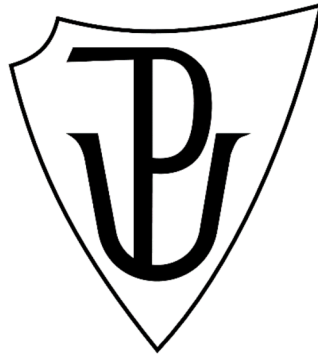PALACKÝ UNIVERSITY OLOMOUC

Faculty of Science

Department of Development and Environmental Studies

Bc. Rozálie Stejskalová

Civil Society and Local Governance:

From Islands of Positive Deviation to Flourishing Local Communities

The case of the Czech Republic

Master thesis

Olomouc 2022   Supervisor: Mgr. Lenka Dušková, Ph.D.

Declaration in Lieu of Oath:

I hereby declare in lieu of an oath that this Master thesis was written by myself under the professional supervision of Mgr. Lenka Dušková, Ph.D. All sources have been acknowledged in the text and in the list of references.

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Place, date   Signature

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Přírodovědecká fakulta
Akademický rok: 2019/2020

ZADÁNÍ DIPLOMOVÉ PRÁCE
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Téma práce:	**Občanská společnost a místní samospráva**
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Zásady pro vypracování

The thesis will explore modes of interaction between local authorities and civil society. The focus will be put on the role of local authorities in fostering collaboration with civil society and the implications and benefits derived from the collaboration. The aim of the thesis is to look for possible approaches and frameworks of collaboration that might improve the quality of planning and implementation of both top-down and bottom-up projects and initiatives, and that might potentially become an impetus for Transition Communities.

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Vedoucí diplomové práce: **Mgr. Lenka Dušková, PhD.**
Katedra rozvojových a environmentálních studií

Datum zadání diplomové práce: **25. února 2020**
Termín odevzdání diplomové práce: **25. dubna 2021**

L.S.

_____   _____
prof. Mgr. Jaroslav Miller, M.A., Ph.D.   **doc. RNDr. Martin Kubala, Ph.D.**
děkan   děkan

V Olomouci dne 25. února 2020

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Abstrakt:

Akademická obec doposud v České republice komplexně neprobádala důvody absence rozšíření neprotestní environmentálně orientované iniciativy „zdola nahoru" s názvem Města přechodu („Transition Towns"). Pozornost nebyla věnována ani tomu, co mohou místní samosprávy ve městech udělat pro podporu vzniku a rozvoje takových iniciativ. Jedním z cílů této práce je prostřednictvím perspektivy teorie systémů prozkoumat důvody, proč takové iniciativy v ČR nevznikají. Následně práce pomocí kvalitativní obsahové analýzy studuje a analyzuje zapojení komunity „shora dolů" ve čtyřech procesech městského rozvoje na vzorku třiceti šesti měst v každém z těchto procesů (N = 36), (N = 36), (N = 36), (N = 36). Další analýza je provedena se zaměřením na participativní aktivity (N = 140) v sedmdesáti čtyřech městech a jednotkách aktivních v programu Místní agenda 21. Analýza identifikuje míru zapojení široké veřejnosti do těchto rozvojových procesů a participativních aktivit a na základě modelu dobré participace posuzuje, jaký komunitotvorný charakter tyto procesy a aktivity mají. Zjištění ukazují, že komunitotvorný charakter v analyzovaných procesech městského rozvoje a v participativních aktivitách buď chybí, je nízký, nebo naplno nevyužívá existující potenciál. V závěru práce je doporučeno, aby samosprávy (v městech s rozšířenou působností nad 10 000 obyvatel) vytvořily stálou, systematickou a konzistentní mezirezortní a interdisciplinární jednotku, která by se v první řadě zaměřovala na humanistickou participaci na rozdíl od participace mechanistické, která se v České republice běžně používá. Takový přístup podpoří vznik a rozvoj místních komunit a tím usnadní realizaci projektů udržitelnosti, které předpokládají fungující místní komunitu a neobejdou se bez ní.

Klíčová slova: místní komunita, občanská společnost, města, municipality, občanská angažovanost, komunitní rozvoj přístup shora dolu, přístup zdola nahoru**,** participace, udržitelný rozvoj, Česká republika

Abstract:

The reasons for the absence of the non-protest environmentally-oriented bottom-up initiatives Transition Towns in the Czech Republic have not been properly researched in academia. Attention has neither been paid to what local governments in cities may do to support the emergence and development of such initiatives. The thesis, therefore, employs the perspective of system theory to understand the reasons behind the lack of such initiatives in the CR. Employing qualitative content analysis, it subsequently analyses top-down community engagement in four urban development processes in a sample of thirty-six cities for each of the processes (N=36), (N=36), (N=36), (N=36). Another analysis is conducted focusing on participatory activities (N=140) of seventy-four municipalities and other entities active in the programme Local Agenda 21. The analysis identifies the degree to which the general public has been engaged in those development processes as well as the community-building character of the participatory events. Furthermore, based on a model of good participation, it assesses the community-building character the engagement possesses in both analysed areas. The findings show that the community-building character in the analysed urban development processes as well as in the participatory activities is either absent, low or not capitalizing on its full potential. At the end of the thesis, it is recommended that local governments (in cities with extended authority above 10 000 inhabitants) create a permanent, systematic and consistent interdepartmental and interdisciplinary unit. Such a unit should first and foremost focus on humanistic participation as opposed to mechanistic participation which is currently commonly applied in the CR. Such an approach will fuel the emergence and development of local communities. This will in turn enable and facilitate the implementation of sustainability projects which need and presume functioning local community.

Key words: local communities, civil society, cities, municipalities, community engagement, community development, top-down approach, bottom-up approach, participation, sustainable development, Czech Republic

Content

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List of tables:

CD – Community development

CE – Community Engagement

CLLD – Community-led Local Development

CPSC – community planning of social care

CR – Czech Republic

CSO – Czech Statistical Office

EU – Europe, European, European Union

LA21 – Local Agenda 21

LAG – Local Action Group(s)

LEADER – *Liaison Entre Actions Développement de l'Économie Rural* (CLLD)

MS – Member state

NGOs – Non-Governmental organizations

ORP – municipalities with extended powers of the third degree

PA – Paris Agreement

PORC – Public Opinion Research Centre

QCA(S) – Qualitative content analysis, qualitative content analyses

RQ, RQs – Research question(s)

RSQ, RSQs – Research sub-question(s)

SD – Sustainable Development

SDG(s) – Sustainable Development Goals

SDP – Strategic development planning

SF CR 2030 – Strategic Framework Czech Republic 2030

TI – Transition Initiatives

TM – Transition Movements

TT – Transition Towns

US – United States

UN – United Nations

UNEP – United Nations Environmental Program

I. Introduction

Due to the increasing importance of the local level in mitigation of and adaptation to climate change and sustainable development (SD), the focal point of the thesis is the role of cities, i.e. municipalities and local communities in tackling these challenges, as well as the possible forms of collaboration and interactions between a municipality and local citizens (top-down and bottom-up community engagement in public affairs).

The world has been facing serious environmental, social and economic crises that are becoming all the more complex and seemingly irreversible. The Planetary Boundaries have reached their tipping points, or are well on the way to reaching it, which is resulting in the endangerment of the animal species as well as of the well-being of humans (Rockström et al. 2009).

The complexity of this problem has called for a worldwide response. Most countries across the globe signed the Paris Agreement in 2015, claiming to become carbon neutral until 2050 (United Nations 2015a). Global action was taken by the United Nations (UN) setting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which many countries have claimed responsibility for (UN General Assembly 2015). The European Union (EU) furthers these goals, featuring them in all of the EU Commission's priorities (European Commission n.d.; UNFCCC 2021). The trajectory of meeting these obligations in the Czech Republic (CR) is indicated in Strategic Framework Czech Republic 2030 (Úřad vlády České republiky 2017b). Specific steps and measures of this framework should be reflected in regional and local decisions as well as in the everyday life of all citizens (UNFCCC 2021; Úřad vlády České republiky 2017b; Guterres 2019).

There is an international agreement that cities should lead the way in the transition to sustainability and resiliency by actively mitigating climate change, adapting to it and by "becoming inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable" (United Nations, n.d.; UN-HABITAT 2010; United Nations 1992a). This is based on the recognition that it is the activities of each citizen, institution or organization at the local level that contribute to the global problems. Therefore, cities may be sustainable and resilient only if their communities are. Moreover, since cities are closest to their citizens, they should interact with them and collaborate with them towards a common future by engaging their local community in local development processes, such as planning and decision-making and other activities related to SD. Apart from that, they should actively motivate and enable people to make changes on their own and to orient towards

sustainable behaviour in their daily lives. On the other hand, citizens should stimulate change from the bottom-up by proactively participating in planning and decision-making and by coming forward with innovative solutions to help solve the global environmental problems (among other things).

Currently, there is an increasing number of cities where citizens and local governments come together to make change happen. Great examples may be seen across Europe, Great Britain, Canada and the US where citizens take the initiative in tackling global problems. A relatively new non-protest initiative known as Transition Towns (TT) came into being and has become nearly worldwide, where local communities take pride in collaboration with local governments to tackle the problems they face together as described also in Chapter II. Motivation, and in more detail in Box 1 in Chapter 10 (Transition Network 2021). While the potential and collaboration of cities and local communities have been acknowledged worldwide, and it has been acted upon by many of them, there are still cities which lag behind the real change.

The thesis looks at the specific case of the CR, where local governments engage citizens in local development processes rather sporadically, through passive or non-participative forms, or inconsistently (Ježek 2013; Hanken et al. 2015). Alongside this, the volume of local bottom-up activities and participation in public life (not only towards SD) is rather low resulting in low social capital and social cohesion and a low degree of development of local communities in the CR or their near non-existence (Frič and Vávra 2012).

The research questions focus on why non-protest bottom-up initiatives dealing with adaptation to and mitigation of climate change and other environmental problems do not come into being in the CR, but mainly on what municipalities should do to support or fuel the emergence of bottom-up initiatives related to SD. Therefore, the aim is to study the state of the affairs in the CR regarding top-down and bottom-up community engagement (CE) concerning SD and to explore its inhibitors and enablers in the CR. The objective is to look for possible frameworks and mechanisms of top-down CE which might improve the collaboration between local governments and local citizens, and which would accelerate the emergence of bottom-up CE in the CR. The integration and internalization of such mechanisms in municipal governments might improve the quality of planning and decision-making in general; the implementation of both top-down and bottom-up local projects; and it may increase the emergence of initiatives related to the transition to SD.

Firstly, the thesis describes the motivation and aim, the objective, RQs and methodology of this work. Secondly, it provides the reader with a theoretical framework describing briefly the global environmental problems and the international and national framework to deal with them. It describes and defines relevant theories and concepts related to governance, public administration, the role of cities and citizens in achieving SD as well as the possible forms of their collaboration contributing to that. Furthermore, it explains the concept of civil society and local community as well as community development (CD) and community engagement (CE) (both top-down and bottom-up approaches). All of these are crucial factors when it comes to SD at the local level. To show good practices of both top-down and bottom-up approaches to CE, two cases of anecdotic evidence are provided towards the end of the theoretical framework.

Secondly, the empirical part focuses on the state of the affairs in the CR in the context of the preceding chapters. It describes the aims defined in the SF CR 2030; the status quo of civil society and local communities in the CR. It also describes and analyses the status quo of CE, i.e. the existing structures of interaction and collaboration between municipal governments and the local community concerning SD in the CR; and it discusses the role of local governments in the CR in accelerating CE and CD.

II. Motivation

The basic stimulus for writing this thesis is to explore the possibilities of dealing with or contributing to the solution of global and environmental problems at the local level in the CR. The motivation for this thesis comes from the belief that both top-down and bottom-up community engagement in public affairs and collaboration related to SD is crucial for advancing sustainability. This belief comes not only from the promotion of top-down CE in public affairs related to sustainability by international organizations. There are also numerous inspiring examples of successful bottom-up initiatives across the world.

One of such examples and the main source of inspiration for this thesis is the non-protest environmentally-oriented initiative called Transition Towns (TT, or Transition Movement, TM, see Chapter 10). The cornerstone of this initiative is the belief that the local level is the ideal place for environmental solutions and action. Each initiative creates a vision for their local group or whole city and by implementing small to large projects they jointly act to reach that envisioned future (Klenovská 2011).

The original idea behind this thesis was to explore why similar bottom-up non-protest initiatives such as TT have not spread in the CR; whether the concept of bottom-up engagement of local communities in public life such as that of TT could work in the CR; and mainly what should be changed or what can be done, in general terms, for TM or similar initiatives to emerge in the CR and initiate, collaborate on, and lead local projects related to sustainability of cities and communities. The follow-up idea to this was that neither is there a common widespread and systematic (consistent, permanent and formalized) approach to top-down CE by municipalities in the development processes in Czech cities, which would stimulate and elicit some kind of bottom-up initiative as described above.

However, if municipalities and citizens belong among the key stakeholders in mitigating and adapting to climate change, then citizens' lack of bottom-up engagement in public affairs at the local level as well as absent or unsystematic and inconsistent top-down CE in municipality-led processes and projects must inevitably negatively affect the processes and projects themselves. Subsequently, it affects the local communities, municipalities and the cities as a whole. This means that both top-down and bottom-up non-engagement of local citizens in public affairs weakens social capital and cohesion resulting in the disintegration or non-existence of local communities.

Yet, there are some cities and organizations, which, based on inspiration from abroad run projects and processes in city planning and development wherein existing or developed local community and CE is a prerequisite. While experience from abroad represents huge learning potential for the CR, it is not viable to replicate or adapt those projects wherein successful implementation is reliant on existing and functioning local CE unless this condition is met (Krkoška Lorencová et al. 2021; Frantál and Kunc 2010).

As mentioned above, TT represent a movement and a concept, which is being "replicated"[1] in many parts of the world. It is desirable that this bottom-up initiative emerges and that it is scaled up also in the CR. For this to happen in the context of the CR, it is necessary, first and foremost, to meet the pre-conditions (i.e. the existence of developed local communities or active citizens). This may be accomplished by accelerating CE in the CR by creating "a space of possibilities" for the emergence of bottom-up initiatives dealing with SD (Conn 2011).

The pivotal idea is that local governments in the CR may play a key role in the acceleration of CE at the local level and in the activation of local citizens, which could give rise to the emergence of bottom-up community initiatives such as TT or other environmentally and locally-based initiatives focusing on SD.

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[1] Replication is not understood as one-size-fits all solution. Replication is understood here as the transfer of viable and proven practices from one environment to the other while respecting the varying contexts.

III.   Objective, research questions and methodology

1. Objective

The objective is to explore why non-protest bottom-up initiatives focusing on climate change mitigation and adaptation do not emerge in the Czech Republic (CR) and to identify possible top-down community engagement (CE) processes and structures which might improve and foster consistent and regular collaboration between local governments and local citizens in cities, and that would accelerate the emergence of bottom-up initiatives focusing on sustainable development (SD) and climate change adaptation and mitigation in the CR.

