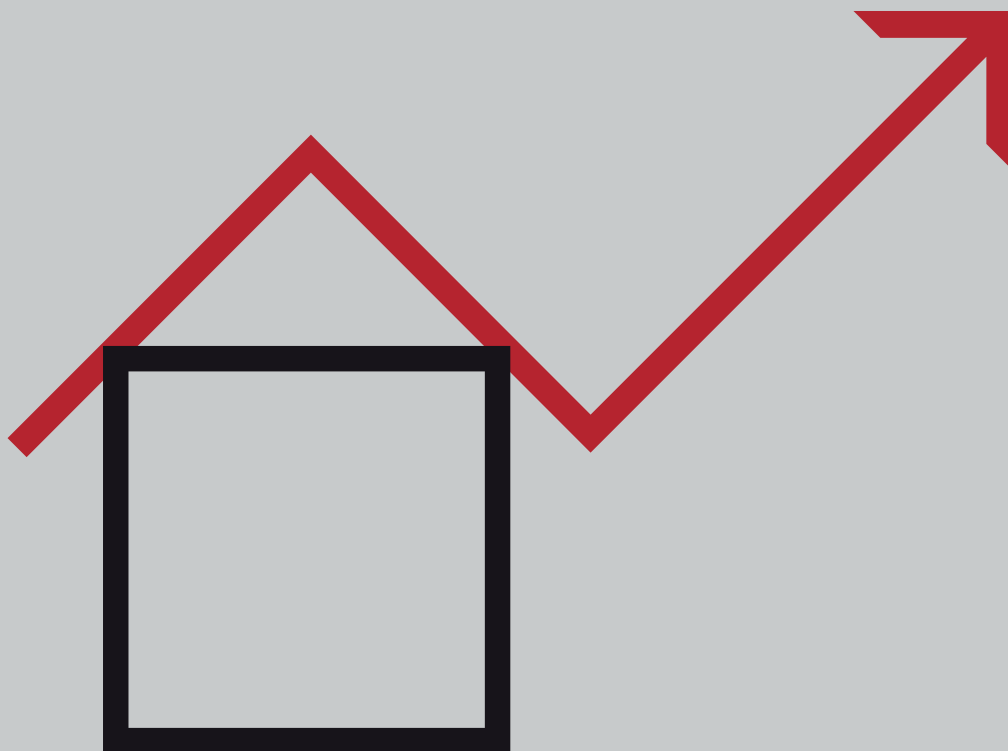




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RETHINKING LOCAL COMMUNITY IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

A Comparative Overview and Assessment of Community
Governance Models and Practices in Croatia, Serbia, Sweden,
Switzerland and Bosnia and Herzegovina

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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.

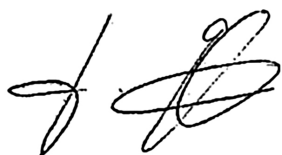
At a time when citizens, local government and socioeconomic stakeholders in the country are recognising that the old ways of (*non*) functioning of local communities are insufficient for the future, the Government of Switzerland and the Government of Sweden are willing to support efforts aimed at the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



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Executive Summary

This comparative research project was undertaken to gain an insight into different modes of sub-municipal and community governance to inform future efforts on improving the work of local communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). It was carried out for UNDP as part of the project *Strengthening the Role of 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 and sub-municipal governance units in Croatia, Serbia, Sweden and Switzerland was scrutinised with focus on their legal and institutional set-up, resources and the functions they perform. Desk research, legal analysis and surveys involving local government representatives and case study research were conducted in the four countries for this purpose. The gathered insights were then compared with the results of an empirical study on sub-municipal governance in BiH that was conducted in 2014 by the Center for Social Research 'Analitika'.

A comparison of the five countries yielded a number of specific dilemmas related to the work of community/sub-municipal governance. One of them concerns the idea of community self-governance or '*mjesna samouprava*', which is a term used to refer to such bodies in the legislation in Croatia, Serbia and BiH. The level of autonomy of such bodies is limited to a considerable extent in all three countries and therefore a discrepancy exists between the notion of self-governance and the extent of autonomy that such units are able to exert in practice.

There are important issues related to the legitimacy of sub-municipal governance in the countries considered. Namely, political party dominated modes of election and the extent to which they truly represent the wider community brings into question the legitimacy of such bodies in BiH, Croatia and Serbia. Some authors also question the model of indirect election for district committee/council representatives in Sweden, given that this can in practice lead to a greater distance between residents and their representatives. The representativeness of quarter based initiatives in some cities in Switzerland can also be viewed as uncertain, due to the fact that not many residents, at least in some of the case studies, were able or interested in participating.

Another related issue is that of the very purpose of community level bodies and the functions they ought to perform. In Sweden, the key dilemma is essentially between centralisation and decentralisation. One of the central arguments is whether there should be district committees as decentralised bodies of service delivery able to ensure an efficient and equitable level of services for all residents irrespective of their location. In the other countries, decentralisation or delegation of services to such bodies is not an official policy; however, in the absence of formal service provision, *mjesne zajednice* (MZs) can, usually in rural areas, deliver certain services in BiH and Serbia.

In a number of the case studies, a significant role that is taken on by community level organisations is 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 translate into collective action beyond the social realm; in other words, social participation can become political.

Moreover, in many of the case studies it appears that local government considers community level organisations as important interlocutors and intermediaries that can help them identify local needs and set priorities for a given locality as well as legitimise certain community interventions through consultation. The role of intermediary is therefore institutionalised, more or less; however, the effectiveness of such a function can in some instances be reduced by residents' perceptions concerning politicisation. This is especially pertinent to the countries of the region, as the dominant role of party politics in community governance can discourage citizen involvement due to the belief that their requests or proposals will be dismissed. For the sake of accountability and legitimacy, some local authorities are looking for ways to ensure that the priorities set for a given community are truly representative of the needs of citizens.

Yet the role of intermediary or advisory body may not necessarily allow for true deliberation or citizen influence in local affairs. In Switzerland, such an influence on decision-making processes is ensured through direct democratic means if no consensus is reached between local authorities and residents on a particular local issue. In Sweden, there is a general discussion on whether or not there is a need for deeper participation or influence. Democracy is seen to rest on the premises of output legitimacy and consultative mechanisms, by which the views of citizens are solicited. This can be part of a district committee's mandate. Nevertheless, 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 longer, raise two questions. The first is whether such mechanisms are meaningfully organised in the first place and the sec-

ond is whether their use is appropriate, considering the level of influence that residents can exert through them. In some cases, interlocutors stressed that issues are solved more easily through political links. This in turn can affect citizen interest in engaging in the work of community governance units. In general, what can be discerned 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; however, there is a discussion on whether such bodies are actually needed. In the case studies in Switzerland the idea of independent community associations that organise around community interests appears to be a clear-cut mode of community organising. It can also be complemented by top-down initiatives by local government. Yet in BiH and Croatia such units appear to represent or relay interests from the community to the local government rather than serve as mechanisms of direct citizen participation. In Serbia, a contradiction exists between MZs as units of community self-governance autonomous of local government and the actual extent of autonomy that they can exercise. In general, the countries of the region may need to revisit the purpose and function of community self-governance units, as there are discrepancies between their hypothetical and actual roles.

Recommendations based on comparative analysis of the potential roles that MZs in BiH can take on are provided later in the text. Which roles MZs are able to take on will depend on the local context and needs. Moreover, such roles are not mutually exclusive and there may be significant overlap or synergy between them. The four roles listed below were identified.

- MZs as advocates of community interests;
- MZs as venues for service facilitation or service delivery;
- MZs as socio-cultural community centres;
- MZs as venues for citizen engagement.

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 the representativeness of community governance bodies, inclusion, independence, transparency of work and active community outreach and community cooperation.

1.

Introduction

1. Introduction

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

In order to better understand the available options for organising the work of MZs in BiH and to ensure their sound functioning, additional comparative research was conducted in 2015. The aim was to gain a comparative insight into local community governance in the region: Croatia, Serbia, Sweden and Switzerland. The countries from the former Yugoslavia were chosen because of their similar historical legacy of MZ development and work. Both are roughly similar to BiH in terms of their general size and scope of local governance, but there are interesting differences in terms of how sub-municipal bodies are regulated and organised. Insights from Switzerland and Sweden are beneficial because of their common traditions of strong local democracy and good governance, yet these two countries also have very divergent types of community or sub-municipal governance organisation. The ultimate aim of the comparative study was to provide recommendations on how important aspects of the work of MZs, such as the organisational set-up, financing, service delivery, coordination with other actors

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

in the community and citizen engagement, can be strengthened in BiH. The results of the research are presented in this report.

The comparison entailed an analysis of the legal and institutional frameworks regulating community or sub-municipal governance units in Croatia, Serbia, Sweden and Switzerland and the procedures relating to their operation, the diverse roles they play in the community and their capacities and funding. The research consisted of a combination of secondary and primary research that included desk research, legal analysis, a survey involving local government representatives from the four countries, case studies that involved interviews with representatives of such units and municipal authorities as well as interviews with local and community governance experts. In the further text, we first outline the analytical and methodological framework and subsequently present important aspects of the organisational set-up and work of community governance units through a comparative perspective. The report concludes with recommendations for improving community governance in BiH.

2.

Analytical and
Methodological
Framework

2. Analytical and Methodological Framework

The definition of community governance used in this study is purposefully broad. It encompasses bodies of sub-municipal and political decentralisation, which can be installed top-down or through different forms of bottom-up, neighbourhood or community organising. In other words, irrespective of their form, the units of interest tend to organise residents around common territorially bound interests at the sub-municipal level. Thus, in understanding the role of such bodies it may be best to rely on Chaskin's definition of 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 organize accountability and responsibility for action undertaken.”²

The analytical framework outlined in the UNDP BiH Terms of Reference for this assignment and the analytical framework from the 2014 research on local communities in BiH conducted by Analitika were applied in this comparative research.³ This made it possible to compare our current insights from Croatia, Serbia, Sweden and Switzerland with the findings of the earlier BiH study in order to assess the different roles that community governance units play, highlight the principal debates concerning the organisation of particular aspects of community governance work in the different countries and to provide recommendations for improving local community governance in BiH.

The analysis focused on a number of key dimensions of the functioning of community governance:

- **legal basis of community governance**, including establishment, legal status, organs, elections, decision-making procedures and local government oversight;
- **resources and capacities of community governments**, including funding, staffing,

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, see Jusic, “Local Communities in BiH”, pp. 29-30.

- premises and technical capacities;
- **services and other tasks** provided by community governance units, including the types of services provided, funding modalities and variations in service delivery in rural/urban areas;
- **cooperation and coordination**, including cooperation among community governance units, interaction with local 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 as well as any innovative solutions for citizen engagement.

A number of methods for data gathering were utilised, as presented below in Table 1, in order to collect the necessary information in the four countries selected for comparison.⁴

v	Scope
Analysis of secondary resources	A review of available secondary literature (articles and reports), websites and statistical data on community governance was conducted in the four countries.
Analysis of the legal framework	A review of the relevant laws and policies at higher levels of government as well as local and community governance acts was conducted in the case studies.
Surveys of local governments	E-mail surveys were sent to 2,248 local governments in the four countries: 247 or 11% of surveys were received in total.
In-depth case studies	In four countries, 14 case studies and interviews with 55 representatives of community governance organisations and local governments were conducted.
Interviews with experts	Interviews were conducted with seven experts on community and local governance in the four countries.

Table 1: *Overview of the data gathering techniques deployed*

To deepen our insight into the functioning of community governance and gather data on different aspects of their work, case studies were conducted in each of the four countries. Representatives of community governance units (and different types of units, where they exist) were interviewed in individual localities in order to gather as many different insights as possible from local representatives. Table 2, below, provides an overview of the main characteristics of the case studies.

⁴ A more detail description of the methodology, including case selection criteria, is available upon request.

Country	Municipality/ City/town	Population	Type of unit	Number of units
Croatia	Kastav	8,891	<i>Mjesni odbor</i>	5
	Rijeka	128,624	<i>Mjesni odbor</i>	34
	Zagreb	790,017	<i>Gradska četvrt</i>	17
			<i>Mjesni odbor</i>	218
Serbia	Kula	43,101	<i>Mesna zajednica</i>	8
	Pančevo	90,776	<i>Mesna zajednica</i>	17
	Subotica	141,554	<i>Mesna zajednica</i>	19
	Zrenjanin	76,511	<i>Mesna zajednica</i>	14
Sweden	Jonkoping	61,559	<i>Kommundelsråd</i>	10
	Gothenburg	541,145	<i>Stadsdelsnämnd</i>	10
	Vetlanda	26,647	<i>Kommundelsråd</i>	9
Switzerland	Basel	175,560	<i>Quartierverein</i>	17
			<i>Stadtteilsekretariat / Quartierkoordination</i>	3
			<i>Quartiertreffpunkt</i>	15
	Geneva	197,376	<i>Contrat de quartier</i>	3
			<i>Maison de quartier / centre de loisir</i>	23
	Lucerne	81,057	<i>Quartierverein</i>	21
			<i>Quartierverband</i>	1
	Vernier	35,327	<i>Contrat de quartier</i>	4

Table 2: Case study localities and the types of units studied

3.

