CITY QUARTER COMMUNITIES – A NEW QUALITY IN SLOVENIAN LOCAL DEMOCRACY?

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Abstract

The participation of residents of local self-governing communities in decision making within the Slovenian local self-government system is relatively little known and researched upon. Particularly, this applies to empirical research. The urban municipality of Ljubljana (henceforth the UML), encompassing the Slovenian capital, has had city quarter communities as new narrowest forms of local self-government system since 2001. They have considerable potential of population's political participation in decision-making process which has been relatively unexploited. The analysis of the issues (regarding the functioning of the narrowest parts of the municipality in Slovenia) performed on the basis of real-life examples of city quarter communities of the UML shows that there are still unexploited possibilities of population and city quarters participation in decision making within the political bodies. In principle, residential quarter communities represent a bridge between the residents and the urban municipality's representative bodies. Especially in city quarter communities residents are dissatisfied with they way their proposals are communicated to urban municipality bodies and relevant response.. Residential quarter communities only have a slight impact on decision making in the UML.

1 POLITICAL PARTICIPATION ON THE LOCAL LEVEL IN SLOVENIA

After the declaration of Slovenian independence in 1991, many processes for democratisation of the political system started to take shape.. The goal was to build a democracy in a newly established or re-invented political system. One of the crucial processes was to re-invent[1] new forms of local democracy in newly established local communities. The purpose of implementing local self-government is to democratise the life of local communities and its residents through assemblies of citizens, local referendums, citizens' initiatives and other forms of citizen participation in decision-making processes in local communities. Joint decision making in public affairs derives from the constitutional right of citizens – the right to participate. From the viewpoint of a democratic regulation it would be ideal for the inhabitants of local communities to be able to manage all municipal affairs directly, given that all decisions were made directly by the inhabitants themselves. Naturally, this is virtually impossible in modern local communities, because modern needs are too complex for all inhabitants to be able to decide upon them, and modern life in the municipality needs continuous decision-making. For this reason direct decision-making in local self-government is not a common practice. Decisions are rather made by elected

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[1] Slovenian local self-government system has some democratic tradition. In 19th century, the Slovenian local self-government was strongly influenced by the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. At the time, a special municipal law was adopted which provided the municipalities with a relatively strong self-government in the field of municipal property, security of inhabitants, care for municipal infrastructure, etc. The Carniola Municipal Law of the 1866 established 348 municipalities, in which new elections in municipal councils were carried out. Municipalities of the time were self-sufficient, and had their own financial sources, etc. After the first world war there were some limited time periods of relatively democratic local self-government, but none such period is recorded under the communist rule after the second world war.

municipal bodies. Nevertheless, direct decision-making is still more common on local levels of government in comparison with the state level. Why? Firstly, a local community is much smaller than the state (in geographical terms and in terms of the size of population). Secondly, direct decision-making is organizationally, financially and technically easier to conduct on local levels of government. And finally, direct decision-making is traditionally much more anchored in local communities compared with the state. Also the content of decision-making is different on the local level; it is not about the decision-making on general political issues, but matters that are important for the local community itself. Given all these reasons, direct decision-making, also known as the essence of local democracy, is used more frequently on local levels of government compared with the state.

The Slovenian local self-government act comprehends four different forms of direct local participation. The most direct is the municipal assembly. It is an assembly of all the inhabitants of a local community. This is the oldest form of local democracy that enables the most direct decision-making about all municipal affairs. Unlike other forms of direct decision-making, the municipal assembly is an informal convention in which all inhabitants can collaborate, making it therefore an important element of cohesiveness and integration in the local community. But such direct decision-making is for obvious reasons exceptional and feasible only in a very small local community. Another form of direct democracy in the municipality is a referendum. A referendum is of a more recent origin than the municipal assembly and it is also a more formalized and organizationally and financially demanding form of local democracy. It cannot be used very often and for all local matters, which means that the local community still needs an elected council that will make decisions on a daily basis. But both mentioned forms of local democracy have the same ideal and political origins, that is, decisions made by people and not by their representatives. The third form of Slovenian local democracy is called the "popular initiative". The institute of popular initiative enables a group of at least 200 local residents to demand an arrangement of any local issue from representative body. In comparison with the referendum, the popular initiative does not enable people to terminate unsuitable solutions, but enables groups of citizens to demand such decision that is most suitable for them. The fourth, in the Act mentioned, form of direct local democracy is the right to petition. This right enables people to send written petitions to a representative body. Unlike the popular initiative, where a representative body is obliged to discuss it and make a decision upon it, the petition involves no such obligation.