To study this objective, it is necessary to analyse the state of the affairs in the CR regarding the role of cities and communities in climate change adaptation and mitigation and SD at large, i.e. how is it reflected in national policies and the practices of public administration. Next, it is necessary to study the status quo of civil society and local communities in the CR; and most importantly the status quo of top-down CE, i.e. the existing structures of interaction and collaboration between municipal governments and citizens related to SD in the CR and how they reflect the international and national context. Finally, based on this as well as the theoretical framework, it is necessary to identify the inhibitors and possible enablers of both top-down and bottom-up community engagement toward sustainable development in the CR.

2. Research questions

Main research questions:

1) Why do not bottom-up non-protest initiatives focusing on sustainable development and climate change emerge in the Czech Republic?
2) What can municipalities/local governments do to support or fuel the emergence of bottom-up non-protest initiatives focusing on climate change mitigation and adaptation and sustainable development at large in the Czech Republic?

The research sub-questions resulting from this are:

To answer the two main RQs, it was necessary to answer the following complementary research sub-questions (RSQs).

1) What is the role of municipalities and local communities in the transition to sustainable development?
2) What structures and processes at the local level can be used in supporting local community engagement in relation to sustainable development and strengthening community development?
3) What is the role of cities and local communities in climate change adaptation and mitigation and sustainable development at large in the Czech Republic?
4) What is the status quo of civil society and local communities in the Czech Republic (and in relation to sustainable development)?
5) What is the status quo regarding collaboration between municipalities and citizens at the local level and in relation to sustainable development in the Czech Republic?
6) What are current barriers and challenges to community engagement and community development in the Czech Republic?
7) How can local governments support community engagement and contribute to community development?

3. Methodology

This chapter describes the methodology of the thesis which is divided into a theoretical part and an empirical part, describing the structure and methods used. The presented thesis represents exploratory research based on secondary research of literature, case studies, public opinion polls, and others. The empirical part employs qualitative content analysis based on official documents of local municipalities. Auxiliary primary research has been conducted consisting of one expert interview, which was used mainly as a foundation for the preceding qualitative content analyses (see empirical part below in this chapter). Citations in the Czech language used in the text were translated by the author into English.

System theory approach

The author views the presented issues from the perspective of system theory focusing on interactions between systems and how these interactions affect the ability to deal with complexities and the outer environment. According to Bertalanffy (1968, 55) system is „a complex of interacting elements" and the main focus is put on interactions between those elements and the individual systems. The author asserts that system theory may be applied also to social sciences and related concepts (ibid., 7). The author further explains that "[e]vents [interactions] seem to involve more than just individual decisions and actions and to be determined more by socio-cultural "systems," be these prejudices, ideologies, pressure groups, social trends, growth and decay of civilizations, or what not" (ibid., 8).

According to Tien and Berg (2003: 23-24), systems may be divided according to their types and elements. Therefore, systems may be dynamic (e. g. society) or built (e.g. government, institutions), and they are composed of components (e.g. people, processes), their attributes (values, norms, principles) and relationships (ibid.). In open systems „there are exchanges of energy, matter, people, and information with the external environment" (Mele et al. 2010, 127). Such exchanges lead to "internal processes of transformations" resulting among others in equilibrium and autopoiesis. While equilibrium refers to the ability to contribute to other systems, autopoiesis refers to self-organizing attributes of systems, which can stimulate change to deal with outer complexities (Mele et al. 2010, 129).

The presented thesis views the studied concepts as systems interacting with other systems, their supra-systems and sub-systems. It presumes that when systems become sufficiently open and

interactive, they may gain new abilities which will improve their ability to deal with outer complexities and to contribute to change.

3.1. Theoretical part

The theoretical part firstly introduces the literature review of previous research and work and then it presents the theoretical framework. The theoretical framework answers the RSQs n. 1-2 as well as provides a framework for the analysis of the state of the affairs in the CR which is necessary to answer the rest of the RSQs (3.- 7.). The systems studied in this thesis in general are state institutions, cities and civil society as well as the interactions between them and their outer environment. More specifically, global environmental problems, governance, public administration, cities and municipal governments, civil society, local communities and the mechanisms of interaction between state institutions and citizens at the local level are studied. The theoretical framework also illustrates two examples of anecdotic evidence of CE (one top-down and one bottom-up). It is explained hereafter why these illustrative examples are considered examples of good practice.

Examples anecdotic evidence

To study the objective, it was necessary to explore both top-down and bottom-up approaches to CE. Since the experience of CE is richer abroad (and inspiration is often drawn from there), examples of CE from abroad are chosen. The reason behind this is also to analyse, identify and describe the main features and principles by which they operate as an example of good practice.

The following examples are used for the following general factors applied in both approaches and specific factors applied in each approach separately (see below for each example). The general factors include: locally-based community engagement, focus on consistent or permanent interaction between municipality and local community, inclusiveness and non-passive aspects of participation. The specific factors of the former will be described first followed by the latter.

Anecdotic evidence 1: Bottom-up community engagement, Transition Towns

The choice of the bottom-up approach is already outlined in Chapter II: Motivation. Inspiration is taken from the concept of TT described in Box 2 in Chapter 9 of the theoretical part. It serves as a piece of anecdotic evidence for its specific nature as is described in the following Table.

Table 1: Example of a bottom-up approach to community engagement

1.	Community-based action towards environmentally sustainable future focusing on local solution to mitigation and adaptations
3.	Value-driven
4.	Scaleable - applicable to different scales of "the local" (organizations such as universities, neighbourhoods, self-governed municipal districts, small or larger cities)
5.	"Replicable": it is possible to replicate the concept in other organizations, cities or countries while respecting the varying contexts (there is a set of tools, best practices and other means, which guide the people through the foundation of the initiative)
6.	Successful collaboration with local governments which makes projects more sustainable and enables implementation of more systematic changes

Anecdotic evidence 2: Top-down Community Engagement

To see good practices of how CE may be internalized top-down, this thesis draws on good practices from the dissertation thesis "Understanding Best Practices for Community Engagement in Municipal Contexts" by Sherry Mc Gee (McGee 2009). It was found using the keywords "collaboration", "interaction", municipalities", local communities", "community engagement", and "best practices" in multiple search databases (Google scholar, Web of science, Google). The example was chosen based on how well it can be used to demonstrate principles/key factors of top-down approach to CE as demonstrated in Table 2. This work describes several case studies of top-down municipality CE. It analyses the case studies of Canadian municipalities and one region integrating CE into their municipal structures and synthesizes their good practices. It was chosen since it demonstrates the following factors.

Table 2: Example of a top-down approach to community engagement

1.	Consistency and systematic approach
2.	Good governance: aspects such as inclusivity and transparency are key
3.	Innovative: they are innovative in establishing municipality integrated frameworks of CE, which is not common in the context of the CR.

4.	Interdisciplinary: does not focus only on the environmental pillar of SD, which is important for its interdisciplinarity

Drawing from these cases of anecdotic evidence, relevant practices will be discussed as a way of collaboration and interaction between municipalities and local communities in the CR.

3.2. Empirical part

The empirical part focuses on the state of the affairs in the CR proceeding from and based on the theoretical framework. Specifically, its purpose is to answer the two main RQs. Therefore, it is necessary to answer the last five RSQs (3.-7.). Due to the under-researched nature of the two main RQs (Snyder 2019), exploratory research was conducted based on qualitative document analysis (Bowen 2009) using a content analysis approach (QCA) (Corbin and Strauss 2012; Labuschagne 2003) in combination with secondary research analysis (Tranfield, Denyer, and Smart 2003; Webster and Watson 2002). The following methods are employed:

1. study of secondary literature and public opinion polls;
2. five qualitative content analyses (see Table 3 below);
3. auxiliary primary research has been conducted based on one expert interview, which was used mainly as a foundation for the preceding qualitative content analyses.

Table 3: Qualitative content analyses

Analysis	Analysed documents	Sources of data	Sample size
QCA	Strategic development plans	Official websites of respective cities	N= 36
QCA	Land-use plans	Official websites of respective cities	N= 36
QCA	Community plans	Official websites of respective cities	N= 36
QCA	Culture plans	Official websites of respective cities	N= 36
QCA	LA21 participatory activities	LA21 database, official websites of respective cities	N= 140

Based on the study and analyses, the thesis summarizes current barriers and challenges to community building and community development in the CR, answering the RSQ n. 6. Likewise, based on the theory, analyses and anecdotic evidence from abroad, it summarizes what local governments in the CR can actually do to elicit CE and support CD, answering the RSQ n. 7.

3.2.1. Qualitative content analyses

There are two areas in which qualitative content analysis is conducted in this research. The first area includes four analyses of urban development processes. The second analysis focuses specifically on participatory activities applied in the LA21 cities and entities. The processes of those analyses are described further.

Limitations of qualitative content analysis

Apart from its time-intensive nature, the limitations of qualitative content analysis include the reduction of information in texts (as opposed to real-time social interactions) as well as possible subjective interpretations in the process of analysis by the analyst (Downe-Wamboldt 2009). The former should be reduced by the fact that cities and units active in LA21 were chosen for the analyses (as explained below). The latter should be avoided to some degree by the rules set before the analyses were conducted. Also, to strengthen the credibility of the analyses, the conducted literature review is corroboratory to the results of the analyses (Bowen 2009).

1. Qualitative content analyses in four urban development processes

First, four analyses were conducted to see whether and to what degree cities engage the general public in strategic planning, urban planning, community planning and cultural planning. Findings are presented in the empirical part of this thesis. They are further assessed from the point of view of their community-building character (*informing*, *listening*, *co-planning* and *co-creating*) with *informing* having the least or zero community-building character and *co-creating* having the highest community-building character. The rules for the assessment of the community building character are explained in Chapter 8.2.4. Model of good participation.

Choice of texts for all of the four qualitative content analyses:

The medium wherein QCAs are conducted are official texts and websites of local municipalities, focusing on four urban development processes, i.e. strategic development planning, land-use planning, community planning of social care, and cultural planning. As for the time range, the most recent documents published were selected as of winter 2022.

Criteria for inclusion are based on the combination of the following three factors following from the theoretical part and the expert interview. First, competencies of local municipalities (ORP cities with extended powers), second on the number of inhabitants (above 10 000), and

third on the participation in the programme LA21 which is explained below in sub-chapter LA21. Since the criteria for inclusion narrowed down the number of cities to 36, all of them have been included in the sample for the QCA in each of the four urban development processes.

Units and categories of analyses

The units of meaning which are recorded are the participatory characteristics of the conducted events. The set of categories are as follows: public opinion polls, surveys, objecting of the public, discussions, public meetings, public forums, round tables, meetings with the Mayor, forum of ten problems, working groups, working groups with the engagement of the public, delegation of decision-making and responsibility, expert creation (Ježek 2015).

Rules for coding

The texts were coded using deductive coding. Preselected categories were applied based on the system theory approach and literature review (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane 2006; Ježek 2015). When conclusive information was not found, the text was determined as unclear.

2. *Qualitative content analysis of specific participatory activities*

This qualitative content analysis focuses on top-down participatory activities which take place at the local level in the CR. It analyses the degree of participation and community-building character of the participatory events conducted by these entities. This provides an overview of whether, how and to what degree citizens are engaged at the local level in the CR.

Choice of texts for the qualitative content analysis

The medium is the official reports of conducted participatory activities with the public by municipalities and other units active in LA21 which are stored in the LA21 official database.

Criteria for inclusion are based on the active part in the programme LA21. The sample takes into consideration all seventy-four entities (i.e. municipalities, regions, self-governed municipal districts and Local action groups) currently active in LA21. It consists of participatory activities (N=140) of those entities, which were recorded as proof for the fulfilment of indicator 2.1. Planning with the public in category D which is publicly available in the database of LA21. In total, one hundred forty participatory activities conducted in those cities and entities were analysed in at least 150 documents recording those activities.

The rationale behind the sample creation is explained further. Based on the expert interview, it was found out that the LA21 database is unique given there are no other publicly available

datasets about top-down citizens engagement by municipalities in the CR as complex and consistent as those in LA21. It also follows from the expert interview that it can be assumed that these participatory activities which are given for evaluation to LA21 experts will be those that might be considered as best practices in the given municipalities and units. This is because the participatory events given for evaluation need to comply with some specific criteria for the municipality or unit to pass the indicators throughout the programme. It is, therefore, in the best interest of the given units to submit a record of those activities that are exemplary of their engagement activities (see below Sub-chapter LA21).

Time range

As for the time range of selected documents, it was recommended in the expert interview that the year wherein participatory activities might be studied should be 3 years old before fall 2021. Under standard circumstances, the most recent monitored and assessed year (2021) would be used. However, due to the circumstances of the crisis Covid-19, the year before this crisis (2019) was used as it was found out that many activities were cancelled or sometimes took place online during the pandemic and might not be of the same quality or intensity as normally. Therefore, this was done to eliminate deviations from standard activities which would normally take place. Whether the documents related to the year 2019 were not found or were non-existent at the time, the activities monitored in the most recent year were used.

Units and categories of analysis (set of categories)

The units of meaning which are recorded are community-building characteristics of the conducted events. The set of categories are as follows: *informing, listening, co-planning* and *co-creating* with *informing* having the lowest (if any) degree of community-building character, and *co-creating* the highest one (see Table 4).

Rules for coding

Like the first analysis, it also uses deductive coding, where the codes were preselected based on literature review and theoretical frameworks of community building, system theory approach and model of good participation (participatory activities with community-building potential/characteristics) (Vácha and Kandusová 2018).

Rules for evaluating participatory activities

For determining the degree of top-down citizens' participation and its community-building character, a simple evaluation tool with basic aspects of engagement was created. Records of

each top-down participatory activity from the LA21 database (N=140) as described above were analysed, and the following aspects of engagement were taken note of. The following table shows the evaluation tool with the aspects of engagement created before the evaluation.

Table 4: Evaluation tool - aspects of engagement

Evaluation Tool	Aspects of engagement: How was the public engaged, how the public engaged
Informing	Informing the public: Passive engagement of the public. The public is informed, the public is provided answers to their questions.
Listening	Listening to the public: Passive-active engagement. The public is active in quasi planning - sharing their wishes and problems. Focus is not on specific ideas and solutions fulfilling common vision. Real planning and/or action is taken by the municipality.
Co-planning	Co-planning: Active engagement of the public. The public is engaged in specific projects, suggesting ideas, solutions, making decisions, thinking through the use of the project etc, whereby it actively contributes to the solutions and final "product".
Co-creating	Co-creating: Active engagement in planning and co-creation. The public actively takes part in the creation of the project by volunteering, organizing, preparing and so on.

Focus is put on whether the general public is engaged, whether there is a common vision and how the activity was concluded (is there any follow-up activity that would indicate *co-creation*).

Engagement of the general public is key to determining whether it can be talked about public engagement at all. When the expert public or the employees of the municipality are engaged without the inclusion or presence of the general public, the activity is determined as without the engagement of the public.

As described in the theoretical part, a common vision and goals are key to local communities as well as it is crucial for planning in general. Without a common vision at hand, it is difficult to plan among a variety of many people. Everyone might have a different vision, and therefore different wishes and care about different problems. While this itself is not wrong, it does not guide the discussion. The absence of a common vision might result in chaos, different opinions on what should be aimed at and inconsistency. Therefore, work with vision was also looked for in the records of the top-down engagement activities to see if it is made use of.