Comparative
Review of Community
Governance Practices
in Bosnia and
Herzegovina, Croatia,
Serbia, Sweden and
Switzerland

3. Comparative Review of Community Governance Practices in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia, Sweden and Switzerland

3.1. Organisational Type, Purpose and Conditions of Establishment

Insights into the five countries chosen for comparison highlight the various types and modes of functioning of community and sub-municipal governance units.

Community self-governance (*mjesna samouprava*) is an inheritance from the past for the countries of former Yugoslav that prevails in BiH, Croatia and Serbia, albeit through distinct organisational types.⁵ In the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH), community self-governance is to be achieved through the local community (*mjesna zajednica* – MZ) as a mandatory form; however, it can also be realised through other forms, such as city quarters.⁶ In Republika Srpska (RS), MZs are not stipulated as forms of community self-governance but rather as an optional form of citizen engagement in local governance.⁷ In contrast, MZs in Brčko District (BD), a distinct self-governing administrative unit within BiH, are registered as citizen associations and have an advisory role.⁸ In Croatia, MZs were dismantled in the early 1990s and replaced by local boards (*mjesni odbor*, hereafter MO) and city quarters (*gradska četvrt/kotar*) that were introduced as forms of community self-governance. In Serbia, MZs prevail as forms of community self-governance and are mandatory in villages but optional in the cities.⁹

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

6 "Zakon o principima lokalne samouprave u Federaciji BiH" [Law on the Principles of Local Self-Government in Federation BiH], Official Gazette of the Federation of BiH, no. 49/06, Article 24.

7 "Zakon o lokalnoj samoupravi" Republike Srpske" [Law on Local Self-Government], Official Gazette of Republika Srpska, numbers 101/04, 42/05, 118/05 and 98/13, Article 99.

8 "Zakon o mjesnim zajednicama u Brčko Distriktu Bosne i Hercegovine" [Law on Local Communities in the District of Brčko of BiH], Official Gazette of the District of Brčko of BiH, no. 3/03, Article 2.

9 "Zakon o lokalnoj samoupravi" [Law on Local Self-Government], Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, numbers 129/07 and 83/14.

In Sweden, neighbourhood/district committees (*kommundelsnämnd* or *stadsdelsnämnd* /*stadsområdesnämnd*) or councils (*kommundelsråd*) are established top-down by local government on a voluntary basis and usually in the larger cities. Both types of units are comprised of political representatives. While the committees usually deliver services the councils are advisory bodies that solicit local views on issues. These bodies resulted from the significant amalgamation that took place between the 1950s and 1970s, when the number of local governments in Sweden was reduced from over 2,000 to 290.¹⁰ However, since the 1990s, sub-municipal bodies in many Swedish municipalities have been dismantled; this is mainly due to concerns over efficiency or service equitability. In some, mostly in rural parts of the country, residents can organise around a community association (*samhällsförening*) with a socio-cultural profile.

In contrast, *quarter associations* (*Quartiervereine/associations de quartier*) in Switzerland are organised by residents of a given quarter on a voluntary basis; this usually occurs in the cities.¹¹ Other types of quarter based organisations are community houses or ‘meeting places’, socio-cultural hubs usually run by local NGOs and umbrella quarter organisations that usually cover an entire city or its part and that have quarter associations as members. Local governments can also choose to establish top-down mechanisms at the quarter level for consulting with residents and in the larger cities soliciting their views. Given the extensive decentralisation of local governance in Switzerland, government instituted sub-municipal bodies comprised of political representatives, such as quarter or district committees, are rare.

Given the different types and forms of local communities in the studied countries, the purpose of such units varies. MOs in BiH¹² and Croatia are considered, “a form of direct citizen participation in decision-making in local affairs.”¹³ There is an obvious discrepancy between an MZ/MO as a form of *community self-governance* and as a form of *citizen participation* in decision-making. While these concepts are closely related, they are by no means equivalent. Although being a form of citizen participation is arguably ambiguous, community self-governance implies that residents associate

10 In 1985, almost every second municipality had introduced or was considering introducing neighbourhood committees. Henry Bäck, “Fragmentation and consolidation in the big city: Neighbourhood decentralization in six Scandinavian cities”, paper submitted to ECPR Joint Session of Workshops, Turin, March 23-27 2002, pp. 5-6. By our own estimates, based on secondary analysis of municipal websites and incoming surveys, 16 municipalities - mostly large cities - still have some form of neighbourhood level structures.

11 Cities in Switzerland are rather small. For example, among the twenty largest cities in Switzerland are ten cities with a population of 30,000 to 45,000. Also see data of the Swiss Federal Statistical Office: Office fédéral de la statistique (OFS), “Population résidante permanente selon l’âge, par canton, district et commune” [Permanent resident population according to age, per canton, district and municipality, 2010-2014], 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>>

12 See the Law on Local Self-Government of Republika Srpska, Article 99 and the Law on Local Communities in Brčko District, Article 2. Although not explicit in the local government law in the FBiH, this role of MZs as the “right of citizens to directly participate in decision-making” at the local level is contained in many local government statutes. See Jusic, “Local Communities in BiH”, p. 66.

13 “Zakon o lokalnoj i područnoj (regionalnoj) samoupravi” [Law on Local and Regional Self-Government], Official Gazette of the Republic of Croatia, 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.

and take action to satisfy their own needs and interests and this may go beyond attempting to affect certain local decisions in their favour. Thus, the purpose of MZs in Serbia, which is to meet needs and interests of residents,¹⁴ seems more appropriate.¹⁵

In BiH, Croatia and Serbia, both local government and residents can initiate the establishment of community governance. The formation of MZs/MOs has to be approved by local government,¹⁶ usually with some prior solicitation of the views of residents on the matter. Local government laws or local government acts usually specify the grounds for the establishment of a MZ (e.g. a settlement, part of settlement or connected settlements). In RS, it is also possible to establish a MZ on historical, economic or cultural grounds.¹⁷ City quarters in Croatia are established in an area of a city that represents an urban, economic and social whole that is bound together by the common interests of its citizens. Moreover, the law allows municipalities considerable room when defining the modes of community governance in their own area. Some authors claim that this has led to a large variation in the territory and population size of MOs in Croatia.¹⁸ Moreover, some cities have two tiers of community self-governance.¹⁹ In all three countries (with the exception of RS in BiH) MZs and MOs have legal personhood, at least de jure. However, in practice such a status can be restricted. In Serbia, for example, given that legal personhood is granted to a MZ as part of its rights and duties, as established by the municipal statute and decision on establishment, its legal capacity is perceived to be limited.²⁰

The Swiss approach to quarter level governance appears to rest on the idea of numerous opportunities for social interaction and political participation. On the one hand, community centres and meeting places facilitate social participation through socio-cultural activities, while, on the other, quarter associations are to represent the interests of their members, the residents of a quarter, toward other actors in the community and to preserve and promote the quality of life in a given area.²¹ Cities can also introduce other mechanisms to gather input from citizens (e.g. city offices in the quarters). Given that the mechanisms of direct democracy at the local level guarantee the political influence of citizens, the underlying aim of such quarter level initiatives

14 See Article 72 of the Law on Local Self-Government of the Republic of Serbia.

15 Analysed local government statutes from Serbia also highlight the role of MZs as bodies established to meet the interests and needs of a given community. MZs in the City of Subotica, for example, are an, "interest-based and democratic community of citizens." City of Subotica, "Odluka o mesnim zajednicama" [Decision on MZs], Official Gazette of the City of Subotica, no. 47/11, Article 2.

16 See Article 73 of the Law on Local Self-Government of the Republic of Serbia.

17 See articles 2, 4, 9 and 10 of the Law on Local Communities in Brcko District; articles 24, 26 and 27 of the Law on the Principles of Local Self-Government in the FBiH and articles 99, 106 and 107 of the Law on Local Self-Government of Republika Srpska.

18 Koprić Ivan, "Stanje lokalne samouprave u Hrvatskoj" [State of Local Self-Government in Croatia], Hrvatska javna uprava, (3), 2010, p. 673.

19 For example, Zagreb has 17 city quarters with an average population of circa 45,000 residents per quarter and 218 local boards with an average population of circa 3,500 residents per urban local board. Through the conducted research, 16 cities were identified as having both types of units in Croatia.

20 See the interpretation by the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities of Serbia (SKGO), "Aktuelna pitanja" [Current issues], <<http://www.skgo.org/pages/display/315/Aktuelna+pitanja>>

21 Such formulations were usually found in a number of analysed statutes of quarter associations.

appears in many instances to be one of social cohesion and support through stronger identification with the quarter rather than political participation. However, quarter associations may fulfil the role of coordinator of collective action and communicator of collective interests toward local authorities. As such, quarter based units are grassroots organisations and are therefore not established by local government in Switzerland.²² The statutes of quarter associations in Switzerland usually stipulate that they are politically and religiously neutral organisations. The statute determines the territory for which an association is established, while the Swiss Civil Code prescribes the rules of establishment.²³

In Sweden, in stark contrast, local government establishes neighbourhood/district committees.²⁴ This predominantly brings local government closer to citizens and thus helps, “offset the losses of participatory citizen rights that have entailed from the large-scale local government amalgamation.”²⁵ Neighbourhood/district committees take on the role of service provider, while neighbourhood/district councils are consultative mechanisms comprised of political representatives. These territorially defined bodies are not separate legal entities.

22 An exception is the City of Lugano in the Canton of Ticino, where the local government has established quarter committees as consultative bodies that act as interlocutors between citizens and the City Government. For more information see City of Lugano, “Commissioni de quartiere” [Quarter committees]. Available from <<http://www.lugano.ch/citta-amministrazione/quartieri/commissioni-di-quartiere.html>>

23 See articles 60 and 61 of the Swiss Civil Code, 1907. Based on statutes considered as part of case studies.

24 “Lag (1979:408) om vissa lokala organ i kommunerna” [Law on Local Bodies], Swedish Code of Statutes 1979:408, Article 1.

25 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. 648.

Table 3, below, provides an overview of the types of units and forms of establishment in the five countries.

	BiH	Croatia	Serbia	Sweden	Switzerland
<i>Type of unit</i>	MZ (other forms possible in FBiH).	MO (quarters/districts option for cities).	MZ (other forms possible).	Neighbourhood/district committees or councils.	Quarter associations (most common type).
<i>Legal status</i>	Legal person in FBiH and BD, but not in RS.	Legal person.	Legal person.	No separate personhood, part of the local authority.	Legal person, citizen association.
<i>Purpose of establishment</i>	Citizen participation in a territorially delineated area.	Citizen participation in a territorially delineated area.	Meeting the needs and interests of citizens in a territorially delineated area.	Bringing government closer to citizens through committees, consultation with councils.	Representation of quarter interests, preservation of the quality of life in a quarter.
<i>Conditions of establishment</i>	Mandatory in FBiH, optional in RS and BD. Can be established by citizens or the local authority.	Optional. Can be established by citizens or the local authority.	Optional in cities, but mandatory in rural areas. Can be established by citizens or the local authority.	Optional. The municipality decides on their establishment.	Established for a delineated territory; optional, association of citizens.

Table 3: Overview of the legal basis and establishment

3.2. Organs and Elections

Although organised differently and performing different functions, the community and sub-municipal governance units in all five countries have a representative body and may also have an executive body (and other sectoral bodies).²⁶ In BiH, Croatia and Serbia, MZ/MOs organs are usually *councils*, as key decision-making bodies, comprised of elected representatives. However, there are certain variations: in Croatia, by law the president also constitutes an MO organ,²⁷ while in the FBiH, where municipalities have the discretion to determine MZ organs, some have introduced a council and president – or a council and a *citizen assembly* – as organs.²⁸ In the unique case of Brčko District, where MZs are citizen associations, an *assembly* comprised of residents/members and

²⁶ Oversight boards controlling the legality of MZ work are present in some municipalities in Serbia, which is also the case for many quarter associations in Switzerland. In many municipalities in Serbia and BiH peace councils, in charge of informally mediating local disputes, are operational.

²⁷ See Article 61 of the Law on Local and Regional Self-Government.

²⁸ For more information see Jusic, "Local Communities in BiH", pp. 38-39.

a *steering board* and president constitute the official organs. MZs in some parts of the FBiH and Serbia have inherited a mode of MZ organisation from Yugoslav times, with an *assembly* as a representative and a *council* or *board* as an executive body. In Switzerland, quarter associations as NGOs have a *general assembly* of members (either legal or natural persons, or both), which in turn appoints an *executive committee* that manages the affairs of the association.²⁹ Swedish neighbourhood/district committees tend to have an *administration* and a representative *council*,³⁰ while neighbourhood/district councils only have the latter.

The modes of election for the representative bodies of community units vary widely between and within the countries. MO elections, for example, in Croatia are uniform in line with the law. In Serbia, in line with the law and municipal statutes, the practice varies and MZs can regulate their elections.³¹ In RS, elections are prescribed by law and a special act and are therefore uniform; however, many municipalities have yet to organise new MZ elections in line with the new rules.³² In the FBiH, there is a mix of practices, as in Serbia, given that local government regulates MZ elections. On the other hand, the executive committees of quarter associations in Switzerland are appointed by the general assembly. In Sweden, the norm is indirect elections via the municipal assembly.³³

Table 4, below, illustrates such differences.

