, we must decrease the [socioeconomic and other] differences and divisions in the city.”

This was reiterated by a municipal representative who stated that the districts have sovereignty when it comes to choosing how to invest such funding.

“This freedom to decide [how to invest the money] is a matter of utilising the capacity and satisfying the local needs in the district.”

However, opinion regarding whether or not funding is sufficient was mixed among the NC representatives interviewed. According to one NC representative, they are not pleased with the amount of resources they have at their disposal.

“We use every penny and we account for every penny [...] the needs in the city districts are increasing and although the municipality is investing these needs are growing faster than the investments.”

Another NC representative added that the NCs face numerous financial challenges that are often the result of the economic consequences of policies at the national level. In example, an NC may have to provide large amounts in support of those without income or provide social housing for residents that do not have work or other means of livelihood and are therefore homeless.

Yet a representative from another NC was pleased with the budget, describing it as a “solid financial structure”.

In terms of human resources in the City of Gothenburg, some 34,000 of the city’s 50,000 employees work in the district councils.¹¹⁶ As explained by one NC representative, the number of employees also depends on the population structure. The City has common directives and guidelines on labour and a common policy on wages that all districts are to respect. As one NC representative explained, individual administrations can be quite large: they have some 3,300 employees, including 120 managers. Politicians in the district councils only work part-time: presidents receive honorary pay covering 45 per cent of their time, while other members, dependent on their position, get less. Some only receive honoraria based on the number of meetings they attend.

In terms of facilities, the districts rent the facilities (both the council and the administration) for the various services they provide, because a department within the municipality is in charge of all of the city’s municipal facilities. Due to scarcity, criteria (e.g. need or socioeconomic conditions) set for determining priorities for facilities are applied in order to discern which districts should have priority access to facilities. Facilities are also rented from private providers. According to one NC representative, securing facilities is a problem because of the density of the respective area and shortage of facilities for the provision of the various services. Another NC

¹¹⁶ See City of Gothenburg, “*Organisation*”, 2015. Available from <<http://international.goteborg.se/organisation>>

representative explained the importance of forecasting in a timely manner when the number and/or quality of the physical facilities will cease to be sufficient, “here, local knowledge plays a big part.”

All districts of Gothenburg have their own technical capacities as part of their administration. Moreover, they have a common IT infrastructure called ‘intraservice’. According to a local government representative, there are comprehensive regulations on developing common IT services for the entire municipality. This is important because the municipality has delegated the same tasks and activities to all districts. One interlocutor stressed that such a service is necessary in order to enable, simplify and make their work more effective throughout the city.

The situation in terms of finance, human resources and other capacities is very different in the two municipalities, where neighbourhood councils have an advisory role. In Jonkoping, the Municipality provides these units with an annual budget of 42,000 SEK (circa 4,000 EUR). Remuneration is paid out of this amount to members (usually the president and vice-presidents) as well as to cover the costs associated with meetings.

According to one representative, “We get compensation for lost employment time when we leave our other jobs and we get honoraria for the time we spend to serve our mandates.”

Representatives of two interviewed councils acknowledged the limitations of their budgets; however, one believed that the council had enough resources to fulfil its tasks.

The eleven elected political representatives are the only ‘staff’ of the NC. There is no administration because of their limited consultative role.

According to one neighbourhood council representative, “decisions within the council are rare and so are plans. Essentially, they respond to requests for consultation.”

According to a municipal representative, “They consist of only those eleven elected officials, but these have the resource of local knowledge and locality to their communities.”

They have no office or facilities. The council representatives interviewed said that they either use the premises of the library without charge or hold meetings in coffee shops.

One added that they only have a limited budget, “and no propensity to spend it [...] renting a facility for a meeting is very expensive and we would rather have a surplus than a deficit at the end of the budget year, in case of unexpected events and costs.”

Recently revised municipal regulations provide the bodies with websites and email addresses via the main municipal website. Moreover, the councils will have additional funds to rent facilities from the Municipality.

In Vetlanda, a common budget for the neighbourhood councils is designated by the Municipality and covers honorary payments when officials hold sessions and incur additional costs for the rental of facilities. As in Jonkoping, councilpersons receive a municipal email address for internal and external communication. Information about the councils is shared on the municipal website, including the minutes of sessions. Other than that, there are no human, technical or other resources. According to a municipal representative, facilities can be rented through the common budget (e.g. for public meetings) yet this is very rare. A council representative explained that they have access to municipal facilities within the community that they can use for free, such as the municipal hall for meetings where local residents are invited to attend. They can turn to the municipal department that deals with such issues for technical assistance.

Similar to what an interlocutor in Jonkoping said, when speaking about their close-knit community, an NC representative echoed, “We have a local network, knowledge and insight. That is a great resource.”

According to a municipal representative, councils have never expressed the need to have more money.

“I do not think that they feel their mandates and mission require it, so it is not really needed.”

Overall, council representatives appeared to be satisfied with the funds they receive.

As one stressed, “We are not in the business of making money for ourselves or our neighbourhood, we have no responsibility in governing or capability to govern financial resources, our finances and our budget are about mediating issues in the community to the Municipality.”

In the case of the community organisation of the *sockenråd* in Vetlanda, the organisation belongs to a community umbrella organisation that encompasses a number of cultural, recreational and other associations. As such, it receives some 1,000 to 2,000 SEK (circa 100 to 200 EUR) a year from the umbrella organisation to cover small costs such as the provision of food during sessions and meetings. A financial unit within the umbrella organisation monitors the finances of the various associations belonging to the organisation and associations can turn to it in the event of financial need. In other words, such a model ensures that small community associations are financially sustainable. Funding of the umbrella organisation is ensured through membership fees, different events held within the community and various sales. As an association, the umbrella organisation can receive financial support through donations and other sources (e.g. from the state for projects cultivating community organisation and cohesion).

As explained by a representative of the *sockenråd*, “Although technically we belong [to the umbrella association] we are not subjugated to it. The organisational structure is just a matter of organisation and efficacy.”

While there are no human resources, except for committee members, the organisation has access to email addresses via the umbrella organisation to which it belongs. It also has free access to a community building, which had hosted more than 100 meetings booked by the community organisation as well as a number of other local organisations over the past year. According to the representative, this is indicative of the level of activity in the small village community.

4.3. Service Delivery and other Tasks/Activities

Neighbourhood committees are established predominantly in the larger cities, set up as hubs for service delivery or as new modes of bringing services closer to citizens. This is one model that local government in Sweden has at its disposal, whereby effectively it continues to provide the service but through decentralised bodies. Other solutions are to opt for the establishment of own corporations or outsourcing to companies or non-profits.¹¹⁷ Funding for services stems from the local budget. According to the Law, the municipalities can levy charges for the services and utilities they provide; however, they cannot levy for services or utilities that they are obliged to provide (except if specifically prescribed). Moreover, the charges levied cannot exceed the cost of the services or utilities provided.¹¹⁸ The core tasks of the districts tend to be in the realm of care for children and the elderly, but can extend to other areas.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ See, for example, Chapter 3, section 16 of the Local Government Act.

¹¹⁸ Chapter 8, Section 3b and 3c of the Local Government Act.

¹¹⁹ See Bäck, “*Fragmentation and consolidation in the big city*”, p. 13.

In Borås, three city districts are in charge of childcare, nine-year compulsory schooling and care for the elderly (service flats, day centres, nursing homes, group housing and home assistance services) as well as youth centres and libraries. Interestingly, districts are active primarily in their geographical area yet also have some responsibilities that pertain to the entire municipality (e.g. one of the district departments offers personal and family counselling for youth from the entire municipality).¹²⁰ However, as was the case with a number of average sized cities (e.g. 50,000 to 100,000) where district committees have been closed, this will also apply to Borås where as of January 2017 three city districts will cease to exist. According to an interviewed municipal representative from Borås, the main reason behind their impending discontinuation is that the Municipality wants all of its residents to receive equal services regardless of their place of residence.

“What we have seen, unfortunately, is an unequal and unequitable treatment of citizens across the municipality in terms of the provision and services that the NCs are responsible for [...] Now the main priority for the city is to ensure that all of our residents are offered equitable and equal services, no matter where they reside geographically.”

Similarly, in the case of Gothenburg, the services that the ten city district committees provide are elderly care, healthcare, individual and family care (social care), care for persons with disabilities, primary school and pre-school, and culture and recreation. Essentially, each district council is responsible for running such services.¹²¹ Services are delegated to the districts as their core tasks.

According to an NC representative, “An NC is like a medium-sized municipality and has a delegated right to exercise all authority practices that a municipality does in soft welfare areas. Construction, infrastructure, maintenance of green areas and so on are the responsibility of other [non-geographically defined] committees and administrations [within the municipality].”

NCs have also received greater responsibility in the realm of urban planning since 2011, in line with a municipal directive. They have the responsibility to take part in urban planning processes and provide the social service perspective, but not the responsibility to actually legislate or execute.

Moreover, according to a municipal representative, they have the responsibility of, “enhancing democratic principles and participation within the locality and beyond.”

As explained by an NC representative, this entails ensuring that procedures for citizen participation are in place in the community. However, coordination and control becomes a challenge in such a model of service provision. According to a local government representative, this is why there are detailed directives and guidelines to ensure that services are provided equally.

“[...] if you had all of these activities and tasks in one place you would not need to worry about the result at the end of the line, but with ten districts we must recognise this need to oversee, direct and coordinate.”

According to the representative, this results in the sovereignty of the districts being perceived to some extent as limited. One example are so-called resource assignments to committees wherein the municipality can entrust one district with a particular service (e.g. care for the elderly) for all ten districts. This removes a level of sovereignty from the other districts in terms of providing this service. Yet according to the municipal representative, this is necessary for reasons of coordination and because of the principle that all residents should have equal services regardless of where they live.

¹²⁰ City of Borås, “Who does what?”, 2015. Available from <<http://www.boras.se/forvaltningar/stadskansliet/stadskansliet/inenglish/inenglish/aboutthemunicipalorganization/whodoeswhat.4.82f0a312665003f0d800010317.html>>

¹²¹ See City of Gothenburg, “Organisation”.

An NC representative reiterated the fine line between independence and top-down control, “If you look at the Statute of Regulations, we have significant powers and authority when you look at what are stipulated as our core missions [...] then, of course, from the perspective of the entire city, there are a lot of rules, policies and routines we must follow.”

Another NC representative added that it has been a challenge to find a “golden way” between full decentralisation and full centralisation in Gothenburg. While the City Government has created a detailed template on how city districts are to be organised and administered, differences in needs can result in deviations from such a template.

Overall, the NC representative thought that delegation works well, especially as it creates, “a dialogue and interplay between the population and the Municipality.”

However, the balance may be shifting towards more centralisation.

According to one NC representative, “The critique is sometimes, when you consider the *stadsdelsnämnd*, that they are part-time politicians and that these issues that they are supposed to familiarise themselves with are very broad and complicated. Increasingly, municipalities are turning towards having ‘fackförvaltning’ – i.e. a municipal organ specialised in and tasked with a specific issue area – because of the idea that you should have more understanding of and be knowledgeable about, say, education, elderly care and so on; to be able to make wiser decisions on these issues [...] There is now an investigation in Gothenburg regarding the school system on whether we should have a municipal school – *nämnd* and *förvaltning* – and we do not know the outcome of this yet, but the signals are there that we are looking at [a more centralised form of municipal governance].”

This was also reiterated by another NC representative from Gothenburg who said that the introduction of a specialised non-geographically defined municipal unit was currently being investigated in Gothenburg within the realm of schooling. This also happened in Malmö and Stockholm.

“The big challenge is how such crucial areas of policy can have continued local ties but also guarantee equal treatment [...] for the city’s citizens no matter where they live.”

According to the representative, there are many areas where the district could have greater influence. These include physical planning, maintenance of green areas and cultural investments, but also solving issues like the physical segregation of housing that leads to segregation within schools.

When asked if there was more room for further decentralisation to the districts in Gothenburg a local government representative responded, “Right now the pendulum goes in the other direction. Instead of asking if the district councils should have more power we are asking how big of a power they actually should have.”

Interestingly, a move towards centralisation and specialisation is what happened in the Municipality of Borås, where, according to a municipal representative, specialised municipal organs tasked with preparing and executing the municipal Government’s decisions will be installed to replace the work of the district councils. Some of the activities will merge with current specialised municipal organs, in areas where they already exist.

While inter-sector collaboration within districts in Gothenburg and the geographical vicinity of citizens are described as positive aspects of the work of the districts, a downside is the difficulty of ensuring that all districts engage equally in the same task and that every resident is met and addressed equally regardless of their location. As such, many of the challenges cited by NC representatives from Gothenburg concerning their work

frequently referred to the substance of the services that they provide (e.g. improving the quality of educational or meeting the challenge of constructing enough new homes for immigrants). A main challenge in one of the districts is that the district is segregated, with many unemployed and unskilled workers living under poor conditions.

“We have to use a large part of our budget on solving the social problems that arise from this: crime, lack of safety and poor health.”

Unlike Gothenburg and Borås, cities like Jönköping and Vetlanda as well as some other smaller municipalities in Sweden have established neighbourhood councils that are consultative bodies without delegated tasks. According to a council representative in Jönköping, they can help residents make ‘citizen proposals’ to the Municipality and can also hold public meetings, for example, on urban planning.

When asked whether or not residents want neighbourhood councils to have greater responsibility, one representative said, “No, the residents do not want that but they want us to be a link between them and the municipal central authority. They recognise us, because we are familiar faces. They can come to us and contact us unreservedly. We cannot allow that peripheral municipal areas fall asleep [in terms of political participation and relevance].”

A municipal representative reiterated this, “We have never had *kommundelsnämnder* or *stadsdelsnämnder*, like some other municipalities in Sweden. We do not think that is a suitable form for us, but this also means that there are limitations. On the other hand, this way we can have a good grasp of the municipalities’ finances, for example, which can be difficult to manage if you place that responsibility in too many hands [...] In choosing a governance structure, you need the whole picture to be able to choose what is suitable for your municipality.”

Similarly, in Vetlanda the main activity of neighbourhood councils is to respond to requests for consultation by the municipal authorities (e.g. in urban planning) or communicating the needs of the community (e.g. via proposals or petitions) to the municipal authorities. Occasionally, they bring forward their own proposals through the minutes they provide to the municipality. Moreover, they can hold public meetings on different issues pertinent to the community and can participate in meetings held by other organisations (e.g. community NGOs) or community events.

As territorially defined NGOs, community organisations found in smaller mainly rural communities usually engage in socio-cultural activities such as organising local fairs or promoting historical or touristic landmarks; however, they can also represent the interests of a smaller village toward the municipal centre to which the village belongs. A representative said in relation to the case of the *sockenråd* in Vetlanda that the organisation’s main role is to coordinate and communicate between local residents and public institutions, including the municipal authorities. Their role is therefore complementary to the neighbourhood council, except that they are more engaged in cultural activities (e.g. the creation of a village flag as a means to strengthen local identity). Particular focus is given to activities aimed at reversing the trend of emigration from rural areas and those that attract business and tourism to the community.

4.4. Cooperation and Coordination

The interlocutors in the case studies in Sweden stressed heavily examples of cooperation and coordination. This did not come as a surprise in Gothenburg, given the strong service delivery role of these units. A local government representative pointed to, “continuous and intensive collaboration” between municipal government, the office of the city management, sectoral departments and the districts. Sectoral departments work closely

with the districts in various areas, such as family policy, disability, care for the elderly and childcare. Heads of districts hold meetings with sector managers from the municipality once a month, while the presidents of districts also meet regularly. Moreover, collaboration across areas of issue (e.g. schooling and social/family care) within the districts is also strong; a local government representative described this as a success.

Coordination between the different districts was described as vital, because in Sweden the population has the freedom to choose public services and service providers. This includes schools, care for the elderly and other services from anywhere within a city and even beyond. Coordination between the districts is a prerequisite in the event that a resident wants to use the services of another district. Moreover, in some areas, the municipality entrusts a city district with a certain task concerning all districts such as the provision of special needs homes or receiving immigrants. Coordination is therefore vital, as individual districts need to ensure that they are not over-delivering on a particular service.

Districts also cooperate with civil society. One example is the case of Gothenburg receiving refugees. A central district was tasked with this role for the entire city and coordinated its work with international and local NGOs that work with refugees.

Local coordination takes various forms within districts, depending on the priorities. An NC representative explained that they worked successfully with the police on a project concerning public safety. Moreover, 'safety fairs' were organised with the population and with regional authorities on another project concerning public health. They have organised health and family forums on various issues. There is a contact point in the district who is responsible for civil society organisations and they also collaborate with a business association and other associations within the district. Moreover, they collaborate with various religious communities on the prevention of radicalisation.

According to the representative, "In a way, you can say that we build bridges between the local inhabitants and other actors so definitely we coordinate our work with other such actors."

A representative from another NC provided a myriad of examples of cooperation. The district had formed an urban planning council comprised of six political representatives who followed city planning and safety issues and invited stakeholders from the private and civil sectors to gain insights into relevant issues in the *stadsdel*. The district administration cooperates with non-profit associations on, for example, arranging 'safety walks' together for the purpose of enhancing local safety as a civic complement to local policing. A safety forum coordinates on safety measures between the municipality, police, emergency services, businesses and property owners. In areas pertaining to social welfare and health, the district, as a service provider, cooperates with different interest groups and associations (e.g. pensioners and persons with disabilities). Through an active cultural association, they are currently working on the construction of a 'culture house'.

Although neighbourhood councils in Jonkoping are consultative in nature they also coordinate with various actors within the community. For example, they take part in community planning activities organised by the relevant municipal departments. Councils also work actively with the municipal administration on processes pertaining to strategic planning and the organisation of public meetings in respective localities. Coordination with the municipality also takes place through requests for consultations that the municipal government sends to the neighbourhood councils when issues of local significance specific to districts arise (e.g. urban planning, establishment of wind power mills and other infrastructure projects).

This is similar to Vetlanda, where the municipality requests consultations with neighbourhood councils (e.g. on urban planning) and the councils may forward their own requests. However, according to a council representative, there is no other cross-district cooperation or coordination with the municipality, other than providing the minutes to the municipality or mediating and consulting. A representative from another NC confirmed this.

Council representatives from Jonkoping and Vetlanda also spoke of contact and coordination with a number of community organisations, local businesses and other actors. One representative from Jonkoping said that the council had advocated on behalf of citizens and associations toward the municipal authorities about the construction of a new sports hall. The community/village council (*sockenråd*) in Vetlanda also appeared to be quite active in cooperating with various actors, both public and private. Projects implemented in the community in cooperation with different stakeholders revolved mainly around infrastructure, service provision and job creation.

4.5. Mechanisms for Citizen participation in Local Decision-making

It does not come as a surprise, given the strong role of political parties in Sweden's democracy, that its political leaders are described as being, "the most supportive of party based electoral democracy and the most critical of participatory democracy in Europe."¹²²

However, participatory democracy as a competing ideal to representative democracy has been present in policy processes. A 1997 government Commission on Democracy that discussed options for increasing the perceivable lack of legitimacy in Swedish democracy argued for, as Amnå writes, "a more participatory democracy with stronger deliberating qualities."¹²³ However, its emphasis on greater input legitimacy was against the, as Amnå also wrote, "predominant output or welfare state focus of the Swedish democracy debate."¹²⁴

In other words, a state-centrist approach was based on output legitimacy through the delivery of extensive social and other services guaranteed to citizens by voting ("service democracy ideal").¹²⁵ Yet this essentially clashed with the idea of allowing for procedures that would give citizens more room to deliberate on and influence decisions. Inter alia, in its analysis the Commission also identified elected neighbourhood committees as indirectly having an adverse effect on citizen participation and accountability. The Commission proposal was to, "directly elect sub-municipal boards."¹²⁶

The idea behind the Commission's emphasis on the promotion of participatory democracy with stronger deliberative qualities was to find a compromise between representative democracy with responsible leadership and giving citizens effective arenas in which to deliberate and solve issues. This could in effect redistribute some political power to citizens. However, according to Amnå, the efforts of this "empowerment project" did not garner enough political support.¹²⁷ Although state government adopted a new policy on participatory democracy in 2003, the authors argue that no major institutional change or capacities have been built up as a result.¹²⁸ Nevertheless, the Swedish Association of Towns and Municipalities (SALAR) has been actively working on the development of a range of tools (e.g. guidelines and methods) to help municipalities implement participatory processes on a voluntary basis.

122 Karlsson and Montin, "Solving Municipal Paradoxes", p. 130.

123 "Demokratiutredningen" [Democracy investigation] (2000, p. 243), cited in Erik Amnå, "Playing with Fire? Swedish Mobilization for Participatory Democracy," *Journal of European Public Policy* 13 (4), 2006, pp. 599.

124 Amnå, "Playing with Fire", p. 599.

125 Ibid, p. 601.

126 Ibid, p. 600.

127 Ibid, page 600 and 603. According to one expert interviewed, a second democracy commission has recently been set up by the Government and is currently working on these same issues.

128 Nazem Tahvilzadeh, "Understanding participatory governance arrangements in urban politics: idealist and cynical perspectives on the politics of citizen dialogues in Göteborg, Sweden", *Urban Research & Practice* 8:2, 2015, p. 246.

Individual cities have taken the initiative to create different participatory policies. Gothenburg has adopted the so-called “city dialogue”¹²⁹ policy, like some other Swedish cities.¹³⁰ It first emerged through planning policy and the reorganisation of NCs and in 2013 became a citywide policy.

As the number of city districts decreased in 2011, “in order to compensate for the increased distance between the politicians and the citizens in these sub local tiers, the new regulations established that the ten city district councils should ensure citizen ‘participation and involvement’ for the purpose of ‘positive’ local community development, aiming to create ‘a more democratic and sustainable Göteborg community.’”¹³¹

According to Tahvilzadeh, this shift toward participatory governance was a major change in the City’s policy discourse.¹³²

Dialogue can take many forms and can be led by different subjects, including urban regeneration, community development projects, safety issues, education and extracurricular activities, environmental planning, etc. They can also take the shape of advisory councils that deliberate on different issues or take the form of ‘safety walks’ where city planners walk with citizens.¹³³ According to Tahvilzadeh, implementation of such initiatives is subject to great discretionary powers as the only existing legal framework is the requirement under the 1987 Planning and Building Act to consult citizens when planning. Otherwise, it can be subject to different policies, such as sustainability and urban community development,¹³⁴ or the above-mentioned policy on dialogue. Yet in practice (in Gothenburg) it has shown to be, “characterised by a minimum level of institutionalisation and gives vast discretion to politicians and street level bureaucrats.”¹³⁵

A 2011 special inquiry by the City into the possibilities for ‘deepening democracy’ assessed and mapped seventy-two processes between 2000 and 2012, almost all deliberative encounters between citizens and city officials. Methods varied ranging from the more traditional meetings, panels, workshops and seminars to the more innovative such as stand-up comedians on balconies and the use of ICT.¹³⁶ The City assessed the quality of these initiatives by inquiring into the district committees responses¹³⁷ and found that, “none of the dialogues were found to display co-decisions and only 10 per cent qualified as influence.”

With the caveat that they only relay the perspective of city district committees, “most of the dialogues were assessed as information, consultation and dialogue, which indicate that the devolution of power in deliberations is rather rare”. Moreover, inputs from city officials also pointed to problems with the dialogue including inconsistency, bias towards some parts of the population, the poor quality of deliberation and a lack of clarity of purpose and ability to achieve policy influence.¹³⁸

As a result of this inquiry, Gothenburg adopted a ‘soft policy’ on citizen dialogue. It consisted of both greater operationalization (through detailed guidelines) and the establishment of units within city districts charged with implementing the dialogue in 2014.¹³⁹ Scrutinising official documents and the statements of officials to find the reasons behind the dialogue policies, Tahvilzadeh identified the discourse on deepening democracy

129 Ibid, p. 244.

130 Ibid, p. 242.

131 City of Gothenburg 2010 Regulations for the City Districts, cited in Tahvilzadeh, “*Understanding participatory governance arrangements in urban politics*”, p. 242.

132 Ibid, p. 242.

133 Ibid, p. 243.

134 Ibid, p. 243.

135 Ibid, p. 247.

136 Ibid, p. 243.

137 The city applied an analytical tool similar to Arnstein’s famous ‘ladder of participation’ that scrutinises the amount of power devolved to citizens, known as a ‘participation stairway’ (made up of information, consultation, dialogue, influence and co-decision steps), developed by SALAR. Ibid, p. 244.

138 Ibid, p. 244.

139 Ibid, P. 245.

and increasing citizen influence as a means of strengthening democratic governance.¹⁴⁰ It provides greater efficiency of service delivery and planning, generates legitimacy in terms of increased public trust, but also means taking joint responsibility for decisions in case of potential future downsizing of welfare services due to demographics.¹⁴¹ The latter is considered problematic because in such a case participation would not be about empowerment but rather a mechanism to legitimise savings policies.¹⁴²

The case studies did in fact reflected some of the challenges to citizen participation mentioned in the literature on the Swedish experience. One of them relates to the effectiveness of the participatory processes. More traditional means of participation such as the thirty-minute open sessions that are held before each district council meeting in Gothenburg, where anyone can ask questions, propose issues and engage in discussion with the politicians, are rarely well attended.

One interlocutor stated that unless a hot topic is discussed, “They are the right form or at least one of the right forms to keep citizens informed, but not to create dialogue.”

However, even if nobody shows up, the interlocutors stressed that it is important for the sessions to be an open and accessible space for everyone to observe for reasons of transparency. Some respondents cited good experiences with other types of physical meetings and forums.

The interlocutors also stressed the need for districts to engage in ‘citizen dialogue’.¹⁴³ Surveys and meetings on security and safety took place in one district, while youth initiatives that probed local needs were organised in another. In one district, school reorganisation and increasing the quality of education involved consultations with parents and the incorporation of their perspective into the decision-making process. According to an interlocutor, this resulted in more options being offered to the population. Another district set up a council for pensioners and a council for disability issues. The council internally assigned politicians to meet and deliberate with representatives from these councils once a month. The interlocutors stressed the importance of feedback after dialogue as, “the essence of the dialogue is to reconnect with the result.”

An interviewed expert stressed that there is a general drive toward more individualised electronic forms of participation, such as e-petitions, in Swedish municipalities. The option of an e-initiative/proposal has also recently been introduced in Gothenburg.

According to a local government representative, “Digitalisation can achieve a lot, particularly in distributing information, and we have seen positive results as we began to stream the municipal government meetings online. Citizens’ interest has awakened and increased significantly [...] But we have to remember that not everyone is digitalised [...] We do not have the same possibilities as private firms, to be able to disregard those who are not digitalised and say some other firm can take ‘those customers’, we have the obligation to consider absolutely everyone.”

Another challenge expressed relates to residents’ unequal ability (time, money) to influence local decision-making and consulting with those whose voices are less heard. This is also connected to modes of outreach, namely traditional open sessions or meetings held in public spaces such as schools, letters, magazines, newspapers, leaflets and advertisements compared to the Internet and social media. A local government representative added that the substance of the information relayed to the citizens could be improved.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, pp. 247-248.

¹⁴¹ Ibid, P. 248.

¹⁴² Ibid, pp. 250-251.

¹⁴³ As previously mentioned, there is a municipal directive on how to work with citizen dialogue and what the processes should look like in this case.