For the purposes of decentralising bigger municipalities in Slovenia and amending even degrees of local democracy in form of direct decision-making by the inhabitants, the legislator allowed in the 18th article of the local self-government act (1994) the restoration of narrower parts of municipality. The possibility of citizens to decide directly increases their interest to participate in the local affairs. In Slovenia citizens also have the right, according to the local self-government act (1994) to participate through lower organisational forms that a local community may organise; those are village or local communities and city quarter communities. The latter could become on the one side one of the paths toward the deconcentration of decision-making and governance processes in the urban municipalities and on the other side a possibility of a more direct influence of local community inhabitants on the administration, which concern them most. At the end of the March 2001, city council of UML has established seventeen city quarter communities as a lowest organisational form of the UML. At the time of the establishment there were some major criticisms from the opposition ranks within the council. Criticisms were oriented towards lack of attention to the quality of content of authorities and towards inaccurate division of tasks between city quarter communities and UML. The question of financing city quarter communities also arose, but nevertheless, city quarter communities were implemented irrespective of criticisms in proposed form. In UML there are now seventeen city quarter communities (picture 1). City quarter communities greatly vary in size and in number of population, and are dealing with very specific problems. The only elected body of the city quarter community is a quarter council, where different problems about individual city quarter community are debated on. To

the councils of city quarter communities from 13 to 17 councillors are elected for four-year mandate. The exact number of councillors depends on the number of citizens in each city quarter community. The purpose for establishment city quarter communities was to increase the possibilities for political participation in decision-making and to introduce contemporary standards of decentralisation and deconcentration to our local self-government system.

Chart 1: City quarter communities in UML

Source: http://www.ljubljana.si (March 2004).

2 PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING: THE UML CITY QUARTER COMMUNITIES

Since the narrowest parts of municipalities in Slovenia are not specifically defined in the local self-government act (1994), the legislation leaves to the individual municipality to define them (if of course one wishes to form them at all) in its statute. This is also the case with the UML that has in the statute (55th to 63rd article) defined the tasks and functions of city quarter communities. The legislation also allows for each municipality individually to grant narrowest parts of municipality the legal subjectivity. The latter was also granted for the UML city quarter communities, however this gives them little power to decide upon important issues, since their range of competences is extremely limited. Even more, if the legislation will be one day amended as it was recently proposed by central government,[2] even legal subjectivity of all narrower parts of municipalities will be taken off.

At the time of the establishment of city quarter communities in UML, the ruling coalition in the city council and the mayoress primarily asserted that with the implementation of city quarter communities the decentralization process of the UML[3] would be more effective. The competencies of the city quarter communities are noted down in the standing rules of the UML. This gives the city quarter communities extremely narrow frame of competencies, especially financially the quarters are non-sufficient and totally dependent from the UML. They have no self-dependent tasks; they deal only with local matters that are each year separately devolved to them by the UML. And the UML was not very generous during last years. If city quarter communities are actually to bring bigger decentralization in the UML, then they should be provided with more significant tasks and greater financial independence, so that they could realize their primary purpose. From the establishment of the quarters forward, the opposition in the city council again and again highlighted their diminished competences, demanding more independence, greater competences and more financial

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[2] See Baclija and Hacek (2004).
[3] UML is the biggest municipality in Slovenia with regard to the number of inhabitants.

sources for city quarter communities or to postpone their subsistence altogether for a while. The opposition has also asserted that decision-makers in the UML deliberately constructed such forms of local self-government so that the principles of the European charter on local self-government[4] would be formally realized.