	BiH	Croatia	Serbia	Sweden	Switzerland
<i>Elections</i>	RS: direct elections by secret ballot (public/secret voting at citizen assemblies in some instances). FBiH: public/secret voting at citizen assemblies, direct elections by secret ballot.	Direct elections by secret ballot.	Direct elections by secret ballot or public/secret voting at citizen assemblies.	Municipal assembly appoints a neighbourhood/district council or committee members.	Members choose executive committee representatives at the general assembly of members (public, but can be by secret ballot).
<i>Prospective candidates</i>	Citizens (some parts of FBiH) or party and citizen lists (RS, some parts of FBiH).	Party and citizen lists.	Citizen or party and citizen lists.	Political representatives chosen by the municipal assembly.	Citizens.

Table 4: *Types of elections in the studied countries*

29 See articles 65-67 of the Swiss Civil Code.

30 In Gothenburg, the district committee is made up of a political council and a city area administration. As an executive body, the administration carries out the work of the council and executes the decisions of the council with significant capacities and resources.

31 See Article 74 of the Law on Local Self-Government of the Republic of Serbia.

32 For more information see Jusic, "Local Communities in BiH", p. 41.

33 Generally speaking, neighbourhood/district councils reflect the party constellation in the municipal assembly. However, in some cases, representatives may also be chosen to reflect the electoral success of parties in a particular district.

A number of issues for discussion come to the fore concerning the community unit elections. A contested question in Serbia is who should be allowed to prescribe election procedures, given that MZs, in line with the municipal statute and decision on the establishment of the MZ, are to regulate their own elections. 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 occurs mainly in relation to municipal decisions on the establishment of MZs. SKGO also highlights the opinion of the Constitutional Court of Serbia concerning numerous decisions whereby local government does not have the authority to meddle in MZ elections or to recall MZ organs.³⁴

Some interlocutors stressed that the current legal provisions on elections are problematic, because they do not allow for the dismissal of a member of a council if this member is not present at council meetings. However, in some instances, municipal decisions on MZs prescribe the possibility to dismiss MZ organs via a citizen referendum, thus giving citizens the possibility to exercise control over the work of MZs. Another form of compromise is for local governments and MZs to organise elections jointly: in Pančevo and Zrenjanin, MZs propose their representatives to an election commission established by the City.³⁵

In contrast, higher levels of government in Croatia and in RS or local government in the FBiH prescribe election procedures despite the fact that MZs/MOs are, as in Serbia, considered forms of community self-governance. An exception is Brčko District where according to law MZs should prescribe their own election rules in their statute.³⁶ In Sweden, elections for sub-municipal units are indirect and, as such, prescribed by local government.³⁷ The Swiss Civil Code only prescribes that the general assembly of a quarter association, as a citizen association, elects (and may dissolve) the executive committee,³⁸ while the specificities of elections are to be regulated by the statute of the quarter association.

Another issue that has to do with the legitimacy of community units or the “extent to which an organisation justly and properly speaks for and acts on behalf of the neighbourhood it takes as its constituency”³⁹ is the degree to which the electoral system

34 According to SKGO, “the president of the [municipal/town] assembly is only authorized to adopt a decision on calling elections of MZs, while his power does not include the issue of prescribing the election procedure of members of the MZ councils, or determining bodies responsible to implement the elections for MZ councils and the way in which these organs are elected.” See SKGO, “Current Issues”. Available from <<http://www.skggo.org/pages/display/315/Aktuelna+pitanja>>.

35 Municipality of Pančevo, “Odluka o mesnim zajednicama na teritoriji Grada Pančeva” [Decision on MZs on the territory of the City of Pančevo], Official Gazette of the City of Pančevo, no. 36/11, articles 18-20. City of Zrenjanin, “Odluka o mesnim zajednicama” [Decision on MZs], Official Gazette of the City of Zrenjanin, no. 32/08, articles 19-25.

36 See Article 13 of the Law on Local Communities in Brčko District of BiH.

37 The assembly also determines the terms of office for committees. “The Swedish Local Government Act,” Swedish Code of Statutes 1991:900, with amendments, Chapter 6, sections 9, 11, 13 and 15.

38 See Article 65. 1. Of the Swiss Civil Code.

39 Chaskin, “Fostering Neighborhood Democracy”, p. 178.

allows for the wider representation of community interests. A number of interlocutors stressed the importance of having party and citizen lists be inclusive of different groups within the community and the need to ensure gender equality. In Sweden, the representativeness of the community is a party driven issue. If, for example, a party promotes gender equality then there will be equal representation of men and women on the district committees/councils. Another way to ensure representativeness is through local election rules that can establish equal representation of women and men on candidate lists.

According to RS instructions on MZ elections, care must be taken in order to ensure gender representation, in line with the gender equality Law, as well as territorial representation when proposing the candidate lists.⁴⁰ Research conducted by the Mozaik Foundation in BiH into women's representation on MZ councils shows a positive correlation between policies that prescribe equal representation of women and men on candidate lists and their actual representation on MZ councils.⁴¹ Some authors in Serbia also propose that more attention should be paid to the adequate representation of both genders on MZ councils.⁴² In some cases in Serbia, local acts prescribe a quota for the less represented gender.⁴³ Moreover, some local acts on MZ elections in BiH, depending on the locality, guarantee territorial representation (e.g. through an MZ branch) or ethnic representation in ethnically heterogeneous communities.⁴⁴

A related dilemma in the countries of former Yugoslavia in particular has to do with allowing independents to run alongside political candidates for MZ/MO seats on a fair basis. For example, while most interlocutors from the case study municipalities in Croatia agreed that the current system guarantees representation of different interests from within the community, citing that both political lists and independent/citizen candidate lists can be submitted for MO elections, some stressed procedural obstacles for independent candidates and community groups. According to one interlocutor, the proportional electoral system requires a number of candidates on a list and an electoral threshold that may be too high in some localities. Some respondents in BiH also cited procedural obstacles (e.g. unrealistic nomination criteria) for citizens.⁴⁵ Another important obstacle can be the inability of citizen groups to mobilise voters as effectively as political parties, which generally have more resources at their disposal. The inability

40 "Uputstvo o organizovanju i sprovođenju izbora za članove savjeta mjesne zajednice" [Instructions on Organising and Implementing Elections for Local Community Council Members], Official Gazette of Republika Srpska, no. 122/12, Article 19.

41 Mozaik Foundation, "Učešće žena u savjetima mjesnih zajednica: Pilot istraživanje" [Participation of Women in Local Community Councils: Pilot Research], Sarajevo: Mozaik Foundation, 2013, p. 74.

42 "Neposredno učešće građana u javnom životu na lokalnom nivou" [Direct citizen participation in public life at local level], Zorica Vukelić (ed.), Belgrade: Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities of Serbia, 2006, p. 50.

43 In Subotica, for example, there has to be at least one candidate among every three candidates on a list for MZ elections who is a member of the less represented opposite gender. City of Subotica, "Decision on MZs", Article 21a.

44 Jusic, "Local Communities in BiH", p. 45.

45 Ibid, p. 44.

of the system to guarantee the representation of the community, but rather political parties, may reduce voter turnout at elections. Some interlocutors in BiH and Croatia agreed that electoral rules should be changed in order to allow for fairer access to the election process for both political affiliates and non-affiliates.

There are differences in viewpoints – and rules – on the presence of party politics in community governance in the five countries. In Switzerland, citizen associations, as representatives of the interests of a community, are in effect representative of their members (i.e. those who wish to join them) and are, generally speaking, supposed to be neutral of politics. In Sweden, given the general preference for representative democracy in the political system, there appears to be no dilemma concerning the dominant role of party politics in district committees/councils. Moreover, as district committees deliver services their political representatives are supposed to be accountable for the quality and level of service delivery. However, the representation of political parties in MO/MZ councils/assemblies in BiH, Croatia and Serbia is contested. This is because of the perceived strong politicisation of such organs⁴⁶ that, according to many interlocutors, discourages citizens from becoming involved in MZ/MO activities.

A cursory overview of media reports in the three countries points to strong political competition for the control of MZs/MOs. Where election procedures are transparent and allow party lists in MZ/MO elections, election results point to a predominance of political parties in community councils; however, interlocutors also spoke of party dominance of councils even in cases where procedures were less clear or parties were not allowed to run (in some instances in FBiH and Serbia). Informal political ties were frequently cited in Serbia and in BiH as a way to get things done in a community. An interlocutor in Croatia pointed out that MOs are effectively a venue for political mobilisation, training and selection of local politicians.

The issue of political party representation leads to the question of the extent to which parties are truly representative of wider community interests, as opposed to 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 does not appear to be an issue. Yet where the general level of trust in political parties in the region is low⁴⁷ such doubts may be well placed and can partly explain the generally low reported voter turnout in

⁴⁶ See Tatjana Pavlović Križanić, "Rural Governance in Serbia: Charting a Sustainable Future", in *Mind Your Own Business! Community Governance in Rural Municipalities*, Gábor Péteri (ed.), Budapest: LGI/OSI, 2008), p. 144.

⁴⁷ 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_građana_u_vlast_0.pdf>. Also see Khan Mohmand, Shandana and Snezana Misić Mihajlović, "Connecting Citizens to the State: Informal Local Governance Institutions in the Western Balkans", Institute for Development Studies, 2013, p. 17.

MZ/MO elections.⁴⁸ Whether or not ‘politically coloured’ councils are able to exert community self-governance in practice also depends on a range of local conditions. These conditions are not only delimited by the legal status, competencies and resources of such units but by factors such as trust of citizens in political parties and the willingness of citizens to participate in elections and community activities. Yet as one interlocutor in Croatia rightly pointed out, whether or not MO councils are venues for representing the community based on the premise of neutrality (“a group of citizens,” as stressed by an MZ representative from Serbia) or a body similar to a municipal parliament is as such a matter of the political conception of community self-governance.

A number of interlocutors in Serbia, Croatia and BiH reiterated the important aspect of actual electoral procedures. They highlighted the qualities of direct secret ballot as transparency, because it leaves less room for abuse and provides citizens with better access to elections. In Sweden, political parties represented in the municipal assembly nominate representatives for the neighbourhood/district committee/council who are then appointed by the municipal assembly. According to Bäck, several commissions of the central government have proposed the option of direct elections for neighbourhood level bodies and while several municipalities applied for exemption from the rules to hold direct neighbourhood elections such requests were turned down.⁴⁹ Appointment by municipal council is also present in a few municipalities in the FBiH. Although this may not always be the case in practice, indirect representation is generally considered to weaken the relationship that citizens have with the politicians who are supposed to represent them.

3.3. Local Government Oversight

Given the different types of bodies and their nominal roles in the community in the five countries studied, it does not come as a surprise that the extent of involvement of local governments in the work of community units differs vastly.

In Switzerland, where community governance is reliant on grassroots initiatives, the Swiss Civil Code regulates the accountability of quarter associations,⁵⁰ which are not liable to local government for their general work and operations. They are only liable to local government for their work in the case of a specific agreement or mandate from

48 According to an interlocutor, turnout in elections for MOs in Rijeka was smaller by up to 13%. An expert from Croatia said that a turnout in elections for such bodies greater than 10% is considered a success. Also see Jusic, “Local Communities in BiH”, pp. 43-44.

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

50 See Article 69b of the Swiss Civil Code.

local government to fulfil certain tasks. Given that district committees are an integral part of municipal government and tasked with the day-to-day operation of the municipality, Sweden is at the opposite end of the spectrum and therefore local government oversight is strong. Thus, they have to abide by extensive regulation from higher levels as well as municipal directives and tend to coordinate with and report to local government on all matters of importance. However, it is forbidden for local governments to intervene in the tasks of committees.⁵¹ Moreover, district committees are, as in Gothenburg, usually free to make decisions on service provision and other issues in line with the general policy priorities established for a city.

In the case of neighbourhood/district councils, which usually have small budgets at their disposal, oversight tends to work differently and, according to some interlocutors from the case study municipalities, is reduced to the councils submitting minutes for the sessions they hold. However, given that the idea behind district bodies was to bring local government closer to the citizens following the local government amalgamation rather than self-governance, an overall lack of autonomy is not perceived as an issue in Sweden.

The notion of *community self-governance* presupposes a given level of autonomy in local communities. It is connected to the trend of increasing the competencies and own sources of revenue of local government that occurred in former Yugoslavia after the rapid amalgamation of local self-governance. Despite the original conception that they were to be “forms of direct popular association”, this also had an impact on MZs. Moreover, it is connected to the normative ideal of self-management.⁵² The whole idea behind MZs was that of a self-managed community where through such an institution residents, “define which common interests, rights and duties they achieve.”⁵³ Workers and citizens of the MZ were to adopt its statute and define its rights and duties, organisation and organs, relations with organisations of “joint work” and self-managed organisations and communities as well as other matters relevant for the community.⁵⁴ Territorially defined common interests articulated through the MZ were then to be taken up by the local government,⁵⁵ which, as such, 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 evolve the necessary policies by common consent.”⁵⁶

51 “The Swedish Local Government Act”, Chapter 6, sections 1, 3 and 7, Government Offices of Sweden, Local government in Sweden – organization, activities and finance, 2005, p. 9.