“I do think, however, that we can improve significantly in informing ‘what decisions were taken, what did they mean’ and in explaining the bureaucratically dry subject matters better.”

Reaching out and engaging newly arrived residents (immigrants and refugees) is a particular challenge to participation. According to one NC representative, a way that their district has tried to address this issue is to have officials who speak foreign languages in their offices and to ensure that leaflets and community information is presented in different languages.

According to the representative, “I do not think we reach out to everyone. We have commissioned the *förvaltning* to come up with suggestions on how to increase citizen participation and engagement.”

Another NC representative from the administrative arm of the district was critical of their own ability to engage with citizens in planning processes.

“From the perspective of official clerks, we have been very good in providing [to the City Urban Planning Office] background information and proposals [for urban planning], but we have not been as systematic in intercepting what the citizens think, want and wish for. We are working on that now; we employed some people this summer who asked people on streets and plazas what they thought of their living arrangements and how they could be improved. So, we have begun that journey and are getting much better at asking ‘what do the citizens really think?’”

In essence, the ability of the districts to involve citizens in a wide range of issues was also critically assessed by NC representatives. One of them stressed that while they are very good at including the citizen perspective on one issue they have yet to transfer such an experience to other areas. Districts may have protocols they follow when ‘managing’ citizen viewpoints; however, there is always the challenge of truly listening to different viewpoints and to not allow the bureaucracy to take over the process. However, a number of interlocutors stressed that listening to and including the citizen perspective, which came up frequently during discourse in the interviews with NC and municipal representatives from Gothenburg, does not necessarily guarantee citizen influence.

In terms of the ways that the City itself involves the districts in decision-making processes, the interlocutors explained that city districts are usually consulted via referral from city government on areas that concern them. One interlocutor explained that the NC might also be requested to consult municipal authorities on other issues that affect the municipality. The council can submit written statements to the municipal government on issues where it may want to influence municipal decisions. Moreover, the close cooperation between the city administration and the districts creates a venue for dialogue.

According to one NC representative, “The municipal government is not obliged to adhere to the consultations [...] but it can be indicative if all ten districts have obviated a request, and one [the municipal authorities] can then think ‘is this really the right way to go?’. On the other hand, if the response it gets is positive, the municipal government can become more determined in its decision.”

This is particularly the case in urban planning, where districts now have greater ability to influence issues such as the location of schools, healthcare facilities, special homes, etc. A local government representative explained that although it is difficult to evaluate the results of a urban planning directive from 2011, that provided more ‘power’ to the districts, the results are overwhelmingly positive. This is because the processes are long and there are no immediate results, but far more input in terms of the social perspective. The latter comes into the process earlier and better coordination follows between the various entities in the city. In general, NC representatives were positive about their greater involvement in urban planning. One cited a successful consultation on a green space that citizens felt was underutilised. The result was that a park was created in this space.

However, some representatives stressed that more can be done to involve them.

In Jonkoping and Vetlanda, where neighbourhood councils have more of an advisory role, participation mainly revolves around consultations that the municipality organises with the councils on various issues (e.g. urban planning). Moreover, representatives of councils in Jonkoping spoke of their role as 'observing the needs of the locality', providing them with a voice or 'putting pressure' on municipal departments.

According to one neighbourhood council representative from Jonkoping, "We are there so that local citizens do not have to go the long way to municipal authorities, both in terms of geographical distance but also of knowing whom to contact."

Another council representative explained, "Our role is both consulting and controlling in nature. We want our voice to be heard and for us not to be 'run over', but we are also controlling in making sure proper procedures are followed on the municipal side."

In both municipalities, citizens can hand in proposals to neighbourhood councils (online, via email, by telephone or in person). Units hold meetings when issues of great local significance are on the agenda, yet this appears to be rare. Outreach depends in both cases on a combination of traditional means such as postings on noticeboards or in local shops or the local library and more up-to-date means like those provided on the local government webpages.

The Municipal Government in Jonkoping has involved the districts in district development processes and this has shown tangible results in terms of improving the physical environment in local areas. Local residents become engaged around projects in this realm and this has proven to be a way to foster community cohesion.

According to a municipal representative, "This awakens significant citizen participation and engagement in contrast to the traditional *kommundelsråd* which, in my opinion, have a hard time stimulating citizen participation and do not really play that big a role in local democracy."

Interestingly, some interlocutors from Vetlanda stressed active citizen engagement through means other than the neighbourhood council.

A council representative explained that while citizens may send their proposals via the councils, "the *sockenråd* [village councils] are often the first point of contact if the inhabitants want to bring a suggestion or a complaint to the table or to the attention of the municipality."

A municipal representative, on the other hand, stressed that citizen proposals often do not go through the district councils because the councils are only able to put forward proposals to the municipal administration and but not to the parliament.

According to the municipal representative, "a lot of the time what happens is that citizens put forward citizen proposals directly to the municipal government, circumventing the local council."

A municipal representative from Vetlanda also stressed the role of the community or village organisations in contrast to the districts. The representative explained that while district councils have a strong position politically and their existence is not in question other organisations, such as the *sockenråd* and other community councils and societies, are sometimes more active than the councils, dependent on the area. Moreover, a couple of interlocutors from Jonkoping and Vetlanda also pointed out that not all district councils are active. It had proven very difficult to recruit representatives in Jonkoping, while an interlocutor in Vetlanda spoke of the varying levels of commitment between councils. Another means of engagement in Vetlanda that was stressed

by an interlocutor was citizen dialogue, where the bulk of such work is organised by municipal issue driven committees or departments and not by the geographically defined district councils.

According to some council representatives, the level of influence that the councils are able to exert is rather limited. One representative from Jonkoping explained that not enough attention is paid to consultation or the work of the neighbourhood councils. Furthermore, it had come to their attention that referrals to the *råd* for consultation are in some instances absent when the issue at hand does affect the local area and inhabitants. According to the interlocutor, this frustrates the councils. Yet a municipal representative in Jonkoping highlighted the importance of consulting with the councils.

“I know that they [councils] take their mission seriously. Centrally, we are interested in asking ‘what does the *kommundelsråd* think?’ This is also a way for us to gather support for centrally pursued policies and then also get insights on the situation locally and on local public opinion. So in that sense, politically, we take that seriously.”

Although a regulatory statute in Vetlanda stipulates that there has to be follow-up with the *kommundelsråd* when their issues have been raised in the municipal government and its departments, a municipal representative stated that the councils have told the municipal authorities that occasionally they do not receive the contact or follow-up they desire.

“[...] so I cannot say that this is always the case – that the Municipality reconnects with them – but we have pushed for this a couple of years ago, saying ‘that if you [municipal organs] are pursuing an activity in the municipality’s geographical areas that may affect local inhabitants you must intercept their views and follow-up’. Even in cases where the locality does not, in full or in part, get what it wants it should be reconnected with, otherwise it is quite pointless.”

Representatives of neighbourhood councils from both Vetlanda and Jonkoping spoke of mixed results on actually being able to influence local decisions. According to one representative from Vetlanda, “it is a bit frustrating as an elected politician in the *råd* to have a consultative role, but being unable to influence some decisions.”

Another representative considered the municipality receptive of the council’s ideas, because it is involved in most issues despite not always getting the desired results.

“We are elected officials who belong to parties that of course also hold mandates in the municipal government, so we are also able to contact our party leaders and municipal elected officials to promote the welfare of our communities and bring issues onto the agenda. I find that overall we are able to do this, bring issues onto the agenda. We have no decision-making capacity, but we do have a strong consultative capacity.”

A neighbourhood council representative from Vetlanda reiterated that the municipality frequently consults with the council and also village councils and the wider community on areas that affect them. Thus, according to the municipal representative, in terms of influence, their input is ultimately weighted alongside or against other interests.

The community council (*sockenråd*) interviewed in Vetlanda is the type of organisation frequently highlighted by other interlocutors from the town as being active, confirming its engagement with the municipality through consultation and dialogue. A representative pointed out that local politicians from the municipal government live in this particular area, which helps them to advocate for village interests. Other forms of engagement include activities such as meetings. When certain local issues are on the agenda they are frequently coordinated jointly between the council and other village NGOs. However, the *sockenråd* representative pointed to an over-

all decrease in interest and commitment within the village and the challenge of how to convince people to stay in the village in the face of urbanisation. To that end, the representative stressed the importance of services and opportunities such as good schools and jobs, which he said the council is ultimately trying to foster.

“We have to make sure there are young people left in the village and that the next generation takes over our work [...] We have to make our part of the municipality accessible and attractive to live in.”

Generally speaking, the case studies show that district committees, as decentralised bodies in Gothenburg, are in charge of various processes of ‘citizen dialogue’ and engage with the local populations (through designated officials in charge of participation). Neighbourhood councils are seen as advisory bodies and consulted as representatives of a given area; however, there is a tendency to not organise participatory processes with local residents. The latter aspect could create greater room for deliberation, which is done by the municipality itself. However, judging by the respondents’ accounts, engagement in Gothenburg’s districts is predominantly about hearing the residents out. In this sense, the impression is that these processes are mainly about consultation. This was reiterated by an interviewed expert and through a 2011 evaluation report on participatory processes commissioned by the City.

5.

Sub-municipal
and Community
Governance Bodies in
Serbia

5. Sub-municipal and Community Governance Bodies in Serbia

Community self-governance (sr. *mesna samouprava*) in Serbia, as in BiH and Croatia, is an inheritance from the country's Yugoslav past.¹⁴⁴ Today, *mesne zajednice* (henceforth MZs) are established throughout the country, albeit by law only mandatory in rural areas.

The Law on Local Self-Government loosely regulates their work, which leaves significant autonomy for local governments and MZs to further prescribe their own work. For example, Pavlović Križanić points out that many issues are not tackled by the Law, leaving it up to MZs to define their tasks and work. This has led to wide variations in terms of the, "different structure, manner of election, decision-making procedures, competence, territory covered, factual influence, size and available funds."¹⁴⁵

In many ways and as a legacy of the Yugoslav period, the open-endedness of the regulation of MZs is still in line with the idea of self-governance. Indeed, local communities are given considerable autonomy – at least nominally – to regulate their own work. Yet following the decision by some local governments to meddle in the work of MZs their autonomy and extent of self-regulation has become a hotly discussed issue and also subject to the decisions of the Constitutional Court in Serbia.¹⁴⁶

In further sections of this report, important aspects of the work of the MZs in Serbia and some of the key challenges faced by these bodies today are outlined in more detail.

¹⁴⁴ For more information on local communities during the former Yugoslav period see Jusic, "Local Communities in BiH", pp. 20-22.

¹⁴⁵ Tatjana Pavlović Križanić, "Rural Governance in Serbia: Charting a Sustainable Future", Mind Your Own Business! Community Governance in Rural Municipalities, ed. Gábor Péteri, Local Government and Public Service Reform Initiative, Open Society Institute, Budapest: 2008, p. 139.

¹⁴⁶ For more information see Constitutional Court of Serbia, "Mesna zajednica nije teritorijalna jedinica niti je elemenat teritorijalne organizacije Republike Srbije" [MZ is not a territorial unit nor element of territorial organisation of the Republic of Serbia], 2003-05-25, 1.U.172/00. Available from <<http://www.sirius.rs/praksa/8926>>. Also see, Constitutional Court, Newsletter 1/2006, Belgrade. Available from <http://www.ustavni.sud.rs/Storage/Global/Documents/Sudska_Praksa/1-2006-latinica.pdf>

5.1. Legal Basis of Community Governance

5.1.1. Establishment

The Law on Local Self-Government,¹⁴⁷ as the main legal document for the regulation of community self-governance in Serbia, outlines the provisions on MZs. Article 72 of the Law makes the units of MZs compulsory in rural communities. This is in order to, “meet the needs and interests of the local citizens of villages.”¹⁴⁸ Depending on their size and capacities, a single MZ may encompass more than two villages. MZs are optional in cities and city quarters.

The municipal assembly decides through a majority vote on the formation, territorial boundaries and abolition of MZs. According to the Law, these decisions shall be made, “with the prior opinion of citizens.”¹⁴⁹

Several sources¹⁵⁰ published prior to the 2007 Law on Local Self-Government pointed out that the former law failed to oblige municipalities to consult citizens before establishing an MZ and that this obligation was more often found in city statutes. The new Law improves on this, though it still fails to elaborate on the ways in which this consultation is to be conducted.

According to a number of interlocutors from the case studies, a local government law in 1994 in effect abolished MZs: the law failed to recognise them as mandatory bodies and as a result many local governments stopped financing them. They were later reintroduced by the 2007 law. Nevertheless, some of the cities visited, such as Pancevo and Subotica, decided to keep their MZs operational.

Municipal/city statutes define community governance more precisely in terms of their establishment. They rarely differ from the Law on Local Self-Government and thus generally resemble one another.¹⁵¹ According to Vujadinović, municipal statutes stipulate that proposals for the establishment of MZs can be brought by:

- the president of the municipality (usually the mayor),
- at least ¼ of municipal assembly members, or
- citizens via a citizens’ initiative.¹⁵²

As such, the various considerations are left up to the local government and therefore vary according to the locality. Additional provisions may be found in acts such as municipal decisions on community governance or those on the establishment of MZs. Table 5, below, presents the provisions on establishment in relation to the case studies.

147 “Zakon o lokalnoj samoupravi” (Law on Local Self-Government), *Službeni glasnik Republike Srbije*, br. 129/2007 and 83/2014.

148 Ibid, Article 72.

149 Article 73 of the Law on Local Self Government.

150 See “Neposredno učešće građana u javnom životu na lokalnom nivou” [Direct citizen participation in public life at local level]. ed. Zorica Vukelić, Belgrade: Stalna konferencija gradova i opština, 2006.

151 Some statutes may be more specific in this respect. The Statute of the City of Belgrade, for example, specifies that MZs should be founded in areas with approximately the same population that have common interests as well as the ability to organise. “Statut Grada Beograda”, Article 123 of the Statute of the City of Belgrade, Official Gazette of the City Belgrade, no. 39/2008, 6/2010, and 23/2013.

152 Petar Vujadinović, “Analiza sistema mesne samouprave” [Analysis of the System of Community Governance], Užice: Standing Conference of Cities and Municipalities, 2006, p.13.

	Purpose of establishment	Procedures
Kula	Established for the territorial and functional whole, with every-day life links between citizens and the possibility of direct negotiation and decision-making aimed at achieving common needs and interests. ¹⁵³	A given territorial area for the MZ is determined; residents give their consent for the formation of the MZ. MZ constituted through a decision of the municipal assembly (MA) by majority vote. If a new MZ is being formed then citizens vote on the proposal through a referendum. Formation can be initiated through citizen initiative (10% voters of the MZ area). ¹⁵⁴
Pancevo	MZ formed in order to meet general, common and everyday needs of residents in a given physical area. ¹⁵⁵	A proposal for establishment may be submitted by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • residents through an initiative • mayor • city council • at least 1/3 of representative of the MA The municipal assembly (MA) is required to gather the opinion of residents via a referendum. The MA decides on the establishment by majority vote. ¹⁵⁶
Subotica	The MZ is a "community of citizens by place of residence and part of the integral system of local self-governance in the city" and as an "interest-based and democratic community of citizens." ¹⁵⁷ The MZ is formed for an area (settlement, part of a settlement or more connected settlements) that constitutes a territorial and functional whole with links between citizens in every-day life and the possibility of direct negotiation and decision-making to meet common interests and needs. ¹⁵⁸	Proposal for establishment by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50% + 1 or 500 voters in the area for which the MZ is proposed, • city executive organs, or • at least 20 members of the MA. In the case of proposals by the executive/assembly, a citizens' assembly has to be held to gather citizens' opinions and signatures. ¹⁵⁹ If the MZ is proposed by voters then a referendum is organised. ¹⁶⁰ The municipal assembly (MA) considers the proposal based on an assessment of the citizens' ability to give voice to their interests and needs and to satisfy them and ensure a material basis for this and develop cooperation and coordination with other MZs, enterprises and organisations in the area. ¹⁶¹ Establishment is by majority vote of the MA.
Zrenjanin	Established for an area where interest exists for, "direct possible meeting of citizen needs and where conditions for direct carrying out of city tasks can be met." ¹⁶²	A given territorial area for the MZ is determined, residents give their consent for its formation, the MZ is constituted through the adoption of a statute and election of organs. The municipal assembly decides, with previous opinion of citizens, on the formation through majority vote. ¹⁶³

Table 5: *Reasons and procedures for the establishment of MZs in the case study municipalities*

Citizens forming their own MZ is generally considered a rarity in Serbia, as they are predominantly instituted by municipalities. However, the MZ Verušić in Subotica, which covers five settlements on the periphery of the City, was established in 1994 by residents through a citizen initiative, in line with the Law on Referendums and Citizen initiatives.

¹⁵³ Municipality of Kula, "Odluka o mesnim zajednicama" [Decision on MZs] [integral version], Official Gazette of the Municipality of Kula, no. 7/13, articles 11-18.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, articles 11-18,

¹⁵⁵ "Odluka o mesnim zajednicama na teritoriji Grada Pančeva" [Decision on MZs on the territory of the City of Pancevo], Official Gazette of the City of Pancevo, no. 36/2011, Article 2.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid, articles 5-7.

¹⁵⁷ City of Subotica, "Odluka o mesnim zajednicama" [Decision on MZs], Official Gazette of the City of Subotica, no. 47/2011, Article 2.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid, Article 7.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, Article 11.

¹⁶¹ Ibid, Article 10.

¹⁶² City of Zrenjanin, "Odluka o mesnim zajednicama" [Decision on MZs], Official Gazette of the City of Zrenjanin, no. 32/2008, Article 10.

¹⁶³ Ibid, articles 9-12.

5.1.2. Legal Status

Article 76 of the Law on Local Self-Government affirms the status of legal personhood of MZs.¹⁶⁴ It is further stipulated by the municipal and MZ statutes as well as decisions on community governance in the case study municipalities covered by this research.¹⁶⁵ According to Pavlović Križanić, this means that MZs can open bank accounts, have the ability to sign contracts, as well as sue and be sued in civil and commercial litigations.¹⁶⁶

However, given that legal personhood is granted to the MZ as part of its rights and duties as established by the municipal statute and decision on establishment, its legal capacity is perceived as limited.¹⁶⁷

5.1.3. Organs

The organs that comprise a MZ can differ and are determined by acts of the MZ.¹⁶⁸ The most prevalent organ is the MZ Council (sr. *savet*); the number of members of a MZ council is also determined by an act on MZs in a given municipality or by an MZ statute. The MZ council can play the role of both an executive and a representative body, depending on the modality of elections and other bodies established in individual MZs. It is usually the key decision-making body of a MZ and can have anything from five to twenty-one members, elected by citizens.

On the other hand, some municipalities have inherited a mode of MZ organisation from the former Yugoslav system of community self-governance. This stipulates an assembly and a council/board, where the assembly is a representative and the council/board the executive arm of the MZ. In the City of Pančevo, for example, an MZ that was visited as part of this research has an executive board (sr. *izvršni odbor*) that is elected by the MZ assembly (sr. *skupština*). Executive board members do not have to be members of the assembly. The executive board has its own president and vice president. In the case of the Municipality of Kula, there is the possibility to have a MZ council and an executive board. However, according to one MZ representative from Kula, the MZ has opted for a leaner organisation consisting of a council, a president and a vice president.

Other formal organs can include an internal organ known as the oversight board, which controls the legality and spending of MZ resources.¹⁶⁹ In Zrenjanin, for example, a MZ has established an oversight board with three members that monitor the MZs' finances. This body is considered a formal organ of the MZ and is also elected directly by residents simultaneously through elections when council members are chosen.

Moreover, MZs can establish different thematic bodies. The Decision on MZs in Subotica, for example, states that the MZ council can form permanent or temporary working bodies, such as commissions, oversight committees and mediation councils.¹⁷⁰ Some of the visited MZs had mediation councils, usually in charge of informal mediation between neighbours involved in local disputes; MZ representatives in Pancevo and Zrenjanin stressed the highly active nature of these councils. In one MZ in Subotica, there are five thematic committees: for communal issues, social and health issues, pensioners, environmental protection, and youth and sport. There are active agricultural committees within a MZ in a rural community in Zrenjanin. In addition, MZs that have introduced self-contribution as a form of financing can establish coordination councils/committees for the realisation of self-contribution.¹⁷¹

164 Article 76 of the Law on Local Self-Government.

165 Municipality of Kula, Decision on MZs, Article 4; City of Subotica, Decision on MZs, Article 3; City of Zrenjanin, Decision on MZs, Article 5; City of Pancevo, Decision on MZs on the territory of the City of Pancevo, Article 8.

166 Pavlović Križanić, "Rural Governance in Serbia: Charting a Sustainable Future", p. 139.

167 See, for example, the interpretation by SKGO: "Aktuelna pitanja". Available from <<http://www.skgo.org/pages/display/315/Aktuelna+pitanja>>

168 Article 74 of the Local on Self-Government.

169 Vujadinović, "Analysis of the System of Community Governance", p.19.

170 City of Subotica, "Decision on MZs", Article 33, Official Gazette of the City of Subotice, no. 47/2011.

171 Article 52 of the Statute of MZ Palic, 17. 12. 2014.

In addition to decision-making bodies, some MZs have secretaries that deal with the administrative affairs of the units. This position is elected or appointed by the MZ council, depending on the MZ statute.¹⁷² The secretary of one MZ in Kula, for example, was elected by the MZ council, but is not its member. In another MZ, the secretary was a member of the council, while in Subotica the secretary is neither a member of the MZ council nor a member of the MZ assembly.

Other bodies that are not official MZ organs but may share premises with MZs are community offices (*sr. mesne kancelarije* - MK), which act as rural outposts of the municipal government. They provide basic administrative services to citizens in a rural area. Pavlović Križanić argues that MKs can also provide administrative services to the MZ (office facility, telephone, copying and internet) and thus make the work of the MZ more efficient.¹⁷³ The heads of community offices can also act as an MZ secretary, as is the case in Kruševac.¹⁷⁴

Some authors, such as Pavlović Križanić, also point to the role of citizens in the work of MZs. This is usually manifested as a citizen assembly (*sr. zbor građana*),¹⁷⁵ which is an official gathering of voting-age citizens from within the local area. However, this is not a working organ of the MZ, but rather a mode for their direct participation in decision-making that is viewed as necessary.

Table 6, below, provides an overview of the types of organs established in the case study municipalities.

	Kula	Pancevo	Subotica	Zrenjanin
MZ organs/ bodies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MZ Council (11 members) with a president and a vice president chosen from the Council. • Executive Board • Working bodies (optional), such as committees, mediation councils, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MZ Assembly (9-15 members) • Executive Council (11 members, not present in all MZs) • MZ may have a secretary, appointed by the MZ assembly. • MZ can also establish mediation councils. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MZ Assembly (a president and members, 15 in total). • MZ Council as the executive body (a president, 2 vice-presidents and 2 members). • Working committees (optional, the number varies between MZs). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MZ Council (5-11 members) as the representative body with a president/a vice-president chosen from the council. • Secretary of the council /MZ, elected by the council. • Oversight Board (a president and 2 members). • Thematic boards/committees, mediation councils (optional, depending on the MZ).¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁶ Table 6: Types of organs established in MZs in the case study municipalities

¹⁷² Pavlović Križanić, "Rural Governance in Serbia: Charting a Sustainable Future", p. 152.

¹⁷³ Ibid, p. 148.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid, p. 153.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid, p. 151.

¹⁷⁶ Municipality of Zrenjanin Decision on MZs, articles 13-18.

5.1.4. Elections

The Law on Local Self-Government delegates the question of elections and the mode of choosing representatives and members of its organs to the MZs and municipalities. An act of a MZ, in accordance with the municipal statute and act on establishing the MZ, determines how elections are held.¹⁷⁷

To what extent municipalities are supposed to regulate MZ elections remains rather contested. The Law on Local Elections, for example, prescribes that MZ acts should, in line with the municipal/city/town statute and the Decision on the establishment of a MZ, determine the election procedures of a MZ. According to the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities of Serbia (SKGO), “such a legal solution creates numerous dilemmas and very different solutions are present.” This applies primarily to decisions on the establishment of MZs, in which local governments have prescribed election procedures, termination of office for members of MZ bodies and the dissolution of MZ councils or have assigned authority to perform MZ duties until another council is established, etc.¹⁷⁸

The SKGO points out that the Constitutional Court of Serbia has, through numerous decisions,¹⁷⁹ voiced its opinion that a local government assembly does not have the authority to prescribe election procedures for MZ organs. The Court is also of the opinion that the termination of mandates of members of organs of the LC or the dismissal of a council of the MZ and subsequent designation of a body that will carry out its mandate until a new council is elected is unconstitutional. By law, these are matters to be determined by the MZ statute and not by a general act of the municipal assembly.

“In fact, the president of the [municipal/town] assembly is only authorised to adopt a decision on calling elections of local communities, where such power does not include the issue of prescribing the election procedure for members of the council of local communities or determining the bodies responsible for implementing elections for local community councils and the means through which these organs are elected.”

Some interlocutors stressed that the current legal provisions on elections are problematic, because they do not allow for members of the council to be dismissed if they do not attend meetings. This was highlighted by a representative of a MZ from Kula. Interestingly, a municipal decision on the MZ in Subotica prescribes the possibility to dismiss the entire MZ assembly via a citizen referendum and thus gives citizens the possibility to exercise control over the work of the MZ.

Depending on the MZ statute, elections are called either by the president/mayor of the municipality or by the president of the MZ council. Votes can be cast by all citizens of voting age that reside within the territory of the MZ. In practice, elections can either take place by public or secret ballot at citizen assemblies or by secret ballot where individuals cast their vote in direct elections. There can be an election commission, chosen either by the MZ council or the president of the municipality, which then names a Voters' Committee (similar to a polling board) that is comprised of citizens who are temporarily employed to count the votes in their constituency.¹⁸⁰ Pancevo and Zrenjanin have adopted an interesting model in this regard, where both MZs and local government take part in the organisation of elections. The City is the one to organise the election, but each MZ appoints one person to a seventeen-member election commission established by the City. Table 7, below, features the modes of election in the case study municipalities.

177 Article 74 of the Law on Local Self-Government.

178 See SGKO, “Aktuelna pitanja”. Available from <<http://www.skgo.org/pages/display/315/Aktuelna+pitanja>>

179 See, for example, the following decisions: IU no. 271/2004, 28 April 2005; IU no. 315/2005, 29 December 2005; IU no. 435/2005, 22 June 2006; IU no. 92/2006, 25 December 2008, *inter alia*. Ibid.

180 Ivana Petrin, “Mesne zajednice – jedini oblici mesne samouprave u Srbiji” [Local communities – only forms of community self-governance in Serbia], Korak ka građanima: vodič kroz mesnu samoupravu u Srbiji, [authors Mihajlović et al.] Beograd: Centar za slobodne izbore i demokratiju, 2006, p.22.