Since city quarter communities have, according to the legislation, merely consultative nature and their superior political body (the body they should report to) is the city council, we have analysed how frequently the problems that derived from city quarter communities' councils were debated on in the city council. The results showed that in 2001 councillors in the city council handled 123 points on the Agenda, but only four of them were directly related to the city quarter communities or their activities.[5] Is this enough for the newly established and very sensitive forms of local self-government? We've made the same analysis again in the 2003, only to found out that the extent of the agenda space designated for the problems and issues of city quarter communities was even lower. What is then wrong with the so celebrated new forms of local self-government designated and "discovered" almost with the sole purpose to decrease the centralization grades and increase local democracy in Slovenian (urban) local communities?

3 EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

In order to gain relevant data on the relationship and communication between city quarter community councils and the UML, the November-December 2004 survey targeted quarter councillors in four city quarter communities of the UML.[6] Some of the questions from the survey targeted 170 randomly selected local citizens and city councillors.[7] The analysis focused on the evaluation of the relationship between city quarter community councils on the one hand and the UML's city administration, the UML's city council and other UML bodies on the other. Table 1 shows the estimated changes in the UML after the introduction of city quarter communities as perceived by all three groups of players. UML residents believe that the introduction of quarter communities failed to bring about considerable changes. According to them, political parties have slightly enhanced their power whereas their confidence in local authorities has been weakened to some extent. In like manner, quarter and city councillors believe that changes were minimal after the introduction of quarter communities. Nevertheless, they are convinced that the confidence in local authorities has improved slightly and that the influence of civil society groups has been less significant, with reduced contradictions between various groups being the most evident change observed. According to city councillors, political parties and civil society groups have slightly increased their power. Further, they believe that the quality of life has improved. They have noticed less contradiction arising between various groups. But the changes perceived are almost negligible. According to all categories of respondents, the introduction of city quarter communities brought about only minimal changes.

Table 1: Evaluation of changes in UML after the implementation of city quarter communities

	INHABITANTS OF UML	CITY QUARTER COUNCILLORS	CITY COUNCILLORS
(N=)	(170)	(44)	(22)

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[4] The Slovenian National Assembly passed the Law on the Ratification of the Charter on 1st of October 1996, which came into effect on 1st of March 1997.

[5] This means that city councils have devoted only 3.6 percent of the agenda space to the problems concerning city quarter communities.

[6] 61 city councillors responded to 8 questions related to the functioning of quarter community councils and cooperation with the UML. 61 survey sheets were distributed. Of these, 44 were completed, representing 72% of all survey sheets distributed.

[7] 45 city councilors were surveyed. They were requested to answer questions concerning the functioning of city quarter community councils. 22 of the initially distributed survey sheets were returned, representing a 48 % success rate.

The quality of life in municipality	3,05	3,00	3,14
Trust in local government	2,85	3,05	2,95
Strength of civil society groups	3,05	2,74	3,27
Strength of political parties	3,35	2,97	3,14
Differences between different groups in society	3,15	2,46	2,76

Source: survey among city quarter's councillors, inhabitants of UML and city councillors.
Note: The values are the average observations of respondents who were included in the survey. The respondents were asked to evaluate changes by selecting a value on the scale of 1 to 5 with 1 standing for "reduced" and 5 for "increased". Value 3 meant "neither reduced nor increased".

Further, the survey aimed to explore how quarter community councillors view the work of their own communities. Their observations were not surprising as they have considered their performance as successful whereas they have taken a critical stance towards relevant city councils (see Table 2). Still further, the purpose of the survey was to examine the relationship which councillors have built towards the UML's administration in respect to professional and other assistance which it is supposed to provide to city quarter communities. The responses were evenly distributed throughout the scale with a slight tendency towards the lower negative values of the scale. The results show that some councillors are well satisfied with the way city administration functions whereas others are not wholly satisfied. This polarisation may as well be attributed to the attitude which a particular city quarter community council adopted by experience. Not surprisingly, city quarter councillors evaluate their work as very positive, but tend to consider the activities of the city council as rather poor in relation to the UML administration.