52 Eugen Pusic, “Intentions and Realities: Local Government in Yugoslavia”, Public Administration 53, no. 2, 1975, p. 137.

53 “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.

54 Ibid, Article 115.

55 Inter alia, through a chamber of MZs in the municipal assembly, as introduced by the 1974 Constitution. Pusic, “Intentions and Realities”, p. 138.

56 Ibid, p. 145.

The extent of community self-governance today is questionable at best in BiH, Croatia and Serbia. While MOs/MZs largely still exist to represent a local territory and articulate local need their autonomy is generally limited. In Croatia, local government oversight is conducted by the mayor, as defined in the Law and municipal statutes, and can be assessed as strong. Mayors have the right to dismiss the MO council if it is deemed to act in contradiction with the law, city statute or MO rules or if it fails to do the tasks delegated to it.⁵⁷ Some municipalities and cities have special departments on communal self-governance that monitor activities and report to the mayor or can establish coordination bodies at the city level to keep the mayor informed about relevant activities.⁵⁸ Although they are legal persons in the FBiH and Croatia, MZs/MOs are generally financially dependent on local government.

Given the fact that MZs were abandoned and that there was a discursive shift away 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 in Croatia. This could be attributed to 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 community level. The extent of legal oversight varies in BiH. In the FBiH, the municipal council or mayor is responsible,⁵⁹ while in RS a special municipal assembly committee has responsibility.⁶⁰ However, local government statutes define oversight in broad terms and generally leave room for local government to intervene in the work of MZs on the premise of the legality of work.⁶¹ In RS, MZs have no separate legal personhood and this has implications for their ability to sign contracts, own property or open bank accounts. MZs are completely dependent on local government for their finance and administrative support.

The autonomy of and oversight over MZs are at the heart of many debates concerning these units in Serbia. Community governance units are to adopt decisions on important aspects of their work in line with the local government law and local government decisions, which has led to diverse regulation on the work of MZs.⁶² In many ways, such open-endedness is in line with the idea of self-governance as a legacy of the Yugoslav period. The autonomy of MZs in Serbia has been the subject of Constitutional Court decisions whereby local governments do not have the authority to meddle in the af-

57 See Article 64 of the Law on Local and Regional Self-Government.

58 For example, such a coordination body exists in Zagreb. City of Zagreb, "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 91.

59 See Article 32 of the Law on Principles of Local Self-Government in the FBiH". Local acts in some municipalities can prescribe oversight by the mayor. For more information see Jusic, "Local Communities in BiH", p. 46.

60 See Article 109 of the Law on Local Self-Government of Republika Srpska.

61 For more information see Jusic, "Local Communities in BiH", p. 46.

62 Pavlović Križanić, "Rural Governance in Serbia", p. 139.

fairs of MZs, especially the appointment or dismissal of their representatives.⁶³ In one instance, 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 MZ.” This is supported by the fact that a MZ is not considered an element of the territorial organisation of the country.⁶⁴ However, a proposed amendment to the Law on Local Self-Government seeks to increase municipal powers to oversee the legality of the work of MZs.⁶⁵

Moreover, MZs are not autonomous when it comes to finance. Although they may raise their own sources of revenue (e.g. through citizen self-contribution) their autonomy is considered limited in practice, given the considerable financial control over their work. For instance, given that MZs are indirect users of the local budget, they are now part of the treasury system and their accounts are becoming sub-accounts of the local government.⁶⁶ MZs have to spend their funds in accordance with their annual financial plan, which has to be approved by the municipality,⁶⁷ and must report on its execution on an annual basis. Higher level laws also prevent MZs from conducting own procurement above a certain threshold.

Another important issue related to oversight is how to ensure that the organs of community governance units are accountable for their work to those they represent in order to ensure that, “organizations that speak for or act on behalf of a community are fulfilling their stated goals and can be held responsible for their actions.”⁶⁸ The financial oversight previously mentioned in relation to the individual countries is the most obvious way to ensure accountability. Decentralised service delivery or the delegation of specific mandates, as in Sweden and Switzerland, is usually linked to financial and narrative reporting on the results achieved in a community. Accountability to citizens can be ensured through the possibility for residents to question the legality of a committee decision in court, as for instance is the case in Sweden.⁶⁹ Provisions on the transparency of local acts related to the work of local community units are also important in order to guarantee that their work is made public.⁷⁰ Another method of oversight available

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

64 For more information see Constitutional Court of the Republic of Serbia, “Mesna zajednica nije teritorijalna jedinica niti je element teritorijalne organizacije Republike Srbije” [MZ is not a territorial unit nor element of territorial organisation of the Republic of Serbia], 2003-05-25, I.U.172/00. Also see Constitutional Court of the Republic of Serbia, Newsletter no. 1/2006, Belgrade.

65 In respect to municipal organs being able to suggest change or ultimately to suspend the enforcement of MZ acts perceived as not being in line with municipal statutes or decisions or to initiate proceedings before the Constitutional Court if MZ acts are deemed unconstitutional. “Zakon o izmenama i dopunama zakona o lokalnoj samoupravi” nacrt [Law on Changes and Additions to the Law on Local Self-Government], Draft, Article 29, 2015.

66 For more information 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.

67 See Article 75 of the Law on Local Self-Government of the Republic of Serbia.

68 Chaskin, “Fostering Neighborhood Democracy”, p. 182.

69 Government Offices of Sweden, “Local government in Sweden”, p. 13.

70 In Subotica, for example, the work of MZ organs is public and they are obliged to inform citizens about their work on a regular and timely basis. See Article 4 of the City of Subotica Decision on MZs.

to citizens, given that they are comprised of representatives elected by citizens, is the ability to recall a local community organ, as is the case in some municipalities in Serbia.

3.4. Resources and Capacities

Community organisations in the five countries studied are rather diverse in terms of their resources and capacities. The starkest contrast is between the decentralised sub-municipal governance units or district committees in the cities in Sweden on the one hand and community run organisations in Swiss cities on the other. As might be expected, the resources and capacities of MZs/MOs in BiH, Croatia and Serbia are more alike; however, there are some differences in terms of the diversity of sources of income and funding schemes.

Although the financing of MZs in BiH is ensured through different sources, they generally depend on the local government budget.⁷¹ The case studies in BiH showed that MZs have only modest resources for operational costs, which are allocated by local government. While some actively raise funds from other sources⁷² many, both in RS and the FBiH, are not only financially dependent but do not even have their own bank accounts. Semi-structured interviews with representatives of eighty-three MZs showed that most had their own designated or rented premises. When it came to human resources, MZs were predominantly dependent on the volunteerism of their council representatives and rarely had staff.⁷³ Local governments tend to provide MZs with technical and administrative support: this is a legal obligation in RS.

In Croatia, local acts define the sources of funding for local boards and quarters. If municipalities delegate tasks from their competence to MOs/quarters then they have to provide funding for their execution.⁷⁴ In practice, MOs/quarters are financed overwhelmingly through the local budget.⁷⁵ An important source of income for MOs and quarters can be funding for so-called 'small communal actions', which covers activities such as small-scale construction projects (e.g. playgrounds and parks) or maintenance of public areas. For instance, 5 per cent of the total revenue of the City of Zagreb

71 According to a 2014 survey involving local government representatives, most MZs are financed from the municipal budget. Sources of additional income were more diverse in the FBiH than in RS. This was not surprising given that the operational costs of MZs in RS are covered directly by municipalities, because MZs do not have their own accounts. Jusic, "Local Communities in BiH", p. 49.

72 These included donations and grants and in one case fees for water supply and management of the local water utility conducted by the MZ. Ibid.

73 For example, in as many as 89 of 129 surveyed local government units MZs did not have any employees. In 17 municipalities, in both entities, local government employed staff (usually secretaries) in one or more MZ, especially in rural areas. Only 11 municipalities in the FBiH and 2 in RS had one or two MZs that employed their own staff. For more information see Jusic, "Local Communities in BiH", p. 52.

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

75 A survey conducted with local government representatives as part of our comparative research showed that out of 63 respondents that said their municipality had MOs/quarters only 52 responded stated that all of their MOs/quarters were financed through the municipal/town budget. According to survey results, there were very few instances of such bodies being funded through higher level grants, own fees, donations or other contributions. The case study MOs/quarters also depended predominantly on local government for financing.

raised in the previous year was allocated for community self-governance financing and the bulk of these funds was spent on 'small communal actions'.⁷⁶ In Rijeka, priorities are based on input from citizens and MOs and communal actions by MOs are funded through the local budget.⁷⁷ Some local governments may have other funding schemes. In Rijeka, for instance, annual grants cover the cost of the work and activities of the MO council. MOs can also apply for extra funds based on special city programmes in the realms of culture, sport and entrepreneurship.⁷⁸ In terms of capacities, employees in MOs/quarters in Croatia are generally rare and their work rests on volunteerism.⁷⁹ However, larger cities, such as Rijeka and Zagreb, have secretaries or city employees for MOs/quarters. Moreover, most municipalities designate premises for MOs/quarters to use.⁸⁰ Other forms of capacity, such as technical equipment, internet access or own websites, are not as common, at least judging by the survey results.⁸¹ Given their voluntary nature and the frequent absence of own staff, local governments tend to provide MOs/quarters with technical and administrative support for their work (e.g. through special departments for community self-governance).

In Serbia, the sources of funding for MZs include funding from the municipal budget, donations and earnings from MZ activities. Municipalities are to provide funds for any competencies they may entrust to MZs. The survey results showed that MZs tend mainly to be financed through the municipal budget and that very few receive other sources of funding (e.g. donations or service fees). Local acts can stipulate further sources of income, such as the voluntary self-contribution tax (*samodoprinos*) that is decided on by a majority of citizens via a referendum. In one of the MZs visited in the Municipality of Kula, for instance, self-contribution funds were earmarked for particular needs such as infrastructure, sport or culture. Yet it appears that self-contribution is becoming less common,⁸² possibly because citizens are less willing or able to pay. If a MZ has the relevant permission from the local government that owns and allows it to use its premises, it can also rent such premises.⁸³

76 For more information see City of Zagreb, "Odluka o financiranju mjesne samouprave u Gradu Zagrebu" [Decision on the financing of community self-governance in the City of Zagreb], Official Gazette of the City of Zagreb numbers 2/01, 16/02, 18/02, 19/03, 18/04, 16/08 and 17/09.

77 For more detail on the specific criteria see 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, articles 5 and 6.

78 Ibid, Articles 8-11.

79 According to the results of the survey involving representatives of local government in Croatia, 63 municipalities/cities out of the 96 that responded to the survey had MOs/quarters. Of those that had MOs/quarters, 89.5% of respondents said that MOs/quarters on the territory of their municipality/city did not have employees.

80 In Croatia, 43 out of the 63 surveyed representatives of municipalities/cities that had MOs/quarters on their territory said that all of their MOs/quarters were given premises to use by local government or another institution/organisation.

81 For example, only 12 respondents out of 63 that had MOs/quarters said that 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. Respondents usually answered that a few MOs/quarters had access to such resources.

82 For example, out of the 28 respondents that replied to the survey all of had MZs on the territory of their municipality, but only 3 said that all of their MZs had self-contributions and six responded that a few of them did.

83 In line with the Law on Public Property, "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.

As shown by the case study research, several MZs in the City of Zrenjanin, which is an oil-producing area, have the right to a certain percentage of oil revenue (*naftna renta*) and can use such funding for small infrastructure projects. MZs in Serbia are also likely to have secretaries, which is a function common to MZs in former Yugoslavia. Local government usually employs them. The case studies show that secretaries can also serve as coordinators of community offices (*mesne kancelarije*), which are established by local government. As in Croatia and BiH (especially RS), local government departments (e.g. those for communal self-governance) can provide administrative and technical support for the work of MZs.

Given that quarter associations in Switzerland are civil society organisations, an important source of income is their membership fees. The statutes of the associations can stipulated further means and may include voluntary contributions, proceeds from the activities they perform or income from property or assets. The staffing of quarter associations in Switzerland depends on the scope of their work. Most often, their executive committee members are volunteers. The quarter associations can also draw funding from the municipal/city budget, depending on the type of policies a city has adopted. They can also gain funding from sponsorship and donations from the private sector or donors, the renting of premises, in the case they have them, or by selling advertising space in their quarter newspapers to local businesses.

Where community houses or meeting places have been set up, cities tend to finance a substantial part of their budget. Some cities, such as Lucerne and Basel, have established special budget lines that are open to a wide range of stakeholders from the quarter, including quarter associations, foreseen for citizen engagement or socio-cultural activities.⁸⁴ An interesting finance mechanism is also the *quarter contract*, found in the cities of Vernier, Geneva and some other localities in the cantons of Geneva and Vaud. They are envisaged as a tool for quarter level citizen participation in proposing local projects. In Vernier, for instance, a *project group* made up of residents considers projects initiated by the community. A piloting committee comprised of representatives of the municipality, associations, citizens and experts then considers those projects accepted by the project group for financing. Every quarter contract receives 60,000 CHF (circa 54,000 EUR) a year from the municipality. Since 2005, 170 projects have been financed.⁸⁵

84 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. Also see 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.