The way the engagement activities were concluded was also analysed. Specifically, the focus is put on whether and when there was a follow-up activity or whether an action was taken by the general public in collaboration with the municipality and other stakeholders.

However, the most determining factor is the way of engagement by the public and how the public engaged as explained in Table 4 above. Participative budgeting and specific projects were usually determined as co-planning. In the former case, people from the general public are inherently those making the primer proposal and deciding about the final project. In the latter case, it is usually the general public who decides about the final form of the project based on their needs, wishes and some common vision at best. However, even in a specific project, it might happen that people just share problems or ask questions. Therefore, it was determined either as *informing* or *listening*.

The most difficult to determine were participative events usually called Public Forum, Forum of Healthy Cities, School Forum, Public Meeting, 10 problems of the City, 10 Possibilities of the city, and so on. These events are the same in form, but each may take a different course depending on other factors. In this thesis, they are considered rather as quasi planning. The events are determined as *listening* or *co-planning* depending on the course the event took:

1. The discussion was reduced to problems related to missing benches in the park, neglected and unkempt parks and public spaces, shortage of parking spaces, traffic noise and so on. When the focus of the event is reduced or changes course to this, the degree of public engagement was determined as *listening*. The municipality listens to the problems and maybe some general suggestions and is willing to do something with some of them rather than the public coming together and catalysing action in collaboration with the city (raising public awareness, volunteering etc).

2. If the event took a more constructive approach, where specific suggestions for ideas are given, the ideas serve a common purpose rather than individual interest, possible actions of groups of citizens are defined etc, then the event is determined as *co-planning*.

Rationale for the focus on LA21

There are several reasons for focusing on LA21 in the analyses of top-down participatory activities at the local level. The reasons are summarized in the following Table.

Table 5: Focus on LA21 in expert interview and qualitative analyses

1.	The programme LA21 was found significant both at the international scene which gives a larger context for individual countries, such as CR.
2.	The analysis of the SF CR 2030 shows that it is one of the few tools/programmes for SD at the local level in the CR.
3.	It is the only top-down programme for good governance of cities (at local level) in the CR which is state-guaranteed, with defined structure, rules and indicators of success and therefore it can be assessed.
4.	It is the only programme suitable also for larger cities (above 25 000 inhabitants), i.e. therefore focusing on urban areas rather than rural.
5.	It is committed to the engagement of local citizens in planning and decision-making.

In general, the premise of the expert interview and the analyses is that the cities taking part in the programme LA21 are active (some of them probably the most active) in the CR in aiming to actively and consistently engage local citizens in local development processes and SD. Therefore, they might serve as a reference point to see whether and how citizens are engaged in cities where there is a real aim to engage the public.

Auxiliary Expert Interview

An auxiliary expert interview was conducted in the organization LA21 with the leading expert responsible for the implementation of LA21 in the CR to:

1. provide a foundation for the aforementioned analyses and;
2. understand how the programme LA21 works in the CR.

The expert was contacted by e-mail communication, informed about the intended content and purpose, agreed to the interview and also invited the author of this thesis to a training course for LA21 coordinators. Therefore, the author of this thesis also attended a training course for LA21 coordinators from municipalities in the CR, which preceded the interview itself and took about two and half hours. This training course helped to understand better the context of LA21 and further shaped the questions which followed.

The interview was semi-structured, face-to-face, conducted in the Czech language, took one hour and a half and included technical/practical questions about the LA21 database and the details of how the programme works. It was followed by generic questions about the benefits, aims and objectives. Further emphasis was put on more detailed questions, mainly the link

between LA21, CE and CD as well as the future of LA21. The questions are attached in Appendix A of the thesis. Above all, the expert interview enabled the author to orient herself in the LA21 database, to know which data (time-wise and type-wise) are best for further research and; to better understand the purpose and system of the programme. Among the recommendations belong the time range of the studied documents (which should not be older than three years before fall 2021. Activities conducted in category D were recommended for analysis. Also, it was confirmed that those participatory activities in the LA21 database should be exemplary of regularly conducted activities. Findings are summarized in the practical part in Chapter 8.5. Local Agenda 21.

IV. Theoretical part

The theoretical part presents the literature review dealing with the topic of the thesis, and it creates the theoretical framework for the practical part. The theoretical framework puts into context and explains global environmental problems, governance, public administration, the role of cities, civil society and local communities as well as community development (CD), community engagement (CE), and the main existing ways and mechanisms for top-down CE. It also presents two cases of anecdotic evidence of top-down and bottom-up CE.

1. Literature review

Environmental movements, their origins, types, genesis, action and activism in post-socialist Eastern Europe and the CR have been paid considerable attention. Císař (2008) and Císař et al. (2011) categorized environmental movements in the CR as mostly protest-oriented, radical or becoming transactional, i.e. institutionalised, professionalised, based on funding from abroad with limited outreach and mobilization function. The number of environmental movements and grassroots activities in the CR is claimed by Císař (2010) to be less significant, mostly politically oriented, focusing on protest or radical action.

Also other works, such as by Librová (1994), Fagan (2004), Císař (2013), Novák (2017) debate various aspects and the development of environmental movements in the CR after 1989. All of the authors agree that environmental movements in the CR have de-radicalized considerably since 1989 turning into professional agencies. Similarly, Binka (2008) who focused on the analysis of Hnutí Duha and Nesehnutí concludes that these organizations are not radical. On the contrary, they are becoming professionalised and conformist. However, Novák (2020, 138) draws attention to the newly created climate justice movement and the types and repertoire of direct action as well as their recent "turnaround in de-radicalization." Vidomus (2018) deals with the topic of climate sceptics in the CR and their strategies for communicating these beliefs, concluding that climate change is presented as an artificial problem, supported by the claims of the former president Václav Klaus.

Among the authors focusing on bottom-up activities related to the environment belong Jehlička and Smith (2012), Jehlička et al. (2013) as well as Vávra et al. (2018), all of whom study food self-provisioning. Their research discloses that self-provisioning in the CR is large-scale and it

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contributes to SD, However, Jehlička et al. (2013) argue that the motivations behind those activities in the CR do not relate to environmental activism. This is also confirmed by Vávra et al. (2018). Similarly, Librová (2003) debates how people may contribute to the environment in everyday life choices and discloses the non-environmental reasons for such choices.

However, non-protest, environmentally oriented movements have not been paid enough attention by scholars. Among the exceptions belongs Klenovská (2011) and Kolářová (2020) who focus on the Transition Movement in Eastern Europe and the CR respectively. Klenovská (ibid.) in her diploma theses analyses the concept of TM in Britain and aims to explain its near absence in Central and Eastern Europe. Based on her findings, Klenovská indicates that the movement has not become popular in this region due to the absence of a "culture of community." Though ungrounded in research, she believes that these findings may be extended also to the CR.

On the other hand, Kolářová (2020, 363) deals with TM in the CR. The author dwells on "why the issue of climate change has not become an important frame for the local permaculture movement which introduced the idea of Transition to the country." The author arrives at a similar conclusion as Klenovská (2011) by stating that there is not a culture of community organising in the CR. However, it should be noted that at the time of choosing the topic for this thesis in December 2019 and when the writing of the thesis began in February 2020, there has been no academic research in Czech scholarship exploring the reasons for the non-existence of TM specifically in the CR. Nevertheless, the framing and approaches of this thesis differ from those of Kolářová. While the author frames her approach around the permaculture movement, this thesis analyses the point at issue from a larger perspective (system theory approach), and it aims to find an enabling environment for the emergence of such or similar movements.

Therefore, in compliance with Klenovská (2011) and Kolářová (2020), the thesis identifies a gap in literature relating to the existence of a culture of communities and (non-protest) community organising. The presented thesis questions the existence of local communities in the CR in general and explores how top-down CE might elicit grassroots activities.

2. Global and environmental problems

Global and environmental problems lie at the heart of this thesis. The basic stimulus for writing the thesis is to find a way of dealing with those problems at the local level because citizens, local communities and the municipalities they live in may take action to address these problems. This chapter describes in general what is meant by global and environmental problems, what they cause, what they are driven by and why and how (in general terms) action should be taken.

According to The Millennium Project, the most pressing fifteen global challenges are the following: "sustainable development and climate change, clean water, population and resources, democratization, decision making and long-term policymaking, [i.e. governance], globalization of information technology, rich-poor gap, health issues, education and learning, conflict resolution, the status of women, transnational organized crime, energy, science and technology, and global ethics" (The Millenium Project n.d.). SD and climate change underly or enhance most of the other challenges.

Following that, the beginning of the year 2021 saw the General Secretary of the UN, Antonio Guterres, stress that humans and nations must, first and foremost "make peace with nature" to prevent catastrophic environmental and global crises (United Nations Environment Programme 2021). Climate change mitigation and adaptation and SD at large are therefore given particular attention across the globe as well as in this thesis.

However, in the past fifty years or so, it has become clear that the Earth, as humanity knows it, is headed towards irreversible, and to many people, unimaginable changes. The world has been facing a serious (not only) environmental crisis that is becoming all the more complex. As the team led by Johan Rockström discovered, the Planetary boundaries, which determine the stabilization of the Earth system, have reached or have been on the way to reaching its tipping points. This is now resulting in the immense losses of biodiversity and endangerment of the animal species as well as of the well-being of humans (Rockström et al. 2009). While GDP per capita has risen, total debt and income inequality have increased (Glenn et al. 2017). The former testifies to the unsustainability of society and the latter to the unattainability of SD as extreme poverty hinders the transition to SD (Leal Filho et al. 2021; Nováček 2010).

Many factors contribute to the deterioration and acceleration of climate change. However, among the biggest environmental problems of today that warrant attention belong "poor

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governance, food waste, biodiversity loss, plastic pollution, deforestation, air pollution, [and] agriculture" (Deena 2022; Glenn, Florescu, and The Millennium Project 2017).

As Potůček (2017, 48) says, humanity "has unleashed such a dynamic of uncontrollable civilization changes that attested ways of governance are falling behind hopelessly [and that] even a large-scale humanitarian disaster might occur." It follows that poor governance belongs among one of the main factors leading to or possibly incurring climate change and hindering SD (Glenn et al. 2017). Therefore, the one factor that should be in charge and might ensure success is the one falling behind.

Since climate change and transition to SD are global issues, they cannot be solved in their entirety by any single organization nor by individual governments, but through a collaborative approach of governments across the world and with the help of other groups, i.e. private sector, civic sector, international and supra-national organizations and others. As much as climate change and SD are global issues, they are also local in the sense that they are created locally and are experienced first-hand by many citizens. These problems may be therefore also addressed by them and by local authorities if appropriate action is taken. On the contrary, the unfavourable trend will continue if action is not taken. Fortunately, global response in form of global governance, policy and strategy has been established and its implementation is underway. Description of this will constitute the content of the following chapters.

3. Governance

It has been already established that governance is crucial for the management of public affairs and that current governance models are falling behind in addressing the global and environmental challenges that humanity faces. Governance may be described as ''[…] a system of values, policies and institutions by which a society manages its economic, political and social affairs through interactions within and among the state, civil society and private sector. It operates at every level of human enterprise" (UNDP and Eurostat 2004). As Dror (2001, xi) defines it, governance should "[...] influence the future for the better." UNDESA, UNDP, UNESCO (2013, 3) define governance as:

> ''the exercise of political and administrative authority at all levels to manage a country's affairs. It comprises the mechanisms, processes, and institutions, through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences"

Taking into account these definitions, governance is understood in this thesis as a system comprised of values, policies and institutions, which exercise political and administrative authority at all levels (local, regional, national and global) to manage its common social, economic, environmental and political affairs and which interacts with the civic sector and private sector to ensure a better future. It also consists of mechanisms and processes through which civil society exercises their legal rights, voices their interests and participates in public life.

Therefore, good governance is crucial for managing all public affairs, including the management of public commons such as the environment. Inappropriate or insufficient governance might generate more problems than solutions (Dror 2001; Cheema and Maguire 2001, 201) and it might also result in environmental disaster on a global scale (Potůček 2017, 48). Experts voice their opinion on the problem of environmental governance, claiming that "[t]he current system of international environmental governance […] is believed by many to be unsuitable for the 21st century" (UNEP 2012, v.) due to the lack of representativeness, accountability and effectiveness. As a result of that, it is believed that this system cannot achieve the transition to sustainability and that a higher level of participation and transparency in governance is necessary. A system of multi-level governance has been established in recent decades to increase participation in governance.

3.1. Multi-level governance

Historically, in the nation-state world arrangement, governance was focused mainly at the national level and each sovereign nation had its inalienable right to govern the public affairs of its society (Potůček et al. 2004, 16). However, a new international system of governance known as multi-level governance has evolved (Pierre and Peters 2000, 72). According to Cairney et al. (2019, 6), it describes "[…] the diffusion of power across many levels and types of government, and shared responsibility for policy outcomes between governmental, quasi-governmental and non-governmental actors." The national government, though, remains the main executor of administrative and political power (Peters and Pierre 2006, 216-217).

This perspective suggests that increasing shares of governance should go rather downwards and that it should be aimed that governance is distributed more horizontally (Potůček 2017, 47). Likewise, Keping (2018, 2) says that "in modern society, the State is transferring its once exclusive responsibilities to civil society (i.e., private sector organizations and voluntary groups, which are undertaking more and more responsibilities that were formerly in the hands of the State)." From these perspectives, it is believed that governance is a collective responsibility of all sectors of society (i.e. public sector, private sector, and civic sector) collaborating and each having its irreplaceable role.

Therefore, it follows that public authorities (e.g. national government or municipal governments) cannot and should not manage common affairs without the other sectors and that power should be spread not only vertically but also horizontally. At the same time, horizontal networks should be developed to a greater degree in forms of collaboration and interaction between all sectors of society (i.e. engagement of the public). For good collaboration between the vertical systems and the horizontal systems, principles of good governance are crucial as described in the following chapters.

3.2. Good governance

Good governance is a term describing the "ideal" governance, which is crucial for planning, coordinating, conducting and implementing any change from the global to the local level. According to Keping (2018, 4), good governance is a "public administration process that maximizes public interest." Maximization of public interest is achieved by a form of "collaborative management" of public affairs carried out both by the State and the civil society

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(ibid.). As a result of this collaboration, a new relationship and an "optimum state" arises between the State (represented by public authorities e.g. in municipalities) and the civil society (citizens, organizations etc) (ibid., 4). The UN lists as the key attributes of good governance the following: equity, transparency, participation, responsiveness, accountability, and the rule of law, which are crucial for well informed and functioning civil society (UNDESA 2015).

Good governance is also crucial concerning the UN's SDGs as it constitutes a development goal number 16 and it is also described as a key factor in achieving or enabling the rest of the goals. (UNDESA, UNDP, and UNESCO 2012, 6). If the local level is to carry some responsibility for taking action towards a sustainable future, the processes in municipal governments should ensure principles of good governance are implemented and respected. The vertical system, i.e. the global, national and local, is described in the following chapters.