According to Pavlovic Krizanic, the MZ council, “election process has been seized and monopolised by political parties.”¹⁸¹ In addition, MZ councils tend to be dominated by political parties, as was demonstrated by a cursory overview of articles on MZ elections held in Serbia. Elections have become fraught with accusations of paying for votes in certain MZs¹⁸² as well as the boycotting of MZ elections by opposition parties.¹⁸³ This suggests the increasing political party seizure of MZs. Khan Mohmand and Misic Mihajlovic corroborate this through their claim that political capture and lack of transparency has led to decreased citizen participation and trust in MZs.¹⁸⁴

	Kula	Pancevo	Subotica	Zrenjanin
Types of elections	Secret ballot votes at direct elections for MZ council. Elections as determined by the MZ statute. The commission for implementation of elections/election committees is established by the MZ. ¹⁸⁵	Secret ballot vote at direct elections. Elections organised by the city commission for implementation of election/election committees. ¹⁸⁶	Secret vote at direct elections for the MZ assembly. Elections autonomously organised by the MZs, but coordinated by the city election commission. The MZ assembly elects the council by majority vote. ¹⁸⁷	Secret vote at direct elections for the MZ council. Elections organised by the city commission for implementation of election/election committees. ¹⁸⁸
Procedures for candidacy	Citizens.	Party and citizen lists. At least 15 signatures are required for any list.	Party and citizen lists. Registered political parties (and party coalitions) groups of citizens (30 signatures for each candidate or 100 signatures by list; 50 in MZs with less than 1,000 residents). ¹⁸⁹	Citizens.

Table 7: *Types of elections in the case study municipalities*

Local interlocutors from the case study municipalities had different opinions on whether or not political parties have a strong influence on MZs. While some MZ representatives claimed that the organ is not politically affiliated, at least not formally, others pointed to the significant (and rather transparent) dominance of party politics as granted through the electoral rules. In some municipalities there were party lists and citizen lists (e.g. in Subotica) whereas in others political party signs or symbols were forbidden on the list (e.g. in Kula and Zrenjanin). Two MZ representatives from these municipalities stated that it is inevitable that MZ elections are ‘politically coloured’. In Subotica, opposition parties decided to boycott the latest MZ elections.

“The current constellation does not reflect the diversity of political options: earlier, there were four representatives of political parties and three representatives of citizens, this year there are only two lists [entered the MZ council].”

181 Pavlović Kržanić, “*Rural Governance in Serbia: Charting a Sustainable Future*”, p. 144.

182 “NIŠTA NE PREPUŠTAJU SLUČAJU: Naprednjaci potkupljuju birače koncentratom,” *Blic*, 12-05-2015. Available from <<http://www.blic.rs/vesti/politika/nista-ne-prepuštaju-slucaju-naprednjaci-potkupljuju-birace-koncentratom/8kdqz5l>>

183 “DS, LDP I NOVA STRANKA: IZBORI ZA MZ NEMAJU LEGITIMITET,” *Subotica.com*, 22-07-2015. Available from <<http://www.subotica.com/m/vesti/ds-ldp-i-nova-stranka-izbori-za-mz-nemaju-legitimitet-id23424.html#.VnAjeFkrKUM>>

184 Khan Mohmand, Shandana and Snezana Misic Mihajlovic, “*Connecting Citizens to the State: Informal Local Governance Institutions in the Western Balkans*”, Institute for Development Studies, 2013, p. 17.

185 Municipality of Kula “Decisions on MZs”, articles 32-33.

186 Municipality of Pancevo, “Decision on MZs”, articles 18-20.

187 Articles 29, 30 and 44 of the Statute of MZ Palic, Subotica, 17. 12. 2014.

188 Municipality of Zrenjanin “Decision on MZs”, articles 19-25.

189 City of Subotica Decision on MZs, Article 21.

A representative from another MZ in Subotica added that assembly members try to ensure that councilpersons (which are elected by the MZ assembly) are, “experts and citizens who are not party-affiliates.” The representative stressed that the council’s work is especially important. They are the ones that should have very good contact with the public, cooperation with the municipality, gather information and be able to set priorities for the MZ. There was also divergent opinion on whether or not parties should have a say in the affairs of MZs. In the case of Kula, where parties are formally not allowed on MZ lists, MZ representatives shared the view that parties should not become involved as the MZ “is a group of citizens.”

In terms of political party lists, a number of interlocutors also stressed that a system where citizens can vote for a candidate rather than a party (as is the case at the national level) is much better, because citizens know exactly for whom they voted. This, for instance, is currently the case in Pancevo, but not in Subotica.

The Standing Conference of Cities and Municipalities also suggests that MZs should pay more attention to ensuring adequate representation of women candidates in MZ councils, via quotas in the MZ statute.¹⁹⁰ In the case of Subotica, gender representation is at least nominally ensured in the Decision on the MZ that requires that every third candidate on a candidacy list for the MZ elections to be a member of the less represented opposite sex on the list.¹⁹¹

5.1.5. Decision-Making Procedures

As with the question of elections and organs, the Law on Local Self-Government allows MZs to determine their modes of decision-making in their statutes. The MZ council is the body that makes most of the decisions for the MZ, at Council sessions where at least half of the members must be present. Decisions are taken by majority vote,¹⁹² which was also confirmed by the MZs representatives in the case study municipalities.

Council sessions are typically held every few months – according to one author, the absolute minimum is once every three months – or at the request of a certain number of council members or citizens.¹⁹³ A number of MZ interlocutors confirmed this: some tended to meet once in three months, while others had more frequent meetings. In Kula, if no meeting of the council is held at least once in three months then, according to the MZ statute, new elections have to be held. On the other hand, the executive board, which is appointed by the council, meets according to its needs.

5.1.6. Local Government Oversight

Local government has substantial oversight over MZs, but mainly over their finance. According to the Law on Local Self-Government, a MZ must spend its earnings in accordance with a financial plan that must be approved by the municipality.¹⁹⁴ Local government must also maintain information on the costs incurred and provide final end of year reports. The Decision on MZs in Subotica, for example, specifies that the MZ councils are obliged to submit a financial plan to the municipality as well as a final annual report outlining their costs and activities by 15 March each year. As explained by a municipal representative, the financial plan is adopted by the municipal assembly and as such becomes an integral part of the municipal budget decision. The Mayor must also give his consent on such a plan.

According to a MZ representative from Kula, the MZ council creates a financial plan, the municipality adopts it and after this the MZ council has to confirm the plan. The MZ has autonomy over spending and all spending is

¹⁹⁰ SGKO, “Direct citizen participation in public life at local level”, p.50.

¹⁹¹ City of Subotica Decision on MZs, Article 21a.

¹⁹² Petrin, “Local communities – only forms of community self-governance in Serbia”, p.23.

¹⁹³ Ibid, p.23.

¹⁹⁴ Article 75 of the Law on Local Self-Government.

earmarked for different purposes, “This [procedure] has made the system of financing more transparent, but has also slowed down everything.”

MZs also adopt a public procurement plan based on their financial plan: when above a certain threshold, such procurement is conducted by a responsible municipal authority.

However and in line with the Law on Local Self-Government, it is up to community governance units to adopt decisions on important aspects of their work. In fact, the extent to which local government should meddle in the affairs of MZs is one of the most essential dilemmas when it comes to community governance in Serbia. Some interlocutors in our research thought it better for the municipality to prescribe the work of MZs in order to be able to account for errors or irregularities in their work. They believed that more regulation could potentially ensure more resources and competencies for MZs. Yet others called for more autonomy and complained that they had been stripped of the possibility to act autonomously in financial matters. Moreover, as acknowledged by some interviewed interlocutors, MZs – *de facto and de jure* – are highly dependent on the municipality for finance. The interlocutors also pointed out that many laws, such as the Law on public procurement and the Law on public enterprises, limit their activities.

As previously mentioned, the Constitutional Court of Serbia has ruled in favour of MZs in disputes that have come before the court concerning the dismissal of MZ organs by municipal authorities in 2003 or in regard to the prescribing of their election procedures in line with higher level laws.

The Court argued that the local community is, “primarily an interest based community to meet the interests and needs of citizens and thus only citizens are entitled to choose and dismiss organs of MZs.” Considering that MZs are not considered to be an element of the territorial organisation of the country,¹⁹⁵ the court thus ruled that local government should not meddle in election and dismissal procedures.

However, a proposed addition to the Law on Local Self-Government that is included in the latest draft law contains an article that enhances the powers of municipalities to oversee the legality of the work of MZs. It states that if the municipal organ that oversees the legality of the work of a MZ believes that an MZ act does not conform to the municipal laws or statutes then it is obliged to suggest a change to the MZ council. If the council rejects this proposal then the municipal organ can suspend the enforcement of the MZ act or even suggest to the president of the municipality that all financial resources to the MZ be stopped, if they are deemed in conflict with the law or financial plan.¹⁹⁶ This municipal oversight organ can also lodge a complaint about the work of an MZ with the Constitutional Court, inasmuch as its acts are deemed unconstitutional. According to one municipal representative, MZs are essentially autonomous in matters relating to administrative law but not when it comes to finance.

Oversight by citizens can be granted through provisions on the transparency of the work of MZs. In Subotica, for example, the public can attend all sessions of the MZ organs, as prescribed by a local decision on MZs. A MZ representative confirmed that the transparency of work also holds in practice. Moreover, Subotica’s decision on the MZ prescribes that MZs must inform the public. This can be done via a bulletin and board, an internet page and through cooperation with the media. Upon request, citizens are entitled to inspect the financial records and call for public debates and discussions.¹⁹⁷ Another method of oversight available to citizens is the right to recall the MZ Council on account of financial irregularities. The citizen assembly can, for example, recall the MZs if the final report or financial plan are not accepted.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁵ For more, see Constitutional Court of Serbia, above.

¹⁹⁶ “Zakon o izmenama i dopunama zakona o lokalnoj samoupravi,” nacrt [Law on Changes and Additions to the Law on Local Self-Government], Article 29, Draft, 2015.

¹⁹⁷ City of Subotica Decision on MZs, Article 14.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid, Article 28.

5.2. Resources and Capacities for Community Governance

The sources of funding for MZs are stipulated by law and include funds from the municipal budget, donations and earnings from MZ activities. Local acts may further stipulate sources of income. For example, the decision on community governance in Subotica adds voluntary self-contribution tax (sr. *samodoprinos*) and leasing the assets/property owned by the MZ.¹⁹⁹

The funding received from the municipal budget is not fixed and municipalities can determine the percentage of their budget that will go to MZs. These funds are generally meant to cover the expenses of running the MZ, the cost of taking over the responsibilities that the municipality transferred to the MZ, co-financing the development of communal infrastructure and such like.²⁰⁰ In those municipalities where a precise percentage of funds is earmarked for MZs, sometimes there are no precise rules on how much of this amount each MZ is to receive.²⁰¹ However, secondary sources point to the limited resources and financial autonomy of MZs.²⁰² Moreover, the survey responses showed that MZs tend to be financed mainly through the municipal budget and that very few receive other sources of funding (e.g. donations or service fees).

Self-contribution is a crucial source of funding for MZs. In effect, it is a tax voted on by a majority of citizens via a referendum that then becomes obligatory. According to Pavlović Križanić, this sort of tax is imposed on rural MZs by 66 per cent of Serbian municipalities; however, evasion and a lack of cooperation means that it is difficult to collect.²⁰³ The tax is applied in three phases. First, it is suggested via a citizens' initiative (usually by at least 20% of the population) and its viability investigated by the municipality. The municipal council then has to approve the suggestion before the last phase when it is taken to a referendum.²⁰⁴ In one of the MZs visited in the Municipality of Kula, the self-contribution tax amounted to 2 per cent of residents' pay checks. Some representatives of the MZs in Kula explained that they earmark funding obtained through self-contribution for particular purposes. These include, for example, a given percentage allocated to sport, culture or to assist a local club.

However, it appears that self-contribution is becoming less common. Out of the twenty-eight survey respondents that stated that their local government had MZs only three said that all of their MZs had self-contribution, while six responded that only a few had them. This could be because they are becoming less feasible to levy. According to one MZ representative from Kula, where a self-contribution is soon to expire, it is questionable whether the community would be willing to renew it in a referendum, given the difficult socioeconomic situation. A 50 per cent voter turnout is required and 50 per cent must vote in favour.

"That would be a loss, if it is not voted for [...] There will not be investments in the village. Funds are provided through calls, but self-contribution [as a form of co-financing] is always required."

Some other MZ representatives, for instance in Zrenjanin, also stressed that self-contribution is becoming less frequent. In one MZ, there was not enough interest among citizens to take part in a referendum; despite two attempts, the turnout required by the local act was not met and therefore it was not possible to hold a referendum on self-contribution.

MZs can also rent out property or earn money through their own activities; however, as pointed out by a number of interlocutors, 2013 amendments to the state level Law on public property brought this into question. The

199 Ibid, Article 34.

200 Ibid.

201 Pavlović Križanić, "Rural Governance in Serbia: Charting a Sustainable Future", p. 159.

202 Ibid, p. 157. See also, Bećirović, Suad, Šemsudin Plojović, and Enis Uljkanović, "Finansiranje mjesnih zajednica u Srbiji" [Financing MZs in Serbia], *Ekonomski izazovi* Vol.1, no.2, 2012, p. 37.

203 Pavlović Križanić, "Rural Governance in Serbia: Charting a Sustainable Future", p. 158.

204 "Neposredno učešće građana u javnom životu na lokalnom nivou" [Citizen participation in public life at the local level], Belgrade: Standing Conference of Cities and Municipalities, 2006, pp. 36-37.

holders of the rights of public ownership in the country are considered to be the Republic of Serbia, the autonomous province of Vojvodina and municipalities/cities. Moreover, the Law stipulates that MZs and other forms of community governance have the right to use objects of public property of a given local self-government unit in line with law and local acts.²⁰⁵ In other words, MZs have become more dependent on the municipality to grant them the right to use public property: this usually constitutes the premises where the MZ has its office. Some MZ representatives stated that they are not able to rent premises without the permission of the municipality. According to the survey responses, only a few respondents said that their MOs had premises that they owned and most pointed to their use of premises allocated to them by local government or other institutions.

Field research showed that several MZs in the Municipality of Zrenjanin are financed partly by oil revenue (sr. *naftna renta*, lit. oil rent). Given that the region is an oil-producing one, MZs have the right to a certain percentage of this revenue. According to an MZ representative, the MZ uses this funding to finance small infrastructure projects such as street repairs. Interestingly, other oil-producing areas, such as Pančevo, do not guarantee any funds for their MZs from this type of income.

According to experts interviewed for this study, local communities are indirect users of the local budget and are therefore now part of the treasury system and their accounts are becoming sub-accounts of the local government.²⁰⁶ This essentially means that all spending is controlled by the municipality in line with a financial plan.

Pavlović Križanić also points to a 2007 Ministry of Finance decision that, “...restricted the right of the municipalities to devolve certain percentages of their taxes and fees to the MZs. The Ministry stated that MZs are only allowed to receive pre-planned appropriations from the municipal budget.”

Municipalities are also not allowed to earmark revenue from utilities for MZs.²⁰⁷

Although there is now greater financial accountability over MZ spending, as explained by one representative, this potentially means that MZs could be less proactive in fundraising, especially ad hoc fundraising not envisaged in the financial plan.

According to one MZ representative from Pancevo, “A couple of years ago we had the possibility [of own income], as we had an own account where we could gather donations from private persons. Now we cannot do that anymore.”

According to one municipal representative from Zrenjanin, MZs do not have the legal possibility to make profit. Yet some MZs are financially self-sustaining, such as the MZ visited in Pančevo. It does not receive budgetary funding, but according to the representative it rents out a building that was originally constructed through a self-contribution. It is now leased to them by the City free-of-charge. The MZ is able to cover its total expenses by renting out the building. They also apply to the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina for funds and have received financing for youth sports facilities.

However, in general, limited financial resources means that MZs struggle to keep permanent staff and premises. Khan Mohmand and Misić Mihajlović claim that during the process of decentralisation of powers, municipal governments, “took over MZ facilities and properties” and that few municipalities pay salaries for MZ employees or cover office expenses.²⁰⁸ Some MZs do have employees, but their salary financing and status varies by municipality. According to the Constitutional Court of Serbia, MZ council members cannot have the

205 “Zakon o javnoj svojini,” [Law on Public Property], Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, numbers 72/2011, 88/2013 and 105/2014, Article 18. Available from <http://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_javnoj_svojini.html>

206 For more detail see “Zakon o budžetskom sistemu” [Law on Budget System], Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia numbers 54/2009, 73/2010, 101/2010, 101/2011, 93/2012, 62/2013, 63/2013, 108/2013, 142/2014, 68/2015 and 103/2015.

207 Pavlović Križanić, “Rural Governance in Serbia: Charting a Sustainable Future,” p. 156.

208 Khan Mohmand and Misić Mihajlović, “Connecting Citizens to the State,” p. 14.

status of municipal employees.²⁰⁹ The survey results showed that in some 60 per cent of cases (i.e. 15 local governments) MZs had one to five employees, while 36 per cent of respondents said that such units in their town/municipality did not have any employees. According to survey responses, in most instances they were employees of the local government.

Our field research in Serbia showed variations in the modes of staffing in municipalities. In Pančevo, the MZ Secretary was also employed by the Municipality and served as the coordinator of the community office (*sr. mesne kancelarije; MK*). In the MZ in Starčevo, the Secretary of the MZ also worked 30 per cent of the time as the MK coordinator. This sort of overlap suggests further cooperation and coordination between MZs and municipal MKs.

In Subotica, where the City pays the salaries of MZ secretaries who are formally employees of MZs, there is an internal formula to determine the salary of the secretary based on the population size and locality (rural areas mean additional costs). Whether the secretary works full-time or part-time (50%, 75% or 100%) is determined by the size of the MZ (e.g. for smaller ones – between 1,000 and 3,400 residents – the secretary has shorter working hours).

Larger Serbian municipalities usually have a department for MZ affairs, which provides administrative and technical support. In smaller areas, usually only one staff member is responsible for this and is rarely full-time. The draft law on the amendments to the Law on Local Self-Government includes a provision that obligates municipal governments to “assist MZs in carrying out administrative-technical and financial material tasks.”²¹⁰

Three of the four municipalities visited had a department that was dedicated to MZs. Within the City of Subotica, for example, there is a Department for MZ and MKs that is in charge of coordinating the work of MZs and ensuring that MZs receive technical advice or assistance from within the municipality. They are in charge of operational issues, such as drafting acts for MZs, preparing their budgets and execution reports. MZs can entrust bookkeeping to the city department without charge, as part of the municipal finance department.

Table 8, below, provides an overview of the financial and other resources at the disposal of the MZs in the case study municipalities.

209 Vujadinović, “Analysis of system of community governance”, p. 33.

210 Changes and additions in the draft Law to Article 30 of the Law on Local Self-Government.

	Kula	Pancevo	Subotica	Zrenjanin
Sources of financing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budgetary funding for the work of MZ organs (employees). Self-contribution (most MZs). Donations. Income through own activity²¹¹ (1 MZ visited charges fees for the communal services they provide). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budgetary funding determined by municipal decision. Self-contribution as a possibility (none in practice). Donations. Grants from the regional authority (in some cases). Income through own activity.²¹² Rent (some MZs rent premises in practice). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budgetary funding determined by municipal decision. Donations (some MZs). Grants from the regional authority (in some cases). Income through own activity.²¹³ Self-contribution (ended last year, the last one was introduced in 2005). Rent of premises (1 MZ visited). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budgetary funding determined by municipal decision. Self-contribution (9 rural MZs). Donations. Income through own activity.²¹⁴ Rent of premises (some MZs). Oil tax (6 MZ in the municipality). Partnership with companies (1 MZ).
Annual budget	2.4 to 6.6 million dinars (19,500 to 53,500 EUR) in 2 case study MZs.	2.5 to 7 million dinars (20,300 to 56,000 EUR).	1.1 to 2.3 million dinars (8,000 to 18,700 EUR) in 3 case study MZs.	2.4 to 19 million dinars (19,500 to 154,000 EUR) in 3 case study MZs.
Human resources	Offices shared with MK: Thus, in addition to secretaries, other employees in the visited MZs perform administrative services.	City officials, as employees of the municipal administration, work part-time for MZs (1 per MZ), and part-time for MKs. No compensation for MZ organs.	Secretaries (1 per MZ) employed by the MZ, whose salaries are financed by the City, some MZs have housekeepers whose salaries are paid for by the regional authority.	Employees of MZ: secretaries (1 per MZ) in all MZs, and technical secretaries (1 per MZ) in some MZs. No compensation for the councils.
Other resources	MZs use premises owned by the Municipality.	Use premises of the City, which rents the premises from third parties for the MZs.	Municipality finances utilities. MZs use premises owned by the City or third parties (rent covered by the City).	

Table 8: *Financial, human and other resources of MZs in the case studies*

²¹¹ Municipality of Kula Decision on MZs, Article 24.

²¹² MZ Banatsko Novo Selo, Statute of MZ Banatsko Novo Selo, 22. 2. 2012, Article 49.

²¹³ Statute of MZ Palic, 17. 12. 2014, Article 52

²¹⁴ City of Zrenjanin Decision on MZs, Article 58.

5.3. Service Delivery and other Tasks/Activities

The services to be provided by MZs are not prescribed by the Law on Local self-government, although there is a set of activities that are usually assumed to come under the purview of MZs. The Law states that it is the municipal act on establishing MZs that defines their tasks.

Pavlović Križanić provides a sample list of responsibilities of MZs, based on a comparative analysis:

- “Organising citizens’ assemblies and to solicit citizens’ opinions on significant issues;
- launching initiatives for the changing of municipal documents (planning, zoning);
- establishing cooperation with municipal public utilities and review reports on their work and their development programs;
- implementing small infrastructure projects (construction of roads, sidewalks, village water-supply systems) financed from a self-contribution fee;
- performing other jobs determined by the constitution, law and municipal statute.”²¹⁵

In Subotica, for example, the Decision on MZs opens up the possibility for MZs to deal with a wide range of issues that affect the needs and interests of their citizens, which are quite similar to some other statutes that list MZs tasks (e.g. Belgrade and Zemun). Article 13 of the Decision lists the following activities and services:

- urban planning;
- building of communal objects and roads;
- upkeep of communal objects and roads;
- sending citizen complaints, suggestions and initiatives to municipal or state organs;
- cooperating with municipal organs to create the conditions for preschools, primary schools and other institutions of child education as well as the care of the elderly and children;
- ensuring the spatial, financial and organisational capacities for sport and recreation;
- cooperating with healthcare and veterinary organs to create the conditions for health and veterinary protection;
- organising various kinds of humanitarian aid;
- protection against natural disasters and their consequences;
- setting up mediation councils;
- cooperating with citizen associations and NGOs on questions of interest to MZ citizens;
- setting up the self-contribution tax (*samodoprinos*);
- doing the tasks delegated to the MZ by the municipality.²¹⁶

Belgrade’s statute adds a number of specificities:

- care for persons with disabilities,
- upkeep of green spaces,
- organising recreation for the elderly,
- upkeep of residential buildings,
- communal zoo hygiene,
- organising protection against fires.²¹⁷

It is interesting that the most prominent types of services relate to local infrastructure and communal services, social services, civil protection and urban planning. Although facilitating citizen participation in local affairs is

²¹⁵ Pavlović Križanić, “*Rural Governance in Serbia: Charting a Sustainable Future*”, p. 150.

²¹⁶ City of Subotica Decision on MZs, Article 13.

²¹⁷ City of Belgrade, Article 126 of the Statute of the City of Belgrade.

one of the main roles of the MZs, this is nowhere to be found in the lists of their main tasks. Moreover, those tasks that MZs actually are to provide are open to interpretation. According to interviewed experts, it is questionable to what extent MZs truly have the executive powers to perform any actual tasks. Rather, their work is usually about coordination with other service providers and the local authorities. The survey results show that service provision generally appears to be rare in practice, with some sort of communal services being the most prevalent where service provision exists.²¹⁸

Municipalities can delegate some of the tasks under their authority to MZs, along with giving them adequate funds for their execution. The Law on Local Self-Government states that the municipal government can decide to entrust these tasks to all or certain MZs, but this is left up to individual municipalities.²¹⁹ Yet there is, “little evidence that such delegation actually occurs.”²²⁰ The survey results show that there was some task delegation in the case of nine local governments (33.3%), while seventeen local government representatives responded that no task delegation had taken place (63%). According to some authors, municipalities are reluctant to give over the funds that come with devolving competencies.

“The overwhelming majority [in a survey] reported that no authority was hitherto delegated to [MZ] councils or presidents.”²²¹

For some, the further decentralising of power to the MZ level, “means that some bureaucrats will lose their jobs.”²²²

In the case studies the delegation of tasks to MZs by the municipality did not take place, although such an option was allowed by the local acts studied. A municipal representative in Subotica explained that there had been no task delegation because none of the MZs had requested to deliver services and the fact that services are generally centralised. However, the municipal representative and a MZ representative stressed that MZs can be allotted certain administrative tasks, such as creating inventories, maintaining farm registries and validating medical documents, that a community office in a given locality cannot provide. As MZ administrators are municipal employees, the municipality can also give them ad hoc administrative tasks. In Pancevo, the Municipality had previously delegated communal tasks to MZs but ceased this practice in 2014.

In the recent past, there have been a number of cases where MZs have taken their complaints about municipalities to the Constitutional Court. This was the case in Indija, where the Municipality had outsourced funeral services and the upkeep of the village cemeteries to a private company. The result of this was a substantial increase in the fees for funerals. Members of a village MZ argued that funeral services should remain under the authority of MZs and the issue was taken to court.²²³

To what extent MZs should perform functions that are currently under the auspices of the local government is a debated issue.

According to a representative of a rural MZ from Kula, “The MZ should function as a whole, so that citizen can get 90 per cent of services here. Our functions are becoming smaller, as is our possibility to help people in the village. The decision to decrease the jurisdictions of MZs is not adequate as they are much more important in villages than in the city.”

218 For example, out of 28 respondents that said that their local governments had MZs, six said that all MZs provided communal services, while five responded that most MZs did and six said that only a few MZs provided such services. Moreover, only nine said that all or a few of their MZs provided administrative services (e.g. issuing documents to citizens) Nine said that all of their MZs provided the service of safety protection, six said that most of MZs did, while one said that a few did. As for social services, eight respondents said that all, most or a few MZs were active in this realm.

219 Article 77 of the Law on Local Self-Government.

220 Khan Mohmand and Misić Mihajlović, “Connecting Citizens to the States”, p. 14.

221 Ibid, p. 20.

222 Ibid, p. 17.

223 “Indija: Sahrane ‘stigle’ na sud,” *Večernje Novosti*, 30 March 2014. Available at <<http://www.novosti.rs/vesti/srbija.73.html:485066-Indija-Sahrane-stigle-na-sud>>

Different authors point out that MZs have different roles in urban and rural settings as service providers. In rural settings, due to a lack of infrastructure, MZs often play the role of utility provider whereas the need for such functions is diminished in urban settings. In rural areas, villages may not be connected to wider networks supplying services such as water and electricity and so the maintenance and provision of these utilities are taken over by MZs. Pavlović Križanić explains that this is largely due to the fact that villages are seen as being outside the system and therefore ignored by utility providers. Since rural populations, “do not pay much (taxes and fees) they do not receive many services. For this reason, villages have to take care of their own infrastructural and other needs (waterworks, roads, graveyards, culture, sports, etc.).”²²⁴

The village MZs that were visited in the course of this study play a particular role in ensuring basic utilities such as water, electricity and transport lines. In Kula, for example, one rural MZ performs communal services such as water supply and maintenance of graveyards and charges fees for such services. In Pancevo, the Municipality delegated communal services to MZs in 1993; however, this practice was abolished last year (2015) by a decision of the State Audit Institution. From 1993-2014, MZs could be founders of communal enterprises yet now, in line with the Law on public enterprises, the City is the founder. Despite this, a municipal representative stressed that almost all rural MZs in Pancevo continue to have their public communal enterprises. In addition, local communities tend to serve as a coordinator for many communal and other services.