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

Since district committees in Sweden are tasked with delivering important local services and are granted resources for their operations from the municipal budget. Political councils of city district committees are supported by an administration that implements committee decisions and is in charge of service delivery. According to the law, municipalities can levy charges for the services and utilities they provide

“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.” A neighbourhood council representative in the Municipality of Vetlanda in Sweden.

but cannot levy for those services or utilities that they are under obligation to provide (unless specifically prescribed). The charges levied cannot exceed the cost of the services or utilities provided.⁸⁶ As such, NCs can be large structures. In the City of Gothenburg, for example, some 34,000 of the city's 50,000 employees work in the district committees.⁸⁷ Districts in Gothenburg are financed through a resource distribution model that considers parameters such as the size and structure of the district population and social criteria such as the number of single parent households, size of the population with disabilities, number of households with elderly persons. Procedurally, there are overarching goals and an orientation plan that the districts can adjust to suit local conditions and priorities (e.g. security, quality of educational or public health). Districts in Gothenburg rent facilities from the City or private providers for the various services they provide. Where municipalities have neighbourhood/district councils as advisory bodies, such bodies usually have neither their own staff nor substantial budgets.⁸⁸ Council representatives from two of the cities where interviews were conducted stated that they either use the premises of the library free-of-charge or hold meetings in cafes. The interviewed representatives did not complain about scarce funding and most voiced the opinion that it was commensurate to their mandate.

⁸⁶ See Chapter 8, sections 3b and 3c, of the Local Government Act of Sweden.

⁸⁷ See City of Gothenburg, “Organisation”, 2015. Available from <<http://international.goteborg.se/organisation>>.

⁸⁸ For example, in Jonkoping the municipality provides these units with an annual budget of 42,000 SEK (circa €4,000) out of which remuneration for members (usually the president and vice-presidents) are paid as well as costs associated with meetings.

3.5. Services and Activities for Citizens

Comparative research has shown that community level organisations and institutions in some countries can take on the role of service provider⁸⁹ and that in others they facilitate service provision and organise different types of community activities in line with the need.

Service provision is an explicit role of neighbourhood/district committees in some Swedish cities, as they aim to bring government closer to citizens. Being part of local government, districts are in effect decentralised administrations with a representative arm and extensive resources and a certain level of discretion to tailor services to meet local needs in line with city directives. The core tasks of districts, as units of decentralised service delivery, tend to be in the realm of child and elderly care, care for persons with disabilities, preschool and primary school and culture and recreation, but can extend to other areas.⁹⁰

On the other hand, the service delivery role of MZs and MOs in BiH, Croatia and Serbia is not explicit. MZs in rural areas in BiH and Serbia can deliver small communal or administrative tasks, while MOs in some cities in Croatia can be in charge of ‘small communal actions’ or small infrastructure and maintenance projects. The survey results from Croatia and Serbia show that service provision generally appears to be rare in practice and that those communal services that do exist are most prevalent.⁹¹ They are somewhat more common in BiH, but usually pertain to small administrative and communal tasks.⁹²

In general, the work of MO/MZ appears to be more about service facilitation and coordination with other service providers and local authorities. As explained by interlocutors in Rijeka and Zagreb, for example, MOs and quarters tend to advise cities on the type of communal and infrastructure priorities required. Local acts in BiH state that MZs are to be consulted on issues related to local planning. This is similar to the role that district/neighbourhood councils take in some municipalities in Sweden, where such bodies are advisory in nature and without decision-making powers, executive functions or an ad-

89 Here the notion of services relates to continuous activity in a given sector.

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

91 In Serbia, for example, out of 28 respondents that said that their municipality had MZs only six said all MZs provided communal services, five responded that most MZs did and six that a few MZs did. Moreover, only nine said that a few or all of their MZs provided administrative services (e.g. issuing documents to citizens). Nine said that all of their MZs ensure civil protection, six that most of their MZs do this, while one said that a few do. As for social services, eight respondents said that all, most or a few MZs are active in this realm. In Croatia, the most dominant types of services appeared to be civil protection and social services. Out of the 63 respondents that said that their municipality had boards/quarters, 15 said that all MOs/quarters provided civil protection, four that most of them do and six that a few of them do. 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.

92 The 2014 survey conducted by Analitika showed that 62 of 129 surveyed local governments allowed MZs to deliver some types of services (mostly administrative or communal services). Jusic, “Local Communities in BiH”, p. 57.

ministration and tend to consult with local government on a wide range of issues (e.g. urban planning). In Serbia, a number of representatives of the visited MZs said that they considered their MZ to be a 'service centre' and a communicator between residents and service providers.

An important aspect of community work appears to be the socio-cultural realm. In Switzerland especially, the idea of social participation is at the root of quarter based activities and is mainstreamed in the work of different organisations: both quarter associations and designated community houses organise different recreational and cultural activities. Such activities are intended to foster integration and cohesion within communities that can be rather heterogeneous, capitalising on the idea that citizens have a tendency to identify with their place of residence and thus create close-knit communities on the basis of social interaction. Such interaction is a precondition for social cohesion and 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.

Quarter based community houses and centres in many Swiss cities are run professionally by community based associations. For example, associations in charge of running community centres, such as the *treffpunkte* in Basel or *maisons de quartier* in Geneva, have a specific mandate from the local authorities to organise a number of socio-cultural and recreational activities. Professional animators facilitated these activities, which can include, amongst others, recreational courses for the elderly, joint meals, extracurricular activities for youth and children and language courses for immigrants. They can also provide their space to other groups and organisations from within the community. In both cities, city policies determine the principles and obligations as well as the tasks of community centres/meeting places and a substantial part of their budget comes from local government. However, these policies leave it up to the associations that run the community centres to develop the content of their activities in line with community needs.

MZs/MOs in BiH, Croatia and Serbia may not have specialised mandates in the realms of culture and recreation but local acts often encourage such activities. Empirical research points to the prominence of such activities. The survey results confirm, for instance, that activities such as organising sports and cultural activities are common to

MOs/quarters and MZs in Croatia⁹³ and Serbia.⁹⁴ In Rijeka, for example, some 200 small programme activities, organised by 34 MOs, include activities in the area of culture, sport, ecology and health (e.g. events, tournaments, awards, workshops, clean-ups and blood drives). These activities are often carried out in cooperation with associations, schools, health providers and other partners. In Kula, a visited MZ organises a football and a chess club in the community. A municipal representative in Pančevo explained that activities in the realm of sport and culture are the most frequent types of activities of MZs, especially in rural areas. Moreover, many MZs/MOs in all three countries tend to organise humanitarian activities.

Considering the current legislation and acts in the countries of former Yugoslavia, it appears that their roles in the realm of service delivery merit some clarification. In BiH and Serbia especially, MZs are, in line with local government acts, to participate nominally in the delivery of a wide range of

“Some 500 people come through here on a daily basis, we have a dance school, we have a business school. All political parties use these premises [...] and all citizen associations use the meeting hall.” MZ representative from the City of Pančevo.

vaguely defined tasks. Although some roles may be explicitly worded (e.g. organising civil protection or taking care of persons in a state of need), MZs generally do not have the power of execution or authority over service delivery.⁹⁵ In Croatia, laws and local acts do not foresee service delivery as a principal role of boards and quarters. However, as in the other two countries, local acts tend to cite areas where MOs can organise their activities in line with considerations related to community well-being (e.g. social, health, sport and recreation or civil safety). Although allowed for by legislation or local acts, task delegation is not common in BiH, Serbia or Croatia. In Serbia, the role of the MZs as service providers, especially in the communal realm, is challenged. This is because MZs are no longer allowed to be the owners of communal enterprises. In some areas, municipal communal enterprises are taking over rural parts of water utility networks that MZs built and financed through citizen self-contribution.⁹⁶ Who should provide communal services in rural areas has also become a matter of appeal to the Constitutional Court in Serbia; one example is the upkeep of village cemeteries.⁹⁷

Whether or not the role of community governance units should be strengthened in

93 In Croatia for example, 25 out of 63 surveyed respondents that said that their local government had boards/quarters stated that all such units in their municipality organise sports and cultural events. Moreover, 19 said that most such units organise educational workshops for the community.

94 In Serbia, 17 out of 28 surveyed respondents from localities where MZs exist 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.

95 MZs usually to seek to 'initiate' certain activities or 'satisfy' needs in different areas, such as communal affairs, the environment, social affairs, culture and sports.

96 The city or municipality should be the founder of such enterprises, in line with changes to the Law on Public Enterprises.

97 See, for example, "Indija: Sahrane 'stigle' na sud" [Indija: Funerals 'made it' to court], Večernje Novosti, 30 March 2014.

terms of their tasks is also a contested matter. Some authors and experts find that a lack of competency leads to a lack of interest among citizens (and thus the relevance of such organisations), while others question the need for the decentralisation of tasks. An important dilemma in relation to the decentralisation of district based service delivery in Sweden, as in the case of Gothenburg, is to what extent an equal level and quality of services can be ensured throughout a city while catering to specific local needs and conditions. In the City of Borås, where the three existing city district committees will cease to exist as of January 2017, a municipal representative explained that the Municipality wants all of its residents to be provided with equitable and equal services regardless of their place of residence, which has not always been the case in the provision of services by the districts. Another dilemma is to what extent bodies at the neighbourhood level have the know-how to decide on specific issues. This raises the question of whether or not there should be specialised districts (e.g. school districts), which was brought up during the research in a number of cities in Sweden. Another challenge relating to the delivery of decentralised services may lie in coordination and control.

Unlike some 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 small population size of most local government units. Yet while local governance in Croatia has also been significantly decentralised and local government units tend to have small populations an expert explained that higher levels of government continue to deliver the most important services to citizens. In Serbia, where local governments are relatively large administrative units, any service delivered by a MZ is increasingly contested, as described above. In BiH, there has been a trend towards the centralisation of service delivery over the past several decades. The City of Sarajevo, for example, centralised communal service provision in the 1980s by allocating services to city level providers (rather than municipal level ones).⁹⁸

At the same time, it is important to acknowledge that MZs in rural settings often play the role of service provider. Pavlović Križanić explains that this is largely due to the fact that villages are seen as being outside of the system and thus are 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.).”⁹⁹ In BiH, such a role also prevails in smaller rural communities where citizens have to self-organise

⁹⁸ For more information see Mirna Jusić, “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 Neighbourhoods and Proposed Solutions], Sarajevo: Center for Social Research Analitika, 2013, p. 28.

⁹⁹ Pavlović Križanić, “Rural Governance in Serbia: Charting a Sustainable Future”, p. 154.

around services that are not granted to them. In Kula in Serbia, one rural MZ provides water supply and the maintenance of graveyards and charges fees for such services. Some MZs with more substantial funding, such as those that receive revenue from an oil tax in Zrenjanin or those with self-contribution in Kula, are investors and finance small communal or infrastructure projects in their vicinity.

Whether or not community and sub-municipal governance units should be tasked with delivering specific services, in general, depends on a number of factors, including concerns related to cost-effectiveness, whether or not they have the capacity to perform such functions and whether or not services will be provided in an equal manner throughout neighbourhoods. However, as highlighted by the 2014 study on local communities in BiH, where such functions are needed, it is important to acknowledge them formally through local policies and to make them viable by providing funding for their execution.¹⁰⁰

“The MZ should function as a whole, so that citizens can get 90% of services in the village. (...) They are reducing our functions as well as our ability 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.” – MZ representative from the Municipality of Kula.

3.6. Coordination and Cooperation with Other Stakeholders

Although they may be different in form, sub-municipal and community governance units tend to play a significant role in connecting residents and other stakeholders and thus mitigating the needs of residents.

Such a role may entail being an interface between residents and the local government. This means that community or sub-municipal governance units relay citizen needs – through requests,

“When we established local boards we wanted to have a partnership, because we are doing the same job. [...] The cooperation of citizens, board council members, secretaries and the city departments is good. [...] Problems are being solved jointly; there is a display of good will to help citizens.” An Official from the City of Rijeka in Croatia.

¹⁰⁰ Jusic, “Local Communities in BiH”, pp. 76-77.

petitions or other means – to the local government. In BiH, Serbia, Croatia and Sweden, they consider citizens' complaints and submit them to the relevant authorities. In Switzerland, local governments tend to consult with quarter associations on different issues within the community. In Basel, an umbrella organisation of quarter based associations serves as a 'secretariat' and interface between residents and the local authorities where residents can submit requests to participate in certain issues.

This signals that local governments have recognised community and sub-municipal governance units as important intermediaries that can help them to identify local needs and define priorities and with whom they can sporadically consult as representatives of the community. The main activity of neighbourhood councils in some Swedish municipalities is to respond to requests by the municipal authorities for consultation (e.g. urban planning) or communicate the needs of the community (e.g. via proposals or petitions) to the municipal authorities. Procedures for submitting such requests and providing community units with feedback are a crucial component for the effectiveness of such interaction.