3.3. United Nations and Sustainable Development Goals

As described in the previous chapter, governance is becoming increasingly more concentrated mainly at the global and the local level. This chapter briefly introduces the governance of SD at the global level and how these goals are transposed by the EU to its MS.

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is a framework for the establishment of international cooperation and coordination to combat climate change (United Nations 1992b). The first agreement for the implementation of measures leading to those ends is reflected in Kyoto Protocol to the UNFCCC signed in 1997 (UNFCCC 1997). The EU and its MS have pledged to decrease its emissions by 2020 by 15 % in comparison to 1990 which complies with the internal regulations of the EU (ibid.). The Kyoto Protocol was superseded in 2020 by the Paris Agreement (PA) which was signed in 2015. The objective of the PA is to decrease the CO_2 emissions at least by 40% in comparison to the year 1990 and to keep the global temperature well below 2 °C (United Nations 2015a). Currently, there are 195 signatories to PA (United Nations 2015b).

Another event to coincide with these treaties is the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which sets out a blueprint of action for the following 15 years (UN General Assembly 2015). This blueprint is embodied by 17 SDGs and 169 targets to achieve a sustainable future, i.e. to end poverty, increase the quality of life of everyone across the globe and protect the planet at the same time. (ibid.) There are three main pillars of SD, i.e.

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environmental, social, and economical, all of which need to be taken into consideration for the transition to SD. It strives to achieve the SD of the society, which is defined as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (United Nations n.d.).

Some improvements in transition to SD have been noted but not enough to secure these goals. And yet the threat of climate change (and inequality) might undo current improvements which have been achieved so far (UN PRESS 2019; Leal Filho et al. 2021). Therefore, a decade of action has been called for and ushered in 2020 by the UN Secretary-General (United Nations 2019). Following the multi-level governance, great emphasis has been put on the mobilization of efforts at three levels: global, local and people action. (ibid.) The SDG number 11: sustainable cities and communities, focuses specifically on the local level. The UN envisions cities as environmentally resilient human settlements, that "work with local authorities and communities to renew and plan our cities and human settlements to foster community cohesion and personal security and to stimulate innovation [..]" (United Nations 2017, 9). It also means that action should be taken by citizens, i.e. all constituents of civil society (see Chapter 6).

Each MS of the EU are committed to transposing the SDGs in its national strategies and implementing appropriate policies to fulfil the goals. The implementation of policies related to sustainability into the national strategies is then the competency of each MS (UNFCCC 2021). To explain this further, the following chapter briefly describes public administration.

4. Public Administration

Government policies related to SD, which are transposed or recommended by supra-national organizations are implemented by public administration (UNFCCC 2021). This chapter briefly introduces the division and competencies of public administration to understand how supra-national frameworks can be implemented at the local level. Since the empirical part is concerned with the state of the affairs in the CR, this chapter focuses on public administration in the context of the CR (as individual national systems may vary).

The way public affairs are managed derives, among others, from public administration (Evropská komise n.d.). The functions of public administration comprise the power to protect, organize, regulate and provide for the public (Ministerstvo vnitra ČR 2019; Kadečka and Rigel 2009). It refers to all administrative activities pursuing governance of public affairs for the benefit of the public at all levels (§ 4 Paragraph.1, Act č. 500/ 2004). Therefore, good governance in public administration is crucial for SD (Úřad vlády České republiky 2017, 427).

Public administration in the CR is divided into direct (i.e. state administration) and indirect (i.e. self-government). This means that the powers of the state administration are transferred to and carried out by self-governing entities, i.e. municipalities ("Veřejná Správa" n.d.). The role and competencies of state administration concerning SD, provision of local SD and citizens engagement will be discussed hereafter. The theoretical background to municipal self-governance as well as its role and competencies will be discussed afterwards in Chapter 4.2.

4.1. State administration

State administration is responsible for the development of the country as it sets the rules, direction and goals for collective action of the nation by relevant laws, regulations and recommendations (e.g. in strategic documents) implemented in the best interest of the nation (Ministerstvo vnitra ČR 2005, 18). It also controls lower bodies of the state (direct and indirect) administration (Ministerstvo vnitra ČR 2021). While the government's role is, among others, to ensure the transition to SD to deal with climate change, the bodies of public administration are responsible for its implementation (creating strategies coherent with national objectives, making sure they are implemented and so on) (Ministerstvo vnitra ČR 2005, 18-19; Úřad vlády České republiky 2017b). State administration, therefore, provides a certain framework for

collective action and development for ministries and lower administrative bodies (e.g. self-governing municipalities) as well as financial resources, certain tools, methods, etc. For government policies to be carried out successfully, state administration must be sufficiently and adequately interconnected with lower self-governing bodies, e.g. municipalities (Ministerstvo vnitra ČR 2005, 34; Mátl et al. 2010; McNamara and Buggy 2017, 451).

4.2. Self-government

The self-government of an entity in public administration means the performance of public administration (delegated powers) by a self-governing public entity, therefore having a certain degree of autonomy. Territorial self-governing units are divided into basic and higher self-governing territorial units, i.e. municipalities and regions respectively (Ministerstvo vnitra ČR 2005). The focus of this thesis is on self-governing municipalities.

Self-governing municipalities as opposed to the central administration have the advantage of being closer to the territory and therefore in touch with the public, i.e. the citizens of a given territory (Bai et al. 2016, 70). While the municipality is a term used in public administration to describe a territorial administrative unit (Ministerstvo vnitra ČR 2005), a city is a general term for a larger human settlement with a higher density. These two terms are overlapping. The importance of cities and the local level is described in detail hereafter.

5. Local level and the importance of cities

Since environmental problems are often created and experienced locally, there is a strong belief both in academia and the political scene that cities will play a significant role in dealing with climate change adaptation and mitigation and transition to SD (Bai et al. 2016; Neij, Bulkeley, and McCormick 2015; UN-HABITAT 2020; Roseland 1997). As McCormick et al. (2012, 3) put it, "there is a general agreement that effective and integrated solutions can only be found and efficiently implemented through cities and urban areas." This means that "[…] policies formulated by international bodies and national governments need to be implemented at the community, city and regional levels" (ibid., 3).

5.1. The importance of cities

Half of the world's population nowadays lives in cities as opposed to rural areas. As a result of that, urban areas all over the world are rapidly expanding, occupying 3-4 % of the Earth's land (Nováček 2010, 256). In 2050, the global urban population is going to reach 68 % (United Nations 2018). Cities account for two-thirds of the world's energy used, and they are responsible for 70 % of global CO_2 emissions (Neij et al. 2015, 2). Urban areas also create other environmental problems such as heat islands, air pollution, large consumption of materials and production of waste. All that has a catastrophic impact on the quality of life of the citizens and most significantly on the natural environment and biodiversity at large. The rise of demands along with the increasing population will only intensify these problems (Nováček 2010).

On a brighter note, this does not mean that cities represent the downfall of our civilization. On the contrary, according to Hudeček (2019, 54), a citizen of a large city is less detrimental to nature and more beneficial than a person living in a small city. It is due to the shared means (infrastructure), resources and territory (land, nature), as the density of population is proportionately smaller than in small cities and villages (ibid.).

Also, cities represent a convenient unit from the administrative point of view. A city is a system which is complex enough to cover a necessary range of sectors, own necessary resources and exert authority. Yet, it is a small enough unit to make the change happen shortly, over a certain territory, and on a constant and long-standing basis (Čápová 2011, 32). However, this may also vary depending on the size of the city, its authority and resources. Also, cities may initiate

action much faster and follow local needs. All in all, this means that cities as opposed to nations and global alliances are "closer" to the problems and "in touch" with the problems and the citizens (Bai et al. 2016, 70).

5.2. Sustainable development and social innovations in cities

However, SD in cities may be achieved only if substantial changes in local settlements, institutions and people's behaviour and activities are made (such as production, consumption and the treatment of the natural environment) (Kučera 2014, 7-8). Cities must transform the challenges into opportunities by implementing approaches of SD in their processes, planning, and decision-making, which would prevent further increases of problems and create solutions instead (Neij et al. 2015, 3; Hudeček 2019, 54).

While literature used to focus on technical solutions and innovations only, the past decades and recent years saw an increase in the importance of social innovations, such as citizen and community engagement in local development processes and other projects (Lund 2018; McNamara and Buggy 2017; Duží et al. 2019; Krkoška Lorencová et al. 2021; Černý 2016). This is also in compliance with the previously discussed issues, i.e. SD cannot be achieved without good governance, which is in turn dependent on the participation of all sectors of society resulting in the necessity of local governments to actively engage citizens in local public affairs as visualised in Picture 1 (Jörby 2000, 202).

Picture 1: Participation as part of sustainable development

Source: Author's work, 2022

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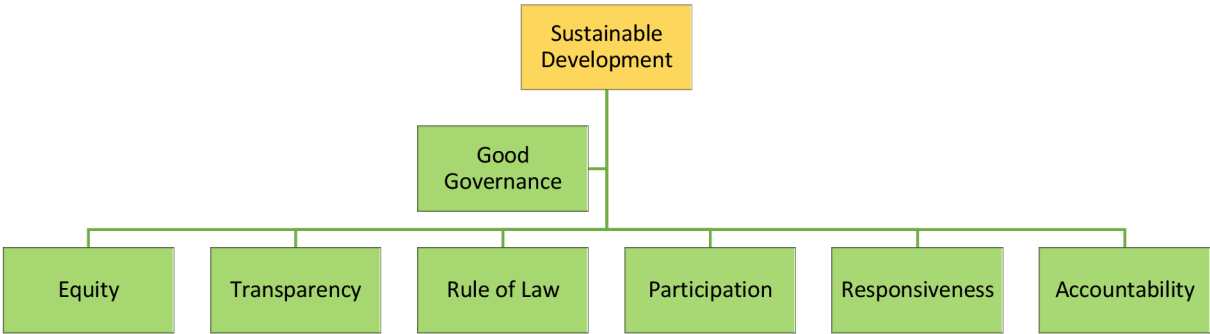
Cities may contribute to SD in their area through their plans and projects. Second, cities may support innovations and sustainable transformation in their projects, processes, and services. They can build an innovation culture within the municipality and city organizations and lead others by example. Third, cities may influence third-party projects that are being planned/prepared or implemented in the territory of a given municipality. Fourth, cities may (positively) influence other cities. They may share their know-how, and collaborate with other cities to achieve good or better results. Fifth, cities may engage their citizens to actively participate in SD of a given municipality, and they may even motivate its citizens to participate in public life (e.g. they may establish re-use centres to be sustainable etc). Next, they may also support citizens in their activities by providing them with various means of resources (financial, know-how etc) and they may systematically initiate community or cultural planning if these processes have not yet been commenced or integrated (see Chapter 8.1.5. and 8.2.).

Since SD should be dealt with in the processes run by local authorities, one of such approaches is to engage communities in local development planning and decision-making processes. And 'real participation' should be applied in those processes (United Nations 1992a, 282). There are several areas of city development processes which might directly or indirectly influence the SD of cities and which would benefit from public participation, i.e. urban development planning, strategic planning, community planning, cultural planning, vision-making and other mechanisms (Hanken et al. 2015, 50). These processes will constitute the content of Chapter 9. Areas and mechanism of top-down community engagement. The following chapter delineates the ecosystem in which these processes take place.

5.3. Urban ecosystem

Cities are commonly described as geographically defined settlements of people, and they are usually categorized according to their size and density of population (Mužík 2006). Yet, cities are complex dynamic systems which may be looked upon from many perspectives (Kučera 2014). According to Hudeček (2019, 25), "[a]nthropology, sociology, demography and other social disciplines describe a city as the place of the life of its inhabitants." Therefore, the basic element of cities are people, sometimes also called city-makers. They are the driving force of cities as they co-create cities through their activities. And the functionality and resilience of cities are dependent on these activities (ibid.: 27).

The urban ecosystem has a complex social network composed of subsystems, i.e. the civic sector, private sector and public sector collaborating (Potůček 2017). The main stakeholders from the public sector are officials from municipalities who are in charge of the administration of a city, but also state-funded institutions such as schools, culture centres, libraries etc. The private sector which also creates and produces indispensable services for the city and its citizens also interacts with municipalities and citizens. Among those belong local firms, supranational firms, local investors and investors from outside the municipality who take interest in investing in the city. There are also stakeholders from the civic sector such as the Scout Associations, voluntary firemen or other local societies, associations, clubs and other formal or informal groups. Other relevant stakeholders might include local librarians, teachers, or any citizen interested in public affairs (Čermák et al. 2011). So much of what happens in a municipality might be linked to the initiative of some of the stakeholders, networks and collaborations just described (Conn 2011).

Picture 2: Urban ecosystem
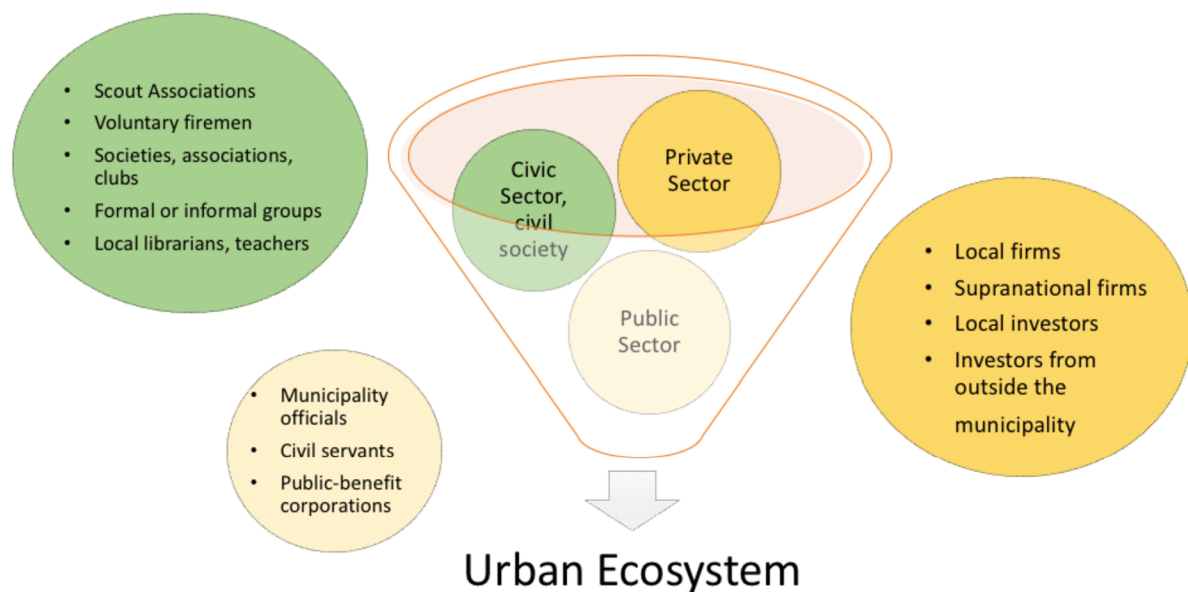
Source: Author's work, 2022

The sub-systems which are studied in this thesis are local governments in municipalities, citizens and/or local communities, and the interactions (forms of collaboration) between these two sub-systems. The next chapters describe civil society and local communities.