According to a representative from Kula, the MZ is a, ‘service centre’ for citizens, “We call all of those who are responsible, such as the [enterprise in charge of] street lightening, electric utility company, companies in charge of waste disposal [...] we are a link to all companies that provide some sort of service to citizens.”

According to the interlocutor, citizens sometimes contact them instead of the local police and they then redirect them to the police station. MZ representatives from Subotica and Pancevo also stressed the role of the MZ as “a service to the citizens”, referring to the function of communication between citizens and local authorities. A MZ representative in Zrenjanin described the MZ as an “initiator of new actions in the city,” especially within the communal realm. Moreover, representatives of the MZs in Zrenjanin stated that they write requests and help citizens to contact different authorities and enterprises. In Subotica, MZs mostly take care of the needs of citizens within the communal realm. One MZ representative explained that when the MZ receives a detailed regulatory plan a public discussion is organised in order for citizens to provide comment. The MZ follows the work of communal enterprises and makes suggestions for infrastructure priorities to the water utility companies, etc.

Making sure that the provision of services is regular is considered a major achievement by MZs in some rural areas.

According to one representative from a rural community in Kula, “As long as the infrastructure of the village is functioning without problems, that is a success. Recently, we solved the problem of water supply of the village through wells [a solution] for the next thirty years. At this moment, that is a great success.”

Some MZs with more substantial funding, such as those in Zrenjanin that receive revenue from an oil tax or those with self-contribution in Kula, are investors and finance small communal or infrastructure projects within their vicinity. Such projects are coordinated and carried out together with the municipality and companies.

According to one MZ representative from Zrenjanin, “We are one of the rare MZs that always have ready projects in the drawer, with the necessary documentation. We always have three to four capital investment projects. The administration helps us with expert assistance and public companies with

224 Pavlović Križanić, “*Rural Governance in Serbia: Charting a Sustainable Future*”, p. 154.

the logistics. They carry out the projects for us. Some of the projects completed were realised on a 'dinar to dinar' basis [equivalent co-financing by the local authorities for every dinar spent by the MZ], such as the bike trail."

Other smaller-scale activities may include environmental clean-ups and educational activities in the realm of environment. One MZ from Subotica organises an annual selection of 'the most beautiful yard and the most beautiful street'. It also organises educational activities within the realm of public health or blood drives within the MZ.

Some MZs stressed that although they cannot provide social assistance, as this is the responsibility of local authorities in charge of social work, they do organise activities such as humanitarian drives in this realm. In two of the MZs visited in Subotica, there is an MZ committee on social issues that either makes house visits or distributes packages to households in need. They also cooperate with the centre for social work.

Socio-cultural activities are also an important part of the work of MZs. In Kula, for instance, a representative explained that the MZ organises a 'village day' as an annual event along with sports tournaments. The community also has a football and a chess club within the MZ. According to the representative, "This is important for our children."

A MZ representative in Subotica also pointed to a number of cultural and sports events organised by the MZ in cooperation with other institutions, such as the local library. A municipal representative in Pancevo said that activities within the realm of sport and culture are the most frequent types of activities run by MZs, especially in rural areas. The survey results also point to the prevalence of instances of sports and cultural activities, but also humanitarian activities and educational workshops organised by MZs in the respondents' municipality/city/town.²²⁵

5.4. Cooperation and Coordination

Khan Mohmand and Misić Mihajlović argue that municipal collaboration with MZs is, "currently only suggested, rather than required by law."²²⁶ They also stress the fact that there are no punishments for municipalities that fail to be open about their work and no incentives for further cooperation with MZs. Nevertheless, city/municipality statutes frequently encourage such cooperation. The Statute of the City of Belgrade, for example, ensures that MZs work with other MZs, citizens associations, NGOs, municipal organs and public enterprises in the provision of the services listed above.²²⁷ Another example is found in the Statute of the MZ 'Orom' in Kanjiža, where the relationship between the Municipality of Kanjiža and MZ organs together with the necessity of MZs to consult with and give suggestions to municipal organs is discussed.

As described by Pavlović Križanić, some municipalities have advisory councils that deal directly with MZs, "providing advice and assistance to MZs upon their request; reviewing the annual financial reports and reports on the work of the MZ from the previous year; proposing the budget; as well as preparing financial reports of urban and rural local communities; and for making proposals for improvement of the local community."²²⁸

225 A total of 17 (out of 28 from localities where MZs existed) respondents pointed to 'a few', 'most' or 'all' MZs in their locality organising humanitarian activities; 23 pointed to a 'few', 'most' or 'all' of them organising educational workshops and 24 pointed to a 'few', 'most' or 'all' of them organising sports and cultural activities.

226 Khan Mohmand and Misić Mihajlović, "Connecting Citizens to the State", p. 20.

227 City of Belgrade, Article 126 of the Statute of the City of Belgrade.

228 Pavlović Križanić, "Rural Governance in Serbia: Charting a Sustainable Future", p. 142.

These councils can serve a crucial role in relation to cooperation between MZs and the municipality. In Kruševac, this advisory board, which consists of municipal councillors and citizens, organises meetings of MZ representatives as well as other public events.²²⁹

In the case study municipalities, regular communication and cooperation with the local government is the norm. The survey results show that MZs tend to cooperate and coordinate their activities predominantly with the municipality: Twenty-three out of twenty-eight respondents stated that their local government had community self-governance directed at MZs being engaged in cooperation/coordination with local government. This can in part, as some interlocutors explained, also be attributed to the fact that all MZs payments as well as public procurement are made through the municipal organs. As described by an MZ representative from Pancevo who pointed to excellent communication with the local government, “That is where our finances are.” Given the very prominent role that MZs enjoy as coordinators between citizens and the administration, at least in the case of those visited, they tend to be the ones to turn to different local departments as well as local enterprises in order to assist citizens with issues of concern.

Municipal departments, especially those that hold particular responsibility for the work of MZs, tend to provide MZ with technical support and expertise. Some local governments also tend to organise sporadic meetings on particular issues with MZs.

As explained by one MZ representative from Subotica, “The cooperation with the City and public enterprises is tight and I would assess it as very good. They know our problems and we lobby to solve them.”

Another MZ representative from Subotica agreed but added that it is rare that an issue is not resolved; however, if this is not the case then they receive feedback from the Municipality explaining why and when it could be addressed: “until now, we have never not received a response.”

Another MZ representative also stressed the importance of the role of the coordinator for MZs within the local administration, citing an instance where the MZ was able to resolve a particular issue faster through this form of coordinator. The majority of MZ representatives from the other municipalities also considered communication and coordination with the municipality as good. One MZ representative in Zrenjanin said that, “problems are solved in a record period [...] This is a result of good communication.”

In some municipalities, MZs also seem to have a very good level of cooperation with the centres for social work and/or the Red Cross. They are usually in charge of delivering humanitarian aid to citizens. In Pancevo and Zrenjanin, for example, there is a good level of cooperation with health and/or elderly care providers (measuring blood pressure and through blood drives). Representatives of MZs in Subotica observe a practice of sporadic thematic meetings that can be attended by relevant stakeholders, depending on the issues, such as communal enterprises. Most representatives of MZs emphasised very good cooperation with other MZs, especially with neighbouring ones that often serve as partners in the realisation of certain projects. Some stressed good interaction with local media. In Subotica, a representative from a MZ said that the media were particularly interested in covering the annual citizens’ assemblies.

A number of representatives of MZs that represent a physical hub with premises in the local community in the case study municipalities also pointed to good interaction and cooperation with other actors within their vicinity. This included different community associations and cultural and sports organisations. A MZ representative from Subotica mentioned that the MZ has good cooperation with the local karate club, which uses their premises and animates children and youth. A MZ from Pancevo highlighted its good cooperation with all civil society organisations within their locality, as did representatives from a MZ in Zrenjanin. Others, such as an MZ in Zrenjanin, support civil societies through donations.

229 Ibid.

5.5. Mechanisms for Citizen participation in Local Decision-making

Apart from the MZ council, citizens can also contribute to community governance via three forms of direct citizen participation. These three forms of participation are the citizen assembly (*sr. zbor građana*), citizen initiative (*sr. građanska inicijativa*) and referendum. All three mechanisms are listed in the Law on Local Self-Government as citizens' rights.

The assembly serves as a meeting or forum of MZ residents and is sometimes the site of council elections. Assemblies are convened to discuss particular issues and are open to all local citizens, precise rules on convening assemblies usually resides within MZ statutes²³⁰ and in some cases special municipal acts. In fact, the Law on Local Self-Government transfers the responsibility of defining the manner in which an assembly is held to city statutes and decisions.²³¹ According to the literature, they are the most commonly used forms of direct participation; however, they no longer have much of a decision-making capability. Instead, assemblies now perform a more 'consultative function'²³² by offering suggestions and requests to MZs or municipal governments.

The amount of citizens needed to have a quorum and make decisions that are considered legitimate varies from MZ to MZ. While some have set lower limits, such as at least 10 per cent of registered voters, other MZs have no such regulations and this means that a small group of citizens can make decisions that can be considered valid.²³³ In some of the case study municipalities, such as Subotica, the organisation of citizen assemblies is institutionalised by a special decision of the City. At least 5 per cent of MZ residents are required to be present at a citizen assembly for it to bring a decision. MZs are obliged to organise assemblies. According to a MZ decision in Kula, 3 per cent of the voters from a given municipality must be present for the assembly to be able to bring a decision; in the case of this MZ it amounts to fifty persons.

Citizen initiatives are a way for groups of citizens to put forth suggestions directly to the municipal government. According to state law, this group must represent at least 10 per cent of registered voters; in some municipal statutes this increases to 25 per cent and therefore they are not necessarily facilitated by MZs.

Referendums, on the other hand, can be organised by MZ councils, although it is more often the case that referendums are held by local governments. In general, mechanisms of direct citizen participation such as assemblies, initiatives and referendums can also be called by the municipalities themselves and are therefore not necessarily solely within the competence of MZs. Referendums can be held by the municipality on questions that fall within their authority; however, once a decision on the referendum is passed via majority vote the municipality no longer has the right to amend or fail to enact the decision.²³⁴

Although these mechanisms of direct citizen participation exist at the municipal and MZ level there is not much evidence that they are effective forms of engagement. Indeed, a 2006 survey in Serbia showed that 78 per cent of the citizens were not involved in a single activity organised by their local MZ,²³⁵ 12 per cent were involved in at least one activity, 7 per cent were involved in some activities and only 3 per cent were 'very active' in their MZs.

According to some authors, while the current laws do not sanction MZs in the case of unlawful activities or the misuse of funds their lack of transparency, which was noted earlier, is seen as a leading cause of the lack of citizen participation. In this sense, the proposed draft changes to the Law on Local Self-Government, which are referenced above, would help to install some mechanisms for sanctioning MZs. Another set of issues relates to

²³⁰ Ibid, p.24.

²³¹ Article 69 of the Law on Local Self-Government.

²³² Khan Mohmand and Misić Mihajlović, "Connecting Citizens to the State", p. 15.

²³³ Petrin, "Mesne zajednice – jedini oblici mesne samouprave u Srbiji", p.24.

²³⁴ Article 70 of the Law on Local Self-Government.

²³⁵ Pavlović Križanić, "Rural Governance in Serbia: Charting a Sustainable Future", p. 144.

the unwillingness of municipalities to devolve powers, funds and responsibilities to the MZ level. Some argue that the right to community governance and participation in decision-making is denied inasmuch as there is a lack of municipal funding for MZs. Municipalities are in practice unwilling to transfer funds from their own budget, which forces MZs to rely on self-contribution.²³⁶ Another reason for the disengagement with MZs is their apparent capture by political parties, as mentioned earlier.

According to the survey results, out of the twenty-eight respondents that stated that their local government has community self-governance only twelve said that all MZs in their locality hold community assemblies, public hearings and other public events. Eleven stated that most of them do and four that only a few of them hold public events. In the case study MZs, formally recognised mechanisms of citizen deliberation, such as assemblies or hearings, seemed to be underutilised. According to a municipal and a MZ representative in Subotica, MZs are obliged to organise citizen assemblies at least once a year and representatives of public communal enterprises, the local government and/or the mayor can attend. A representative of another MZ from Subotica, which organises at least three public assemblies a year, pointed out that citizens were able to achieve their aim of having more frequent public transportation over the weekend through this citizen assembly. In other words, assemblies can be used to exert pressure on the relevant authorities or enterprises to improve their service. This option did not appear to be used frequently in Pancevo, but in Zrenjanin MZs organise citizen assemblies to inform citizens on how self-contributions will be used. One interlocutor stressed that annual citizen assemblies should be organised but that this can prove difficult given the requirement that 5 per cent of residents need to attend. An MZ representative from Zrenjanin considered them to be an, “outdated form of communication with the population.” When they are organised, they are essentially informative meetings where representatives of communal and other enterprises can inform citizens about a given issue; however, an interlocutor from Pancevo questioned to what extent citizen assemblies, unless theme-specific, are attractive to citizens.

Such dilemmas are emphasised in the literature on the subject. Zarić, for example, proposes that public discussions or assemblies be organised around specific issues so as to provide concrete recommendations and suggestions to the municipal government. She suggests that the MZs themselves could organise them using forums of service users (dealing with questions of the management and development of specific services), thematic forums (dealing with questions of interest to the local community), micro-community forums (dealing with questions of interest to the neighbourhood community or MZ) and interest group forums.²³⁷

In general, the case study research shows that citizen assemblies seemed to be more prevalent in rural areas. For example, one MZ representative from Kula explained that there was a number of thefts in a village and the MZ called a citizen assembly where representatives of the police were invited.

“The result is that a representative of the police is present here every Wednesday and citizens can address him. We do not have a police station here [...] and that is a problem.”

The interlocutors mentioned some other possibilities for citizen engagement. In Subotica, for example, the Municipality can organise ‘days with citizens’ where municipal assembly representatives meet and listen to citizens in the MZs. There are also other public hearings that citizens can attend. In Pancevo, the Municipality organises public hearings during the adoption of the budget. In Pancevo and Zrenjanin, citizens also participate in a participatory budgeting programme, implemented by the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN) from Belgrade; they can also vote online for projects for a given MZ or for the city, which are later chosen by a committee.

236 SKGO, “Direct participation of citizens in local public life”, p. 44.

237 Bojana Zarić, “Učešće građana u javnom životu mesne zajednice” [Participation of citizens in the life of MZ] *Korak ka građanima: vodič kroz mesnu samoupravu u Srbiji* [authors Mihajlović et al.], Belgrade: Centar za slobodne izbore i demokratiju, 2006, p. 45.

MZs seem to be rather important as a communicator of citizen requests to local authorities, especially in rural areas. This seems to be common in the MZs visited in Kula. According to one MZ representative from Kula, citizens write requests and turn to the MZ with their problems.

“The majority of the residents turn to us to solve [an issue] or to direct them to those responsible. We are a link with higher levels of government.”

The secretary in this MZ in Kula is especially important for the performance of this linkage function, because it is this person that citizens tend to turn to for assistance, “We often help them, type up something, print something, write a plea, a request [for them].”

Collective action through joint requests and petitions appears to be prevalent in both rural and urban areas. A MZ representative from Kula explained that thanks to a citizen petition citizens were able to solve a traffic problem with the Municipality. A MZ representative from a peripheral part of Subotica mentioned a case where residents from a few streets made a petition to the Mayor to solve the problem of the water network. This was resolved by the local government and the MZ organised a public meeting with the public utility to inform citizens about the issue. This is also the case in Pancevo where a municipal representative explained that initiatives mostly come from citizens, while the MZs proceed to solve the problem in the name of citizens. A MZ representative from Zrenjanin also stressed that citizens are very active and address a number of proposals pertaining to communal services, such as lighting and local playgrounds, to the MZ.

According to a MZ representative from Subotica, “citizens are active, but mostly through complaints. The MZ is like a complaints counter.”

Complaints usually pertain to issues such as infrastructure, transportation, socioeconomic needs or the lack of doctors.

MZs also serve as physical hubs for interaction, which is especially the case in the visited study municipalities as all of them have premises.

According to one MZ representative from Pancevo, “Some 500 people come through here on a daily basis, we have a dance school and we have a business school. All political parties use these premises [...] and all citizen associations use the conference room.”

Outreach is also deemed important in the case study municipalities. In addition to traditional bulletin boards, municipalities and MZs have introduced other forms of outreach. In some urban areas, as in Zrenjanin, MZs make use of the local media. Moreover, one MZ in Subotica has an interactive website where citizens can leave questions and receive answers via the website.²³⁸ In all of the municipalities visited, MZs are finding ways to establish their own web presence: either through own websites or Facebook pages.²³⁹ In rural MZs, such as the ones in Kula, both websites and social media as well as face-to-face contact, given the proximity of the MZ to village residents, are important. Where MZs are larger and therefore more remote they tend to establish numerous bulletin boards in different localities. A MZ in Kula has also installed public announcement equipment that plays public announcements throughout the day. The MZ in Starcevo has its own local newsletter, which is also available via their website.

A good example of accountability through outreach is also the practice of publishing annual reports. In Subotica, there is a special section of the municipal website devoted to MZs where all their basic information as well

238 For more information, see the website of MZ Palic in Subotica. Available from <www.palic-palics.rs>.

239 See, for example, the website of MZ Starcevo in Pancevo. Available from <www.starcevo.org.rs>. Also see the Facebook presence of MZ Dositej Obradovic in Zrenjanin: <https://sr-rs.facebook.com/Mesna-zajednica-Dositej-Obradovic-21727837177557/>>

as annual programmes and annual reports are available for download.²⁴⁰ Moreover, some MZs with their own websites, such as Palic, publish annual plans and reports on their website. This is also the case with some MZs in the City of Pancevo, but not for those municipalities where MZs are also obliged to report on their work on an annual basis.

In terms of the influence of MZs on local decision-making processes, the interlocutors generally agreed that such an influence is questionable. While most are invited to consultative meetings by the local governments and can use this opportunity to lobby for their interests, the interlocutors agreed that MZs, especially ones in peripheral areas, should be involved in the decision-making process. According to an interlocutor from Pancevo, representatives of the MZs are invited to attend sessions of the Municipal Assembly but cannot influence decisions directly. However, they can simultaneously be members of the Municipal Assembly and a MZ assembly.

According to one MZ representative from Pancevo, they have members in the City Assembly that can help, “put things forward and make decisions faster.”

Another representative also stressed that they are able to influence decision-making through their MZ representatives in the Municipal Assembly, “The party is not important, what we care about is that our problem is being solved.”

Other interlocutors pointed out that influence is possible by lobbying through political parties. One MZ representative said that he is a member of the ruling party and can therefore, through his connections at the municipal and state level, succeed in solving and speeding up issues. However, another interlocutor suggested that MZs should make more use of formal channels such as citizen requests submitted to municipal organs, as the authorities are obliged by law to give a response.

As stressed by the interlocutor, “Sometimes such party lines can help push things through, but mostly not; that type of informal dependency is very bad.”

According to Pavlović Križanić, Serbia’s Law on Local Elections from 2007 introduced a proportional electoral system that distributes seats on the municipal council based on the number of votes won by each party list. This domination by political parties has in effect led to rural areas being underrepresented by municipal councillors, since most politicians are from the more urban areas of each municipality or electoral unit. This has widened the gap between municipal government and rural areas²⁴¹ and further complicates the situation for rural MZs, which may not have a representative on the council to achieve the aforementioned influence via politics. Thus, the establishment of more institutionalised mechanisms of consultation between municipalities and MZs may be more important for the ‘periphery’ in terms of its ability to articulate needs.

²⁴⁰ Individual MZs can also publish their financial plans on this website. See, for example, the 2015 financial plan of MZ Aleksandrovo. Available from <<http://www.subotica.rs/index/page/lg/sr/id/8635>>

²⁴¹ Pavlović Križanić, “*Rural Governance in Serbia: Charting a Sustainable Future*” p. 141.

6.

Sub-municipal
and Community
Governance Bodies in
Croatia

6. Sub-Municipal and Community Governance Bodies in Croatia

Like Serbia and BiH, Croatia has a form of community self-governance (cr. *mjesna samouprava*) as a legacy of the Yugoslav period. However, the *mjesne zajednice* from the Yugoslav period were dismantled in the early 1990s. In their place, local boards (cr. *mjesni odbori* - MOs) and city quarters (cr. *gradske četvrti/kotarevi*) were introduced as forms of community self-governance in the mid-1990s. In the further text, the operations and functions of such bodies are scrutinised in more detail.

6.1. Legal Basis for Community Governance

6.1.1. Establishment

Article 134 of the Constitution of Croatia states that in a settlement or part of a settlement, units of community governance can be established.²⁴² Article 133 also states that citizens have the right to participate directly in local governance, via citizen assemblies, referenda and “other forms of direct participation.”²⁴³ It is not entirely clear whether community governance is considered a form of direct citizen participation under the Constitution; however, under the Law on Local and Regional Self-Government MOs are considered as, “a form of direct citizen participation in decision-making in local affairs.”²⁴⁴

Local boards are established by municipal statute, but are not obligatory. Local governments have the option to establish MOs and define their territory via a municipal act or statute. This has resulted in a wide range of MOs with varied relationships with local government.²⁴⁵ Once an initiative is put forth to establish a MO, in accordance with local government regulations, the municipal government issues an act establishing the MO. Three types of MOs can be established:

1. *Mjesni odbor* (lit. local board),
2. *Gradski kotar* (a city district established in parts of cities, e.g. Split),
3. *Gradska četvrt* (a city quarter, such as those established in Zagreb and other cities).

A MO can be established for one or more villages or settlements or a part of a larger settlement. A quarter or district is established in an area of a city that represents an “urban, economic and social whole bound together by the common interests of its citizens.”²⁴⁶

The initiative to establish a MO can come from citizens or groups of citizens, although the Law on Local and Regional Self-Government does not prescribe their number.²⁴⁷ Instead, individual municipalities define such specificities in their statutes.

242 Mirko Klarić, “*Mjesna samouprava u Republici Hrvatskoj*” [Community self-governance in the Republic of Croatia], Zbornik radova Veleučilišta u Šibeniku, ed. Onesin Cvitan, yr. 2, no. 1-2, 2008, p. 10.

243 Rešetar, Vojko, “*Mjesni odbor: predstavnik građana ili lokalnih političkih elita*” [Local board: representative of citizens or local political elites], *Hrvatska javna uprava*, 2009, p. 786.

244 “*Zakon o lokalnoj i područnoj (regionalnoj) samoupravi*” [Law on local and regional self-government], Official Gazette, numbers 33/01, 60/01, 129/05, 109/07, 125/08, 36/09, 36/09, 150/11, 144/12, 19/13 and 137/15, Article 57.

245 Rešetar, Vojko, “*Mjesna ili lokalna samouprava - isto ili različito*” [Community and local self-governance – same or different], *Hrvatska i komparativna javna uprava*, 2012, p. 796.

246 Klarić, “*Community self-governance in the Republic of Croatia*”, pp. 11-12.

247 Article 58 of the Law on Local and Regional Self-Government.

The Law gives municipalities considerable freedom to define the modes of community governance within their territory. Municipal statutes are also expected to identify the tasks that MOs will be allocated, their level of competence, basic rules of engagement, their mode of funding and such like. Each MO writes its own rulebook and passes acts that more precisely define their work.

Given that the criteria for the establishment of MOs is not outlined in the Law on Local and Regional Self-Government, there are significant variations in terms of the territory and population size that MOs encompass. Koprić cited a number of examples of this:

- The City of Slavonski Brod has approximately 4,038 people per MO.
- The Municipality of Dragalić has approximately 214 people per MO.
- The City of Rijeka has 4,358 people per MO.
- The Municipality of Lovran has 3,987 people per MO.
- The City of Vrbovec has 368 people per MO.
- The Municipality of Preseka has 139 people per MO.²⁴⁸

Table 9, below, outlines the purpose and procedure of establishment in the case study municipalities.

	Purpose of Establishment	Procedures
Kastav	Local boards are established as “forms of community self-government to achieve the direct participation of citizens in decision-making on local affairs.” Established for a part of a town/city that in relation to other parts contains a separate delimited whole. ²⁴⁹	Establishment of MOs can be initiated and proposed by: - 10% of voters from the proposed area, - organisations and citizen associations (by written request sent to the mayor), - mayor. The mayor forwards a request to the municipal council, which decides on the formation. ²⁵⁰
Rijeka	Local boards are established as a, “form of direct participation of citizens in decision-making on local affairs of direct and daily influence on the life and work of citizens.” Established for a city area that in relation to other parts constitutes a separate delimited whole. ²⁵¹	Establishment of MOs can be initiated and proposed by: - 10% of voters from the proposed area, - organisations and citizen associations, - working bodies of a town/city council, - mayor. The town/city council and mayor determine whether the initiative is lawful prior to issuing an act establishing the MO. The town/city council adopts a decision on the area, borders and the seat of the MO with prior opinion of citizens from the area. ²⁵²
Zagreb	Established as, “forms of community self-government used by citizens to participate in decision-making on affairs within the scope of self-government as well as local affairs that directly and daily affect their life and work.” ²⁵³ Quarters are established for a territory that represents a town/city, economic and social whole tied by common interests of citizens. Boards are established on the territory of the quarters. ²⁵⁴	The borders of quarters/boards and seats are determined by a town/city decision. The town/city establishes the quarters. ²⁵⁵ Establishment of MOs can be initiated and proposed by: - citizens and their organisations and associations within the area of the proposed board submit their request to the council of the town/city quarter. The council provides its opinion and submits it to the town/city mayor. - The council of the town/city quarter. The city council decides on the formation of the boards. ²⁵⁶

Table 9: Purposes and procedures for the establishment of MOs in the case studies in Croatia

248 Koprić Ivan, “Stanje lokalne samouprave u Hrvatskoj” [State of local self-government in Croatia], Hrvatska javna uprava, 2010, p. 673.

249 Town of Kastav, “Statut grada Kastva” [Statute of the town of Kastav], Official Gazette of the Primorsko-Goranska County, 26/09, Article 69.

250 Ibid, articles 71-72.

251 City of Rijeka, “Statut Grada Rijeka” [Statute of the City of Rijeka], Official Gazette of the Primorsko-Goranska County, numbers 24/09, 11/10 and 5/13 and Official Gazette of the City of Rijeka no. 7/14, articles 78-79.

252 Ibid, articles 81-82.

253 City of Zagreb, “Statut Grada Zagreba” [Statute of the City of Zagreb], Official Gazette of the City of Zagreb, harmonised version, numbers 10/04, 18/05, 2/06, 18/06, 7/09, 16/09, 25/09, 10/10 and 4/13, Article 77.