Moreover, it entails building a relationship with the local government. In some countries, as in Switzerland, local policy can prescribe cooperation, often as an attempt to institutionalise the linkage function that such associations can perform between local the authorities and citizens. The City of Basel has, for instance, through a special policy, named quarter secretariats (associations comprised of quarter based member organisations) to be the "interface between the administration and the quarter"¹⁰¹ and 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, inter alia, to mediate concerns between the quarter and the administration and operate a platform for information exchange that may entail hearings, informative meetings or events.¹⁰² Similarly, the City of Zurich has signed an agreement that establishes principles of cooperation with quarter associations that are part of a wider city level conference of quarter associations.¹⁰³

In Zagreb, a special coordination body, which involves the Mayor, the Head of the City Council and the presidents of quarter councils,¹⁰⁴ meets on a regular basis. Empirical research from BiH, Croatia and Serbia has shown that MZs/MOs tend to have good

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

102 Ibid, Part 3, articles 3.1-3.3.3.

103 The agreement signed between the City of Zurich and the Conference of Quarter Associations includes details on the principles of cooperation between the city administration and quarter associations as conference members. 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.

104 Article 91 of the City of Zagreb Statute of the City of Zagreb.

working relationships with local authorities. In large cities, such as Rijeka and Zagreb, cooperation between local boards/quarters and the local government is facilitated by city departments for community self-governance, which provide assistance to boards and quarters and collaborate with them on a regular basis. This was also the case in some of the municipalities visited in Serbia, where many MZ representatives pointed to

“We call on all those responsible institutions to solve problems with landfills, roads, rubbish collection from the village [...] We are a link to all companies that provide some sort of service to citizens.” A MZ representative from the Municipality of Kula in Serbia.

sound cooperation with a designated municipal department; the contribution of MZ coordinators within the local administration was also highlighted in the case of BiH.¹⁰⁵

In addition to local government, repeated interaction with other stakeholders in the community helps ad-

“[Residents] want us to be a link between them and the municipal authority. They recognise us, we are familiar faces. They can come to us and contact us unreservedly.” A neighbourhood council representative in the Municipality of Jonkoping in Sweden.

dress community needs. Clauses on MZ coordination and cooperation with different actors, such as healthcare providers, social services or citizen associations, are included in many local acts in BiH and Serbia. In BiH, Croatia and Serbia, these stakeholders tend to constitute service providers usually in the communal or social realms. In Serbia, the role of MZs as ‘service centres’ in rural areas in particular were highlighted as helping to connect residents and communal service providers. Sound cooperation between MZs and the centres for social work was emphasised in the empirical research in BiH.¹⁰⁶ In Sweden, some district representatives in Gothenburg cited good cooperation with non-profit associations on, for example, arranging ‘safety walks’ together for the purpose of enhancing local security as a civic complement to local policing, or gathering actors such as the city police, emergency services, businesses and property owners around a safety forum.

As social cohesion appears to be at the forefront of many city policies focused on quarters in Switzerland, there are efforts to strengthen complementary activities at the quarter level. Lucerne, for example, has adopted a comprehensive quarter and city areas policy that creates multiple access points for residents to engage in their quarter.

¹⁰⁵ Jusic, “Local Communities in BiH”, p. 62

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, p. 64.

This includes quarter associations,¹⁰⁷ quarter offices for ‘quarter work’ (*die Quartierarbeit*),¹⁰⁸ quarter centres where socio-cultural activities take place and contact points for quarter related issues within the city administration that direct matters and requests from the quarter to relevant departments in the municipality.¹⁰⁹ At the same time, the principle of subsidiarity is to apply to the content of such endeavours, meaning that the quarter based entities are the ones that determine what type of activities are needed.¹¹⁰ Cooperation between local boards and schools and cultural institutions jointly on socio-cultural activities was highlighted in the case of Rijeka. As a physical hub with premises within the local community, a number of representatives of MZs from the case study municipalities in Serbia also pointed to good interaction and cooperation with different community associations or cultural and sports organisations.

A number of interlocutors, especially MO/MZ representatives from Croatia and Serbia, stressed the importance of good cooperation between community organisations in a given municipality. Such cooperation has been institutionalised in some cities in Switzerland. In Lucerne, for example, quarters make up 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 other cases, such as in Basel, quarter associations and other community organisations associate through an umbrella organisation for a given part of the city. In general, such forms of organising can be a good means through which to coordinate the activities of community organisations and to advocate for common goals.

3.7. Modes of Citizen Participation

The function of coordinator between residents and other stakeholders in the community, no matter how important, may not necessarily lend itself to the realisation of opportunities for greater deliberation and ultimately influence local affairs. Rather, according to Chaskin, it is precisely citizen engagement at the community level that should, “promote more responsive, competent programs; place boundaries on and refocus municipal agendas; establish greater trust in government; create a more equitable distribution of public goods; increase social interaction and a sense of community among residents; and strengthen the link between citizens and government.”¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷ For more information see City of Lucerne, “Quartiersvereine” [Quarter associations], 2015.

¹⁰⁸ This primarily relates to extracurricular recreational activities for children and youth, but also other age groups in the quarter.

¹⁰⁹ City of Lucerne, “Leitfaden zur Kommunikation und Zusammenarbeit mit den Quartieren” [Guide for Communication and Cooperation with Quarters], April 2015.

¹¹⁰ City of Lucerne, “Bericht und Antrag an den Grossen Stadtrat von Luzern vom 13. Juli 2011, Quartier- und Stadtteilpolitik” [Report and Proposal to the Great City Council of Lucerne from 13 July 2011, Quarter and City-part Policy], 2011, p. 3.

¹¹¹ Chaskin, “Fostering Neighborhood Democracy,” p. 163.

Citizen participation is, at least nominally, one of the core activities of community and sub-municipal governance in the countries studied and citizens engage with these bodies in a number of different ways. In some countries, like Croatia and BiH, direct citizen participation is, at least de jure, the purpose that underlies MZs/MOs. In all of the study countries, relevant laws foresee different mechanisms of participation that can be used at the community level. In some instances, municipalities have adopted special policies and methodologies on citizen participation.

The basic mode of citizen participation – that of submitting certain proposals, requests or

“Citizens are active, but mostly through complaints. The MZ is like a complaints counter.” A MZ representative from the City of Subotica.

petitions to local government – is common in all of the countries, as mentioned above. Many respondents from Croatia and Serbia in fact stressed that this is the most common form of engagement, especially when it comes to communal issues and infrastructure projects. Most citizen requests and petitions are usually channelled through the MO/MZ council. In Rijeka, for instance, it is possible to integrate more substantial and long-term issues brought up through such requests into the annual plans of MOs. In the municipalities of Jonkoping and Vetlanda in Sweden, where neighbourhood councils have an advisory role, citizens can hand in proposals to the councils. In Switzerland, the case studies showed that residents are able to approach quarter associations, as representatives of common interests in a quarter, with requests that are then discussed by the executive committee of the quarter association.

Although usually perceived as a weak form of engagement, such submissions can be powerful. A MZ representative from Kula explained that citizens were able to resolve a traffic problem with the municipality through a petition. A MZ representative from a peripheral part of Subotica mentioned that residents from a few streets submitted a petition to the local government and this successfully resolved the problem of water supply. The case studies in BiH showed the potential for MZs in rural areas to become coordinators of collective action centred on the immediate needs and communal problems. This also appeared to be the case in some rural parts of Serbia. Such activities can also be viewed as an extension of their role as a communicator of citizen requests, because they do not simply relay them further to the local authorities but self-organise in order to solve pertinent issues.

A common venue for citizen participation in the countries of former Yugoslavia is the MZ/MO or citizen assembly (*zbor građana*), which is a mechanism of engagement that dates from the Yugoslav period. The assembly is intended to serve as a venue for de-

liberation on the needs and interests of citizens in the community. It is still recognised in local government laws and local acts in BiH, Croatia and Serbia as a venue for citizen participation in local affairs, while it remains a formal organ of MZs in some municipalities in the FBiH. Although their uses vary, such mechanisms generally tend to be underutilised in BiH, Croatia and Serbia.¹¹² In the case study research, citizen assemblies appeared to be most common in the municipalities visited in Serbia.

Community organisations can also act as venues for organising public hearings or consultations with residents on particular issues. In Switzerland, municipalities and cities recognise quarter associations or quarter umbrella organisations as partners for consultation and some cities have adopted policies that facilitate the involvement of such associations in local decision-making processes. The quarter secretariats in Basel, for example, are a venue through which concerns at the community level can be communicated. This is done through means such as an 'information platform', which the secretariat maintains and can take the form of hearings or informative events.¹¹³ An agreement between the City of Zurich and the Conference of Quarter Associations stipulates a similar role, but with the possibility that the quarter associations, which are members of the Conference, can demand consultation with the city administration concerning major public projects to take place within the quarter.¹¹⁴ In Sweden, despite the perceived dominance of a party based representative democracy and an emphasis on output as opposed to input legitimacy,¹¹⁵ participatory democracy has become the substance of voluntary city policies; this is usually referred to as 'city dialogues'.¹¹⁶ In Gothenburg, such dialogues, organised by district committees, can involve meetings on safety, youth initiatives, consultations on school reorganisation, councils for pensioners and councils for disability issues, and many others.¹¹⁷ In the other studied municipalities of Jonkoping and Vetlanda advisory neighbourhood councils take part in consultations that the municipality organises on various issues, such as urban planning.

112 In BiH, for instance, some 33% of local government representatives responded that MZs in their vicinity organise citizen assemblies on a regular basis (at least once a year). Jusic, "Local Communities in BiH", p. 67. In Croatia, out of 63 respondents that said their local government had community self-governance only 17 said all such units hold community assemblies, public hearings and other public events, 28 said that most of them do, and 7 that a few of them do. According to survey results from Serbia, out of the 28 respondents that said their local government had MZs, 12 said that all MZs in their locality hold community assemblies, public hearings and other public events, 11 that most of them do, and 4 that a few of them do.

113 Presiding Department of the Canton/City of Basel, Office for Canton and City Development, "Citywide concept on Basel Quartersecretariats", Part 3, Article.31-3.3.3.

114 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.

115 David Karlsson and Stig Montin, "Solving Municipal Paradoxes: Challenges for Swedish Local Democracy, Local Politics and Governance", March 2014, p. 130. Also see Erik Amnå, "Playing with Fire? Swedish Mobilization for Participatory Democracy", *Journal of European Public Policy* 13 (4), 2006, p. 599.

116 The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR) has been actively working on operationalising participation and developing a range of tools (e.g. guidelines, methods) to help municipalities implement participatory processes on a voluntary basis. 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. 244.

117 For an overview and discussion on the effectiveness of such initiatives see Tahvilzadeh, "Understanding participatory governance arrangements in urban politics", pp. 242-247.

A number of challenges came up when assessing citizen participation in these countries. One pertains to how the rules for participation are set. For instance, some authors claim that local acts define citizen assemblies in BiH, Croatia and Serbia vaguely and claim this as the reason for their, “rare and inconsistent use.”¹¹⁸ Another reason could lie in their more consultative function,¹¹⁹ given that decisions made at the citizen assembly are not binding for local government. Moreover, local or MZ acts may or may not prescribe a threshold for the turnout required in order to hold a citizen assembly or bring decisions. If set, this threshold can also be set too high which can limit their organisation in practice: according to some MZ acts in Serbia the requirement is 10 per cent of registered MZ voters. Some interlocutors cited this as the reason why they organised ‘meetings’ rather than assemblies. In the event that no rules exist, a small group of citizens can make decisions on behalf of the community.¹²⁰

Another challenge relates to the way in which processes are organised and which methodologies are used. Numerous authors have pointed out that organising assemblies in community governance units with larger populations may not be feasible¹²¹ and that organising meetings that are too open-ended in terms of their purpose and structure may frustrate citizens.¹²² An interlocutor from Pančevo questioned the extent to which citizen assemblies, unless theme specific, are attractive to citizens. According to one interlocutor from Rijeka, instead of articulating interests assemblies tend to become venues for conflict. The case studies show that citizen assemblies organised on a particular issue or initiative, such as, for example, the introduction of community policing in order to halt construction in a public area or the organisation of more frequent public transportation, can be effective. Moreover, some MZs can use them to inform the public about the work they have done or, as in the case of one MZ in Zrenjanin, to inform citizens on how self-contribution funds will be used. Zarić proposes that public discussions or assemblies should be organised around specific issues, such as forums of service users, thematic forums, micro-community forums or forums for different groups in the community, in order to provide concrete recommendations and suggestions to the municipal government.¹²³

118 Khan Mohmand and Misić Mihajlović, “Connecting Citizens to the State,” p. 15.

119 Ibid, p. 15.

120 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., Belgrade: Centar za slobodne izbore i demokratiju, 2006, p.24.

121 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 (1), p. 64.

122 See, for example, 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*, Vivien Lowndes (ed.), Budapest: Open Society Foundation, 2012, p. 85.

123 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.