6. Civil society

The significance of civil society in the context of governance and SD has been growing increasingly in recent years as delineated previously (Divjak and Forbici 2017).

Civil society is a broad term often defined inconsistently. Henderson and Vercseg (2010, 14) accent that there is no uniform definition and meaning of civil society as it differs across the globe. Potůček (2017, 48) talks about a narrow and broad definition of civil society. The narrow conceptualisation considers civil society to be represented by non-profit organizations working and acting for the public good and standing up for the needs of citizens. The broader conceptualization considers civil society to comprise also of other associations, institutions and other formal and informal groups of people as well as families and citizens (ibid.).

Skovajsa (2009, 30-31) divides civil society according to the type of activities, i.e. organized and unorganized activities. Unorganized civil society consists of informal groups of people, associations, demonstrations, citizens etc. As opposed to that, organized civil society consists of formal groups such as religious organizations, foundations, schools, NGOs etc. Skovajsa (2009, 40) points out that public benefit corporations do not belong to organized civil society but public sector. The term civic sector is used as the established expression for organized civil society (Skovajsa 2009, 31; Potůček 2017, 53).

Civil society may be defined as "the independent self-organization of society, the constituent parts of which voluntarily engage in public activity to pursue individual, group, or national interests within the context of a legally defined state-society relationship" (Weigle and Butterfield 1992, 3). And it may be understood as consisting of "values, social norms and customs which determine the way citizens act and the behaviour they consider as morally right" Skovajsa (2009, 31). Similarly, Hann (1996, 20) understand[s] "civil society to refer more loosely to the moral community, to the problems of accountability, trust and cooperation that all groups face." This emphasis on responsibility, interest in others and from that following cooperation and action is emphasized by others as well. According to Potůček (2017, 48), civil society itself is "empowered by certain attitudes and actions that are characteristic of responsible civility," which drives people to contribute to the well-being of the local community (Etzioni 1988, 56).

Therefore, civil society is formed out of people who share common values and goals, and who take interest in collaborating and implementing activities leading to those ends. In the meantime, they build trust, and reciprocity and fulfil their potential in doing so. Not only does it allow people to express commitment to their values and attitudes through the activities they implement but also influences public affairs. These activities are crucial in controlling that public affairs are managed properly and sufficiently, whereby they strengthen governance and democratic processes (Potůček 2017).

In this thesis, civil society is understood from its broader perspective and in compliance with the aforementioned authors. It comprises of both formal and informal groups of people, families and citizens who are guided by deeper moral motives and obligations towards other people, the community and environment they live in as well as towards the society as such. However, the focus in this thesis is put on local activities of unorganized civil society (mainly those related to the natural environment and SD). These are activities of unorganized civil society which seek to fulfil group or the public interest, performed or pursued in their free time as a voluntary (unpaid) activity (based on citizens interests, beliefs and values etc) (Skovajsa 2009, 35).

According to Forbrig (2011, 7), civil society differs from the local community in that it is a broader encompassing concept which has "a strong foothold in local communities through traditional associations [..] and newer organisations such as local foundations and community-organising groups." Therefore, civil society is embodied at the local level by local communities which are given attention in the following chapter.

7. Communities

Since around the 1990s, there is a strong call for the return of communities as their network of relationships represents a powerful source of problems solution (Bernard et al. 2010; Beckley et al. 2008; Luloff and Bridger 2003; United Nations 1992a). Bauman (1991) even claims that the postmodern era will be an era of communities. Communities strengthen the ability of towns, cities and regions to develop and gather their internal resources for the solution of local and global problems making communities and cities more resilient (Frič and Vávra 2012, 7). A resilient community refers to „a city, town or neighbourhood that reduces its vulnerability to a dramatic change or extreme events and responds creatively to economic, social and environmental change [..]" (United Nations n.d.). Communities became a source of hope for climate change adaptation and mitigation and SD at large (Büchs et al. 2012).

Historically, communities have developed from small, geographically limited rural territories, and they were based on inclusion, social cohesion, collective self-help and support (Frič and Vávra 2012, 11). The previously common element of social cohesion became weak after industrialization and its accompanying processes, and it has become almost absent in modern societies (ibid.). Nowadays, a community is understood in many different ways (Hillery 1955; Theodori 2005; Henderson and Vercseg 2010, 18-19; Fraser 2005)

There are communities based on a geographic area (place-based) usually in one region, city, or neighbourhood. (Theodori 2005, 662; Fraser 2005, 286). Secondly, communities are based on shared interests and worldviews.[2] This may be knowledge-based, interest-based, hobby-based or value-based (Fraser 2005, 287). Third, there are communities of circumstance which form usually during environmental disasters. (ibid.) Forth, there are communities formed by people who share common problems, such as disease. (Sabran and Isidiho 2016) Fifth, there are identity communities, such as Asian communities, Black communities, etc. (ibid.) There are also myriad types of virtual communities (Fraser 2005, 287).

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[2] These are e.g. gardeners, fishermen, firemen, religious groups or other communities. In Czech context, they are termed as communities (*komunita*). For the purpose of this work, they are considered groups of people (organized or unorganized), which are a part of the local community. When referring to communities in this work, it is not referred to these groups specifically.

In Care for the Earth (IUCN, UNEP, and WWF 1991, 57), community means "the people of a local administrative unit, such as a municipality; of a cultural or ethnic group, such as band or tribe; or of a local urban or rural area, such as the people of a particular neighbourhood or valley." Lerch (2015, 7) perceives community as:

> "far more than just the physical infrastructure of a human settlement. A community is mainly the people inhabiting a particular place, defined by their interpersonal relationships, cultural patterns, economic and governance structures, and shared memories and aspirations."

Frič and Vávra (2012, 19) define community as "a full-blown social structure which provides its members with a social support, creates a higher quality of their lives and space for their emancipation and personal development to become a better citizen, friend or a neighbour." It follows that communities are based mainly on social cohesion, i.e. social capital, collective action, a sense of belonging to the place and to a larger group, solidarity and the ability to overcome barriers in collective planning and decision-making (Forrest and Kearns 2001, 2129).

Also, social learning takes place in well-functioning local communities (Lave and Wenger 1991). Well-functioning communities based on social cohesion, social capital and shared vision among other things enable individuals in those communities to understand their role in their community (regarding the way they may contribute to the development of the community), and the roles of others (Reed et al. 2010). In the meantime, new forms of social interactions and bonds are created (Pahl-Wostl, Mostert, and Tabara 2008). This enables and facilitates individuals in those communities to coordinate their efforts in collective planning and decision-making processes as well as other activities (Evans et al. 2021). The definition of the local community as viewed in this thesis is presented hereafter.

7.1. Local communities

For the purpose of this thesis, the focus is on place-based communities, i.e. local communities. A local community is understood similarly as defined above, specified as a social structure, composed of both organized and unorganized civil society, i.e. a cohesive network of local citizens and groups of people who live in the same city, who are at least loosely bound by interpersonal relationships (social capital), sense of belonging, solidarity, might be bound by cultural patterns or memories and should share similar values and aspirations, i.e. there is some common vision. Local communities participate in the activities and governance of their city,

generate collective action and are formed as a result of such action. Well-functioning and developed local communities should be able to overcome barriers in collective planning and decision-making processes. However, this thesis focuses mainly on the unorganized local community where people self-organize and voluntarily participate in public affairs in their free time as an unpaid activity (Krajhanzl et al. 2015).

Picture 3: Characteristics of local communities

Source: Author's work, 2022

In addition to the suggested definition, local communities are perceived in this thesis as a continuum. This means that the local community may be developed to some degree according to the amount of social capital, the strength of relationships and networks and so on. It also means that the degree may vary, and local communities might come into being, develop as well as disintegrate, depending on the local people, their activities, values and so on. Not each citizen is necessarily a member of the community and not all cities represent a community, i.e. a city does not equal a community (Bellah 1995; Frič and Vávra 2012, 18; Bernard 2010, 20).

According to Bellah (1995, 50), the size of the group does not matter. The essence of a group which is, or seeks to be a community, is to be or to strive to be, a good one or a better one. In this way, for a community to become one, it must (strive to) reach a common vision (which is always open to further discussion). And to remain one, it must continually and consistently take

care of the group and its common good, i.e. of its city and its environment (IUCN, UNEP, and WWF 1991). Therefore, members of a community should perceive themselves to be a part of something larger and be willing to contribute to the well-being of this larger group and its members (Bellah 1995, 50).

Ideally, local communities should strive to become sustainable and take care of their local environment (United Nations 1992a; IUCN, UNEP, and WWF 1991, 57). People and local communities may achieve environmental action if they set out to do so. However, they need to have sufficient resources such as access to information, education, and training to receive adequate skills if necessary as well as to be allowed to participate in decisions which affect them. Most importantly, communities will have to be fostered so that enough human resources are willing to participate and devote their time to community service (ibid., 58).

7.1.1. Emergence of local communities

Community building might be crucial in countries where communities do not quite exist and where community development (CD) does not take place, or where the conditions for CD are not quite suitable. Therefore, "[…] in some cases, a lengthy process of community building may be necessary before any common environmental action can be undertaken" (IUCN, UNEP, and WWF 1991, 58). For this to happen, fundamental changes need to take place in local governments, citizens' values, the responsibility they feel towards the natural environment and community well-being, and the actions they take to act on those values. According to the concept of communitarianism, the existence of communities is also, and most importantly, crucial for society as such. As Bellah (1995, 52-53) puts it,

> "individuals are realized only in and through communities, and that strong, healthy, morally vigorous communities are the prerequisite for strong, healthy, morally vigorous individuals" (Bellah A Defense Of "Democratic Communitarianism", Page 52-53).

Following this, nations, regions or cities, in which the state of civil society is weak, local communities are not forming and the interest in public life is low, do not form active and responsible citizens. Inactive individuals in turn do not form strong communities, again feeding into the vicious circle. This process is depicted in Picture 4 below.

Picture 4: Vicious circle leading to absence of local communities
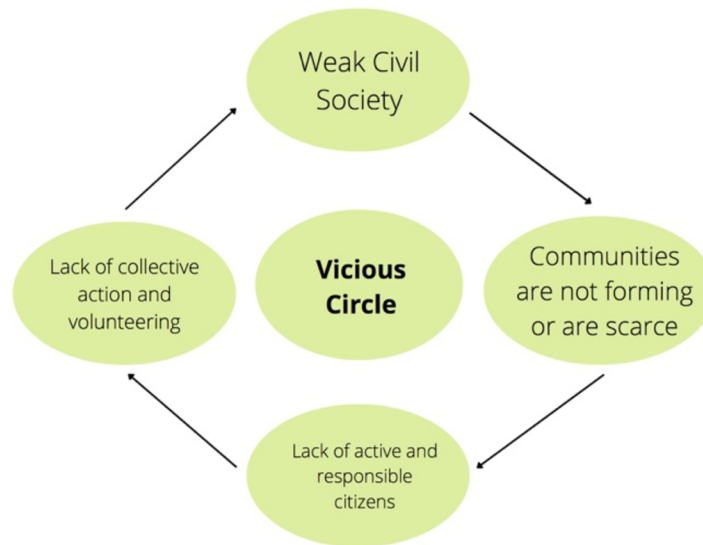
Source: Author's work, 2022

This is to say that the existence of communities and the level of their development may have an overall impact on citizens and societies, their behaviour, decisions and activities. This in turn affects the development of cities and regions they live in and the natural environment around them. The crucial factor for a strong civil society and local communities is the building of social cohesion.

7.1.2. Social cohesion

Definitions of social cohesion vary across the literature. It is an abstract term which is often divided into many dimensions measured by indicators. There is not a clear consensus on how to measure social cohesion. Sedláčková and Šafr (2004, 26) divide cohesion into two dimensions: i.e. inequalities and social capital. Social capital is usually referred to as the core dimension of social cohesion (Forrest and Kearns 2001; Musil 2005).

Putnam (1993, 167) defines social capital as the "connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them." Also, Forbrig (2011, 15) defines social capital as the relationships in a community which are usually based on or realized through collective action and participation in public and civic life, resulting in reciprocity, trust and social cohesion. Similarly, Putnam (2000, 469) talks about the following

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dimensions of social capital when analysing social cohesion: organized community life, participation in public affairs, community volunteering, non-formal sociability and social trust. The components of Social cohesion and social capital as by Putnam (2000) are visualized hereafter in Picture 5.

Picture 5: Characteristics of social cohesion

Source: Author's work, 2022

Therefore, social cohesion refers to the quality and extent of social capital (Forbrig 2011, 15). Butcher et al. (2019, 14) claim that "social capital is generally understood to be derived from social relations and harnessed to produce social cohesion and to empower local communities." There is a virtuous circle at work, i.e. the higher the number and complexity of social relations, the higher the degree of cooperation and trust, the higher becomes the social capital and social cohesion, and the more local communities are empowered. Roseland (2000, 75) that multiplying social capital belongs among the factors necessary for SD. This is visualized in Picture 6 below.

Picture 6: Virtuous circle resulting in the existence of local community
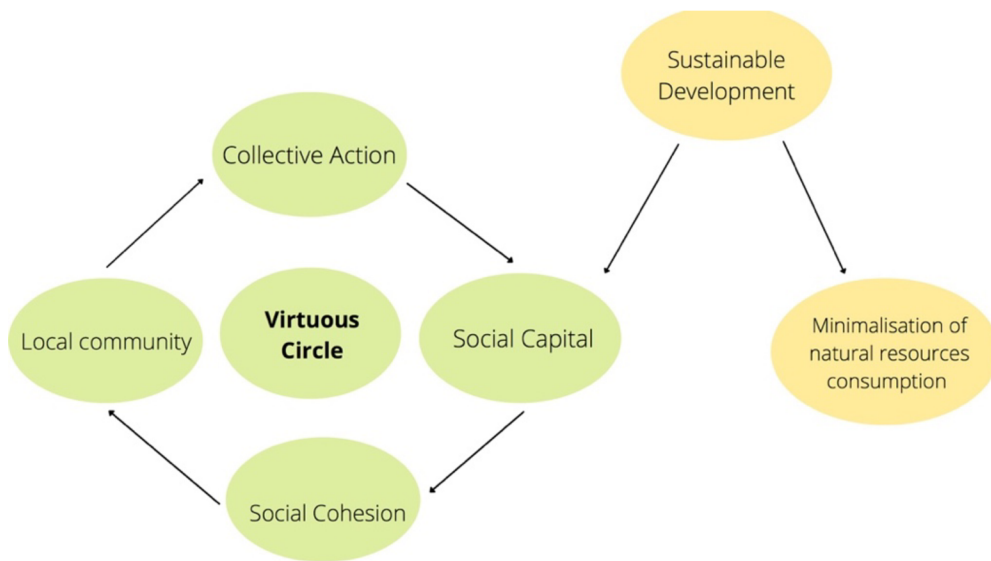
Source: Author's work, 2022

It follows that social cohesion should be created and nurtured consistently at all levels of a society, i.e. the macro-level (state), medium level (in cities, schools) and micro-level (in families, unorganized civil society groups) (Musil et al. 2004, 6). One way to do this is to enable and actively promote citizens to participate in public and civic life, which is discussed further (Lund 2018, 28; Šafr and Sedláčková 2006, 61).