254 Ibid, Article 79.

255 Ibid, Article 79.

256 Ibid, article 94-95.

In the three case study cities/municipality, the initiation of the establishment of local boards (and quarters) took place in different ways. An interlocutor in Kastav explained that citizens, through a combined initiative of political parties and citizens, initiated the formation of boards by submitting a significant number of signatures to the town administration. Local boards were only established two years ago.

Local boards were established in Rijeka (and essentially replaced MZs) through a city council decision in 1994, following the passing of the 1993 Law on local government.

In Zagreb, which is considered an unique case in Europe because it has two tiers of sub-municipal government (in the meantime, some other Croatian cities have also established both city quarters and local boards),²⁵⁷ there are both city quarters and MOs. Zagreb did not have any form of community self-government between 1994 and 2000. Through a City initiative, seventeen city quarters were established in 2000.

The quarters are, according to one interlocutor, very large in terms of the population and territory they encompass. While the average number of residents per quarter amounts to 45,832,²⁵⁸ there are great variations in the population of quarters: ranging between 12,000 and 80,000. In 2009, the City decided to introduce 218 local boards. These boards cover the larger city districts in accordance with the former territorial delineations of the MZs, thus forming a two-tier community governance structure. The number of MOs in a quarter ranges from five to forty-six, while the average population of urban MOs is 3,574. However, there are large discrepancies in their population: the 'smallest' MO counts only 74 residents and the largest circa 13,000 residents.

A Croatian government investigation into the transparency of local and regional governance showed that MOs are established in 69.69 per cent of towns and municipalities, which amounts to 3,997 MOs.²⁵⁹ Yet according to one expert interviewed for this study, community governance functions in most local units exist only on paper and are deemed unnecessary. This can be attributed to the fact that a large number of local units have less than 5,000 citizens (over 80%) and therefore, as MZs during the socialist period were as large as today's municipalities in Croatia, forming units of community self-governance inside them may not make sense.

6.1.2. Legal Status

MOs in Croatia are legal persons.²⁶⁰ All legal persons with public authority can, according to the Law on Civil Servants and Employees in Local and Regional Self-Government, use the official stamp of the country and therefore this includes MOs.²⁶¹

This legal status also implies that MOs have the right to make their own rules and regulations, and to decide on the way they use their property and funds, although, as Hrženjak states, this level of autonomy is rarely respected in practice.²⁶²

According to an interlocutor from Zagreb, the Law on Local and Regional Self-Government is somewhat contradictory and creates problems in practice. Local boards are considered to be legal persons under the Law,

257 In total, we identified 16 cities that have both in Croatia.

258 Koprić Ivan, "State of local self-government in Croatia", p. 673.

259 "Rezultati istraživanja o transparentnosti rada lokalnih i regionalnih jedinica" [Results of research on transparency of work of local and regional units], Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Croatia, 2015. Available from <<https://pravosudje.gov.hr/istaknute-teme/antikorupcija-6154/rezultati-istrazivanja-o-transparentnosti-rada-lokalnih-i-regionlanih-jedinica/7644>>

260 Article 66 of the Law on Local and Regional Self-Government.

261 "Zakon o službenicima i namještenicima u lokalnoj i područnoj (regionalnoj) samoupravi" [Law on Civil Servants and Employees in Local and Regional Self-Government], Official Gazette of the Republic of Croatia, numbers 86/08 and 61/11, Article 52.

262 Hrženjak, Juraj, "Ustrojstvo i funkcioniranje mjesne samouprave u Gradu Zagrebu" [Organisation and functioning of community self-governance in the City of Zagreb], Hrvatska i komparativna javna uprava, 2011, pp. 51-52.

but are financed through the budget of the local self-government units.

According to the interlocutor, “if you do not give them their own sources of financing what kind of legal persons are they? [...] They consume this legal statehood, but in other ways. They have own finances as part of the [local] budget and independently dispose with these funds. They do not have property but have premises for work given to them by the City, they have their organisation.”

6.1.3. Organs

The two organs of MOs are the MO council (*vijeće*), a representative body, and the president of the council. The council is chosen by citizens from the local area through direct secret ballot. Candidates can be residents from a given area who have voting rights and councillors are elected for a four-year mandate.

The main task of the council is to represent the citizens in its area and as such it proposes the plan of work for the MO, the rules of the MO and publishes information about its work, a financial plan and the end of year accounts.²⁶³ Yet each municipality is free to define the tasks and size of their own MOs. MOs can also have various working groups, on a long-term or temporary basis, to work on specific topics of interest to the local community. The president, on the other hand, represents the MO council.²⁶⁴

The precise definition of how these organs are organised is further outlined in the city statutes. The Statute of the City of Zagreb, for example, defines that the councils of city quarters can have between eleven and nineteen members, depending on the population size within the city quarter,²⁶⁵ whereas MOs, according to a City decision, can have between five and eleven members, depending on the population size.²⁶⁶ The total number of councilpersons in both tiers of community self-government in Zagreb is 1,639.

According to a representative of a city quarter, “There is a total of 121 persons [in the quarter and MO councils on the territory of the quarter] [...] This is a good concept, so that problems on the ground that happen on a daily level that can be noticed, such as communal problems are noticeable to members that reside [in neighbourhoods], who report them to the council.”

Some MOs visited in the case study municipalities have their own working bodies. In Rijeka, for example, three MOs that were visited had different thematic boards covering areas such as culture, sports, communal affairs, environmental affairs and public health. These thematic boards are made up of councilpersons and some outsiders, such as volunteers that want to become involved. They cooperate with the MO council and with outside stakeholders like communal service providers.

As such, MOs and quarters do not have ‘executive’ bodies as is the case in some Serbian MZs or former Yugoslav MZs. Hrženjak, writing about the case of Zagreb, argues that the lack of an executive body in the MOs’ organisational structure is a problem, because such a body could suggest, pass and implement decisions.²⁶⁷ However, similar concerns were not voiced by interlocutors in the case studies.

263 Article 61 of the Law on Local and Regional Self-Government.

264 Ibid, Article 62.

265 Ibid, Article 81.

266 City of Zagreb, “*Odluka o izborima članova vijeća gradskih četvrti i članova vijeća mjesnih odbora*” [Decision on the election of members of councils of city quarters and local boards], Official Gazette of the City of Zagreb, no. 4/13.

267 Hrženjak, “*Organization and functioning of community self-governance in the City of Zagreb*”, pp. 61-62.

6.1.4. Elections

The Law on Local and Regional Self-Government states that local governments with established MOs are obliged to hold elections for their council and that these elections are to be called by the local government assembly. The council is elected directly by citizens for a four-year mandate and following this the newly established MO council votes among its members on the president of the MO council, who is also given a four-year mandate.²⁶⁸

Most interlocutors from the case study municipalities agreed that the current system guarantees the representation of different interests within the community, citing that both political lists and independent/citizen candidate lists can be submitted (with a given number of signatures) for MO elections. A interlocutor in Zagreb noted that all of the larger parties are represented at the level of community governance in the city. However, an expert interviewed for this research was concerned by the fact that party politics has infiltrated community governance. The expert believed that some interests that citizens would like to see represented are neglected under the present political system and that this has lowered the representation of independent lists in elections and independent candidates on MO councils.

There are also procedural obstacles, because the proportional electoral system requires lists with a number of candidates equal to the number of seats in the representative body. In the case of Zagreb, this means that fifty-one persons need to become candidates for a given MO and this is almost as large as a political party. An expert interviewed explained that it is unlikely that independent lists will pass the electoral threshold of 5 per cent. They tend to receive some 20 per cent of support from those that vote but are only able to gain 10 per cent of seats in elections, which means that 50 per cent of the support they receive falls through.

“This means that the interests of the community are not represented, but rather of political parties that nominate their own people and then distribute seats, influence and, where a local unit of self-governance can afford it, compensation [for their work].”

Another interviewed expert agreed by stating that the current system does not guarantee the representation of citizens, “but oligarchies of those who deliberate in the name of citizens.”

Given the voluntary nature of the work of council members in some cities (such as in Rijeka), the interlocutors stressed that people who run for office are usually those that want to volunteer. Generally, MO representatives in Rijeka appeared happy with the quality of involvement of council members.

“We are not professionals, we are not paid. We are people of good will, we are in love with our quarter and this is the basis of everything [...] We do not have any members that do not come, we have a good council.”

Yet many stressed that the level of voting in community elections is not very high. According to a municipal representative, in the last MO elections in Rijeka only 13 per cent of eligible voters cast their ballots. Different experts cite a number of reasons for such a low level of interest in voting for community governance.

Rešetar argues that the fact that MO elections occur under party lists points to a weakening of the underlying democratic principles of MOs. He argues that the voting that takes place for MO councils is mainly symbolic – part of the ‘political folklore’ – and that this is in part a reflection of the capture by political parties that has lowered citizen participation.²⁶⁹

268 Articles 61 and 62 of the Law on Local and Regional Self-Government.

269 Rešetar Vojko, “Istraživanje mjesne samouprave i neposrednog sudjelovanja građana u javnim poslovima na mjesnoj razini” [Research on community self-governance and direct participation of citizens in public affairs at the community level], Hrvatska i komparativna javna uprava, 2011, pp. 89-90.

An expert interviewed for this research agreed that, “Every form of community self-governance has its own council with elected representatives of citizens. We have so-called community elections and in these elections the turnout of citizens is extremely small, if there is a turnout greater than 10 per cent this is considered a success. This indicates how unimportant the whole thing is in the eyes of citizens, but it has somehow legitimised political parties to enter this space and nominate their people and these people receive some compensation [...] in Zagreb, on an annual basis, twenty-five million Kuna [circa 3.2 million EUR] is spent for compensation for all these councilpersons.”

According to the expert, those who profit most from the current system of community self-governance are the political parties. The parties provide their novices or those at the lowest rung of the party ladder with an opportunity to be educated and selected as good politicians to nominate for local elections.

“We should not be paying for the education of political parties. There are funds that political parties legally receive from the state [...] What we need is the political education of citizens.”

Another expert interviewed was of the opinion that political parties should be, “kicked out of the process.” The expert also believed that the presence of intermediaries in communal self-government is a negation of the concept of self-government.

“[...] citizens do not need such communal self-government, but political parties do in order to seize it. It is structured as a kind of conglomerate of parties that supposedly build some legitimacy in some elections, while turnout is the worst in MOs.”

According to the expert, community self-governance could build social cohesion and social relations.

“Instead of building a political system from community self-governance we are building it from the top.”

6.1.5. Decision-Making Procedures

The MO council makes decisions on specific acts and plans, such as its work plan, financial plan, rulebook and other crucial documents. They can also call a citizen assembly in order to discuss the needs and interests of citizens, which will give suggestions on various questions of communal importance. An assembly can be called for all or part of an MO's territory and is led by the council president or a MO councillor.²⁷⁰ However, in terms of the power of their decisions, they are not mandatory for the municipality and therefore the role of a MO is in essence an advisory one rather than an executive.

The interlocutors in Rijeka stated that the council has to hold a session once in three months, but that in practice they have a session on average once a month. A representative explained that a given issue is initiated at a session but that activities take place all month and have to be realised by the next session. Representatives from Kastav also said that the MOs meet once a month: the session minutes are published on the Municipality's website. Decisions are usually adopted through a majority vote. In the case of Zagreb, in order to vote on important decisions, such as the financial plan, annual execution report, change of regulations or a plan of ‘small communal actions’, the majority of all quarter members has to be present at a session and majority vote applies.

Annual work plans are an important task for the councils of the MOs and quarters visited in the case studies. In Zagreb and Rijeka, special attention is devoted to identifying priorities for so-called ‘small communal actions’. According to an interlocutor from a city quarter in Zagreb, plans are created based on requests by MOs, individ-

²⁷⁰ Article 63 of the Law on Local and Regional Self-Government.

uals and all institutions, “We animate them during the summer to report their needs.” The quarter then sends a list of priorities to the City for approval.

One interviewed expert expressed suspicion over whether plans for ‘small communal actions’ truly identify the needs of citizens in an inclusive manner.

6.1.6. Local Government Oversight

Local government oversight of MOs is done by the mayor of a local government, as defined in the Law and repeated in the city statutes. Such oversight can in fact be perceived as rather strong: mayors have the right to dismiss the LB’s council if it is found to act in contradiction with the law, city statute or other city acts or if it fails to carry out the tasks delegated to it.²⁷¹ As previously mentioned, the president of the MO council is responsible to the municipal mayor for the implementation of any tasks delegated to the MOs from the purview of local government.²⁷²

Some municipalities and cities, such as Zagreb or Rijeka, have special departments on communal self-governance that monitor the activities of these bodies and report to the mayor. According to a city representative from Zagreb, up until now there has only been one occasion when the Mayor had to intervene: when a city quarter president refused to call a session. In general, the Mayor is kept informed about the activities of communal self-government through a coordination body. This body was established in accordance with the Statute of the City of Zagreb and is comprised of the presidents of the councils of the city quarters and the Mayor and the President of the City Assembly.²⁷³ The Coordination body meetings take place on a monthly basis.

6.2. Resources and Capacities for Community Governance

The Law on Local Self-Government does not define how community self-governance units are financed. Rather, it is foreseen that individual local governments, inasmuch as they have MOs, will define how MOs are financed via local acts. This means that MO funding is entirely dependent on the cities and municipalities. Local governments are also responsible for ensuring that inasmuch as they delegate certain tasks from their competence to MOs the funding necessary for their completion is also provided.²⁷⁴ Cities and municipalities also define the criteria upon which MO funding is based through particular acts.²⁷⁵ MOs also have the right to apply for project funding. The National Foundation for Civil Society Development, for example, has tenders for which MOs are entitled to apply for the co-financing of projects.²⁷⁶

MO funding is often mixed in municipal acts with funding for small communal infrastructure projects, which is one of the crucial MO activities in Croatia. In general, funding for ‘small communal actions’ may be spent on activities such as small-scale construction projects (e.g. playgrounds or parks), maintenance of public areas or communal infrastructure not conducted by the municipality and such like.

Table 10, below, shows the resources that MOs/quarters in the three case study municipalities have at their disposal.

271 Ibid, Article 64.

272 Ibid, article 60.

273 City of Zagreb, Article 91 of the Statute of the City of Zagreb.

274 Article 60 of the Law on Local and Regional Self-Government.

275 Hrženjak, “*Organization and functioning of community self-governance in the City of Zagreb*”, p. 54.

276 Rešetar, “*Research on community self-governance*,” p. 26.

	Kastav	Rijeka	Zagreb
Sources of finance	Municipal budget to fund MO work. Additional funding can come from donations (e.g. sponsorships).	City budget. The City offers funding equivalent to the donations that MOs obtain (up to 5,000 Kuna or 650 EUR), but they must be planned. MOs can also apply for the <i>Rijeka Local Partnership Programme</i> (up to 30,000 Kuna or 3,900 EUR) if they fulfil the criterion of a 10% community contribution.	City budget (small communal actions). Rarely financed from other sources (e.g. donations).
Annual budget		The City funds the realisation of the MO programme of activities (20,000 Kuna or 2,600 EUR per MO), the cost of MO council representation and volunteer citizen actions. Extra funds for MOs are based on special city programmes. ²⁷⁷	It varies between city quarters: the largest allocation in the past year amounted to 25 million Kuna (3.2 million EUR).
Human resources	No employees. A secretary within the municipal administration helps with administrative tasks (the minutes and announcements).	Secretaries (24 for 34 MOs). Volunteers in some MOs become involved in different activities. The City finances symbolic reimbursements to MO councilors (150 Kuna or 20 EUR per month for presidents and 100 Kuna or 13 EUR for council members).	City employees work in quarter offices and provide support to quarters and MOs. Representatives of MOs and quarter councils receive compensation for their work. A total of 125 employees of the City's Department for Community Self-Governance support the activities of the units.
Other resources	Some MOs have their own premises that are financed by the municipality, others hold meetings in city administration building.	Premises (office for secretary, meeting room for the council, large hall for activities and assemblies) owned by the City, equipment, financed by the City. A MO can issue an opinion on the use of premises to NGOs, citizens and others. The City finances the upkeep of office spaces, rent and other costs such as office material and the purchase and upkeep of technological equipment.	All boards and quarters have premises provided for and mostly owned by the City (a total of 225 objects). The City finances maintenance, utilities and equipment.

Table 10: *Financial and other resources of the case study municipalities*

According to one MO representative from Rijeka, in addition to budgetary funding of 20,000 Kuna for their annual programme of activities, they are able to obtain small donations that the City offers as an additional incentive to the amount of 5,000 Kuna. Moreover, the MO has also applied to different programmes of the City of Rijeka in the realms of culture, sport and entrepreneurship. Through this the MO has gathered smaller funding for its own initiatives in these realms (e.g. up to 900 EUR to publish a book and small funding to cover awards to citizens in a competition for the nicest yard).

²⁷⁷ City of Rijeka, "Odluka o načinu financiranja djelatnosti mjesnih odbora na području Grada Rijeke" [Decision on the means of financing the tasks of local boards on the territory of the City of Rijeka] Official Gazette of the Primorsko-Goranska County, no. 14/13.

As elaborated by the MO representative, “[Funding] is parsimonious, overall. And there is lots of volunteer work.”

An interesting model to evaluate MO expenditure has been put in place wherein for every activity that the MOs implement there are independent committees established by the city administration, involving representatives of the media, NGOs and different departments of the city administration, that judge the activities of the MOs in line with set criteria. For example, they are not allowed to spend more than 50 per cent on representation and citizen engagement and volunteerism is assessed.

In Kastav, the work of the MO is financed directly through the municipal budget and the MO does not receive any funding. Citizens, through MOs, may find donations (e.g. sponsorships), but an interviewed representative of the MO stated that as yet they have not had such an opportunity. Funding received from the Municipality is spent on the work of the MO and smaller activities such as the beautification of promenades, funding humanitarian packages for citizens in social need.

Municipalities differ in the ways that funding is allocated for communal actions. In Rijeka, for instance, 11 million Kuna or 1.5 million EUR is spent on communal activities on an annual basis. Rijeka ensures 80 per cent of the taxes on apartments, houses and garages in the MO area are allocated for ‘small communal actions’. These funds are divided among MOs according to their territorial size, population size and number of successful actions. While priorities may be set by MOs, this funding is not for their operations. Rather the City plans and executes these actions. This is also the case in Kastav, where the Municipality invites the MOs to consult with citizens and deliver their priorities to the municipal councils during the process of budget planning.

In Zagreb, the model of financing communal self-government is very different. Every quarter council has its own funding defined by the budget that it can dispose of freely and their expenditure, which is decided on at the meetings of quarter councils with proposals by the MOs. ‘Small communal actions’ are carried out by the relevant city department. However, these delegated tasks are mostly limited to small communal actions.²⁷⁸ Through discussions with MO councilors in Zagreb, Hrženjak found that city quarters rely completely on the funds allocated for ‘small communal actions’.²⁷⁹

Funding for ‘small communal actions’ in Zagreb is allocated from the city budget as defined by a City Council decision (5% of the budget realised in the previous year). This amount is divided up in such a way that 60 per cent of the resources is allocated to a given city quarter in line with the population size, 30 per cent in accordance with the state of communal infrastructure in that city council and 10 per cent on the basis of the geographical territory of a given city quarter. Funds for communal actions are used both to fund the operations of quarters and boards, and activities.

As mentioned by one interlocutor, the funding for certain city quarters is larger than the budget of some cities in Croatia. One of them amounts to 25 million Kuna (3.2 million EUR).

Yet authors argue that the latest wave of decentralisation in Croatia has left MOs with much less financial autonomy than under the previous system. Since the resources for the work of MOs is entirely in the hands of the local budget, the level of funding depends on the will of the municipal representative body and on the availability of funds in the municipality itself. The survey conducted with local government representatives points out that MOs/quarters are overwhelmingly financed through the local budget: out of 63 respondents that said their municipality/city had such units, 52 said that all of their MOs/quarters are financed through the municipal/city budget. There were very few instances, according to survey results, of such bodies being funded through higher level grants, own fees, donations or other contributions.

²⁷⁸ Hrženjak, “*Organization and functioning of community self-governance in the City of Zagreb*,” p. 53.

²⁷⁹ Ibid, p. 67.

As explained by one interlocutor, the legal subjectivity that MOs have is more formal in nature, because they do not have their own property or funding. MOs can earn revenue from short-term leasing or rental of the property belonging to them and many cities have regulations on this possibility. Legally, MOs do have the right to decide on how to use their property, although as Hrženjak points out, MOs rarely have much property in practice.²⁸⁰ MOs rarely have their own sources of income and, as Koprić points out, the property that was confiscated from community organisations in the Yugoslav system (MOs' predecessors) was never returned to them.²⁸¹

According to the results of the conducted survey, 89.5 per cent of respondents from Croatia said that MOs/quarters do not have employees. In those cases where respondents said that they did have them, in four cases they had from 1-5 employees, in one case between 6-10 and in one case more than 10 employees. Generally speaking, if MOs do have staff members then their salaries come from municipal funding. Moreover, 43 out of the 63 survey respondents (as representatives of municipalities/cities where community governance units exist) said that all of their MOs/quarters were given premises to use by local government or another institution/organisation. Very few pointed to such bodies having premises they owned or rented. If they have them, MOs are legally allowed to decide autonomously on how to use their premises. In some cities, local acts prescribe that the local government is obliged to provide a workspace for MOs (e.g. Velika Gorica).²⁸² In terms of other forms of capacity, such as technical equipment, internet access or own websites, this was far from common, at least judging by the survey results.²⁸³

As Khan Mohmand and Misić Mihaljović observed, the original process of decentralisation also meant that, "MZ employees were transferred to other working posts [and...] only a few municipalities continued to support the work of MZs, for example, by paying a salary to one employee and partially covering expenses for office maintenance."²⁸⁴

A city representative from Rijeka explained that with the adoption of a local government law in 1993 that established local boards as bodies of community self-government in place of MZs, "we took all former workers of the MZs in [to work for the administration] and attempted to adapt the organisation in line with the new legal provisions." This transition was done in consultation with former secretaries and presidents of councils and assemblies.

According to an interlocutor from Zagreb, "When they [quarters and boards] emerged, citizens perceived them as former MZs, but this had nothing to do with MZs except for territorial organisation and objects that were used, which the city took and gave [quarters and boards] to use. MZs used to have their own source of funding, their assemblies used to make executive decisions. This is more advisory in nature."

An interlocutor from Rijeka thought that the change from MZs to MOs had actually improved the situation for the secretaries that work in these units, arguing that now they all have equal pay and working conditions. Therefore, the material and technical aspects of the work of MOs, at least in this case, have been strengthened.

The technical capacities of MOs vary in urban and rural settings. In research conducted by the Croatian judiciary, only 39.13 per cent of the polled municipalities responded that their local boards had functional websites.²⁸⁵ Again, there were wide variations between MOs. Their web presence usually relates to the size of their popu-

280 Ibid, p. 53.

281 Koprić, "State of local self-government in Croatia."

282 City of Velika Gorica, "Statut Grada Velike Gorice" [Statute], Official Gazette of the City of Velika Gorica, numbers 10/09 and 9/12a, Article 70.

283 For example, only 12 respondents out of 63 that had MOs/quarters said 'all' of their MOs/quarters had technical equipment, only 8 said 'all' of them had internet access and 2 that 'all' units had their own website. Here, respondents tended to opt for the option 'a few of them' more frequently.

284 Khan Mohmand and Misić Mihaljović, "Connecting Citizens to the State", p. 14.

285 Ministry of Justice, "Results of research on the transparency of the work of local and regional units".

lation and the amount to which the population uses the Internet as well as the MOs financial means, including human resources.²⁸⁶ As observed by Bajok and Skorić, there are motivational contests for MOs in Rijeka that include the best MO and the best MO webpages that incorporate criteria such as “the promotion of a webpage, available content and information, accurate and new content, visible impressions, innovations (interactive content, etc.).”²⁸⁷

Experts interviewed for this research stressed that the lack of financial resources of local boards is one of the main reasons why citizens do not choose to these bodies as a venue for participation. Moreover, they stressed that their dependence on the municipality for finance means that it is more likely, when budgetary resources are tight, that the local authority will spend less on community governance rather than on its own administration. They also believed that generally there is too much room for political discretion when deciding how funding will be disbursed to community governance units.

6.3. Service Delivery and other Tasks/Activities

MOs, in addition to acting as facilitators of citizen participation in local decision-making, can act in different realms within their local communities, although the level of activity or potential service provision is based on municipal acts. According to the Law on Local and Regional Self-Government, municipal statutes regulate the scope and authority of MOs. This means that their tasks can vary widely. The most commonly mentioned areas where MOs are to play a role were economic, social, health, sport and recreation, and civil safety.

Some of the main activities that currently come under the purview of MOs in Croatia are the previously mentioned ‘small communal actions’. These include the, “ building, upkeep and renovation of smaller objects of communal infrastructure and public objects that are not included in other programmes like green spaces, parks and playgrounds.”²⁸⁸ In the Statute of the City of Zagreb ‘small communal actions’ include connecting water supply, sewerage, gas, electricity, TV network distribution, green spaces, parks, playgrounds, roads, paths, fountains, public wells and religious, cultural and sports objects.²⁸⁹

The Zagreb statute stipulates that community units in Zagreb are tasked with, “considering questions of direct and daily effect on the life and work of citizens in the area, especially when it comes to the organisation of settlements, protection of children, young people, the elderly and the health, cultural and sports needs of citizens.”²⁹⁰ Community units in Zagreb are also tasked with organising civil protection.

Croatian MOs in general can, “implement activities from the municipal social programmes (such as improving the quality of life of persons with disabilities), health programmes (for example, conducting simple health tests for free or raising health awareness) and culture and sports policies.”²⁹¹

However, it is uncertain to what extent Croatian MOs actually provide services or have any executive powers to do so. The survey results, for example, show that in only a very few instances do MOs appear to provide some sort of administrative, communal, social or civil protection or other services.²⁹² According to a media report, some representatives of Croatian MOs complain that they have neither the funding nor the authority to undertake even the smallest of infrastructural projects, such as the building of a playground. One MO representative

286 Bajok Igor and Vanja Škorić, “Connected Communities: How Can Local Governments Initiate, Enable, and Support Citizen Participation in Public Decision-making?”, in *Citizen Participation in Southeastern Europe*, ed. Vivien Lowndes, Budapest: Open Society Foundation, 2012, p. 85.

287 Ibid, p.89.

288 GONG, “Pazin, budget”.

289 Article 82 of the Statute of the City of Zagreb.

290 Ibid, Article 83.

291 Khan Mohmand and Misic Mihajlovic, “Connecting Citizens to the State,” p. 20.

292 For example, the most dominant types of services appeared to be social and safety protection. For social services (e.g. elderly care, childcare), ten respondents said that ‘all’ of their MOs/quarters provided such services, three said that ‘most do’, and 11 that ‘a few do’. In the realm of safety protection, 15 respondents said ‘all’ of their MOs/quarters provided such services, four said that ‘most’ of them did and six that ‘a few’ of them did.

from Zagreb argued that even when MOs do have authority over certain tasks they rarely have the funds to complete them, which leads to alienation of citizen in relation to the decision-making process.²⁹³

Table 11, below, illustrates the types of activities that local boards and city quarters undertake in the case study municipalities.