Table 2: Evaluation of various UML organs in current mandate

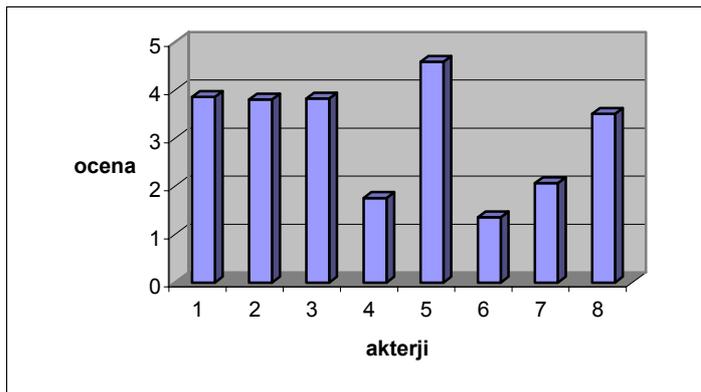|	**CITY QUARTER COUNCILLORS**
(N=)	*(44)*
City council	3,77
City quarter community council	7,36
Evaluation of the city administration's role in assurance of expert and other help to quarter communities*	4,88

Source: survey among city quarter's councillors.
The data are average values, calculated on the basis of assessments of the performance of an individual body as seen by respondents who were asked to select a value on the scale from 1 (very poor) to 10 (very good). The lower the value the more negative the assessment for a UML body is.
*This particular item of data is the average assessment mark of the work of the city administration in regards to providing professional and other types of assistance to quarter communities as attached by city quarter councillors who were asked to select a value on the scale of 0 (absolutely negative) to 10 (absolutely positive).

City quarter councillors were asked to evaluate the impact of certain players in the urban municipality (such as the mayor, city councillors, city administration, city quarter community councils, political parties, ordinary citizens, various civil society organisations and business operators). The results presented in Chart 2 are rather astonishing, portraying political parties as the most influential players as regards the UML decision-making. According to city quarter councillors, the impact of the mayor, city councillors and UML city administration is roughly the same whereas business operators are deemed to be least influential. According to city quarter councillors, city quarter community councils are bodies having little effect on decision making whereas ordinary citizens are deemed to have minimum influence.

Chart 2: Assessment of influence on decision making

Source: survey among city quarter's councillors. Key: 1=mayor; 2=city councillors, 3=city administration, 4=city quarter community councils; 5=political parties; 6=ordinary citizens; 7= various civil society organisations; 8=business operators (N=42).

Further, the survey aimed to illustrate how city quarter councillors view and evaluate individual aspects of the functioning of the city administration. They assessed the responsiveness of the UML's administration to the needs of the citizens, its accessibility, the complexity of procedures, work organisation and application of e-government elements. Given the results above, it came as no surprise that city quarter councillors consider the responsiveness of the UML rather poor, as 33 % of the respondents thought that mark 1 (negative) on a scale form 1 to 5 best describes the situation, 30 % selected mark 2, 30 % chose mark 3, and merely 17 % selected 4 or 5.

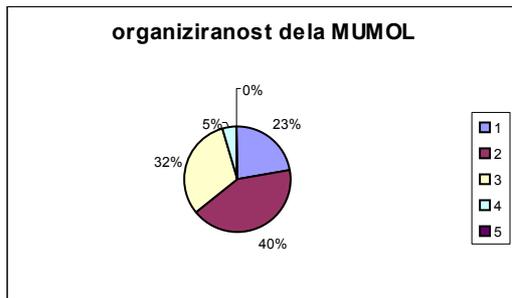*Chart 3: Assessment of responsiveness of UML's administration*
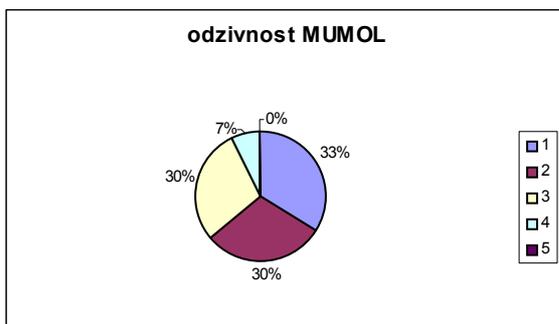
(N=44) Source: survey among city quarter's councillors.
Respondents evaluated responsiveness of UML's administration by selecting values on a scale from 1 (negative) to 5 (excellent).