8. Community development and community engagement

To understand the emergence and development of communities, it is necessary to introduce community development (CD) and community engagement (CE). As the terms are overlapping and are often used inconsistently, it may be difficult to distinguish between them. In this thesis, the main difference is perceived in that CD is more of an abstract term and an umbrella term while CE is perceived as the core activity of CD.

8.1. Community development

As well as communities are perceived from dozens of perspectives and categorised in many ways, so is CD. In the broadest sense, the CD is about bringing people together and joining their efforts towards common goals and interests (Bernard 2010a, 20; Forbrig 2011, 15) contributing to the local development (Henderson and Vercseg 2010, 30). It is often done with the view of individual and systemic social change (Brady and O'Connor 2014, 222). It is also aimed at economic, psychological, "sociocultural, environmental and technological transformation in communities and societies" (Sabran and Isidiho 2016, 267). CD is practised in various contexts (e.g. developed or developing countries, with different problems, values, customs etc.) settings (e.g. rural or urban areas), and from different perspectives (top-down and bottom-up) as will be explained further in more detail.

8.1.1. Community development approaches

CD is tied with individual and collective initiatives as well as with other programmes (e.g. by non-profit organizations and governmental policies). It has been applied across continents for the past 100 – 150 years and various purposes depending on the country, period and needs as well as other factors. Henderson and Vercseg (2010) see the roots of CD in two distinct directions and proposes two examples. The first was the British government which used CD in policies in colonized countries (e.g. India). The second occasion is the mobilisation of working-class citizens of Chicago initiated by community organizer Saul Alinsky (1930s) in his free time to improve their living conditions (Sanders 1970, 7-9). These two examples show the duality of CD that resulted in the following two main approaches. The former is the top-down approach to CD used by governments, international organizations, and other authorities who want to or need to create some change in communities. On the other hand, the latter shows the

grass-roots movement, where people start to voice their opinion, take action or even confront those in power (Henderson and Vercseg 2010). It also explains how CD can be understood both as a profession (e.g. used by governments and local authorities) as well as a social movement (Kinkor 2003). Each of these approaches has its advantages and disadvantages.

8.1.2. Top-down community development

According to Cooksey and Kikula (2005, 3), the top-down approach "allow[s] rapid, large scale spending of budgets in accordance with pre-established timetables [..]." Sabran and Isidiho (2016) claim that it is also more resource-efficient as the approach uses „professional expertise to mobilize, coordinate and interpret community options." The top-down approach proved successful mainly in scientific and innovative technological developments and it is more transparent as the project plan and outcome are more or less pre-defined (ibid.).

However, other authors believe the top-down approach lacks local knowledge, opinions and ideas. (Cooksey and Kikula 2005; Thomas 2013). It is also believed that the top-down approach favours the decisions and ideas of the central decision-makers (Matland 1995, 156), therefore neglecting the views of other actors and imposing their views on them. Also, as Sabatier (1986, 30) puts it, it is "difficult to use in situations where there is no dominant policy (statute) or agency (..)." However, the criticism also focuses on the strict nature as planned processes do not allow for much variance which may be necessary mainly in socio-cultural projects as one-size-fits-all solutions might meet with inefficiency, failure or even resistance.

8.1.3. Bottom-up community cevelopment

On the contrary, according to Henderson and Vercseg (2010, 37), grass-roots movements and organisations which evolved from such movements have higher acceptance among people as their primarily work with the people affected by or related to the given project or activity (Sanders 1970). Also, necessary changes during the project can be implemented according to the current needs, e.g. socio-cultural, and environmental. On the other hand, it often lacks the advantages of the top-down approach. As Henderson and Vercseg (2010, 31) put it, it is not:

> "necessarily characterised by deep and long-term commitments, and citizens' involvement can come down simply to saying 'yes' or 'no'. [...] response times are unpredictable; there are examples of sudden, immediate actions and examples of step-by-step development or processes that slow down, almost to stagnation, then unexpectedly regain momentum."

8.1.4. Mixed method approach

Whereas the two approaches seem to have clear boundaries, the reality is often different, and the boundaries are somewhat blurred. Henderson and Vercseg (2010, 34) suggest some approaches bridge the two main ones and it becomes clear that in many cases, the two approaches may be complementary and combined. At the end of the 19th century, Samuel Barnett, a vicar of the England Church, with his wife started providing help to people in need and mobilised other vicars to do so as well and to collaborate with local universities and involve volunteers to help (Kinkor 2003, 255). This approach seems to involve something of both of these two approaches, while the action is initiated by individuals, it involves community workers, public employees and volunteers. Henderson and Vercseg (2010, 30) believe that "only if members of a community themselves, their groups, organisations and institutions, develop their own community." And that "the community development worker acts [only] as a catalyst and provides professional support in this process" (ibid.). In this thesis, the CD is understood accordingly as described further.

8.1.5. Definition of community development

The thesis focuses on CD aiming to accomplish social change (individual, socio-cultural, socio-institutional) in urban areas in developed countries, during which social ties, trust and satisfaction of citizens are increased and that would result in environmental care. Therefore, the CD is understood as a development of a socio-cultural ecosystem or "interactive sphere" wherein local citizens mobilize their resources or are mobilized to network, collaborate, and achieve a common goal, bringing about socio-cultural change (Conn 2011). While CD should always include the activity of residents, systemic change may be brought upon with or without the help of outer stakeholders outside of the community or stakeholders other than the citizens themselves (see Chapter 8.2). The logic at work in the process of CD can be seen in Picture 7.

Picture 7: The process of community emergence and development

Collective action → Social Capital → Social Cohesion → Emergence of Communities → Sustainable Development

Source: Author's work, 2022

Initiation of interaction leads to collective action, which creates social capital and social cohesion, which in turn leads to the emergence and/or development of local communities. All in all, this may result in environmental action and SD at best. If social capital and social cohesion are the key factors of CD that are produced during collective action (participation in civic life), then participation in civic life should be promoted to create (strong, sustainable, and resilient) communities. This is supported by Butcher et al. (2019, 15) who believe that civic life should be promoted as a "platform or program to support social capital and community-building, enhance the conditions of social cohesion, and facilitate community resilience through enhanced community capacity, access to resources, and community efficacy."

Likewise, McNamara and Buggy (2017), Lund (2018, 28), Adhikari and Taylor (2012), and McGee (2009) place great emphasis on policy frameworks to foster enabling environment to promote bottom-up processes and participation in civic life. Participation in civic life, i.e. such as networking and collaborating on common goals is often called community engagement (CE). Similarly to the aforementioned scholars, Bernard (2010, 13-14) claims that an integral part of CD is to create opportunities for CE.

8.2. Community engagement

To understand how to enhance collective action, the term community engagement (CE) is explained. It overlaps with or is often replaced by terms such as civic engagement, political participation, community participation, participation, public engagement, citizen participation (McGee 2009, 1), participation in public life or participation in planning and decision-making. In general, CE can be understood as the participation of local citizens or communities in (local) public affairs. According to McGee (2009, 1), it is a complex process that "can occur formally and informally, can occur within and among multiple structures of society (local neighbourhoods, public interest groups, municipalities), and can occur both individualistically (volunteerism), as well as collectively [..]."

Similarly, CE is understood in this thesis as an umbrella term having two main approaches, i.e. top-down and bottom-up approaches to CE. It depends on the catalyst and/or facilitator of the action whether it can be talked about as the former or latter approach, see Picture 8.

Picture 8: CD and top-down and bottom-up CE
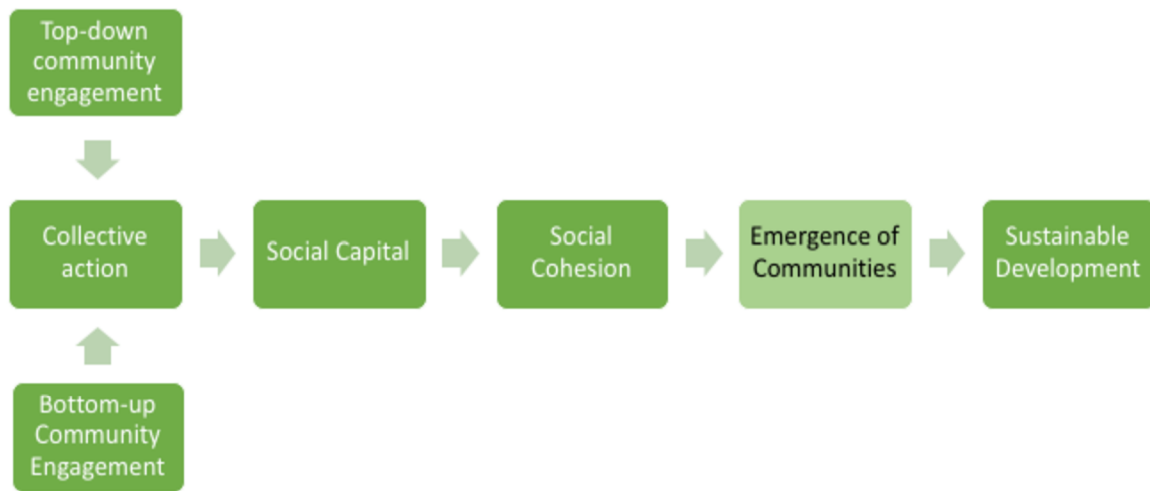
Source: Author's work, 2022

However, some criticize this terminology as too simplistic. To use the words of Conn (2011, 4) this conceptualization "reflects an idea that the 'bottom-up' and the 'top-down' are like two parts of a machine to be fitted together." While the *top-down* and *bottom-up* terminology is used in this thesis, the conceptualization applied by Conn (2011) using systems description will be employed here to understand how these two approaches work and interact. Conn uses the terms *vertical* and *horizontal sub-systems* and *space of possibilities* to describe how CE works and to describe who interacts in it. According to Conn (2011, 5-7), there are two social sub-systems, vertical and horizontal, which inhabit and share one "social eco-system" (a city, in this case), and both of which are in constant interaction called *space of possibilities*. The former represents public (and external) agencies, and the latter individuals, groups and communities. Picture 9 below depicts this system.

Picture 9: Eileen Conn's social eco-system dance
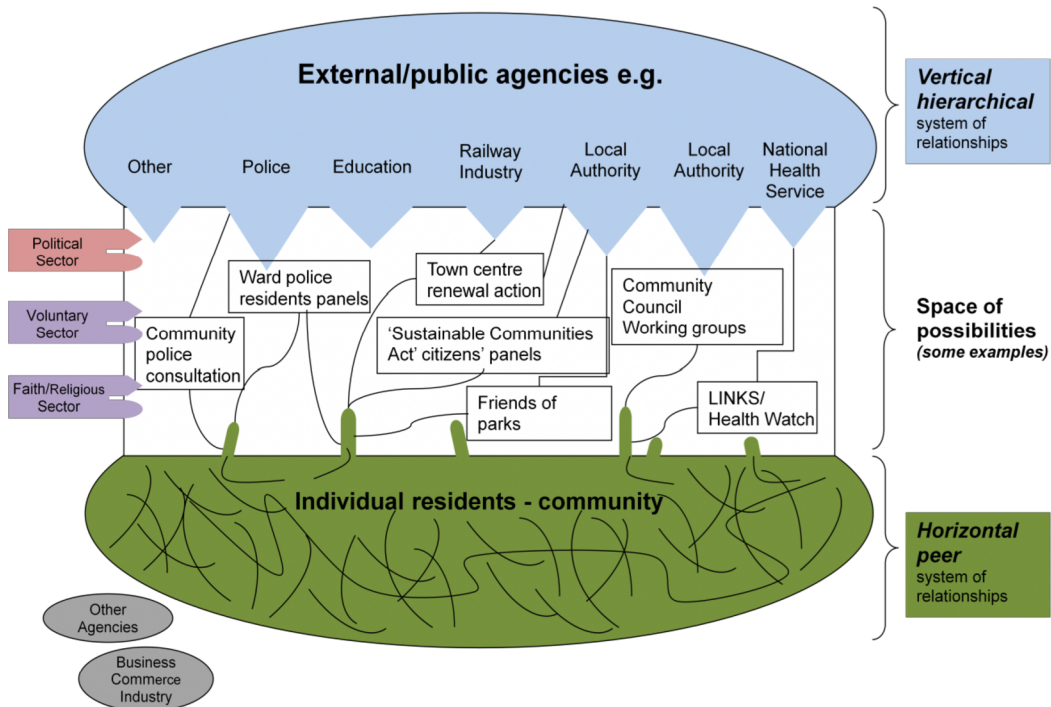
Source: Eilleen Conn (2011, 12)

The horizontal system is based on relationships of free associations of citizens forming communities (neighbourhoods, interest groups and ad hoc associations, clubs, and other formal and informal groups)**.** The horizontal system acts from the bottom (up), depending on whether it needs support from the vertical system or how much it wants to interact with the vertical system in the space of possibilities. This may depend on whether people want to achieve some larger change in policy through protests, negotiations or others, or whether they prefer other grassroots activities. In any case, the system has to be continuously nourished to create healthy and strong and resilient communities (Rowson et al. 2010) . That is, relations have to be fostered to create social capital and social cohesion as described earlier.

On the opposite side, on the top, is the vertical system. It is a world of hierarchical public and external agencies (e.g. local authorities/governments) that (should) try to engage with the community at the bottom. In this case, top-down approaches to citizens' engagement are (or should be) used to initiate, create and provide opportunities for participation in local development and planning.

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8.2.1. The role of the vertical system

As outlined above, some authors perceive community engagement (CE) in community development (CD) rather as or purely within the boundaries of the horizontal system. Others perceive citizens' engagement in CD as an imposition of the vertical system. Yet, some recognize the role of the vertical system in the CD. There is an increasing belief that local municipalities (especially those which have enough resources at their disposal) may play a role in supporting local communities in their development, or in their activation (Bernard et al. 2010; Archer et al. 2014; Adhikari and Taylor 2012; McNamara and Buggy 2017).

While CD processes are largely dependent on the activity of the horizontal system, the fact remains that these two systems co-exist and interact in the same social eco-system, sharing the space of possibilities. Therefore, the process of CE leading to CD may be initiated by either the vertical or the horizontal system, which may lead to increased or improved collaboration depending on the needs and goals prevailing in the two sub-systems as well as on the capacity and resources in each of the systems.

In addition to that, many benefits of top-down CE may be found in the literature. Some authors claim that communities might be more successful in achieving their goals if supported by other stakeholders, such as local governments (McNamara and Buggy 2017). According to (Butcher, Davidson, and Nolan 2019, 10), "[…] it can increase civic literacy, help develop bonds of trust and mutual understanding amongst diverse groups, generate more responsive design and planning outcomes, or increase feelings of confidence."

In line with that, some authors suggest a "mixed method" using both of these approaches should be applied for effective community development (Forbrig 2011, 74). And that "[…] there should be a systematic blending or mixing of both top-bottom and bottom-up so as to achieve a holistic and appreciable sustainable development that carries everyone along" (Sabran and Isidiho 2016, 1). A formal and systematic approach to top-down community engagement in public affairs is increasingly more called collaborative governance (Ansell and Gash 2008; Gash 2016; Emerson, Nabatchi, and Balogh 2012) However, there are also other possibilities for how to initiate community engagement from the top-down which might be less demanding when beginning with top-down community engagement. This is discussed further.