Kastav	Rijeka	Zagreb
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Communication of requests (predominantly communal/ infrastructure) to local authorities. - Organisation of cultural activities (e.g. events), provision of humanitarian help and very small communal activities. <p>No formal services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Some 200 small programme activities for all 34 MOs, including activities within the domain of culture, sport, ecology, health (e.g. events, tournaments, awards, workshops, clean-ups and blood drives), frequently in cooperation with associations, schools, health providers, etc. - Communication of issues/ requests (predominantly communal/infrastructure) to city authorities. <p>No formal services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Predominantly 'small communal actions'. - Communication of issues/ requests (predominantly communal/infrastructure) to city authorities. <p>No formal services.</p>

Table 11: *Services and tasks performed in the case study communities in Croatia*

In Rijeka, the role of an organiser of a number of socio-cultural activities is combined with the role of a communicator/mediator for predominantly communal or infrastructure requests by the community to the local authorities and communal enterprises. The MOs do not have the resources or powers to solve communal issues, but do advise the City on what types of communal activities could be funded (e.g. one pointed out that they have 27 priorities for 2016, including a children's playground).

Quarters in Zagreb have funding through small communal actions to solve smaller issues in line with community requests, but rely on the city authorities for greater investments.

As one quarter representative elaborated, "We have many needs and we request a lot, but a lot of it is not taken into account. We attempt to achieve that at least the issues with the greatest priority are adopted [by the city council]."

A representative of another quarter council from Zagreb added, "Our job is to coordinate all of it, to sensitise citizens concerning what the priorities are, that infrastructural issues are tackled first and then all other activities."

Nevertheless, the interlocutors pointed out that socio-cultural activities, especially in Rijeka, are common. The survey results also show that activities such as organising sports and cultural activities appear to be common. Of the respondents that said that their local government has boards/quarters 25 out of 63 also said that all of these units in their municipality organise, for example, sports and cultural events. Moreover, 19 said that most of these units organise educational workshops for the community.

²⁹³ "Mjesni odbori: Nemamo ovlasti čak ni za popravak sprava u parku", *Večernji List*, 19/3/2013. Available from <<http://www.vecernji.hr/zg-vijesti/mjesni-odbori-nemamo-ovlasti-cak-ni-za-popravak-sprava-u-parku-526369>>

Municipalities can delegate tasks from their competence to MOs, but such a practice is not that common. This is supported by the survey results where 80.3 per cent of respondents answered that no task delegation had occurred in their municipality/city/town.²⁹⁴ An expert explained that there are essentially no tasks that can be considered as an original competence of community self-governance in Croatia, because under the Law such units are exclusively forms of citizen participation. If some delegation does occur then these are basic tasks such as 'small communal actions'.

The case study municipalities and cities had not delegated any tasks to boards or quarters. According to a municipal representative from Kastav, the technical and financial possibilities do not allow it.

"Maybe someday MOs will be able to organise childcare or find accommodation for the elderly and so on. [...] there is not so many of us to have to decentralise [...] and it is questionable whether that would be cheaper and better. For now, dealing with the communal spectrum [of issues] should work quite well."

One quarter representative in Zagreb explained that the only type of competence that could be considered as devolved is the ability to decide on whether or not a request or issue (e.g. a traffic problem in a neighbourhood) is valid. What this quarter tends to do in such cases is conduct a survey at the level of the particular local board and if the issue is agreed upon forward a request to the municipality to solve the issue (e.g. the placement of traffic signs). Another representative agreed that forwarding requests is essentially the main competence of local boards and quarters.

Whether the role of local boards and quarter councils should be strengthened in terms of their tasks is disputed. While some authors and experts, as pointed out earlier, find that a lack of competence leads to a lack of interest among citizens (and thus relevance) in such organisations, one interlocutor pointed out that the existence of too many independent subjects that can decide on everything in their territory would be against the idea of a city as an administrative and territorial (centralised) whole that grants greater control. It is essentially a matter of perceived purpose, because if the core task of the MOs and quarters is to hear and channel the needs of citizens to the local authorities then the current lack of more substantial tasks, such as services, makes sense.

Community self-governance in its present form in Croatia cannot be considered a form of decentralised governance, but it is also questionable to what extent they are able to perform their function of citizen engagement. According to one expert, it is because of their lack of competence and resources that citizens do not engage through them.

"Citizens will tell you that MZs used to be good, unlike what we have today, because once they were able to solve local problems and now they basically cannot. Whether there can be a change of institution, not in the normative sense but in terms of a change in the concept, is a matter of political decision."

According to the expert, only a decision that would make sub-local community governance responsible for certain tasks and provide them with a source of income would make this institution "somewhat meaningful". The costs currently incurred by these institutions – through compensations to board and quarter members throughout the country – do not produce enough results to justify them.

²⁹⁴ See also Hrženjak, "Organization and functioning of community self-governance in the City of Zagreb," p. 66.

6.4. Cooperation and Coordination

Cooperation and coordination in community self-governance units took on different forms in the visited case studies. In Rijeka and Zagreb, the city authorities have instituted departments for community self-governance that provide assistance to boards (and quarters) and collaborate with them on a regular basis. The Department for Community Self-Governance in the City of Zagreb, for example, is legally bound to provide technical and administrative support to MO/quarter councils in their work. It is foreseen that the Department will ensure that its employees are adequately trained and informed to be able to work with the units and that they are placed around various city quarters/MOs so that each unit receives assistance for at least several hours or a day. Councils can also ask for assistance from other municipal organs.²⁹⁵

Moreover, as previously mentioned, the Statute of the City of Zagreb states that the mayor, the head of the city council, and the president of the quarter council should coordinate with each other. This coordination involves discussion on questions important to the MOs as well as possible conflict. As explained by a city representative, this meeting should take place once a month. The head of the municipal service for community governance takes part, although without any decision-making authority.²⁹⁶ A quarter representative assessed this as an efficient venue for problem solving. In Rijeka, representatives of MOs stressed good cooperation with the city authorities.

As explained by a City representative in Rijeka, “When we formed the MOs we wanted to have a partnership, because we are doing the same job. It is in the interests of the city to take into account the needs of its citizens [...] The cooperation of citizens, council members, secretaries and the city services is good [...] We solve problems jointly.”

In some cities, such as in Rijeka, MOs also have a very good level of cooperation with a myriad of different civil society associations as well as service providers with whom they organise a number of activities. Here, joint involvement in a number of socio-cultural activities (e.g. with schools or cultural institutions) was especially highlighted.

A quarter representative from Zagreb also pointed to good cooperation with other stakeholders in the community, “We have 22 facilities in our city quarter and all associations, organisations and others can use them by filing requests and we give them the premises to use free of charge. This way, we have over a thousand users.”

In Kastav, local authorities have named a coordinator within the municipal administration to work with MOs. Every Tuesday at 3 p.m. representatives of the MO councils can meet with the designated municipal department responsible for issues of the greatest interest for citizens (presently, these are mainly communal issues) in order to provide MOs with direct feedback as to the status of a given request.

The Statute of the City of Zagreb also foresees that city quarters and MOs organise their own coordination, with the president of the quarter council as the head of coordination.²⁹⁷ In the other two municipalities, community units appeared to have good cooperation.

According to a MO representative from Kastav, “I am always insisting that we presidents jointly agree upon certain issues and then address the city administration, because I want to see whether or not we ‘breathe’ in the same way. Cooperation is very good.”

²⁹⁵ Hrženjak, “*Organization and functioning of community self-governance in the City of Zagreb*,” p. 53.

²⁹⁶ Article 91 of the Statute of the City of Zagreb.

²⁹⁷ Ibid, Article 101.

The survey results appear to corroborate such views on cooperation. For example, out of the 63 respondents that said that their local government had some form of community governance 38 respondents also said that all such units cooperate and coordinate with local government, 12 said that most of them do and 8 said that only a few of them do. The respondents also pointed to cooperation between community governance units (albeit to a lesser extent), non-governmental organisations and public service providers.

6.5. Mechanisms for Citizen participation in Local Decision-making

According to the Law on Local and Regional Self-Government, citizens have the right to participate directly in local decision-making. This can be done through referenda, citizen assemblies, by proposing certain acts or taking assertive action to resolve problems (a citizen initiative) and by filing a complaint.²⁹⁸

The city council may also seek the thoughts of citizens on certain acts or other questions through citizen assemblies, although the opinions they receive through this mechanism are not binding.²⁹⁹ MOs themselves can also hold citizen assemblies in order to discuss the needs and interests of citizens within the community, but on a smaller scale. These assemblies are led by the MO council president or a councillor.³⁰⁰ Generally, these forms of citizen participation are supplementary and optional and only play an advisory role. However, there is the perception that the impact and importance of citizen assemblies have decreased as it only serves a consultative function.

According to some authors assemblies are, “vaguely defined in laws and local regulations... [and] although municipal statutes and rulebooks should define other details related to this citizen participation mechanism – for example, the frequency of meetings, themes discussed or rules of decision-making – they are rarely more specific than the Law. This could be the reason for rare and inconsistent use of citizen assemblies as spaces for consultation and citizen participation.”³⁰¹

Hrženjak found that as many as 74.25 per cent of polled participants in Zagreb had never had the opportunity to participate in a citizen assembly. Those who had participated tended to come from smaller suburban MOs. Opinion on why so many MOs fail to hold even a single assembly was split. While some believed it was because MOs had too large a population and that this made assemblies unfeasible, others thought that the suggestions that came from such assemblies would never be adopted.³⁰² Hrženjak points out that, according to the city statute, it is the responsibility of the MO council president to inform and seek the thoughts of citizens about important issues affecting the community. He recommends more precise rulings at the municipal level to streamline the calling of assemblies to at least once a year.³⁰³

Citizens also use other informal mechanisms of participation and ad hoc forms of self-organisation, which, according to some, points to a failure on the part of MOs that are supposed to fulfil this role. Rešetar, for example, blames MOs, inter alia, for their bureaucratisation, corruption, incompetence and lack of work,³⁰⁴ which can result in citizens seeking other means or venues for participation. He argues that rural settings are more favourable for direct citizen participation and activism, because of the smaller size of MOs; however, the financial and human resources are more limited. He identifies two extreme trends in participation in urban areas: complete social apathy or bursts of protest and civil disobedience.³⁰⁵

298 Rešetar, “Local board: representative of citizens or local political elites”, p. 784.

299 Article 24 of the Law on Local and Regional Self-Government.

300 Ibid, Article 63.

301 Khan Mohmand and Misić Mihajlović, “Connecting Citizens to the State”, p. 15.

302 Hrženjak, “Organization and functioning of community self-governance in the City of Zagreb,” p. 64.

303 Ibid, p. 64.

304 Vojko, “Research on community self-governance,” p. 97.

305 Ibid, p. 96.

Other authors point to diverse experiences, especially in the organisation of citizen assemblies. In the town of Pazin, for example, GONG implemented a communal budgeting project that involved holding public discussions at MOs on the topics of social security and health, culture and tourism, economy, and education and sport.³⁰⁶ Notwithstanding that these discussions took place at the community level, many of these budgeted services and activities belong to the competence of the municipality itself. In this sense, the MO served as a method of assembling the community and communicating their thoughts upwards.

Yet Bajok and Skoric point out that assemblies do not always provide the ideal participatory platform, citing the example of a local planning process in Rijeka. Although many interested citizens attended, a lack of time, facilitation of citizen understanding of the issue at hand and an apparent lack of interest in the questions posed by citizens meant that, “many disappointed citizens left the discussion claiming it to be pointless.”³⁰⁷

The survey results show that the use of traditional participation mechanisms, such as citizen assemblies, is not a common practice in all MOs/quarters. This is supported by the fact that out of the 63 respondents that said that their local government has community self-governance only 17 said all such units hold community assemblies, public hearings and other public events, while 28 said that most of them do and 7 said that only a few of them do.

Most boards and quarters in the case study municipalities had the most experience in terms of direct interaction with citizens concerning their requests. Citizens in Kastav are still learning to use the fairly recently established institution of the MO for this purpose.

In response to the great level of interest in communal issues expressed at one MO in Rijeka the council president introduced shifts once a month so that citizens can report problems and discuss communal issues in the area. This is published on the MO website and requests are then forwarded to the relevant communal service. According to a representative, there were sixty-six requests pertaining to smaller communal infrastructure projects in 2014. The thematic communal committee of the council selects the priorities from among them for financing through the funds that the MO has at its disposal. The MO also issues an annual call to citizens to deliver communal priorities that they can then forward directly to the City. When the MO receives them the communal committee first conducts field visits to assess the issues reported and then gives its opinion on the priorities.

Another MO representative (a secretary), stated that citizens contacted him on a daily basis (by telephone, face-to-face or via email) and most issues are resolved through communication with the local administration. If more substantial issues occur then these are addressed at council sessions. They are then channelled through communal priorities in accordance with annual plans that are formed based on citizens’ written requests and then determined by council members. Follow-up then occurs with the City. According to one MO representative, the MO informs all citizens that have submitted requests on priority communal issues what issues have been chosen as priorities for the forthcoming year.

The engagement of citizens in other forms of participatory mechanisms was less prevalent.

According to one interlocutor from an MO in Rijeka, “Except for our thematic council on communal affairs, the interest of citizens to take part in all other activities is very low.”

Another interlocutor from Rijeka stated that although citizen assemblies do take place occasionally they are rare, because they are very difficult to organise and implement. This was confirmed by a few other respondents.

306 GONG, “Pazin, Budget”.

307 Bajok Igor and Vanja Škorić, “*Connected Communities*”, p. 90.

According to the interlocutor, “A lot of time will pass before citizen assemblies are functional in order to articulate interests and not use it as a venue for conflict.”

Other means of citizen participation that were emphasised as prominent in Rijeka included joint volunteer activities, such as clean-ups. A MO representative from Rijeka pointed out that there was a citizen initiative pertaining to the regulation of traffic that was followed up by a citizen assembly where a decision was made on the issue.

In Kastav, there has not yet been a need to organise assemblies. As explained by an interlocutor, this is because, “it is a rather small local government unit.”

According to the interlocutors interviewed in Zagreb, citizens tend to use individual requests and joint petitions. Requests to be considered for the forthcoming year’s annual plan are collected between October and December and then forwarded to the city administration. City quarters handle smaller or more pressing issues directly.

In two city quarters visited in Zagreb, representatives confirmed that they have sporadically organised citizen assemblies. Issues included voting on street names or on the borders of MOs. Another has organised thematic meetings of an informative nature (e.g. on traffic or on public health). One MO is currently engaged in an effort by citizens and community organisations, supported by the MO council, to halt construction in a public area, a citizen assembly having been organised on the issue. If the construction is not stopped then citizens can implement a referendum organised by the City and the MO. This is because community level citizen assemblies cannot oblige local government to adopt or not to adopt an assembly decision.

A representative of the MO stated that, “Citizens frequently use these mechanisms. As soon as there is a problem, the president [of the quarter] has to be on the ground to speak with the citizens, presidents of MOs and others.”

A quarter representative from Zagreb stressed that citizens frequently submit requests and that they are given significant weight if the quarter or MO council backs such a requests.

Table 12, below, illustrates the different means of outreach employed in their interaction with citizens by the boards and quarters in the localities visited.

Kastav	Rijeka	Zagreb
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MOs have • Facebook sites • Bulletin-boards • Town website (where MO plans are published) • Town/city bulletins • Posters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MOs have their own websites as part of City website. They use them to publish MO acts, minutes of meetings, annual reports and work plans, including budgets, announcements, newsletters and different forms. An interactive section of the website allows residents to submit questions to MOs and receive answers. The City educates each MO council in use of the website.³² • Local media (radio Rijeka, TV and newspapers). • Bulletin-boards and posters. • Some have their own newspapers/bulletins. • E-consultation platform of the City of Rijeka.³³ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bulletin-boards in all MOs feature information on activities. • All information on council sessions and decisions is available on the City website. • Local media used by city quarters.

Table 12: Means of outreach in the case study municipalities

Since MOs and quarters are themselves considered mechanisms of direct citizen participation,³¹⁰ their inclusion in decision-making on the municipal level can be seen as a form of citizen engagement. In Zagreb, the city May-

308 For more detail, see <www.rijeka.hr/mo>

309 Although a platform of the City rather than individual MOs, it is an example of outreach through the use of ICT to include residents from individual city areas. For more information see <ekonzahtacije.rijeka.hr>.

310 Klarić, “Community self-governance in the Republic of Croatia,” p. 788.

or is obligated to consult with city quarters before bringing any decisions. This relates to economic issues, plans of maintenance of public spaces, the establishment and transfer of institutions, companies and other services, maintenance of services, correction of boundaries, the establishment of set working hours, events taking place on public roads, squares and pedestrian zones and all other questions important to a city quarter.³¹¹

This implies that community governance units have a level of consultative power in relation to these questions. Additionally, the municipal leadership must inform the quarter council president about any questions pertaining to city development plans, programmes of the city administration, environmental protection, the building of objects on the territory of the quarter and any other questions important to be the quarter/MO.³¹²

According to a city quarter representative from Zagreb, the City is obliged to consult the quarter but not to accept its opinion when making decisions. However, the City has to seek the confirmation of the quarter on certain matters. This includes, for example, decisions on longer working hours for pubs and restaurants, as there is a tendency for citizens to complain. Another representative voiced dissatisfaction at the fact that the city administration does not consult or seek more proposals from the quarters. The representative pointing out that council members would like to be better informed and actively included when the City decides on major capital investment projects.

In other visited case study cities, interlocutors mostly stressed this consultative role. Departments in Rijeka, for instance, seek the opinion of MOs on different issues and MOs in Kastav take part in the planning process. According to one MO representative from Rijeka, although councils are informed in a timely manner, “sometimes you can and sometimes you cannot influence” a decision. Another representative of a MO gave the example of one of their requests concerning a street repair. As it was a shared competence of different levels of government, it went all the way up to the President and Prime Minister of the country.

“It was a small intervention. The street was damaged and there were injured people and serious consequences. All that long-term correspondence paid off.”

The survey results pointed to an ambiguous perception concerning the effectiveness of MOs/quarters in influencing the decisions of local government: 37.7 per cent of respondents said that they were neither effective nor ineffective in that respect, the same percentage of respondent leaned towards them being effective (‘somewhat’ or ‘very’), while 24.6 per cent believed that they were not effective (‘mostly’ or ‘not at all’).

An expert who was interviewed attributed the general lack of citizen participation through MOs to the politicisation and lack of resources and competencies of boards and quarters.

“The result is apathy, because people believe that they cannot influence anymore so they will not deal with it [community governance], not even think of it as a possibility when they have a local problem. If they happen to think of the local board, it will be their last resort.”

Moreover, the expert believed that the local board is of little interest to citizens as they have lost the desire to initiate something.

“[...] because they have learned that this means nothing, since it ends up being privatised or becomes state owned. So they have concluded and in my opinion rightly so that it is pointless to invest one’s money in something that someone will take in the end.”

311 Article 89 of the Statute of the City of Zagreb.

312 Ibid, Article 90.

7.

A Comparison
of Community
Governance in
Switzerland, Sweden,
Serbia and Croatia
with BiH

7. A Comparison of Community Governance in Switzerland, Sweden, Serbia and Croatia with BiH

7.1. Introduction

In this chapter we refer to the findings of Analitika's study from 2014 on local communities in BiH and compare them with the insights from our 2015 comparative research on Croatia, Serbia, Sweden and Switzerland. The purpose of this exercise is to assess which community governance models appear to work better than others and in what circumstances, highlighting the principal debates concerning the organisation of particular aspects of community governance work.

The first comparative section refers to the established legal basis for community governance, including organisational aspects such as establishment, legal status, organs, elections and modes of oversight. In the second section we present and discuss the actual activities and tasks of these bodies, including the organisational resources that such bodies have at their disposal. In order to provide a clear overview, comparative information summarised from the previous chapters and the BiH study is shown in tables and this is followed by an analysis of key issues.

7.2. Community Governance Operations: Organisational Set-up and Legal Basis

Community or sub-municipal governance differs substantially according to the country under review. In Sweden, some local governments have decided to establish district committees comprised of political representatives and an administration – especially in the larger cities where such organs deliver services – or district level advisory councils made up of political representatives. These bodies are a part of local government and established in a top-down manner.

In stark contrast to Sweden, community governance in Switzerland is for the most part bottom-up and depends on residents interest in organising around quarter associations as non-governmental organisations independent of local government. However, local governments can introduce different mechanisms through which they can seek to solicit citizens' views or project proposals (e.g. the 'quarter contracts' in Vernier and Geneva). This often functions in combination with bottom-up initiatives.

In Serbia, community governance is, at least normatively, supposed to be self-governing. Although a public organ, it can be established top-down (where citizens' views are to be solicited) or bottom-up; however, it should have autonomy from local government to elect and dismiss its representatives and set its own rules.

In Croatia, local boards and quarters are, normatively speaking, also self-governing; however, local and higher levels of government substantially regulate their work and local government can, for instance, dismiss board/quarter representatives if they do not abide by the prescribed rules.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), MZs are intended to be units of community self-governance in the Federation of BiH (FBiH); however, such a role is not explicitly envisaged for them in Republika Srpska (RS). Again, government has substantial discretion to regulate the work of MZs and local authorities can dismiss MZ organs in

the event that they do not comply with the set rules. In all three former Yugoslav countries, they tend to have rather limited legal personhood (or none at all in the case of RS and some municipalities in the FBiH). Moreover, in all three countries, it is local government rather than citizens that in practice usually establish such units.

Table 13, below, provides an overview of the main aspects of the functioning of community governance in terms of their legal basis and organisational set-up in the four studied countries.

	BiH	Croatia	Serbia	Sweden	Switzerland
<i>Type of unit</i>	MZ (other forms, such as quarters, are possible in the FBiH). ³¹³	MO (quarters/districts option for cities).	MZ (other forms, such as quarters, possible)	District committees or councils	Quarter associations (dominant type)
<i>Conditions of establishment</i>	Mandatory in the FBiH, optional in RS/Brcko District (BD). They can be established by citizens or local authorities.	Optional. They can be established by citizens or local authorities.	Mandatory in villages, but optional in cities. They can be established by citizens or local authorities.	Optional. Municipality decides on their establishment.	Established for a delineated territory. Optional is an association of citizens.
<i>Legal status and type of organisation</i>	Legal person in FBiH/BD, but not in RS.	Legal person.	Legal person.	No separate personhood. Part of the local authority.	Legal person, citizens' association.
<i>Organs</i>	RS: council FBiH: council/assembly, council/president Council/citizen, assembly. Citizens' assembly, steering board, president (in BD).	Council and president	Council (sometimes with an executive board) or council/Assembly.	District committees made up of a council and an executive arm. District councils only have a council.	Executive council and a membership based general assembly, with the option for to have oversight bodies.
<i>Elections</i>	RS: direct elections by secret ballot (public/secret voting at assemblies in some instances). FBiH: public/secret voting at assemblies, direct elections by secret ballot.	Direct elections by secret ballot.	Direct elections by secret ballot or public/secret voting at assemblies.	The municipal assembly appoints council or committee members.	Members choose council representatives at member assemblies.
<i>Local government oversight</i>	Oversight by the mayor (mainly in FBiH) or by a body of the local assembly (mainly in RS), with the ability to dismiss MZ organs.	Oversight by the mayor, with the ability to dismiss MO organs.	Financial oversight by the municipality, with higher level audit.	A formal part of local government, with oversight by the municipality.	Municipal oversight only when associations are mandated to fulfil certain tasks.

Table 13: *Organisational set-up and status of community governance units*

³¹³ 'FBiH' is the abbreviation for the 'Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina'. 'RS' is the abbreviation for 'Republika Srpska'. 'BD' is the abbreviation for Brcko District.

7.2.1. Community Self-Governance: Declarative of substantial?

The legal basis for the establishment and the organisational set-up of community governance units – including their formation, legal status, the types of organs they entail and how these are chosen – as well as their relationship with local government opens up a number of dilemmas in terms of what approaches may best serve their declared function.

The inherent dilemma of what these bodies are in the countries of former Yugoslavia relates as such to the original concept of *community self-governance*. In line with the main premise of historical institutionalism, it may be useful at this point to refer to the origins of these institutions as the legacy of the previous system could shape or influence the operations of community units today. In his article 'Intentions and Realities: Local Government in Yugoslavia', Pusic, for instance, closely relates the evolution of *mjesne zajednice* to the amalgamation of local governments.

Local governments developed over the socialist period into autonomous units with strong competencies. Moreover, given their dominant role in policy-making and as service providers as well as the involvement of representatives from different organisations in their representative and executive organs,³¹⁴ local governments were, "thought of not only as communities of citizens but also as second order associations of self-managed organisations, as the main mechanism for integrating these organisations into more inclusive social purposes."³¹⁵

They were, in other words, to be, "a co-ordinative instrument in a generalised system of self-management."³¹⁶

This, *inter alia*, meant that local government was to manage the 'individual rationality' inherent to self-managed organisations by exposing them to each other in order to foster a 'social rationality' of common interest.

As Pusic notes, "Indeed, the commune was to become the platform upon which self-managed institutions themselves meet and become conscious - through interaction - of the more general interests of the community and to evolve the necessary policies by common consent."³¹⁷

As such, local government also had to manage the territorially based interests of MZs. They were previously established within a municipality as local committees that were "more or less as political field offices" of the municipal council.³¹⁸ With the adoption of the 1963 Yugoslav Constitution, which rendered more autonomy to local government, they became local communities. *Mjesne zajednice* could optionally be established by local statute and had to be established if a certain number of voters' meetings so demanded.

MZs were, as Pusic argued, "conceived as forms of *direct popular association* [emphasis added], not local government and not having their own budget or professional administration [...] But the increase in the size of the communes, as it turned out, made it necessary to extend the powers of the local communities, including the raising of some form of local revenue, as well as to introduce local branch offices as outposts of communal administration in the outlying parts of the commune's territory."³¹⁹

The 1974 Constitution made local communities mandatory and furthermore introduced the requirement that in addition to directly elected members the municipal assembly be composed of delegates from MZs as well as working organisations and interested associations.³²⁰ This, *inter alia*, added a chamber of local communities to

314 Municipal assemblies, *inter alia*, had a Council of Working Organisations, elected by workers, and frequently sub-divided into sectoral councils (e.g. councils on economy, education, culture, health and welfare). Municipal executive committees included delegates from different organisations.

315 Eugen Pusic, "Intentions and Realities: Local Government in Yugoslavia", Public Administration 53, no. 2, 1975, p. 137.

316 Ibid, p. 141.

317 Ibid, p. 145.

318 Ibid, p. 135.

319 Ibid, p. 137.

320 This refers to self-managed bodies of consumers of different public services, such as health, education, welfare and transportation. Ibid. p. 138

the representative body. With the consolidation of local government and the strengthening of functional and financial decentralisation local communities in essence not only had to take on more tasks but arguably also the coordination function of different (self-managed) interests within the micro community and translate them into a common (territorial) interest.

The whole idea behind MZs was that of a self-managed community where workers can through such an institution, “define which common interests, rights and duties they realise.”³²¹ Workers and citizens of the MZ were to adopt its statute and define its rights and duties, organisations and organs and its relations with organisations of ‘joint work’ and self-managed organisations and communities as well as other matters relevant to the community.³²²

The term self-government/management (*samouprava*) is still incorporated in the legislation of BiH (except for RS), Serbia and Croatia when referring to MZs/MOs today. Yet the extent of the self-government of these units is questionable at best, especially in BiH and Croatia where they tend to have little autonomy from local government. Although they are legal persons in the FBiH and Croatia they are still under the oversight of local government and are usually completely financially dependent. In RS, because they have no separate legal personhood they can be considered part of the local government structure. This has implications in terms of their ability to sign contracts, own property and open accounts. MZs are completely dependent on local government for their finance and administrative support.