This signals that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to participation. Quarter secretariats in Basel, for instance, are official points of contact for filing a written request for a participatory process with the relevant city level department in charge of quarter level processes. A meeting between the initiators from the community, the relevant quarter secretariat and representatives of the responsible department within the city administration should follow within six weeks of such a request having been filed. The parties involved then clarify the scope of action and develop concrete recommendations for a participatory process. This can represent a one-off occasion or a process that lasts for several years. The relevant city department must confirm the recommendations and the assembly of the members of the relevant quarter secretariat issue a decision on the recommendations. Following a positive decision, all parties work on the implementation of the participatory process. In the event of a negative decision/vote, the initiator can repeat the request and modify the participatory process.¹²⁴

Another challenge is to ensure that the programmes the community governance units run (e.g. 'small communal actions') are based on priorities actually set by the community as opposed to a small group of locals who, as one interlocutor from Croatia suggested, may be "refurbishing in front of their own doorstep." The case studies show that governments allow these units varying levels of discretion to set local priorities. In Rijeka, the City issues an annual call for citizens to submit communal priorities that are sent directly to the City. A MO then gives its opinion on these priorities and subsequently develops a plan containing priorities for within its own vicinity. Moreover, the City establishes an independent committee for programme activities to be implemented by MOs. This committee evaluates the activities of MOs based on set of criteria, such as the aim, significance and quality of programmes and the number of potential beneficiaries and participants involved in their development and implementation (including volunteers).¹²⁵ Through the 'quarter contract' in Vernier, committees, which include residents, verify projects proposed for funding by the community. In Gothenburg, districts define their own programmatic priorities in line with the overarching goals of the city government.

Transparency of work is another precondition for citizen participation. This is because activities such as annual reporting and planning, which are open to the wider community, garner trust and residents have to be made aware that certain processes are happening. Active outreach is crucial for greater engagement. According to empirical research in BiH and as described by respondents, the promotion of participatory events

¹²⁴ 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.

¹²⁵ City of Rijeka, "Decision on the means of financing the tasks of local boards on the territory of the City of Rijeka", article 7.

tend to be informal and ad hoc in many instances.¹²⁶ An interlocutor from Gothenburg stated that the districts could do even more to improve how citizens are informed about the decisions taken and in, “explaining the bureaucratically dry subject matters better.”

Some case study cities and municipalities had adopted a mix of communication tools in order to cater for different groups within the community (bulletin boards, social media, websites, local media, etc.). Moreover, many of the visited community governance units were embracing new technology in order to reach out and engage. One MZ in Subotica has an interactive website where citizens can leave questions and receive answers via the website, while many of the MZs visited in Serbia are finding ways to establish their own web presence: either through their own websites or Facebook pages. According to an interlocutor, the districts in Gothenburg are present on social media (Facebook and Instagram) and there is a specific local government Directive on how representatives of the City are to act on social media. While traditional means of participation, such as the thirty-minute open sessions that are held before each district meeting, where anyone can ask questions, propose issues or engage in discussion with politicians, are rarely well attended some interlocutors consider them to be a good way to keep citizens informed about what is going on in the district: unless a pertinent subject is discussed. In Gothenburg, the option of an e-initiative/proposal was recently introduced. A quarter in Basel has a telephone application that serves as an information platform for citizens in the quarter. It allows them to find out the latest events in the quarter, to find good places to eat, where to buy, borrow or sell items and how to find caretakers or babysitters in the area as well as other information.¹²⁷

Another challenge can relate to the unequal ability of residents (e.g. in terms of time and/or money) to engage in participatory processes. A particular challenge to participation in Swiss and Swedish cities has been reaching out to and engaging new residents, which also meant reaching out in different foreign languages. A related issue is the level of interest among citizens or residents in becoming engaged in community organisations as venues in the first place, given that they are not the only means of engagement at the community level. This was also stressed in the study on local communities in BiH where MZs were no longer considered, “the only venue through which citizens engage, although it still is an important one for articulating general public interest, especially in rural areas.” Others include political parties, civic and interest groups and religious institutions. This is in contrast to the situation that existed prior to the democratisation of the country, when MZs were one of the few channels of en-

¹²⁶ Jusic, “Local Communities in BiH”, p. 69.

¹²⁷ The application is established by Wettstein21, an association located in the quarter of Wettstein and supported by the Department for Environment and Energy of the Canton/City of Basel. For more information see <www.wettsteinapp.ch> and <www.wettstein21.ch>.

gagement. While a diversity of opportunity in terms of structures and access points can be perceived as a strength of a community this also means that a MZ has to build its legitimacy in the community.¹²⁸

Such legitimacy inevitably stems from the ability of organisations to influence local decisions on behalf of the community. The countries compared showed different results when it came to influence. Local acts in BiH, Croatia and Serbia tend to include obligations for local government to consult with MZs/MOs on particular issues or to inform them about certain decisions in a timely manner. Most interlocutors in the case studies visited in these countries stressed this consultative role, but spoke of mixed results regarding influence. In BiH, for example, only half of the MZ respondents interviewed felt that they could influence decision-making processes.¹²⁹ Survey results for municipal representatives in Croatia pointed to an ambiguous perception concerning the effectiveness of MOs/quarters in influencing the decisions of local government: 37.7 per cent of respondents stated that they were neither effective nor ineffective in that respect, the same percentage of respondents leaned toward them being effective, while 24.6 per cent believed that such bodies were mostly or not at all effective.

Some interlocutors in Serbia spoke of lobbying through political parties or members of municipal assemblies to, “put things forward and make decisions faster.” In Sweden, where regulations for consultation with district committees or councils are also in place, the representatives interviewed in the case study municipalities appeared generally satisfied with their level of involvement; however, municipal governments are not obliged to adhere to the results of these consultations. Representatives of neighbourhood councils from Vetlanda and Jonkoping spoke of mixed results in terms of actually being able to influence local decisions. Yet a number of respondents stressed that municipalities tend to take the points of view of neighbourhoods or districts seriously and make efforts to follow-up with neighbourhood/district representatives even in cases where the municipality cannot fulfil certain requests. A neighbourhood representative from Vetlanda said that neighbourhood representatives, as elected officials who belong to parties holding mandates in the municipal assembly, are able to contact elected officials to promote certain local issues to the agenda.

This is somewhat in contrast to the experience of Switzerland, which is famous for its frequent use of mechanisms of direct democracy, including referenda and initiatives that citizens can make use of to influence decisions. In this respect, it is quite singular in relation to other European countries. Referendums and initiatives are widespread at

¹²⁸ Jusic, “Local Communities in BiH”, p. 71.

¹²⁹ Ibid, p. 62.

the local level. Through referendums, citizens have the right to retract decisions of local authorities (local parliament, executive or local assembly). Through initiatives, they have the opportunity to submit their own proposals. Moreover, in many municipalities in Switzerland there are so-called local or 'direct democratic assemblies' comprised of all citizens who, inter alia, play a part in the "function of controlling and directing the executive."¹³⁰ In fact, one research revealed that around 82 per cent of the Swiss municipalities surveyed had local assemblies as mechanisms for direct voting on local issues.¹³¹ Direct democracy is complementary to quarter based processes of citizen participation. As one interviewed expert explained, Swiss democracy rests on the idea of constant negotiation. This was apparent in the relations between communities and higher levels of government. Thus, it came as no surprise that there were consultations with quarter based organisations. The expert provided an example of residents and authorities negotiating on the height and appearance of new high-rises in a neighbourhood. Ultimately, the authorities had to take local opinion into account and, as dissatisfied citizens can always pull the levers of direct democracy to halt an unfavourable decision, find a compromise with local residents.

Party politicisation in combination with a mixed record on influencing local decisions is usually emphasised as an important challenge to citizen participation in units of community self-governance in BiH, Croatia and Serbia. This is usually attributed to a lack of trust in the political parties and the perceived capture of MOs/MZs for particular aims in these countries. This can, as highlighted by an expert from Croatia, lead to a lack of citizen engagement and apathy and make such units the "last resort" for residents or, as articulated by a local respondent from BiH, evoke "great mistrust."¹³²

130 Denters et al. (eds.), "Direct Democratic Participation in Switzerland", *Size and Local Democracy*, Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2014, p. 279. Also 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.

131 Ladner and Fiechter, "The Influence of Direct Democracy on Political Interest, Electoral Turnout and Other Forms of Citizens' Participation in Swiss Municipalities", p. 439.

132 Jusic, "Local Communities in BiH", p. 69.

4.

Conclusion:
Comparative Practices
and Potential Roles of
MZs

4. Conclusion: Comparative Practices and Potential Roles of MZs

This comparative research provides an overview of sub-municipal and community level governance practices in Croatia, Serbia, Sweden and Switzerland. The aim was to identify different potential modes of organising as well as the different ways in which community governance can be exercised in order to inform future work in this realm in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The five countries are in fact very different and there is a stark contrast in the functioning of community/sub-municipal units, such as between Sweden and Switzerland. The research shows that in BiH and Croatia, for instance, community governance units appear to represent or convey interests from the community to the local government, rather than act as mechanisms of direct citizen participation. In Serbia, there is a discrepancy between the idea of MZs as autonomous units of community self-governance and the extent of their autonomy in practice. This is particularly prevalent in regard to practical issues such as handling finance or engaging in public procurement. In Sweden, on the other hand, the role of district committees and councils 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 (which may, where such self-organising is recognised as fulfilling essential public needs, entail a formalised relationship with the local government) appears to be a very clear-cut mode of community organising; this applies both nominally and in practice. It is also strongly rooted in a culture of negotiation and deliberation on public issues and supported by the 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 of expanding on their current practice. Looking at the results of our comparative analysis, it is apparent that the perspective for local community development and the idea of *community self-governance* in BiH today needs to be more clearly articulated. Given the discrepancies between the nominal purpose and the practice of MZs, the options and recommendations provided below relate to the roles that MZs in BiH could potentially take on and the principles that need to be considered if such roles are to be fulfilled.

The four identified options, below, are elaborated on further in the text.

- **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

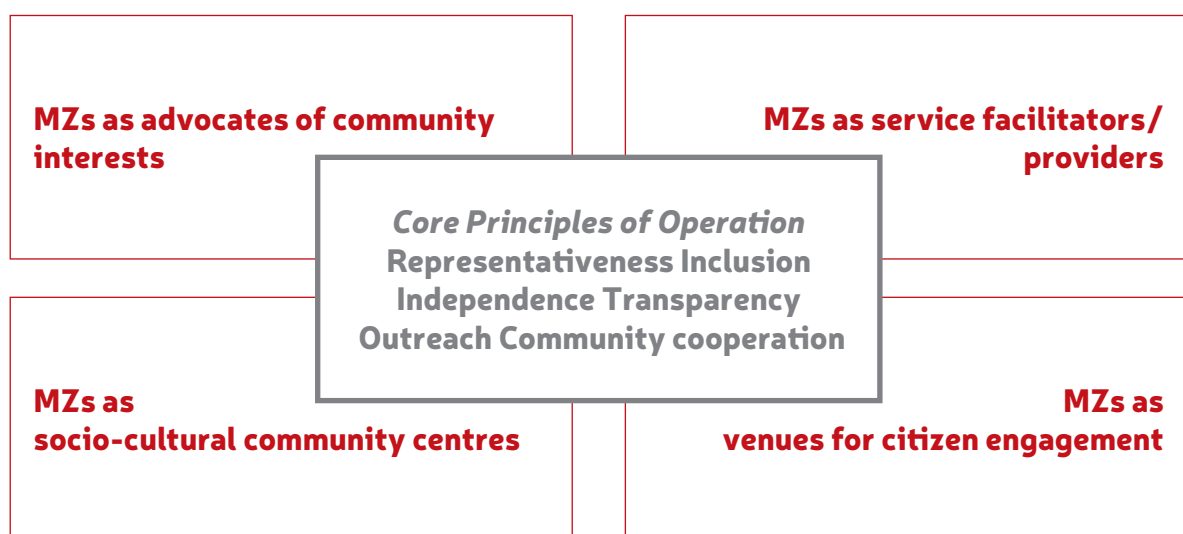
The roles that MZs will take on will certainly depend on the local context and needs. Moreover, it is important to stress that these roles are not mutually exclusive and can therefore be combined. In other words, there may be significant overlap and synergy between these four modes of operation. Hence, depending on its context and needs, any local community can have different combinations of the features of the four roles.

A number of crosscutting issues and principles need to be considered in relation to the above stated roles for the work of MZs.

- Representativeness
- Inclusion
- Independence
- Transparency of work and ease of access
- Active community outreach
- Community cooperation

These crosscutting issues are elaborated below, following a presentation of possible options for the development of MZs in BiH.

Picture 1: MZ roles and principles



Option 1: MZs as advocates of community interests.

Vision: With an aim to represent the interests and needs of their residents towards local and higher levels of government, MZs speak on behalf of various groups and parts of the community.

Empirical research has demonstrated that MZs in BiH have already taken on the role of coordinator and information provider or an interface between residents of a community, local authorities and local service providers. Such a role consists of receiving input, usually in the form of requests or complaints, from residents and forwarding them on to the relevant municipal authority. Moreover, MZs can initiate collective action surrounding a particular issue on behalf of citizens. They can also reach out to and facilitate assistance or service provision for those in need. 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, as in the realm of civil protection, communal affairs, social welfare and health, neighbourhood safety and humanitarian assistance.

The relevant legislation in BiH already foresees such a role. Essentially, laws and local acts formally recognise MZs as interlocutors and counterparts for cooperation that act on behalf of residents in a given

area. In RS and the FBiH, MZs are to initiate hearings on different issues or participate in them and provide their opinion on certain matters. In RS, they gather and submit petitions, complaints, initiatives and proposals by citizens to local institutions or service providers. The relevant laws in Brčko District highlight the role of enabling *organised communication* between residents and the District as well as the provision of recommendations to institutions on issues concerning the quality of life.¹³³ Laws and local acts usually stress realms of engagement for MZs such as (communal) infrastructure, urban and spatial planning, social protection, economic development and sport and recreation. Additionally, in the FBiH they are to be consulted on matters on which the municipal council decides through a two-thirds majority.¹³⁴ Moreover, the fact that they have formally elected representatives from the community further legitimises such a role.