There are two common ways of engaging the community from the top-down. There is a mechanistic and humanistic community engagement (IPR 2016, 15). Mechanistic participation understands the essence of participation purely in the possibility of the public to voice their opinion with regards to public affairs e.g. in urban development planning. The outcome of this is to create or strengthen consensus, trust "or one's sense of the right to a result" (IPR 2016, 16). Therefore, citizens are assets as they help the municipality to govern the municipality well, i.e. good governance. However, participatory processes in both approaches must be conducted competently and they need to be framed. That is, participants' expectations need to be moderated. They need to be thoroughly and systematically informed and understand the forthcoming process, its goals, possibilities and degree of participation and so on (ibid.). Failure to conduct participatory activities systematically and consistently with clear goals and impacts leads to chaos, apathy and disinterest in further participation (Chi, Xu, and Xue 2014; Irvin and Stansbury 2004). The nature of mechanistic participation is depicted in Picture 10.

Picture 10: Mechanistic participation
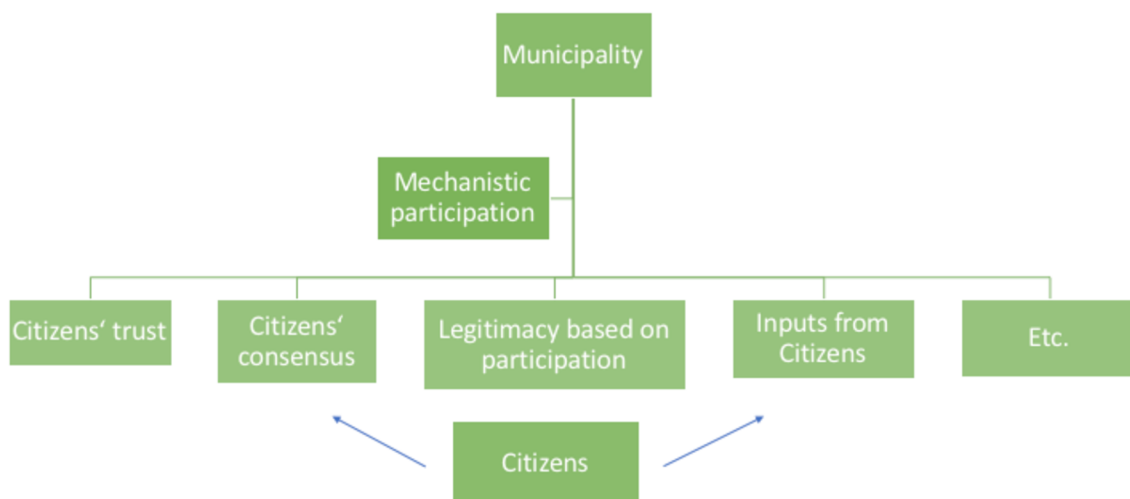
Source: Author's work, 2022

On the other hand, participation is perceived from the humanistic point of view as a process of public involvement in raising awareness and strengthening the self-confidence of participants and most importantly, in the emergence of new social ties (IPR 2016, 15).

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Picture 11: Humanistic participation
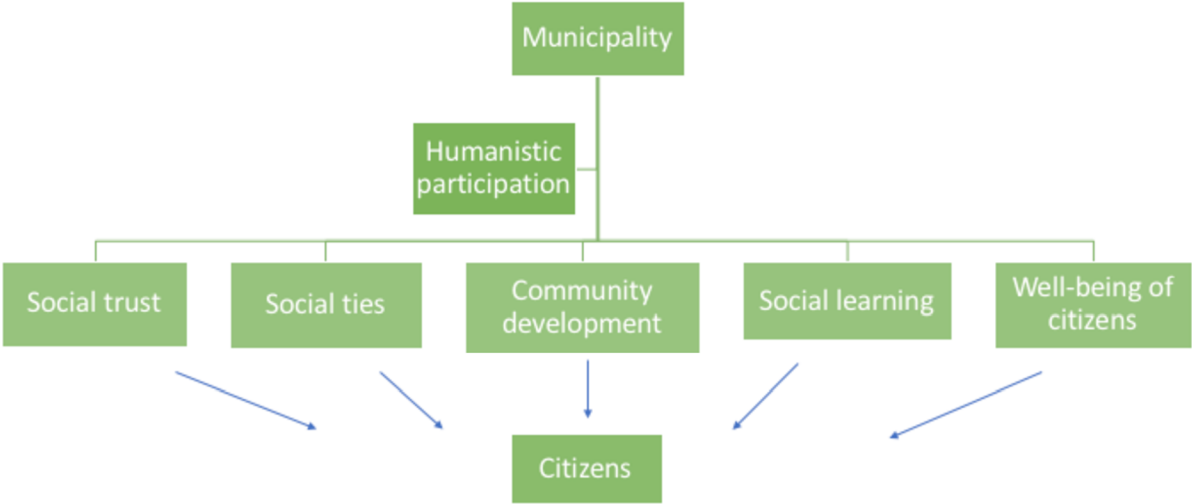
Source: Author's work, 2022

It follows that mechanistic participation is engaging citizens rather for the sake of good governance. By contrast, humanistic participation is concerned with the community largely for the sake of the community itself. The latter is the one that should be strived for to build local communities.

8.2.3. Degree of participation

The degree of participation was described in the "participation ladder" by the proponent of public engagement Sherry Arnstein (1969). In this metaphorical ladder, Arnstein divides public engagement in the participation process according to the powers given to the participants, starting from "manipulation, therapy, informing, up to consultation, placation, partnership, delegated power, and citizen control" (Arnstein 1969, 217). The lower rungs represent the lowest degree of participation, while the upper rungs signify the higher degree of participation. The higher the degree of participation is applied, the more empowered the local citizens are. According to Arnstein, the highest public engagement should be strived for (ibid.).

While the participation ladder by Arnstein is used widely across the globe and sectors, it should be noted that it was designed in a specific historical context of the United States(Lund 2018). Therefore, it does not have to reflect the participatory needs and possibilities in other contexts and should not be used as a one-size-fits-all approach. Therefore, a different model of participation is used in this thesis.

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8.2.4. Model of good participation

For this thesis, a different and simplified model of participation is used, based on academic literature (Vácha and Kandusová 2018; Luyet et al. 2012). It is based on the Three Pillars of Participation, i.e. *inform, listen, co-plan/co-create*. This model is further adjusted into four separate pillars or principles, i.e. *inform, listen, co-plan, and co-create* (Lund 2018). Also, a common vision should be present (see Chapter 9.5.). All four pillars should be accomplished for good participation to take place as well as the benefits resulting from that. Good participation in the context of this thesis means humanistic participation creating and resulting in community-building processes (*komunitotvornost*). The activities relating to these principles should be conducted in the context of a common vision. The whole process should be facilitated by a professional otherwise public participation might have negative consequences (Institut plánování a rozvoje 2016).

Table 6: Model of good participation

Common Vision	
Informing	- Informing about current issues; - making sure the audience has enough knowledge to participate; - how the event is going to proceed; - how the audience may participate; - etc.
Listening	- Listening to the audience's needs, wishes, perceived problems and proposals

Co-planning	- The audience (the public) should actively participate in co-planning (solution-planning) and co-creating (solution-making).
	- Citizens' role in co-planning:
	    o What change will serve the common good? How can we contribute to a common vision?
	    o What the final project is going to look like?
	    o How is it going to be used, who is going to use it, and how am I going to use it?
	    o Who can take part in the creation and how?

Co-creating	- Citizens' role in co-creating/solution making:
	    o What am I going to do to make this happen?
	    o How am I going to take part in the creation?
	- Who else may participate and in what way?

If only the first principle is fulfilled, citizens are not engaged in public affairs actively but passively by being informed (or given answers to their questions) by the municipality, which

does not create the necessary conditions for citizens to take collective action. In this thesis, such a process is called passive participation as simplified in Picture 12.

Picture 12: Passive participation – municipality informing citizens

Source: Author's work, 2022, based on informal consultation with Mgr. Tomáš Vácha

When the second principle is also accomplished during a participatory event, citizens are more active as they are bringing attention to problems, expressing wishes and needs for the municipality to solve them and carry them out, while the municipality is listening to them. However, these problems and wishes – if chosen as a priority – are then carried out by the municipality alone, often with no further participation of the citizens. See Picture 13.

Picture 13 Passive participation - municipality listening to citizens' needs and wishes

Source: Author's work, 2022, based on informal consultation with Mgr. Tomáš Vácha

However, such events may constitute a continuum: on one side of the spectre, the event may be conducted in a way that citizens list their problems and wishes and leave the event with uncertain results at sight. On the other side of the spectrum, they might come up with plenty of suggestions for specific problems which would fulfil a common vision. Such a process might be more community-building.

When the third principle is accomplished, it means that citizens take an active part in public affairs. They may either co-plan their role in the final product, how a certain "product" is going to develop, who is going to use the final "product", what it is going to look like et cetera. They may also plan their participation or participation of others in bringing the project to life. This process is visualised in Picture 14 below.
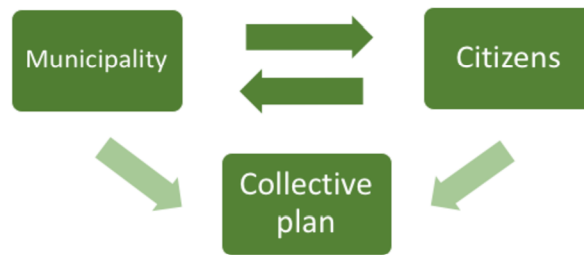
Source: Author's work, 2022, based on informal consultation with Mgr. Tomáš Vácha

When possible, citizens might even co-create the final product/activity/programme. This means they give their proposals and co-create the final "product" through volunteering at events and voluntary works etc, which has the highest community-building potential (Lund 2018). This simplification of this process is visualised below in Picture 15.

Picture 15: Co-creation
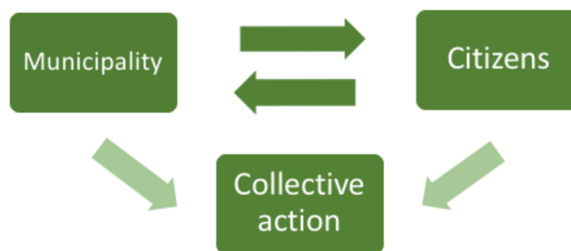
Source: Author's work, 2022, based on informal consultation with Mgr. Tomáš Vácha

Also, it is suggested in this thesis that the four principles may be looked upon as a continuum as can be seen below in Picture 16.

Picture 16: Four principles of good participation seen as a continuum

Source: Author's work, 2022

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The most community-building process is *co-creation* where collective action toward a common goal (and a common vision at best) takes place. This is followed by *co-planning, listening* and *informing* respectively. Each of the principles can be accomplished to some degree and it may have a different degree of community building impact during different events. This means that two separate events both of which fulfil the *co-planning* principle may have a different community-building impact based on the degree to which the principle was applied.

However, the process of participation must be facilitated competently to bring the desired results. Otherwise, participatory events which might have higher community-building potential might end up being less community-building than expected or possible. For example, this may happen when a co-planning event where the municipality engages citizens results in an event where citizens complain about their local situation or things that cannot be solved and therefore the attention is drawn to problems rather than solutions and action (which could be achieved collectively in many cases).

This may happen, among other things, when expectations from a participatory co-planning event are not clear to participants, or the employment of such event is not properly made use of by the organizers and further action is unclear, insufficient, late or lengthy. Therefore, the content (not the label) of each participatory event determines to what degree is the event community-building (*komunitotvorná*).

9. Areas and mechanisms of top-down community engagement

As described in the chapter on community engagement (CE), cities and their local authorities may engage local citizens and communities in the planning processes dealing with or impacting SD. This chapter describes what cities may do in tandem with local citizens. The context of top-down CE in urban processes is well put in "Agenda 21" (United Nations 1992a, 285):

> "Local authorities construct, operate and maintain economic, social and environmental infrastructure, oversee planning processes, establish local environmental policies and regulations, and assist in implementing national and subnational environmental policies. As the level of governance closest to the people, they play a vital role in educating, mobilizing and responding to the public to promote sustainable development."

There are three main areas of city development planning, i.e. strategic development planning urban development planning, and investment planning (including participatory budgeting). There is also community planning and cultural planning and two main international programmes for good governance and development of local communities, i.e. Local Agenda 21 (LA21) and Local Action Groups (LAGs) as well as the tool of visioning and vision-making which is important for planning (Hanken et al. 2015). While participatory budgeting is increasingly more employed in the CR, it is not studied in this thesis. Similarly, LAGs are dealt with only briefly as they are primarily focused on rural areas as opposed to cities. The rest of the development processes are described hereafter.

9.1. Strategic development planning

Strategic development planning (SDP) (*strategické plánování rozvoje*) in cities is an increasingly more implemented tool for the development of local areas internationally (Ježek 2014). It is a process of planning for a medium-term and long-term development of a city wherein optimal solution to the global and local challenges and opportunities is sought and dealt with (Ježek 2017; Malík 2022). The strategic development plan is a fundamental document presenting a vision and direction of its cross-sectoral development which relates among others to its socio-cultural, environmental and economic context, influencing the lives of its citizens. Local government needs to know the needs and attitudes of its citizens as well as to receive their feedback relating to the current state of affairs (Institut plánování a rozvoje 2016; Cities Alliance n.d.). Strategic development planning abroad is understood as a creative,

dynamic process with the active participation of citizens through organizational and institutional culture varies across countries (Ježek 2017).

9.2. Land-use planning

Land-use planning (*plánování územního rozvoje*) is a process dealing with the change of land use of a given territory wherein the land use is being optimized at the national, regional or local level and it is closely linked to the protection of the environment (Čápová 2011; Kopáček 2021; Sdružení místních samospráv České republiky 2015). The School of Urban Planning in Canada defines urban planning as "[..] a technical and political process concerned with the welfare of people, control of the use of land, design of the urban environment including transportation and communication networks, and protection and enhancement of the natural environment" (School of Urban Planning n.d.).

Therefore, it may be used to regulate territorial development to preserve and restore the natural environment. Čápová (2011, 30) claims that "while sustainable urban development is exercised by public authorities, they should also engage the private sector and citizens" (Kopáček 2021, 1-2; Morkus 2015; Späth and Rohracher 2012; Council of Europe 1984) Citizens should be engaged for their local knowledge and needs as they are often the final users of the city. However, for this to happen, collective action and social learning which are dependent on social cohesion and its strengthening must take place (Kopáček 2021, 10-11).

The processes of land-use planning in cities wherein community engagement is possible, beneficial or even required are the creation of land-use plans and public space development which represent more viable ways of participation as it is less complex than the creation of land-use plan (Hanken et al. 2015).