Respondents also evaluated the organisation of work of UML's administration and, not surprisingly, again 23% of them thought that the organisation of work is very poor, 40 % believed that it deserved mark 2, 32 % thought the organisation is average (mark 3), 5 % thought it was very good (mark 4) and non of them thought it was excellent.

Chart 4: Assessment of the organisation of work of UML's administration

organiziranost dela MUMOL

0%

23%

5%

32%

40%

Legend: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

(N=44) Source: survey among city quarter's councillors.
Respondents evaluated the organisation of work of UML's administration by selecting values on a scale from 1 (negative) to 5 (excellent).

Obviously, city quarter councillors believe that the procedures under the responsibility of UML administration are very complex and complicated and so 42 % respondents selected a negative mark, 36 % of them selected mark 2, 20 % remained undecided and selected mark 3, and only 2 % of respondents thought that the procedures are managed well and chose mark 4. None of the respondents, however, selected mark 5.

Chart 5: Assessment of the complexity of procedures

enostavnost vodenja postopkov

2%

0%

20%

42%

36%

Legend: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
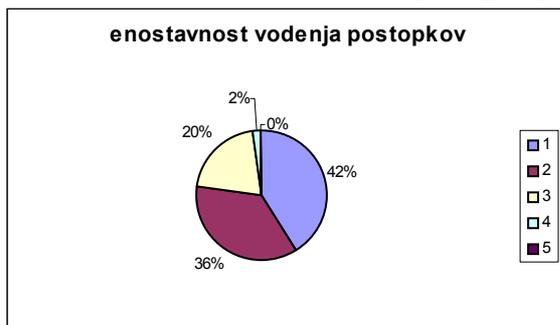
(N=44) Source: survey among city quarter's councillors.
Respondents evaluated the complexity of procedures by selecting values on a scale from 1 (negative) to 5 (excellent).

Accessibility of UML's administration has received slightly better assessments, but still 30 % of quarter councillors chose mark 1, 23 % selected mark 2, 36% selected the average mark 3, and 11% chose mark 4. None of respondents selected the best mark for accessibility.

Chart 6: Assessment of accessibility of UML administration

dostopnost MUMOL

11%

0%

30%

36%

23%

Legend: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
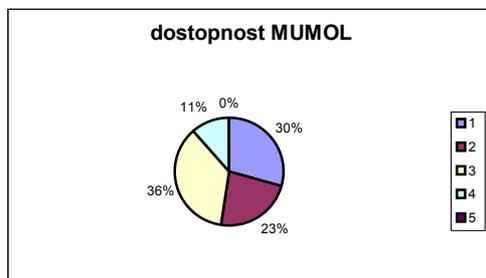
(N=44) Source: survey among city quarter's councillors.
Respondents evaluated the accessibility of UML's administration by selecting values on a scale from 1 (negative) to 5 (excellent).

5 COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEWS GIVEN BY CHAIRMEN OF QUARTER COUNCILS AND HEADS OF UML ADMINISTRATION DEPARTMENTS

Decisions taken by UML administration departments (led by heads) are very important for quarter communities and UML residents. We interviewed UML administration heads in order to analyse the attitude of UML's administration towards to city quarter councils. Yet another objective was to analyse the opinions of city quarter chairmen and their view of the status of a quarter community as an intermediary between citizens and UML' administration given that chairmen's competences are greater than those of other members.[8] The summary of both analyses shall focus on the relationship between city quarter community councils and UML bodies. The point of departure is that quarter councils already manifest as citizens' choice. The analysis has narrowed down the focus on three topics:

- the role and powers of city quarter councils,
- liaison between UML's administration and quarter councils,
- possibilities of enhancing mutual cooperation.