A number of important preconditions need to be met in order for MZs to be able to perform this role more effectively.

Institutionalising communication and procedures for processing citizens' requests requires communication between residents, the MZ and local government as well as providers of public services. There should be clear-cut procedures through

¹³³ See Article 109a of the Law on Local Self-Government of Republika Srpska, Article 25 of the Law on the Principles of Local Self-Government in the FBiH and Article 5 of the Law on Local Communities Brčko District of BiH.

¹³⁴ See Article 29 of the Law on the Principles of Local Self-Government in the FBiH.

which citizens can communicate their needs/requests and receive feedback via MZs, which can be operationalized through a local government act that defines the relationship between government and MZs 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 must be obligatory for procedures to be meaningful in the first place. This may also entail strengthening the obligation of the local administration to respond to or decide on all requests.

Moreover, this means that the decision of 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 lead to the MZ being side lined by residents, who might then decide to address the relevant institutions directly. In other words, the criteria for the types of issues that can be raised through a MZ (e.g. common, but not particular interests) may have to be defined.

As in the cases studies in Croatia, Serbia and Switzerland as well as some areas in BiH, communication can be facilitated by the assignment a local coordinator within the administration who is explicitly in charge of MZ affairs. Such a position can help MZs with administrative matters and assist them in the organisation of meetings with relevant departments or public service providers when issues of local

relevance are raised. In some of the larger urban areas, such posts could be distributed territorially in order to allow MZs closer access to local authorities.

Clearly defined principles of cooperation between MZs and local government

would require that MZs are able to anticipate the type of own involvement they might expect on different local issues. Thus, agreeing on the principles of cooperation (as is the case in local policies/agreements in Basel and Zurich, for instance) could prove beneficial. Ensuring that they are informed and consulted about new developments and infrastructural and other projects within the municipality in a timely manner, especially in their own locality, may be one basic principle of cooperation. The ability to request a consultation process or the participation of the wider community in a matter may be another. Yet MZs also need to be seen by the local government as credible partners. With the exception of the question of representativeness, as this is guaranteed through elections (which is addressed in more detail below), local governments 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 means that the representatives of MZs need to be well informed in order for them to assist citizens. They need to know

whom to direct different requests to and who is in charge of what issue. This is especially 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 of their rights. This requires the education of MZ representatives or staff as well as capacitating MZs to ensure a level of institutional memory (e.g. staff, procedures 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 – that can provide know-how and facilitate information exchange. In other words, equipping MZs with the basic preconditions to fulfil their role as a communicator of local needs and an interface for residents is essential. Otherwise, the inability of MZs to inform or assist citizens properly can impair their legitimacy 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, decentralisation of services has taken place or to act as a facilitator between residents and service providers with respect to determining the kind of services required.

In line with the principle of subsidiarity, the need to respond to the specific needs of a given community can justify service provision by sub-municipal institutions. Furthermore, it can help limit waste through improved allocative efficiency. Comparative research has shown that large Swedish cities like Malmö, Gothenburg and Stockholm that have populations ranging from 200,000 to 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 on an annual basis. Priorities should be in line with local needs and correspond to the overarching annual city plan. In Serbia and BiH, some MZs provide small services in remote areas where the local

government does not provide such services. A 2014 survey¹³⁵ of local government representatives in BiH conducted by Analitika showed that in some 48 per cent of cases MZs were in charge of some administrative¹³⁶ or communal tasks in their vicinity.¹³⁷

The relevant legal framework on MZs in BiH does not preclude the possibility that MZs can deliver services. While current laws do not give any executive authority to MZs to provide a given service they do contain clauses that state that the municipal government can delegate tasks from its own competence to MZs.

A number of considerations need to be taken into account in order to ensure sound service delivery.

Task delegation needs to make sense and should be justified on the grounds of sound assessment based on criteria such as efficiency, equity and the ability to deliver a service in a standardised and quality manner. Debates concerning service delivery by neighbourhood committees in Swedish cities have highlighted an efficiency versus equity dilemma. Moreover, they have raised the question of the know-how of territorially defined units compared to specialised service delivery units (e.g. school districts). Some authors also stress a potential service delivery

versus citizen engagement trade-off, as neighbourhood institutions may not be able to do both or to do both well. This is due to capacity considerations,¹³⁸ but also to the possible bureaucratisation of neighbourhood units where in such a case they can essentially become an extended arm of the local administration. All of these are considerations that need to be considered when making the case for the delegation of service provision. In any event, assessments in this realm should be done in combination with pilot projects in order to test the decentralised service delivery models.

Clear definition of tasks and the assignment of commensurate funding require that task delegation presume a formal and clear designation of the types of tasks that MZs can conduct on behalf of local government or other service providers (e.g. communal services, social services). The BiH study highlighted cases where MZs provided certain administrative tasks informally without any clear guidelines, resources to perform such tasks or standards in this realm provided by the local government.¹³⁹ 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 of service provision. Moreover, any task delegation should be accompanied by proper funding and the capacities required for its execution. Service oversight

135 Jusic, "Local Communities in BiH", p. 57.

136 These included keeping evidence of persons in social need, issuing household lists and various confirmations (e.g. on property damage).

137 These included the maintenance of local roads, graveyards, local water utilities and water provision, the cleaning of public spaces, etc.

138 See, for example, Chaskin, "Fostering Neighborhood Democracy," p. 176.

139 See Jusic, "Local Communities in BiH", p. 59.

mechanisms would also need to be extended to MZs.

Cross-municipality coordination, in the case of service delivery by MZs, requires that cross-municipality coordination between relevant stakeholders involved in service provision in a given realm, including MZs, should be established. The aim of such coordination would be the harmonisation and continuous improvement in the quality of service delivery.

In order to meet the needs of residents and ensure the efficiency of service delivery, MZs may not necessarily be directly involved in the provision of services. Instead, they may engage in facilitating service provision by regularly coordinating with service providers on the extent and quality of services needed in a given area. Formally, such a role is, to a certain extent, already made possible by the relevant legislation and local acts. The Law on the Principles of Local Self-Government in the FBiH, for instance, lists taking care of the protection of persons in social need and initiating cooperation with social protection organs as a MZ task.¹⁴⁰ Moreover, this is something that many MZs in BiH are already doing: empirical research highlights in particular the sound cooperation and regular information exchange that exists between MZs and the centres for social work or communal enterprises. However, cooperation often takes place on an ad hoc basis.

Such a role may become more effective if certain conditions are met.

Formalising coordination implies that service facilitation can be fostered through formal coordination between MZs and the relevant institutions/organisations involved in service delivery (e.g. communal departments, departments and centres for social work, NGOs providing social services, etc.). Standards for coordination and cooperation, for example, may require the definition of mutual obligations concerning 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 local government level can also include MZs as members.

Citizen involvement requires that service facilitation be based on the active involvement of citizens as service users in order to tailor services to local needs and to ensure allocative efficiency. This may entail the establishment of different mechanisms for the receipt of input from citizens on their expectations of individual services as well as feedback on service provision. It may also require the fostering of direct information exchange and consultation between residents and service providers (e.g. regular meetings at the premises of MZs). This may also entail having residents and service providers jointly plan the level and quality of a given service.

¹⁴⁰ See 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 an aim to foster social cohesion in the community, MZs are hubs where various socio-cultural activities take place that are initiated and organized jointly by MZs and residents.

As highlighted by Robert J. Chaskin, a neighbourhood can be portrayed as “a spatial construction denoting a geographical unit in which residents share proximity and the circumstances that come with it.”¹⁴¹ Authors in this realm often stress the potential of micro-location, as both territorially and socially constructed places, in fostering social cohesion through the repeated interaction of residents. Socio-cultural and recreational activities can advance such interaction. Some city quarters in Switzerland are an excellent example of such ‘social’ participation. *Maisons de quartier* or *treffpunkte* frequently act as intergenerational community centres that foster 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 might 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 creating the spatial, financial and organisational conditions for sport and recreation or can organise different forms of humanitarian assistance on the territory of the MZ.¹⁴² Empirical research in BiH has shown that in addition to communicating on the 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.

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 genuine community centre is important to MZs. Running a socio-cultural centre means that MZs, among other things, should be able to open bank accounts, raise funds and sign contracts. 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 thus able to hire their own staff and buy materials and services to run their operations. In Rijeka, where

¹⁴¹ Robert J. Chaskin, “Perspectives on Neighbourhood and Community: A Review of the Literature”, *Social Sciences Review* 71, no. 4, 1997, pp. 522-523.

¹⁴² See 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 of Republika Srpska.

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 by MZs to develop programmes and have designated staff or volunteers carry them out. According to an interlocutor interviewed as part of the research, *Maisons de quartier* in Geneva have professional animators who work on the creation of programmes; however, *maisons* can also accept input and proposals from residents on the types 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 the centres (in some instances using them free-of-charge) for their own activities. MOs visited in Rijeka used funds designated by the City for programmatic activities to buy materials for workshops, usually run by volunteers. The MO council plans such workshops on an annual basis and the City approves their financing.

Cooperation with the local community and NGOs on programming can 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 work jointly on programmes with others and actively seek to cooperate on different activities with various groups

and organisations to ensure the continuity and diversity of such activities. They can also act as physical meeting places and have long-term agreements with other groups or organisations to run activities at the premises of the MZ. As community centres, MZs can coordinate their activities with a wide range of service providers. This includes schools, centres for social work and other organisations targeting particular populations like children and youth, women, the 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 supported. For example, *maisons de quartier* in Geneva have the flexibility to determine their own programmes; however, they have to comply with general principles on the type of activity supported by the City Government in this realm and formal obligations on the number of hours of socio-cultural activities that are to be provided on a weekly basis. In Rijeka, there is a designated fund for MO programmes and special committees established by the city administration to evaluate the financial proposals of MOs.

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 can improve municipal plans and programmes, facilitate greater trust between residents and local government, allow for the redistribution of public goods and build social cohesion.¹⁴³ Where citizen engagement is meaningful it also allows individuals to build up their civic skills and the, “capabilities of individuals and groups to pursue goals that are broader than their personal needs.”¹⁴⁴ Moreover, meaningful participatory processes help build the legitimacy of neighbourhood and community organisations.¹⁴⁵

MZs in BiH are already formally recognised as a means of direct citizen engagement. However, judging from empirical research to date, to what extent they serve as access points to local decision-making pro-

cesses is a contested matter.¹⁴⁶ Individual accounts from the other countries studied also tend to stress certain difficulties in 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.

A number of preconditions need to be met for MZs in BiH to live up to their formally recognised role.

Procedures for citizen engagement need to be clear and in place for citizens to initiate participatory processes through the MZ on an issue for which local government is responsible. 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 can be organised by the 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

¹⁴³ Chaskin, “Fostering Neighborhood Democracy,” p. 163.

¹⁴⁴ Horak Martin and Talja Blokland, “Neighborhoods and Civic Practice”, in *The Oxford Handbook of Urban Politics*, Mossberger, Karen, Susan E. Clarke and Peter John (eds.), New York: Oxford University Press, 2012, p. 255.

¹⁴⁵ Chaskin, “Fostering Neighborhood Democracy”, p. 179.

¹⁴⁶ See Jusic, “Local Communities in BiH”, pp. 66-71.

has introduced quality management of participatory processes, which relies on an evaluation of the 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 and 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 the MZ identifies priorities for financing local projects must be participatory in nature. Such procedures must entail some form of validation of the priorities stemming from citizens in order to ensure that they are truly based on the needs of citizens. An interesting methodology applied in some cities in Switzerland is 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 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, means that MZs should 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, can 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. In the Swiss cities scrutinised as part of case studies positive results of the complementarity of different quarter based organisations in engaging in 'quarter work' were frequently cited.

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 types of elections and the representativeness of MZ organs ultimately influence the legitimacy of MZs, irrespective of the roles they perform in a given community. Rules on MZ elections need to be transparent and remove any barriers to voting. They should guarantee citizens and political parties equal opportunities to become MZ council representatives. Moreover, procedures and mechanisms that support the representation of different groups of the population and territories in the representative organs should be considered. Special attention should be paid to ensuring the equal representation of women and men in such bodies. Strong oversight mechanisms, such as joint election committees comprised of MZ and municipal administration representatives (e.g. as in Pančevo), are required in order to prevent abuse in elections. Procedures whereby residents can recall MZ organs if they do not perform their function of representation should be put in place.

Inclusion, irrespective of formal representation, requires that MZs should actively seek to involve diverse stakeholders from the community in their work. This

can be done by forming partnerships with representatives of different groups (e.g. ethnic minorities, the elderly and youth) and actively involving them in the work of MZs. Given that they comprise around 50 per cent of the population and that they may be excluded from community level activities, special attention should be given to the inclusion of women and their perspectives, experience and skills in the work of MZs. 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 MZs, to a degree, 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 particular to their internal decision-making procedures and the activities they wish 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 principles or standards relating to their own work.

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