However, in Serbia their independence is an important policy issue and the Constitutional Court has in numerous instances stopped municipal authorities from meddling in the affairs of MZs (especially the election and dismissal of representatives). However, under the current draft Law on Local-Self Government there is an initiative to limit such autonomy on the grounds of improved regulation of local community work. Moreover, how much self-governance MZs and MOs can actually exert in practice in all three countries varies from municipality to municipality and according to specific local regulations.

This does not come as a surprise given that self-management today is a deserted concept. Whereas a former Yugoslav local government was seen as a platform and a coordinator of self-managed institutions that articulated policy based on common interest – even local service providers were largely autonomous from local bureaucracy³²³ – today’s local government in the three countries studied tends to have substantial control over local public organisations and institutions. Similarly, whereas it appears that legislators in all three countries have recognised the merit of having MZs/MOs as bodies that can articulate territorial interests and needs, local government appears to a considerable extent to be involved in the work of such bodies. This is especially true in Croatia and in RS.

In Croatia, given that MZs were abandoned and there was a discursive shift from local communities to boards, one can speak of a break with the legacy of MZs as a form of territorially based accumulation of (self-managed) interests. This can also be explained by the extensive decentralisation of local government whereby many former MZs essentially became municipalities and the fact that MOs are, normatively at least, mechanisms of direct citizen participation at the micro level.

MZs continued their existence in their original form in the other countries studied. However, their level of self-government is constrained by strong municipal oversight or by higher level legislation that considerably limits both the extent of their legal personhood, where they have it, and their ability to perform different functions (e.g. public procurement and fundraising).

321 “Ustav Socijalističke Federativne Republike Jugoslavije” [Constitution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia], Official Gazette of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia yr. XXX, no. 9, 21 February 1974, Article 90.

322 Ibid, Article 115.

323 As Pusic notes, municipalities’ executive committees issued recommendations to such bodies and were in charge of inspections, but they were essentially independent. Ibid.

This discrepancy between the idea and the practice of community self-governance cannot be found in the other two countries considered. In Sweden, the autonomy of such units is a non-issue given that the idea behind district committees or councils was never to install community self-governance. Rather, following the significant conglomeration of local authorities that took place in the 1970s, it was to bring local government closer to the citizens.

This meant political decentralisation and service provision by districts in the larger cities, but also an administration that was closer to citizens and one that could listen to their needs. In smaller municipalities where the decentralised provision of service delivery was not considered efficient or necessary, district councils, as representatives of the community, take on an advisory role. They are to be consulted on and to relay specific territorial interests on certain issues, such as urban planning, to the local government.

Contrastingly, in Switzerland the whole idea of community governance is mainly reliant on grassroots initiatives: citizens organise around a common territorial interest through quarter associations, especially in the cities. There is usually no need for such bodies in smaller communities, given the extensive decentralisation of local government in Switzerland. Yet it should be noted that needs responded to by traditional community self-governance are also being met through the mechanisms of direct democracy. Citizens have been granted enough political power to decide on issues important to their community and therefore the quarter associations can fulfil the role of coordinator of collective action and communication. By representing the collective interests to local authorities, they act as a mechanism of social participation. In an effort to solicit opinion from citizens in a timely manner and in order to gather ideas on local needs, local authorities have also installed top-down participatory or consultative mechanisms in a number of cities to serve in addition to the quarter associations.

It can be argued that the extent of self-governance of local communities in the three countries of former Yugoslavia is rather doubtful at present, with the strongest remnants in Serbia. Self-governance would essentially mean that local/higher level governments grant community units, as organs that are representative of community interests, a dose of autonomy in terms of their ability to run their own operations. The optimal level of oversight should also be agreed in order to ensure their financial/functional accountability and prevent abuse and unnecessary intervention in their work. Thus, the notion of self-governance as such may need to be revisited. Yet any consideration of alternative modes of organising should take into account that the voluntary self-organisation of residents around community interests, as in some cities in Switzerland, unavoidably presupposes an advanced development of democratic institutions. It should also consider the status of municipal outposts, as in some cities in Sweden, that also assume a level of autonomy to work on issues of importance to the community.

7.2.2. Issues of Legitimacy and Accountability

Another important issue is the legitimacy or the, "extent to which an organisation justly and properly speaks for and acts on behalf of the neighbourhood it takes as its constituency."³²⁴ The representation function of community organisations raises a number of questions in BiH, Croatia and Serbia, while it appears to be more clear-cut in Switzerland and Sweden.

In Switzerland, citizen associations, as representatives of the interest of a community, are in effect representative of their members (i.e. those who join them). A membership based assembly votes for an executive committee. Such bodies are generally supposed to be neutral of politics, although they may have politically affiliated individuals as members. A number of interlocutors from different cities stressed such a neutrality. According to one interlocutor, it is rather ironic that this is guaranteed by the fact that they are based on the premise of

324 Robert J. Chaskin, "Fostering Neighborhood Democracy: Legitimacy and Accountability within Loosely Coupled Systems", *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 32, no. 2, 2003, p. 178.

volunteerism and are not financed by a particular stakeholder (party or government) but rather by membership fees.

In Sweden, where districts are a part of local government that delivers services, their political representatives are supposed to be accountable for the quality of service delivery and to ensure that the particular level of services needed in a community is delivered. Where they exist as neighbourhood councils made up of local politicians, their main purpose is consultation and to articulate local interests. The dilemma is not whether it is acceptable for such bodies to have political representatives, because given the general preference for representative democracy in the political system this is completely accepted. Rather it relates to the dilemma of whether it is acceptable for such politicians to be indirectly elected: nominated by political parties participating in the municipal council. Indirect representation is considered by some to weaken the relationship citizens have with the politicians who are supposed to represent them.

One of the issues with representation in BiH, Croatia and Serbia is whether political parties should be elected to the MO/MZ council. Their dilemmas are shared not only because of a common institutional legacy but also because of a very similar political context. A cursory overview of media reports in the three countries today points to strong political competition over the control of MZs/MOs. This is particularly evident where election procedures are transparent and allow party lists in MZ/MO elections. The election results point to the predominance of political parties in local community councils; however, interlocutors also spoke of party dominance of councils even where procedures were less clear or parties were not allowed to run (as was the case in some instances in the FBiH and in Serbia). Informal political ties were frequently stressed as a way to get things done in the community in Serbia as well as in BiH. In Croatia, experts pointed out that MOs are an effective venue for political mobilisation, training and selection of local politicians. Similarly, the 2014 study on BiH also found that MZs act a venue for political mobilisation in the country.

In essence, the problem with political party representation in community councils is twofold. On the one hand, many interlocutors question to what extent they are actually representative of wider community interests and not just their own particular interests. In Sweden, where there is generally a high level of trust in political parties and high voter turnout, having politicians on district bodies is not an issue. Yet in countries where there is generally a low level of trust in political parties³²⁵ such doubts may be well-placed and can in part explain the low voter turnout in MZ/MO elections.

On the other hand, as explained by interlocutors in Croatia and BiH, giving an equal footing to political parties and citizen groups in elections is problematic. Citizen groups may actually limit the possibility of independent candidates entering community councils due to unrealistic nomination criteria and a lack of resources to mobilise voters. However, as one interlocutor in Croatia rightly pointed out, whether the MZ/MO council should be a venue for representing the community based on neutral premises or a body similar to a municipal parliament is a matter of the political conception of community self-governance.

Moreover, whether or not such 'politically coloured' councils are able to exert *community self-governance* in practice also depends on a range of local conditions that are not only delimited by their legal status, competencies and resources but also by factors such as the interest of citizens to partake in elections and community activities as a result.

Another issue is to what extent elections in general allow for a wider representation of community interests. A number of interlocutors stressed the importance of having organs that are inclusive of different groups within

325 For example, a recent Analitika poll representative of the population in BiH shows that an astounding 77.2% of citizens does not trust political parties. Analitika, "Rezultati ankete: Nastavljen trend nepovjerenja građana u političke partije i institucije vlasti u Bosni i Hercegovini" [Survey results: Continued trend of citizen distrust in political parties and institutions in BiH], Fact-sheet, December 2015. Available from <http://www.analitika.ba/sites/default/files/publikacije/povjerenja_gradana_u_vlast_0.pdf>

the community (by gender, ethnicity, territory, etc.). In some instances, as in Serbia and BiH, rules at higher or local levels of government require or encourage the greater participation of female candidates in elections or that certain territories of the MZ or ethnic groups be represented in councils.³²⁶

In Sweden, some district council representatives pointed out that their party ensures equal representation of women and men and the inclusion of minority candidates in their lists. While the representativeness of different parts of the community in community units may be stimulated by electoral rules their de facto representativeness will depend on the willingness of different groups to become involved in the work of such bodies.

A related dilemma is how to ensure that the organs of community governance units are truly accountable to those they represent (and therefore to those who sponsor them) for their work. The level of accountability can enhance or strip away a unit's legitimacy. As Chaskin states, "the extent to which organisations that speak for or act on behalf of a community are fulfilling their stated goals and can be held responsible for their actions."³²⁷

In Sweden, Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), ensuring financial oversight over the work of these units is the most obvious way to ensure accountability. In Serbia, for example, MZs are a part of the state treasury system and therefore have a strict obligation to share their financial plans with local government and report on their work. Decentralised service delivery or the delegation of specific tasks is usually tied to financial and narrative reporting on the results that have been achieved in a given community, as is the case in Sweden. In Switzerland, community associations are subject to reporting on those activities financed by local government, such as the running of community centres.

However, ensuring that the programmes that community governance units run (e.g. 'small communal actions') are truly based on priorities set by the community as opposed to a small group of locals who, as one interlocutor from Croatia suggested, could be "refurbishing in front of their own doorstep" remains a challenge. Where members of an association finance the activities of community units through membership fees, as in Switzerland, citizens or members are allowed, like the Swiss Civil Code, to hold such organisations to account before a court. The case studies show that where local government entrusts organisations with funding to carry out important activities in the community, even if they are the sole funders, governments allow varying levels of discretion. Determining the level of discretion is crucial. Some cities, such as Rijeka in Croatia or Vernier in Switzerland, have defined top-down criteria or installed committees that include residents as a way to verify that projects or funding priorities are chosen on the basis of community needs. In the case of running community centres, Geneva's city government defines a mandate but ultimately leaves it up to associations to tailor the activities to the needs of the community. This is similar to Gothenburg, where districts define their own programmatic priorities in line with the overarching goals of the city government.

That community governance units must be accountable for the activities and project priorities they set on the behalf of a community is not up for debate. However, giving them an appropriate level of discretion to carry out their work (especially where they are, in essence, supposed to be self-governing) requires transparency as well as some form of validation of their work by those they are supposed to represent. Transparency may involve annual reporting and planning that is open to the wider public (e.g. through assemblies or websites). Validation may entail the involvement of the wider community of residents in activities (e.g. in planning meetings, mechanisms such as quarter contracts and such like).

326 For example, according to the RS instructions on MZ elections, care should be taken in terms of gender representation, in line with the gender equality Law, as well as territorial representation, when proposing candidate lists. "Uputstvo o organizovanju i sprovođenju izbora za članove savjeta mjesne zajednice" [Instructions on Organising and Implementing Elections for Local Community Council Members], Article 19. Some local acts on MZ elections in BiH, depending on the locality, guarantee territorial representation (e.g. through an MZ branch) and/or ethnic representation in ethnically mixed communities. Jusic, "Local Communities in BiH", p. 45.

327 Chaskin, "Fostering Neighborhood Democracy", p. 182.

7.3. The Functions that Community Governance Units Perform

The roles of community governance units are defined and accounted for by legal and financial preconditions in different ways in the five studied countries. In BiH and Croatia, MZs/MOs are to be venues for citizen engagement and laws and local acts either prescribe them as a form of direct citizen participation in decision-making (in Croatia and RS) or as a right of citizens to participate directly in decision-making (FBiH). In Serbia, MZs are to fulfil the needs and interests of local residents. In Switzerland, the quarter associations essentially represent quarter interests to others, including local authorities, and preserve and promote the quality of life in a given area. In Sweden, district committees were established predominantly to bring local government closer to citizens. This was to be done mainly through the role of service provider, whereas district councils represent a consultative mechanism comprised of political representatives.

Table 14, below, gives an overview of the main aspects of community governance work in the five studied countries.

	BiH	Croatia	Serbia	Sweden	Switzerland
<i>Nominal purpose</i>	Citizen participation within the territorially delineated area.	Citizen participation within the territorially delineated area.	Meeting the needs and interests of citizens within the territorially delineated area.	Service delivery for district committees, consultation for district councils.	Quarter associations to represent interests and to preserve the quality of life in the quarter.
<i>Service (activity) function</i>	MZ to nominally participate in a wide range of tasks, but with no executive powers for service delivery. Mostly rural MZs perform smaller administrative/communal tasks. Socio-cultural activities.	No service delivery. In charge of 'small communal actions' in some cities. Socio-cultural activities.	MZ to nominally participate in a wide range of tasks, but with no executive powers for service delivery. Smaller communal services in rural areas. Socio-cultural activities.	For district committees, decentralised service delivery in cities (welfare, schools, childcare, elderly care, etc.). In the case of district councils, only an advisory role.	For quarter associations, mostly voluntary, socio-cultural activities. Some associations can run recreational community centres.
<i>Coordination function</i>	Coordination with the local authority and different service providers pertaining to community needs.	Coordination with the local authority and different service providers pertaining to community needs.	Coordination with the local authority and different service providers pertaining to community needs.	Coordination with local government, service providers, associations and businesses.	Coordination with the local authority and other organisations within the community.
<i>Citizen engagement function</i>	Citizen requests via MZs, citizen assemblies are less prominent; in rural areas, initiate collective action around communal and infrastructure problems.	Citizen requests via MOs, sporadic initiatives or referenda; citizen assemblies less prominent.	Citizen requests via MZs, joint petitions, citizen assemblies.	Citizen requests, consultation / 'citizen dialogue'.	Consultation with the local authority and citizens, can mobilise community on issues of concern; 'social' participation.

Table 14: Functions of community governance units

Needless to be said, the roles such organisations play reflect their resources and capacities. In Serbia, MZs are able to raise own funds and have diversified sources of income (e.g. self-contribution, rent, oil tax, etc.). In Croatia, BiH and Sweden, MZs are highly dependent on local government. In Switzerland, quarter associations (as civil society organisations) rely on membership fees as their main source of income, unless the municipality funds certain activities of importance to the community (see Table 15).

Table 15: *Resources and capacities of community governance units*

	BiH	Croatia	Serbia	Sweden	Switzerland
<i>Financial resources</i>	Mainly dependent on the local budget, other incomes allowed but rare in practice.	Entirely dependent on the local budget, donations possible as other income.	Mostly dependent on the local budget, other sources of funding: self-contribution, service fees, rent and special taxes.	Entirely dependent on the municipal budget/possible higher-level grants.	Membership fees and grants.
<i>Human resources</i>	May have administrative employees financed by the municipality, mainly volunteer-based.	May have administrative employees financed by the municipality, mainly volunteer-based.	Own employees (secretaries), sometimes financed by the municipality, volunteer-based.	Large number of staff in case of service provision, volunteer-based in the case of the (political) council.	Predominantly volunteer based.
<i>Premises and technical capacities</i>	May be granted premises by the municipality.	Granted municipal premises.	Granted municipal premises.	Premises of the local authority; councils may not have premises.	May be granted premises to use by the municipality.

7.3.1. Service Provision and other Activities

As addressed above when speaking about community self-governance, there is a discrepancy between what a MZ/MO declaratively is and what it is allowed to be, both de jure and de facto, in the countries of former Yugoslavia, especially when combined with their declared purpose. Although *mjesna samouprava* and 'a form of citizen participation' in decision-making are closely related they are by no means the same thing. Although being a form of citizen participation is arguably ambiguous, community self-governance implies that residents associate and take action to satisfy their own needs and interests and this may go beyond attempting to affect certain local decisions in their favour. This may require the provision of certain types of services and the organisation of certain kinds of activities as well as own resources to do so. Thus, the purpose of MZs in Serbia, which is to meet the needs and interests of citizens in a given territory, appears more appropriate. Moreover, being a form of direct citizen participation is terminologically problematic given that MZs/MOs today are essentially forms of representative as opposed to participatory democracy.

The community unit as a service provider with different competencies, technical staff, financial independence and discretion in decision-making was, at least nominally, the idea behind community self-government in former Yugoslavia. Today, remnants of such a role can be justified by vaguely defined MZ tasks contained in local acts in Serbia and BiH (where they are usually to seek to 'initiate' certain activities or to 'satisfy' needs in different areas, such as communal affairs, the environment, social affairs, culture and sport). However, MZs generally do not have the power of execution or authority over service delivery. In fact, their role as a service provider, especially in the communal realm, is actively challenged in Serbia. They are no longer allowed to be owners of communal or municipal communal enterprises and are therefore unable to, for example, take over rural parts of a water utility network financed and built by MZs through citizen self-contribution.

In BiH, such a role prevails in smaller rural communities where citizens have to self-organise services because the local government does not provide them. In some cases, service provision has prevailed as an 'inherited practice' – usually in the realm of issuing various certificates to citizens – despite MZs formally not having competency over services. In Croatia, their role is more clear-cut. As there is no legal basis for service delivery they are not allowed to be service providers, unless the local government decides to delegate a certain task to local boards/quarters.

In Sweden, on the other hand, the ultimate role of neighbourhood/district committees in the larger cities is that of service provider, followed by citizen consultation. As a part of local government, they are predominantly decentralised administrations with a representative arm and extensive resources. They also have a certain level of discretion to tailor services to local needs, in line with city directives. However, the underlying dilemmas – at least in Gothenburg – are to what extent a citywide equitability of services can be ensured through decentralised service delivery and to what extent neighbourhood districts and their part-time politicians have the know-how to decide on complex issues. There also appears to be a trend of re-centralising specific services in some cities in Sweden (e.g. establishing school districts).

Unlike certain cities in Sweden, governments in BiH, Croatia, Serbia and Switzerland have generally not opted for the decentralised service delivery model. In Switzerland, this can be justified by the extensive decentralisation of local government and the extremely small size of most local government units. Yet while local government in Croatia has also been significantly decentralised and local government units tend to have small populations, as an expert explained, many of the most important services to citizens are still being delivered through higher levels of government. In Serbia, where municipalities are relatively large, there appears to be a continuous struggle between municipalities and MZs in terms of service delivery, as described above. In BiH, there has also been a trend towards the centralisation of service delivery over the years. The city of Sarajevo, for example, centralised communal service provision in the 1980s by forming city level communal service providers (rather than municipal level ones).³²⁸ Whether or not MZs should be tasked with delivering specific services depends on a number of factors, including concerns related to cost-effectiveness, whether or not MZs have the capacity to perform such functions and ensuring the standardisation and equity of services throughout neighbourhoods.

Although they do not tend to be considered as services as such, socio-cultural activities took on a prominent role in the case studies in BiH and this was also partly the case in Croatia, Serbia and Switzerland. In Switzerland in particular, the idea of social participation is at the root of quarter based activities. It is diversified through the work of different organisations, both quarter associations and designated community houses focus on different recreational and social activities. Such activities are intended to foster integration and cohesiveness within communities that are rather heterogeneous.

³²⁸ For more information see Jusic Mirna, "Degradacija grada: razlozi za propadanje javnih prostora u sarajevskim naseljima i prijedlozi rješenja", [A City's Decline: Reasons for the Deterioration of Public Spaces in Sarajevo Neighborhoods and Proposed Solutions], Sarajevo: Center for Social Research Analitika, 2013, p. 28.

This is especially true in some Swiss cities where, according to an expert, a substantial section of residents may have the right to vote because they are not Swiss citizens. Such activities capitalise on the idea that citizens have a tendency to identify with their place of residence and therefore foster homogeneous and close-knit communities based on interaction at the micro level. In other words, social interaction becomes a precondition for social cohesion and this can translate into collective action not only in the realm of organising joint workshops, classes or fairs but also in satisfying other community needs or advocating for community interests.

7.3.2. Coordination

A community organisation as a coordinator of activities within the community appears to be important in all five countries. MOs/MZs in Croatia, Serbia and BiH can be considered as coordinators of citizen needs. While they may not deliver specific services in most realms they do tend to be in constant interaction with local authorities and service providers in order to address relevant problems. In BiH, their interaction with the centres for social work in an effort to help local residents was highlighted in particular in the case studies. In Croatia, MOs in Rijeka coordinate their efforts, especially in the cultural realm, with other community organisations and institutions. In Sweden, district committees in Gothenburg interacted as decentralised bodies of governance with a myriad of different organisations. This ranged from schools and social care providers to the local police, community organisations and businesses. In Switzerland, quarter associations in different cities work, albeit not explicitly as coordinators as such, in a complementary manner with other types of organisations that engage in socio-cultural and humanitarian activities (jointly termed in some cities by the local authorities as 'quarter forces').

7.3.3. Citizen Engagement

The role of coordinator of citizen requests and communicator of citizen needs is inherent to many of the different forms of community governance units encountered in the five countries. In BiH, Croatia, Serbia and Sweden they consider citizen complaints and then submit them to the relevant authorities. In Switzerland, local governments consult with quarter associations on different issues within a community. In Basel, for instance, an umbrella organisation of quarter based associations serves as a 'secretariat'. It acts as an interface between residents and local authorities and channels requests submitted by residents for participation on certain issues. This signals that local governments have recognised community or sub-municipal governance units as important intermediaries that help them to identify needs and set priorities and which they can consult as representatives of the community.

Although important, this frequently bureaucratised function of intermediary does not necessarily lend itself to more interaction, deliberation and ultimately influence. This is a paradox in countries like Croatia and BiH, where direct citizen participation is – at least de jure – the underlying purpose of MZs/MOs. With the exception of cases where local governments have developed extensive participatory methodologies (e.g. in the case of quarter secretariats in Basel or quarter contracts in Geneva or Vernier), different problems are encountered in most of the countries when it comes to citizen participation.

According to some interlocutors in the case studies, citizen assemblies and other formal mechanisms of participation are rarely used in Croatia and BiH. Experts in Croatia attribute the lack of citizen involvement in MOs to politicisation and their lack of authority. In Serbia, citizen assemblies are used more frequently; however, interlocutors stressed that it is difficult for MZs to influence local decisions because of party politics. In Sweden, where representative democracy has prominence over participatory democracy, some authors have depicted citizen dialogue as a consultative activity that may not foster true deliberation or influence. In Switzerland, where the ability of citizens to influence decision-making processes is ensured through direct democratic means, many interlocutors stated that the main challenge of participation is how to involve more citizens and how to make them interested in quarter related issues.

In addition to the potential politicisation of MZs, which can discourage citizens from participating in the first place, interlocutors in Serbia and Croatia also questioned the structure of general meetings, such as citizen assemblies. They perceived such meetings as too unfocused and as arenas for conflict, unless strictly thematic. This points to weaknesses in the organisation of participatory processes and the absence of methodologies that would allow for meaningful deliberation. Yet this does not justify the fact that so few community units that were visited in the three countries of former Yugoslavia hold assemblies, even for the purpose of informing the community about the work they have done (e.g. as is obligatory for community associations and envisaged as part of the quarter contracts in Switzerland).

In essence, this signals that more attention needs to be devoted to the organisation of meaningful participatory processes. This is especially true in the realms where community units have concrete tasks, such as defining priorities for 'small communal actions' or other types of interventions within the community. This follows the rationale of the discussion on the need for residents to validate such priorities for the sake of ensuring accountability. The latter can be achieved through different means, for example, establishing bodies that consider citizen proposals, as in the case of Vernier, or holding open planning meetings. Given the strong perception of the politicisation of MZs/MOs (which can discourage any involvement by citizens due to the presumption that their requests or ideas will be dismissed), there needs to be some form of assurance that such validation processes will be free from party politics.

The case studies in BiH show that in some cases MZs become important coordinators of collective action around immediate needs, such as communal problems. This also appears to be the case in some rural parts of Serbia. This can also be seen as an extension of their role as a communicator of citizen requests, because they do not simply forward them to the local authorities but self-organise in order to resolve pertinent issues. Yet while ad hoc collective achievements may earn MZs greater legitimacy through action they do not preclude more standardised means of participation, such as mechanisms to validate priorities for action, and would ideally take place in unison.

The option for participation that is most appropriate also depends on the purpose of community self-governance. In Switzerland for instance, local authorities consider quarter associations, as a means of organising members of a given community around joint territorial interests, relevant interlocutors. However, they are by no means the only ones consulted on a given issue and may not have the function or the obligation to coordinate or consult with others (besides their members) from the community in order to articulate a common interest. Relaying community interests to a higher level of government is by no means their sole purpose; rather, they tend to organise activities intended to foster community cohesion. In Sweden, when it comes to participation, their purpose is more of a consultative nature.

In former Yugoslavia, *mjesne zajednice* were an agglomeration of territorial interests and as such held a monopoly on the articulation of common territorial interests. Moreover, they were responsible for a wider variety of functions that merited self-governance in order to improve community life. Nowadays, they may claim to articulate community interests but to what extent they have the legitimacy and the tools to do so in practice is questionable.

8.

A Conclusions and
Recommendations:
Rethinking Local
Community
Governance in Bosnia
and Herzegovina

8. Conclusions and Recommendations: Rethinking Local Community Governance in Bosnia and Herzegovina

This comparative research provides a descriptive and analytical overview of sub-municipal and community level governance in Croatia, Serbia, Sweden and Switzerland. The purpose of the research was to inform further work in this realm in Bosnia and Herzegovina by recognising different potential modes of organisation as well as different ways in which community governance may be exercised.

The five countries are in fact very different and there is a stark contrast in how community/sub-municipal units function, for example, between Sweden and Switzerland. The research shows, for instance, that community governance units in BiH and Croatia do not appear to live up to their purpose of direct citizen participation and are more of a means of representing or relaying community interests to local government. In Serbia, there is a discrepancy between MZs as community self-governance units (which are supposed to be autonomous) and the extent of autonomy they can exercise in practice. This relates in particular to practical issues such as handling their finances or engaging in public procurement, where there is a very vaguely defined idea of their tasks.

In contrast, the role of district committees and councils in Sweden is clearly prescribed; however, there is substantial discussion on whether such a role is always effective or necessary. In Switzerland, the idea of independent organisations self-organising around community interests appears to be the most clear-cut mode of community organisation, both nominally and in practice. This is supported by a formalised relationship with local government where such self-organising is recognised as fulfilling an essential public need. At the same time, it is strongly rooted in a culture of negotiation and deliberation on public issues and supported by a legacy of direct democracy.

Such different experiences offer useful lessons for community governance in BiH, both in terms of potential ways to improve the legal basis of their work and in terms of expanding on the current practice. Relying on such lessons, this section offers options and recommendations on how to improve community governance in BiH.

The results of our comparative analysis and the discrepancies between the nominal purpose of MZs and their practice make it apparent that the perspectives for local community development and the idea of *community self-governance* itself in BiH today need to be more clearly articulated. The options and recommendations provided below relate to the roles that MZs in Bosnia and Herzegovina can potentially take on and the principles that need to be considered for the fulfilment of such roles.