The role of city quarter community councils

Both sides more or less agree on this matter. The common denominator is that quarter councils as seen as a bridge between Ljubljana residents and the UML. There are strong tendencies towards granting more powers to quarter councils, most often advocated by chairmen and less frequently by heads of UML departments who also suggested the powers be extended and defined in greater detail. Remarkably, some heads of UML departments were extremely positively inclined towards quarter community councils although they hardly ever get in touch with them. Head of the Economic and tourist section said that '*quarter councils are bodies that should be most connected with the local residents and should forward citizens' suggestions, wishes and concerns ... as well as provide solutions".* Further she noted that the department under her supervision had not had any contact with quarter councils. Sometimes cooperation between UML departments and quarter councils exists on paper only. Therefore the aspirations of chairmen of quarter councils to achieve greater flexibility within the UML in terms of addressing their issues, problems and proposals are logical. In this way their function would be justified and purposeful, unlike today when they seem to be there just to serve their own purpose.

Chart 7: Comparison of the opinion of heads of UML departments and city quarter council chairmen on competencies of city quarter councils
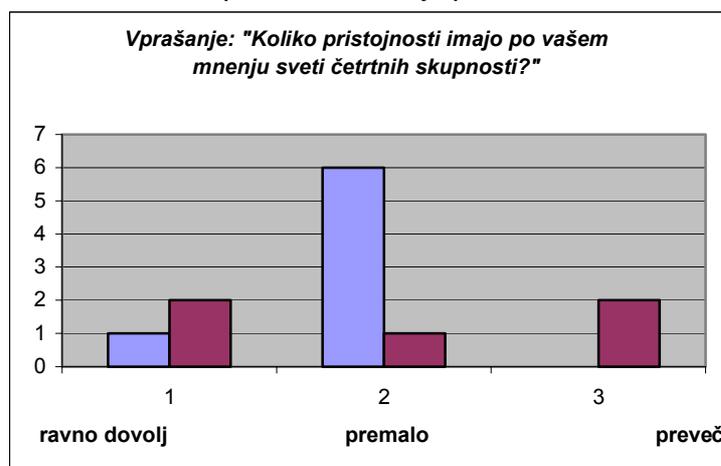
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[8] Interviews with chairmen of city quarter communities councils of Vic, Dravlje, Nove Jarse, Smarna gora, Roznik, Crnuce, Center, from December 2003 to January 2004, Ljubljana.

Liaison between UML's administration and city quarter councils
The opinions of chairmen of quarter councils and heads of UML's administration departments are fairly contradictory. Chairmen pointed put the issue of one-way-only communication approach, the need to use lobbying, paperwork conflicts and their inferior position remote from the core activities. Heads, however, deny that and believe that the situation is not problematic at all. According to them, they respond to each and every initiative and involve city quarter councils in their activities. But a closer examination of the quality of comments, opinions and proposal reveals that there is a great gap between the two groups. Heads maintain that they consider all initiatives but only if these are correctly formulated. The question raised is whether incorrectly submitted or drafted initiatives may be put aside and left unconsidered. Nobody was able to provide a straight-forward answer, but one can assume that an alternative to solve the problem might be a formal and institutionalised communication system supported by prior training. The concept of formal and institutionalised communication could involve standardised forms for comments, opinions and proposals that might be used in a pre-determined logical system of communication. Upon mutual consent, both sides should receive training on the use of such system.

Possibilities for improvements in the communication process
After confronting the opinion of both, city quarter communities' councils and heads of city administration's departments of UML, suggestions for improvement in communicating and performing are various. It can be concluded that heads of city administration's departments were more critical about the lack of communication between citizens and city quarter community councils and less about the lack of communication between citizens and themselves or city quarter community councils and themselves. As we can see they do not view themselves as an obstacle in communication process.

This section is a presentation of various alternatives provided by the respondents:
- better timing as regards the entering of councils in the decision-making process,
- establish cooperation between both sides,
- amendments to regulations to secure a greater say of councils,
- institutionalisation of submitting proposals.

The majority of respondents were critical on the appropriate means of communication, which is a simple self-explaining fact already. The core of the problem is not the flow of communication. The main purpose of city quarter councils, whose competencies are fairly restricted, is to communicate their proposals to a higher level. But this role has taken on a completely inappropriate dimension. Instead of exercising the regulatory right to influence certain decisions, city quarter councillors avail themselves of lobbying mechanisms.

6 FINAL OBSERVATIONS AND SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING THE PARTICIPATION IN CITY QUARTER COMMUNITIES

The key aspect of local residents' participation in decision making is the relationship between the local authority bodies and the general public. The communication between elected bodies and local citizenry is of vital importance for accomplishing greater legitimacy and implementation of the public interest. In a contemporary local democracy context, communication should always be a two-way dialogue. In real life, however, often only one-way communication exists. Local officials get in touch with the local public and their opinion on an every-day basis. Ever increasing volumes of local financial resources are being

allocated to PR activities, PR offices and local bulletins. Large municipalities have set up special public relation offices within their administration bodies and have helped citizens liase with the local authorities also via the web. However, the local public still receives little feedback from the elected local authorities and local senior officials. The most common form of communication remains the acquisition of relevant information which is only one aspect of indirect local democracy. Other less obvious but vitally important aspects are advocating for support, lobbying, participation of local senior officials and officers at public assemblies, active participation in working bodies etc. One of the objectives of establishing quarter communities was to increase the volume of citizen participation through open decision-making processes in individual segments of public life. The functioning of Ljubljana city quarter community councils was analysed and the findings show that their decision-making powers are practically non-existent as all proposals and solutions have to be submitted to the city council which can either approve or reject them. According to the UML statute, a quarter council may submit proposals and perform an advisory function but cannot take any decisions without having acquired prior consent of the city council. Yet another issue that has been raised since quarter communities were established is financing of city quarter councils. In recent times the funds for this purpose have grown ten times (from 200,000 Slovenian tolars to 2 million per quarter community a year) but have still been insufficient to satisfy all the needs and aspirations of some quarter communities. The aforementioned amount represents only 6 percentiles of the entire 2004 UML budget, which is incomparable to resources received by German or Swedish quarter communities. Nevertheless, quarter councils are still only consultative bodies by nature. The current decree governing the responsibilities of quarter councils does not encourage their efficiency. Quarter councils may advise, give proposals, comment on burning issues, participate in the performance of some duties and inform citizens of matters of local significance.

We can conclude that city quarter communities are not fulfilling their primary purpose for increasing participation on local level of government. Even more so, many facts indicate that the implementation of city quarter communities served only as a disguise for greater citizen participation, when in reality they do not improve the participation processes at all. Beside the fact that in the city council of the UML debates on city quarter communities are quite rare and insignificant, there is also the question of financial burden of implementing city quarter communities. Up to this moment financial burden for UML has been fairly low, but city quarter communities are financed from UML budget, so there is at least legitimacy problem if they do not bring some benefits to the citizens.

In the course of the research we have come up to some suggestions, alternative solutions to the problem. Our constructive scientific criticism could provide the UML administration with some general guidelines for establishing better communication and cooperation with city quarter communities. These suggestions are based on the finding that the greatest obstacle for uninterrupted process of the mediation of opinions and resolutions between UML and city quarter communities is in fact the lack of communication.

Recommendation 1: timing management of resolutions, opinions and prepositions of city quarter communities council's when entering into decision-making process
One of the possible upgrades is to determine the exact point in time during the decision-making process when city quarter communities' resolutions, opinions and propositions may enter the process. If they are proposed to the municipal administration too late in the decision-making process, then the possibility for them to be at least discussed is pretty slim. With the regard to this a timeline of general policy-making process should be exactly established and city quarter communities councils as well as the citizens should be acquainted with it. This would then enable all proposed resolutions, opinions and propositions to enter the decision-making process in due course.

The statement the head of the Department for public services and transactions in the UML further illustrates the same concern: "*It is very hard to take into account various resolutions, opinions and prepositions of city quarter communities, when the main concept of the city development plan has already been done and decided upon. After a particular project has been approved by the city council, the implementation of any additional propositions is virtually impossible. This problem often occurs during the phase when most of our projects are already taking place/being implemented*."

Other city administration department heads also mentioned this problem in their interviews, and exposed it as one of the greatest obstacles for uninterrupted communication between city quarter communities' councils and municipal administration. If city quarter communities were established for the decentralization purposes and if their probability to influence individual projects and city policies is negligible, what is their purpose then? If this question is to be addressed properly, the exact determination of time point in the decision-making process when city quarter communities' resolutions, opinions and propositions could enter the process is of crucial importance.