The following four options have been identified and are further elaborated below.

- **Option 1:** MZs as advocates of community interests.
- **Option 2:** MZs as venues for service facilitation or service delivery.
- **Option 3:** MZs as socio-cultural community centres.
- **Option 4:** MZs as venues for citizen engagement.

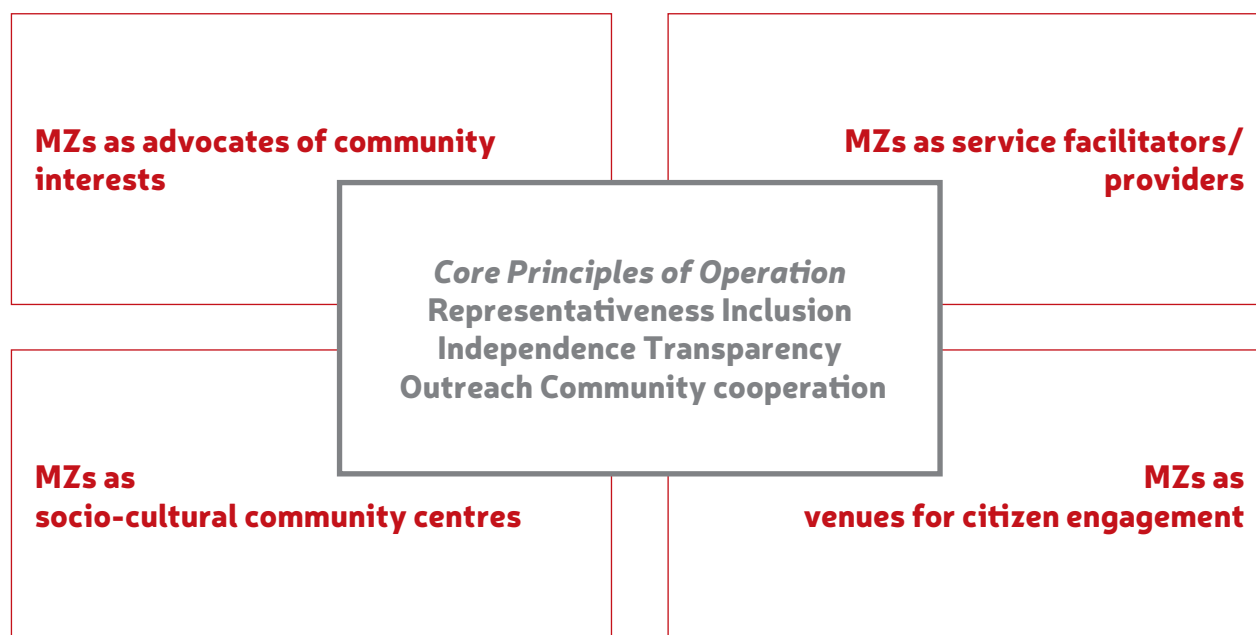
The roles that MZs take on will certainly depend on the local context and needs. Moreover, it is important to stress that they are not mutually exclusive and can be combined. In other words, there may be significant overlaps or synergies between these four ideal modes of operation. Hence, dependent on its context and needs, any local community can have different combinations of the features of the four roles.

A number of crosscutting issues or principles for the work of MZs need to be taken into account when considering the above roles.

- Representativeness
- Inclusion
- Independence
- Transparency of work and ease of access
- Active community outreach
- Community cooperation

Following a presentation of possible options for the development of MZs in BiH these crosscutting issues are elaborated below.

Picture 1: *MZ roles and principles*



Option 1: MZs as advocates of community interests.

Vision: With the aim to represent the interests and needs of their residents to local and higher levels of government, MZs speak on behalf of various groups and sections of the community.

Empirical research highlights that MZs in BiH have already taken on the role of coordinator and information provider or interface between residents of a community and the local authorities and local service providers. Such a role consists of receiving inputs – usually requests or complaints – from residents and forwarding them to the relevant municipal authority. MZs can also initiate collective action surrounding a particular issue on behalf of citizens. They may also reach out to those in need and facilitate assistance or service provision for them. Last but not least, they are to provide feedback and information to citizens. Research has shown that MZs in BiH cooperate with a number of stakeholders, for instance, in the realms of civil protection, communal affairs, social welfare and health, neighbourhood safety and humanitarian assistance.

From a legal perspective, the relevant laws in BiH already prescribe such a role. Essentially, laws and local acts formally recognise MZs as an interlocutor and as a counterpart for cooperation that acts on behalf of residents of a given area. MZs in RS and the FBiH are to initiate or participate in hearings on different issues and to provide their opinion on such matters. MZs in RS gather and then submit petitions and complaints and initiatives and proposals of citizens to local institutions or service providers. The relevant laws in Brčko District highlights the role of MZs in enabling *organised communication* between residents and the District as well as providing recommendations to institutions on issues concerning the quality of life.³²⁹ Laws and local acts usually stress the realms of engagement of MZs, such as (communal) infrastructure, urban and spatial planning, social protection, economic development and sport and recreation. In the FBiH they are to be consulted about matters on which

the municipal council decides through a two-thirds majority.³³⁰ Moreover, the fact that they have formally elected representatives from within the community further legitimises such a role.

Yet, as outlined below, there are a number of important preconditions that need to be met in order for the MZs to be able to perform this role more effectively.

Institutionalising communication and procedures for processing citizens' requests requires that communication between residents, the MZ and local government (and providers of public services) be institutionalised. There should be clear-cut procedures through which citizens, via MZs, can communicate their needs/requests and receive feedback. This can be operationalized through a local government act that defines the relationship between the government and the MZ and between the MZ and citizens in such instances. Residents should be able to find out easily what the procedure for filing a request is and how long they will have to wait for a response. Providing them with feedback needs to be obligatory for procedures to be meaningful in the first place. This may also entail strengthen the local administration's obligation to respond to or decide on all requests.

This means that a decision by a MZ to actually submit a request to other instances or raise local issues on behalf of residents cannot be random. This is because it could result in a loss of legitimacy and the MZ could be side lined by residents who would then address the relevant institutions directly. In other words, the criteria for what types of issues can be raised through MZs (e.g. of common, but not of particular interest) may have to be defined.

Communication could be facilitated through the assignment of local coordinators explicitly in charge of MZ affairs within the administration, as in the cases studies in Croatia, Serbia and Switzerland and in some areas in BiH. Such a position would help MZs with administrative matters and in organising meetings with relevant departments or public service providers when issues of local relevance are raised. Such posts may be territorially distributed in some of the larger urban areas so as to allow MZs closer access to local authorities.

³²⁹ Article 109a of the Law on Local Self-Government in RS, Article 25 of the Law on the Principles of Local Self-Government in the FBiH and Article 5 of the Law on Local Communities in Brčko District of BiH.

³³⁰ Article 29 of the Law on the Principles of Local Self-Government in the FBiH.

Clearly defined principles of cooperation between MZs and local governments would mean that MZs ought to be able to anticipate what kind of own involvement they can expect on different local issues. Thus, agreeing on principles of cooperation (as was, for instance, the case in Basel and Zurich concerning local policies/memoranda) could be beneficial. One basic principle of cooperation could be to ensure timely information and consultation on new developments and infrastructure as well as other projects in a municipality, especially in a MZ's own locality. Another could be the ability to seek a consultation process or the participation of the wider community on a matter of local interest. However, the local government needs to accept MZs as credible partners: representativeness is guaranteed through elections (which is addressed further below). Local government can expect that MZs inform citizens about the issues on which they are consulted (e.g. via regularly updated websites or through local meetings) and that they relay a problem in the community to the local government in a timely manner.

Empowering MZs and their representatives requires that representatives of MZs must be well informed in order for them to be able to assist citizens. They need to know whom to direct different requests to and who is in charge of certain issue. This is particularly important in larger urban areas, where more stakeholders may be involved in service provision. They need to know the procedures and should be able to inform citizens about their rights. This requires the education of MZ representatives and/or staff, but also capacitating MZs to ensure institutional records (on procedures, premises and archives). Ideally, working on the capacity of MZs in this realm would mean that MZs have their own staff – or staff delegated by the local government – to provide know-how and to facilitate information exchange. In other words, it is essential to equip MZs with the basic preconditions for the fulfilment of their role as a communicator of local needs and an interface for residents. Otherwise, by not being able to inform or assist citizens properly the legitimacy of MZs will be impaired in the eyes of residents.

Option 2:

MZs as venues for service facilitation or service delivery.

Vision: With the aim to directly satisfy the needs of residents by ensuring sound service provision, MZs are territorially defined units that either provide services in areas where they are unavailable or where, for efficiency reasons, the decentralisation of services has taken place, or act as a facilitator between residents and service providers with respect to determining the type of services required.

In line with the principle of subsidiarity, service provision by sub-municipal institutions can be justified in response to the specific needs of a given community. Furthermore, it can help limit waste through better allocative efficiency. Comparative research has shown that large Swedish cities (e.g. Malmö, Gothenburg and Stockholm) with populations between 200,000 and 800,000 are a good example of this: neighbourhood districts run large administrations and provide a myriad of services in realms such as social welfare and education. In Gothenburg in particular, this means that local districts set their own priorities for service provision. This is done in line with local needs on an annual basis and corresponds to the overall annual plan of the City. In Serbia and in BiH, MZs can provide small services in remote areas where the local government does not provide them. Analitika's 2014 survey³³¹ of local government representatives in BiH showed that in some 48 per cent of cases MZs were in charge of certain administrative³³² and/or communal tasks in their vicinity.³³³

The relevant legal framework on MZs in BiH does not preclude the possibility that they can deliver services. While current laws do not give any executive authority to MZs to provide a given service, they do contain clauses through which the municipal government can delegate tasks from its own competencies to MZs. However, a number of considerations have to be taken into account in order to ensure sound service delivery.

³³¹ Jusić, "Local Communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina", p. 57.

³³² These included keeping evidence of persons in social need, issuing household lists and various confirmations (e.g. on property damage).

³³³ These included the maintenance of local roads, graveyards, local water utilities and water provision, the cleaning of public spaces, etc.

Task delegation needs to make sense and should be justified through assessments based on criteria such as efficiency, equity and ability to deliver a service in a standardised and quality manner. Debates concerning service delivery by neighbourhood committees in Swedish cities highlight an efficiency versus equity dilemma and also raise the question of the know-how of territorially defined units in relation to specialised service delivery units (e.g. school districts). Some authors also stress the potential trade-off between service delivery and citizen engagement, as neighbourhood institutions may not be able to do both or to do both well. This relates to capacity considerations³³⁴ as well as the possible bureaucratisation of neighbourhood units in such a case, where they can essentially become an extended arm of the local administration. All of these are considerations that need to be taken into account when making the case for the delegation of service provision. In any event, assessments in this realm should be combined with pilot projects to test different models of decentralised service delivery.

Clear definition of tasks and the assignment of commensurate funding is a task that presumes formal and clear designation of the types of tasks that a MZ is able to conduct on behalf of local government or other service providers (e.g. communal services and social services). The BiH study highlights cases of certain administrative tasks being provided by MZs informally, without any clear guidelines from the local government, resources to perform such tasks or standards provided.³³⁵ If MZs are already performing or ought to perform a given task then such a mandate should be clearly assigned and indicate the aims and standards for service provision. Moreover, any task delegation should be followed by proper funding and capacity for execution. Service oversight mechanisms would also need to be extended to cover the work of the MZ.

Cross-municipality coordination is required in the case of service delivery by MZs. Cross-municipality coordination between the relevant stakeholders involved in service provision in a given realm, including MZs, should be set up. The aim of such coordination would be harmonisation and the continuous improvement of the quality of service delivery.

In order to ensure that the needs of residents are met and the efficiency of service delivery maintained, MZs are not allowed to be directly involved in the provision of services; however, they can engage in facilitating service provision by regularly coordinating with service providers on the extent and quality of the services needed in a given area. To a certain extent, the relevant legislation and local acts already formally make such a role possible. For instance, the Law on the Principles of Local Self-Government in the FBiH lists taking care of the protection of persons in social need and initiating cooperation with social protection organs as a task of MZs.³³⁶ Moreover, this is something that many MZs in BiH already do: empirical research highlights in particular the sound cooperation and regular information exchange between MZs and the centres for social work and communal enterprises. However, cooperation often takes place on an ad hoc basis.

If certain conditions are met then such a role may become more effective.

Formalising coordination of service facilitation can be fostered through formal coordination between MZs and the relevant institutions/organisations involved in service delivery (e.g. communal departments and departments and centres for social work, NGOs providing social services, etc.). Standards for coordination and cooperation may, for example, involve the definition of mutual obligations on information exchange. Expert bodies on service provision and standards in individual realms (e.g. communal services) that are or may be set up at the level of local government can also include MZs as members.

Citizen involvement in service facilitation needs to be based on the active involvement of citizens as service consumers in order to tailor services to local needs and to ensure allocative efficiency. This may entail setting up different mechanisms for the receipt of inputs from citizens on their expectations of individual services as well as feedback on service provision and fostering direct information exchange and consultation between residents and service providers (e.g. regular meetings at MZ premises). It may also entail having residents and service providers jointly plan the level and quality of a given service.

³³⁴ See, for example, Chaskin, "Fostering Neighborhood Democracy", p. 176.

³³⁵ See Jusić, "Local Communities in BiH", p. 59.

³³⁶ Article 25 of the Law on the Principles of Local Self-Government in the FBiH.

Option 3: MZs as socio-cultural community centres.

Vision: With the aim to foster social cohesion in the community, MZs are hubs where various socio-cultural activities take place initiated and organised jointly by MZs and residents.

A neighbourhood can, as highlighted by Robert J. Chaskin, be portrayed as, “a spatial construction denoting a geographical unit in which residents share proximity and the circumstances that come with it.”³³⁷ As both territorially and socially constructed places, authors in this realm often stress the potential of micro-locations for fostering social cohesion through the repeated interaction of residents.

Such interaction can be advanced through socio-cultural and recreational activities. Some city quarters in Switzerland provide an excellent example of such ‘social’ participation, where the *maisons de quartier* or *treffpunkte* frequently acts as an intergenerational community centre that fosters interaction through activities such as cooking classes, dance sessions and creative workshops. This function is important both in remote areas, where residents may be isolated and not have the opportunity to engage in such activities, and in the larger cities, where neighbourhood cohesion may be weak.

Current legislation in BiH does not preclude the possibility of MZs becoming community centres. For example, both entity laws include the provision that citizens can use MZs to participate in the creation of the spatial, financial and organisational conditions for sport and recreation or organise different forms of humanitarian assistance within the territory of a MZ.³³⁸ Empirical research in BiH has shown that in addition to communicating on behalf of residents to other instances in a given town or village MZs also tend to organise different community activities or offer their premises to other organisations for such a purpose.

However, there are a number of preconditions that need to be met for MZs to become true community centres.

Legal status in order to function as a true community centre is important to MZs. Running a socio-cultural centre means that MZs should be able to open bank accounts, raise funds, sign contracts, etc. In some cities in Switzerland, designated municipal spaces are given to non-profit associations to run as community centres and meeting places. These independent organisations are usually able to rent out premises and in this manner co-finance some of their activities. They are also able to hire their own staff, buy materials and pay for services to run their operations. In Rijeka, where local boards tend to organise such activities, MOs are designated special funds by the city government that they can spend on programmatic activities in this realm.

Staffing and programming in addition to physical premises are needed for MZs to develop programmes and have designated staff or volunteers to carry them out. *Maisons de quartier* in Geneva have professional animators whose salaries are financed by a foundation in the socio-cultural realm. Animators work on the creation of programmes, but *maisons* can also accept input and proposals from residents on the type of activities they would like to take part in or organise. The actual implementation of programmes usually takes place with the support of volunteers. In addition, other informal groups or community organisations can rent the premises of centres (in some instances, use them free of charge) for their own activities. The MOs visited in Rijeka used funds designated by the City for programmatic activities to buy materials for workshops, which were usually run by volunteers. Such workshops were planned on an annual basis by the MO council and approved by the City for financing.

Cooperation with the local community and NGOs on programming may also be done in cooperation with informal groups or local NGOs, including those active in the realms of culture, education, social well-being and recreation. In this case, MZs can either work jointly on programmes with others or actively seek to cooperate on different activities with various groups and organisations to ensure continuity and diversity of activity. Alternatively, they can work effectively as physical meeting places and have long-term agreements with

337 Robert J. Chaskin, “Perspectives on Neighborhood and Community: A Review of the Literature”, *Social Sciences Review* 71, no. 4, 1997, pp. 522-523.

338 Article 25 of the Law on the Principles of Local Self-Government in the FBiH and Article 109a of the Law on Local Self-Government in RS.

other groups or organisations to run activities at the MZ's premises. Moreover, as community centres, MZs can coordinate their activities with a wide variety of service providers. These can be schools, centres for social work and other organisations targeting particular populations, including children and youth, elderly, ethnic minorities and others.

Financial preconditions need to be ensured by local government as a financial prerequisite for the work of community centres. Supporting the underlying aim of greater social cohesion would mean providing a separate financing scheme with clear principles and criteria concerning the type of activities that would be supported. For example, *maisons de quartier* in Geneva have the flexibility to determine their own programmes but have to comply with general principles on the type of activity supported by the city government in this realm. They also have to abide by formal obligations on the number of hours of socio-cultural activities they have to provide on a weekly basis. In Rijeka, there is a designated fund for MO programmes and special committees that were set up by the city administration to evaluate MO proposals for financing.

Option 4: MZs as venues for citizen engagement.

Vision: With the aim to enable direct citizen participation in local decision-making processes, MZs organise various participatory processes on different issues in the community.

Taking on such a role is in line with the idea that neighbourhood institutions can foster citizen participation and enable access to local decision-making processes. Citizen engagement as such may improve municipal plans and programmes, facilitate greater trust between residents and local government, allow for the redistribution of public goods and build social cohesion.³³⁹ Where citizen engagement is meaningful, it also allows individuals to build up their civic skills or “the capabilities of individuals and groups to pursue goals that are broader than their personal needs.”³⁴⁰ Moreover, meaningful participatory processes build the legitimacy of neighbourhood or community organisations.³⁴¹

MZs in BiH are already formally recognised as a means of direct citizen engagement. However, judging from the empirical research to date, to what extent they serve as access points to local decision-making processes is a contested matter.³⁴² Individual accounts from the other countries studied also tend to stress some difficulties with carrying out meaningful participatory processes. What kind of mechanisms are used, how clearly their aim is communicated, whether or not they are transparent and inclusive and what type of influence citizens can really exercise through them are all aspects that need to be taken into account when organising such processes.

Thus, a number of preconditions have to be met for MZs in BiH to live up to their formally recognised role.

339 Chaskin, “*Fostering Neighborhood Democracy*”, p. 163.

340 Horak Martin and Talja Blokland, “*Neighborhoods and Civic Practice*”, in *The Oxford Handbook of Urban Politics*, eds. Mossberger Karen, Susan E. Clarke and Peter John, New York: Oxford University Press, 2012, p. 255.

341 Chaskin, “*Fostering Neighborhood Democracy*”, p. 179.

342 See Jusić, “*Local Communities in BiH*,” pp. 66-71.

Procedures for citizen engagement need to be clear and in place so that citizens can initiate participatory processes in relation to an issue that local government is responsible for in their area through a MZ. In Basel, for example, residents can benefit from a clearly defined procedure whereby they apply through a quarter based secretariat for a participatory process to take place on a given issue. In other words, such processes may be organised by a relevant municipal department, residents or community organisations as initiators and the neighbourhood based organisation.

Managing participatory processes determines what types of processes work best in a given setting and should be based on continuous evaluation and subsequent improvement of such processes. In some cities, as in Basel, the local administration has introduced quality management of participatory processes, which relies on an evaluation of processes involving participants. Depending on the aim of a participatory exercise, the complexity of the issue at hand, the level of influence that citizens can expect to achieve on a given matter and other factors, participatory processes can involve a myriad of different mechanisms. Organising citizen assemblies in particular may require specific rules (e.g. organising theme specific meetings, changing the formats of assemblies to make them more effective and interesting to citizens, clearly articulating what the purpose of such assemblies and their effect may be). In any event, participatory processes have to be well organised procedurally and must bear some results in order to be meaningful to residents.

Validation of community priorities through participation requires that the procedures whereby MZs identify priorities for financing of local projects must be participatory in nature. Such procedures must entail some form of validation of priorities stemming from citizens in order to ensure that they are truly based on the needs of citizens. An interesting methodology applied in some of the visited cities in Switzerland are quarter contracts, where citizens can demand and also decide on which small projects will be funded. Yet even the more traditional means, such as citizen assemblies where citizens vote on proposals or the establishment of committees that assess community proposals based on transparent criteria, can be pursued.

Capacities and funding for organising and evaluating participatory processes as well as mobilising the community around small projects in general requires funding and the development of skills among MZ representatives and staff. A large part of such an activity revolves around proper outreach to residents and making information about the processes, in all of their stages, widely available and this also requires funding and know-how.

Synergies within communities, as they are by no means the only spaces for engagement in the community, requires that MZs actively work on building synergies with other civic and interest groups on particular issues that affect the community. Joint activities, such as advocacy efforts on a particular issue, may be more (cost-)effective, guarantee a wider outreach and create multiple access points for different groups in a community. It may also result in a transfer of know-how between different organisations and MZs. Positive results of the complementarity of different quarter based organisations in engaging in 'quarter work' was frequently cited in the Swiss cities scrutinised as part of the case studies.

Crosscutting Issues/Principles

A number of important principles and issues have to be considered for any of the above-mentioned MZ roles to be viable.

Representativeness of MZs in BiH is ensured through the election of local representatives. The legitimacy of MZs, irrespective of the roles they perform in a given community, is influenced ultimately by the type of elections and the representativeness of MZ organs. Rules on MZ elections need to be transparent and remove any barriers to voting. Moreover, they should guarantee citizens and political parties equal opportunities to become representatives on the MZ council. Procedures and mechanisms that support the representation of different population groups and territories in the representative organs should be considered. Special attention must be paid to ensuring the equal representation of women and men in such bodies. Strong oversight mechanisms are needed in order to prevent abuse in elections, such as joint election committees made up of MZ and municipal administration representatives (e.g. as in Pančevo). Moreover, introducing procedures whereby residents can recall MZ organs in the event that they are not performing their function of representation should be put in place.

Inclusion, irrespective of formal representation, requires that MZs actively seek to involve diverse stakeholders from within the community in their work. This can be done through the formation of partnerships with representatives of different groups (e.g. ethnic minorities, the elderly and youth) and actively involving them in the work of the MZ. Special attention should be paid to the inclusion of women and their perspectives, experience and skills, given that they account for around 50 per cent of the population and that they may be excluded from community level activities. The integration of different socially excluded groups within a community could be the basis for activities pursued by MZs in the socio-cultural realm, similar to the practice in community centres in some Swiss cities.

Independence in their work should be granted, to a degree, to MZs by local government, given their legacy of community governance and in order for them to be recognised as truly representative and speak on behalf of community interests. This pertains in par-

ticular to their internal decision-making procedures and the activities they want to pursue jointly with the wider community.

Transparency of work and ease of access is required in order to avoid the abuse and capture of MZs and to ensure the legitimacy and accountability of their work; therefore, MZs need to make all information on their work fully accessible. This means that they should publish the minutes of MZ council meetings, their annual plans and reports and make them easily accessible. They should also open council sessions to the public and hold regular assemblies to inform citizens about their work.

Active community outreach should be at the core of the work of MZs and information sharing included in the performance of any given role. This should include information on what is happening in the community, on participatory processes and on the activities of the MZ as well as information on different procedures within the community (e.g. submitting requests or proposals, setting project priorities and initiating participatory processes). Information sharing can take place through regular meetings, regularly updated websites (own or as part of the local government website), social media and other means.

Community cooperation means synergies between MZs and other groups, organisations and institutions in the community. This is vital to be able to initiate activities, pool resources and meet local needs. Moreover, cooperation with other MZs within the municipality (e.g. through the formation of a 'conference' or joint association, as in some Swiss cities) can encourage the exchange of know-how between MZs. It can also strengthen their ability to articulate common issues and to better advocate for certain principles or standards relating to their own work.

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ANNEXES

ANNEX 1

Table 1: Overview of interlocutors per country

Country	Locality	Position	Institution
Switzerland	Vernier	Municipal representative	Municipal administration
		Quarter contract representative	Contrat de quartier
	Geneva	Representative	Municipal administration
		Quarter house representative	Maison de quartier
		Municipality and quarter contract representative	Quarter contract
	Lucerne	Representative	Municipal administration
		President	Quarter association [1]
		President	Quarter association [2]
		Coordinator	Quartierverband
	Basel	Representative	Quartiersekretariat
Sweden	Gothenburg	Representative	Quartiertreffpunkt
		Expert	Fachhochschule Nordwestschweiz
	Gothenburg	President of NC	Stadsdelsnämnd [1]
		President of NC	Stadsdelsnämnd [2]
		Head of Development / NC	Stadsdelsförvaltning [2]
		Head of Development / NC	Stadsdelsförvaltning [3]
		Chief Manager	Municipal administration
		Expert	University of Göteborg
	Jönköping	Member of NC	Kommundelsråd [1]
		President of NC	Kommundelsråd [1]
		Municipal representative	Municipal administration
	Vetlanda	President of NC	Kommundelsråd [1]
		President of NC	Kommundelsråd [2]
		President of NC	Kommundelsråd [3]
		President of village council	Sockenråd
		Municipal representative	Municipal administration
	Boras	Municipal representative	Municipal administration
	Stockholm	Researcher	Mångkulturellt Centrum

Serbia	Pančevo	MZ Secretary	MZ [1]
	Pančevo	MZ Secretary	MZ [2]
	Pančevo	Municipal representative	Municipal administration
	Pančevo	Municipal representative	Municipal administration
	Subotica	MZ Secretary	MZ [1]
	Subotica	MZ Secretary	MZ [2]
	Subotica	President of MZ council	MZ [3]
	Subotica	Municipal representative	Municipal administration
	Zrenjanin	Municipal representative	Municipal administration
	Zrenjanin	MZ Secretary	MZ [1]
	Zrenjanin	President of MZ council	MZ [2]
	Zrenjanin	MZ Secretary	MZ [3]
	Kula	MZ Secretary	MZ [1]
	Kula	MZ Secretary	MZ [2]
	Belgrade	Expert	Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities
	Belgrade	Expert	Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities
Croatia	Kastav	Municipal representative	Municipal administration
		Municipal representative	Municipal administration
		MO council president	MO [1]
	Rijeka	Municipal representative	City administration
		Municipal representative	City administration
		MO Secretary	MO [1]
		MO Member	MO [1]
		MO Secretary	MO [2]
		MO President	MO [2]
		MO Secretary	MO [3]
		MO President	MO [3]
	Zagreb	Expert	University of Zagreb
		Expert	Independent
		Municipal representative	Municipal administration
		Municipal representative	Municipal administration
		Coordinator	City quarter [1]
		Coordinator	City quarter [2]
		Coordinator	City quarter [3]

ANNEX 2

Please note: The complete survey results are attached under a separate annex to this report.