Recommendation 2: additional training for councillors on decision-making processes on the local level of government

One of the most obvious upgrades of the local self-government system is surely the possibility of additional training for local decision-makers on decision-making processes on the local level of government. This suggestion may not present the most urgent upgrade, but nevertheless some form of additional instructions could be very useful for both local councillors and employees of UML city administration. According to the head of Department for local self-government: "*The role of the Department for local self-government has changed after the establishment of city quarter communities. The scale and complexity of duties of our department grew in size continuously. We need additional employees that are qualified in financial regulations and have other specific tasks and expertise. The required levels of expertise can only be achieved through additional training of our employees. In the Department for local self-government, with the help of Service for development and functioning of city quarter communities, we are continuously upgrading cooperation with city quarter communities as well as following the changes of relevant legislation.*""

However, additional training is limited only to support staff who according to the UML statute are not allowed to influence the formation of city quarter community's councils' resolutions. There are two feasible options: a) to enable the support staff to formulate these resolutions (which would be controversial from the ethic point of view) or b) to establish some kind of permanent training for local councillors with seminars, workshops, etc. that would be available to all local councillors at all times. With this action we could decrease, or in the final stage, even eliminate the inadequate usage and formulation of city quarter communities councils' resolutions, opinions and prepositions. This project would be beneficial also from other points of view, for instance councillors would be acquainted with the decision-making process within the municipality, the feedback process within the municipal administration would be much more copious and faster, etc. Some of the heads of administrative departments of UML have also expressed their inclination toward this suggestion. One of them has clearly expressed his concerns about this situation: "*Resolutions, opinions and prepositions are of extremely poor quality. City quarter community's councils are not selective at all, every single possible and impossible idea is listed… Individual claims and requests should be formed and debated on within the councils before they are sent to us.*"

Recommendation 3: proper institutionalisation of city quarter communities councils resolutions, opinions and prepositions

The last suggestion is also the most important one, but could be put into practise with the combination with first two. One of the conclusions from our research was also that institutionalisation of city quarter communities councils' resolutions, opinions and

prepositions could regulate all various forms of resolutions, opinions, requests and propositions that are now send to administrative departments of UML. All written documents from city quarters councils now differ significantly in quality and in form, and are frequently send to improper bodies. Perhaps it would be even more important to institutionalise a joint representative body of all city quarter councils (this representative body could be for instance formed from the chairmen of all councils). A joint representative body should have a more important role in the decision-making process within municipality, because of its general representativeness of all city quarter communities. This would be especially useful when more important city policies are decided upon. But for the time being the most successful way to influence policy making in the municipality is by lobbying through city council. This is unacceptable since the city quarters communities were established manly because there was a need to institutionalise participation of citizens on local level.

Recommendation 4 – independent or at least permanent financial sources for the city quarter communities
Extensive interviews with chairmen of city quarter councils gave rise to the following proposal: financial resources allocated by the UML to quarter communities should be increased to represent at least a few percent of the entire UML budget. It needs to be emphasized, however, that some quarter communities are larger than the majority of Slovenian municipalities but scarcely receive any financial support. Further, although UML allocates small amounts to city quarter communities, the funds can be considered as undue if citizens cannot receive any tangible benefits from them.

The thorough and empirically supported analysis of UML revealed that – through the introduction of quarter communities - the possibility of citizen participation improved in the area of policy- and decision-making. From the viewpoint of the concept of relationship between the political governance and citizens (OECD, 2001: 23), UML is now making a shift from informing and counselling towards active participation. The case study reveals that the introduction of quarter communities added a new value to UML, rendered the citizens of Ljubljana a new opportunity to participate in decision-making and gave a new dimension to local democracy. Naturally, quarter communities were introduced only three years ago when their role, status and functions were not yet fully conceptualised. With a view to increase the possibilities of citizen participation and to promote active engagement, the UML should strive to properly redefine the objective and status of quarter communities, in particular as regard financing, duties and competencies.

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