9.3. Community planning

Community planning is a form of participative city planning or neighbourhood planning in which the municipality engages local citizens and relevant local organizations in the planning processes as well as the decision-making regarding the community plan. It is based on mapping the current situation, possibilities and the needs of citizens for whom the services are intended. Therefore, engagement of those citizens is necessary for the successful design and implementation of the services (Wates 2011). The government of the UK, where community

planning is inherently integrated into the administrative structure, defines community planning as a way:

> "to improve the connection between all the tiers of Government and wider society work through partnership working to jointly deliver better outcomes for everyone. Community plans identify long-term priorities for improving the social, economic and environmental well-being of districts and the people who live there" (UK Government n.d.).

Local governments in the UK are obliged to "initiate, maintain, facilitate and participate" and to involve the community (Community Places 2014, 4). The degree of engagement may be relatively high depending on how the collaboration is set, which usually depends on a given municipality. Well established community planning increases the motivation of local citizens to participate in public affairs, activates the community, and creates a complex social network of partnerships which has further positive impacts as previously described.

9.4.   Cultural Planning

Cultural planning is a strategic process using cultural resources for a multi-sectoral development of the city and the development of the local community (Grogan et al. 1995) contributing to SD (Vojtíšková 2015; Duxbury and Jeanotte 2010). Therefore, the city and its citizens thrive on its resources by means of mapping, understanding and making use of them, e.g. of local culture, history, traditions, knowledge, local community, social networks, geography and local environment (Mercer 2002; Gillivray 2020). However, local citizens, local artists and other citizens from the cultural and creative scene as well as local entrepreneurs should be included in the process of mapping and planning to some degree as cultural planning is mainly a bottom-up community process (Duxbury and Jeanotte 2010).

Plenty of experts and organizations in Western and Northern Europe, the US, Australia and Canada, have been working with this concept since the 1970s (Grogan et al. 1995). Cultural planning was used, at first, for city regeneration and, later on, for the economic development of cities. In recent decades, it has been used for the creation of social cohesion, social capital, community building and city liveability, i.e. making cities for people (Vojtíšková 2015; Hanken et al. 2015, 34). Systematic cultural planning is also promoted by United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), which is an association of local municipalities that have approved Agenda 21 for Culture. It was established to integrate culture, culture thinking and visioning in

the strategic planning of municipalities as well as to promote citizens' participation in the preparation and implementation of cultural policies and programs (UCLG 2009).

Grogan et al. (1995, 1) also see the cultural policy as a "mediator" between all the increasing development challenges local authorities are faced with. Also, Barnett (2001, 24) sees culture as a means to transform the outside world. This is also supported by Vojtíšková et al. (2016, 73). Petráková (2018) even claims that cultural planning represents a starting point for bridging the gap between citizens and politicians/public officers as well as between individual departments of municipality office. It may therefore bring forth new forms of collaboration (e.g. within and between the municipality and local community) and create previously unexplored solutions. Therefore, the repositioning of culture in municipalities should be rethought or reassessed (ibid.).

On top of that, Hájek et al. (2011, 83) highlight culture as "an important factor of social cohesion" and territorial identity because it is connected with values and the ways people perceive the world (Michael Greig 2002). The authors believe that its integration into planning urban processes may have "positive ecological impacts" and "the efforts to maintain local culture may be the main impetus in accepting the LA21 principles [sustainable development] in culturally rich communities" (Hájek et al. 2011, 83). The following chapter focuses on the importance of visions and vision-making in urban planning processes.

9.5. Vision-making processes and planning

All of the above-described planning processes head towards some collective goal for the development of the local environment. Therefore, cities can engage local stakeholders and citizens in creating a shared vision for a sustainable future of the cities and communities (Ortegon-Sanchez and Tyler 2016). Such a vision would need to be long-term, simple and understandable, ambitious, public and shared. Citizens and local stakeholders should be engaged in creating, fulfilling, and updating the vision. That means the process would be participatory, long-term and systematic (van Waart et al. 2016). The vision should be informed and inspired by national and transnational goals, analysis of the local status quo and expert estimates of the future.

A good vision would serve a multitude of purposes. First, it helps integrate and coordinate the agenda of city departments and organizations towards common goals; second, it promotes

principles of SD among citizens; third, it helps establish collaboration and partnerships and activates local actors; fourth, it represents a long term commitment of the city as a whole and thus supports stability trough election periods, fifth it provides branding for individual projects that contribute to its fulfilment and thus makes them easier to communicate (Luyet et al. 2012; Ben Letaifa 2015). A professional, informed, systematic, participative and inclusive vision-making process could be achieved local development processes or in programmes focusing on SD and enhancing principles of community engagement, mainly Local Agenda 21 and Local Action Groups (LEADER).

9.6. Local Agenda 21

Local Agenda 21 (LA21) is a global, supra-national initiative which came into being in 1992 after the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, where action at the local level was determined crucial to the attainment of SD (United Nations 1992a; Kostalova and Vavra 2021). LA21 is a voluntary tool/program for the application of the principles of SD at the local level (CENIA 2017; Kveton et al. 2014). It originated rather as a "green initiative" at the local level (Owens 1994, 441) with the objectives of eliciting citizens' engagement in "green" activities and the environmental area at large (Selman 1998, 550). However, it evolved into a framework for good governance in public administration (Xavier et al. 2019).

The cornerstone of LA21 is that municipalities are enforcing the principles of sustainability in their planning, development and other activities (Havlíček 2022). There are three core principles which any LA21 should comply with, i.e. good quality strategic planning and management; participation of civil society and partnership between all sectors of society; and systemic and measurable advancement towards SD (Kostalova and Vavra 2021).

Nevertheless, Kveton et al. (2014) emphasize the variety of approaches toward SD and how the program LA21 should contribute to SD (Kostalova and Vavra 2021, 246). The authors believe that "this has resulted in a gradual phase-out of LA21 as a tool for promoting local development" (ibid., 516). This view is also supported by the expert interview conducted as part of this thesis. Therefore, LA21 is described and analysed in more detail in the practical part of this thesis focusing on CR. Another supra-national tool focusing on community-led development, which is implemented at the EU level is the programme LEADER as described further.

9.7. LEADER, CLLD: Local Action Groups

LEADER (nowadays transformed into CLLD, community-led local development) is a bottom-up programme focusing on SD in rural areas across the EU countries (Hudečková and Lošťák 2008; Binek et al. 2020). It came into existence in the 1990s from the initiative of the EU and resulted in the institutionalized local inclusive partnership between various stakeholders at a local (rural) level (Kostalova and Vavra 2021; Binek et al. 2020). These stakeholders form associations across boundaries of small towns and cities, i.e. local action groups (LAGs).

While LAGs collaborate on bottom-up development of their rural area, they operate at a regional level and represent rather "public benefit agencies who bring together relevant stakeholders" (Binek et al. 2020, 24). As a consequence of this, the bottom-up approach is weaker (Kostalova and Vavra 2021, 247). LAGs are supported by and dependent on structural funds from the EU. Yet, they represent an apolitical collaboration of the public, private and non-profit sectors and citizens. Countries vary in rules and implementation. It is explained hereafter why the programme is not given more attention further in this thesis.

LAGs in the CR are established in areas with 10 000 – 100 000 inhabitants. LAGs in CR could theoretically cover 99 % of the territory, excluding only military areas and large towns and cities above 25 000 inhabitants (Binek et al. 2020). Currently, the established LAGs cover 93 % of the territory of the CR, comprising most of the municipalities in the CR (Národní síť místních akčních skupin ČR 2021). Yet, a relatively lower number of citizens (60%) inhabit those areas. However, it should be noted that the number of inhabitants in the areas covered with LAGs is not synonymous with the number of participating citizens. Konečný et al. (2020, 179) claim that "[i]n 15 years, the number of inhabitants who did not want to/could not try to apply the elements of local governance had become marginal (only 5% of inhabitants)." Such misconception that all citizens who happen to live in a municipality which is a member of a LAG participate in this bottom-up programme should be avoided.

Due to the focus on rural areas, bigger cities usually do not participate in LAGs. Also, there are forty-seven cities above 25 000 inhabitants, which cannot take part in the programme (Binek et al. 2020). Therefore, around 40 % of citizens are not part of any LAG. Since the majority of people live in cities above 10 000 inhabitants (representing 2,1% of municipalities), this thesis focuses on those cities even though there is an overlap with the range covered by LAGs. The following box relates the case of top-down anecdotic evidence as explained in the methodology.

This box summarizes best practices from four Canadian municipalities and one region concerning top-down CE. It shows how top-down community "engagement should be contextualized within municipal policy structures and practices" (McGee 2009, i.). The best practices consist of two main types, i.e. theoretical mechanisms of change; and practical driving processes and resources. The former represents formalized policy structure including values, principles and a framework. The latter consists of practical drivers in top-down community engagement, i.e. "community partnerships" and "champions" (ibid.).

For a municipality to mobilize citizens and elicit CE in public affairs such as planning, decision-making, volunteering and bottom-up activities, it is necessary to create a formal engagement policy framework based on values, principles and strategy with an intended input of resources. CE, inclusivity and empowerment need to be integrated into municipal structure and practices as fundamental principles and values. Top-down CE should have a clear strategy, goals and purposes so that both municipality workers, as well as citizens and the local community at large, know what to expect from engagement and to what degree they may engage. In that way, the process of CE is guided by clarity in the whole process as opposed to ignorance, chaos and frustration which result in indifference and a lack of interest on the part of the public (ibid., 21). Such formalized policy provides and ensures a stable, regular and consistent approach.

Both municipal and community champions were identified as important to top-down CE. While community champions are active (usually unpaid) individual/s from the community or some local group/initiative, who take care of the local people and create networks, municipal champions are municipal paid staff in the local government who are in charge of a "brokering role" between local community groups and citizens, collaborating with them, giving support in projects, ideas and engaging the community in various projects and activities (ibid., 94). Community partnerships are very similar in form and purpose as they are based on collaboration, engagement and formation of partnerships with relevant stakeholders, i.e. associations, NGOs, state-funded institutions, local entrepreneurs etc (ibid., 78). All of this form new ties, relationships, and networks, and increases trust among local citizens and the community at large which in turn leads to community development in form of further activities creating strong and more sustainable communities.

10. Bottom-up participation and Transition Towns

As already described, bottom-up participation describes activities of citizens at the local level related to public affairs. This thesis focuses on the activities of unorganized civil society at the local level, with the main focus on SD. As already supported by literature, the effective participation of citizens and local communities at large in local development is crucial in tackling global and environmental problems. However, as (Kolářová 2020, 368) notes;

> "all of the main social movement paradigms focus on public protest and social movement organisations, but they overlook movements that are less formal, focused on community initiatives or lifestyle activism, not engaged in public protests, and interested in positive change and practical activities. Community initiatives and lifestyle movements try to deal in practical ways with various aspects of the mitigation and adaptation to climate change."

However, in the past two decades and mostly in recent years, "[a]new wave of community-based sustainable initiatives has arisen that are promoting change towards sustainability" (ibid.). Among the most prominent movements belongs the community-based initiative called Transition Towns (TT), which has become transnational in recent years (Hopkins 2008; Taylor 2012). The TT initiative is described below in Box 2. It represents an example of good practice for local citizens and communities to take action against climate change.

TT is considered in this thesis as an example of good practice of bottom-up citizens engagement because it is characterized by its: community-based nature (social capital and social cohesion are core characteristics of TT), value-driven character (which makes action and activities more likely effective and sustainable in time), action focused on climate change adaptation and mitigation, taking pride in collaborating with local municipalities and other stakeholders (Brangwyn and Hopkins 2008, 36). Very importantly, the concept is scalable, i.e. applicable to different scales of "the local" (organizations such as universities, neighbourhoods, self-governed municipal districts, and small or larger cities), and it is relatively easily replicable (there are many tools, best practices and other means of help which guide the people through the foundation of such initiative taking into account and respecting the different contexts, meaning that it is not based on one size fits all approach (Hopkins 2008; Taylor 2012; Brook 2009; Connors and McDonald 2011).

Info Box 2: Anecdotic evidence of the movement Transition Towns

Transition Towns (TT) (or also Transition Initiatives and Transition Movement), were established in 2005 in Ireland during a permaculture course led by Rob Hopkins (Hopkins 2008). TT are based on the belief that the local level is an ideal place for taking action and creating local solutions in response to climate change and the peak oil (Hopkins 2008, 69). According to Hopkins, communities should become sustainable and resilient, relying on local resources. On the grounds of this, people learn new skills and engage in local collaboration and community-led projects to build resilient communities (Kolářová 2020, 366).

TI can be made up of people or various local initiatives in a certain area, working together on specific projects and achieving a common vision. It can be formed by a group of inhabitants of a smaller area as well as larger areas. However, each movement creates its vision and activities based on local needs, size and capacity. The movement is thus formed from the bottom-up. Unlike other movements, TI are characterized by a positive attitude, vision, personal responsibility action as opposed to theory, and cooperation with municipalities (Connors and McDonald 2011; Transition Network 2016; Hopkins 2010).

The most frequent and proven activities include educational and awareness-raising projects, waste reduction and recycling, community gardens and local food production, or other public and cultural events based on local needs or traditions. There are also larger projects such as energy-saving projects, small energy communities, local currency, or even new incentives in urban infrastructure (creating cycle lines, new edible gardens, parks and such) (Transition Network 2016).

TI have spread quickly mainly across the EU, the US as well as other countries across the world. In total, there are 1076 transition initiatives in 57 countries. By getting involved, people get to know their neighbours and neighbourhoods, they become part of something larger, creating a sense of belonging and influencing the development of the local community and municipality.

V. Empirical part: The case of the Czech Republic

1. Sustainable development in the Czech Republic

The CR has become active in the solution of environmental problems mainly after the end of the socialist regime, defining SD as: "[..] development that preserves the ability of current and future generations to meet their basic needs, while not reducing the diversity of nature and preserving the natural functions of ecosystems" (Act No. 17/1992 Coll. 1992). The CR ratified the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in 1993, and the Kyoto protocol in 2001 to decrease CO_2 emissions at least by 5,2 % (Ministerstvo životního prostředí n.d.). As the CR entered the EU in 2004, it increased the engagement of the CR in the protection of the environment (ibid.). The laws and regulations related to the natural environment have been transposed from the EU to the CR as its Member state (MS) by the rule of the communitarian law of the EU (Steunenberg and Rhinard 2010). As the MS of the EU, the CR signed the Paris agreement in 2015. By 2017, the CR transposed the UN's SDGs into its strategic document called Strategic Framework Czech Republic 2030 (SF CR 2030), which is discussed hereafter.

2. Strategic Framework Czech Republic 2030

SF CR 2030 (Úřad vlády České republiky 2017b) is a key national strategic document which sets the direction of development of the nation for SD in the CR. It takes into consideration and integrates all relevant SDGs of the UN and it forms a framework for other strategic and sector documents at all levels, i.e. national, regional and local. There are six key areas determined as crucial for SD of the CR, and each of them is complemented with strategic objectives, specific goals as well as indicators of those goals. The areas which are related to the topic at issue, i.e. Good Governance, Municipalities and Regions, People and Society, are studied to see not only the objectives and goals but also the tools (indicators) which are being provided and suggested to achieve those objectives (ibid.).

The CR envisions a nation with democratic and effective governance. Great focus is put on increasing the inclusiveness of citizens in policy-making and decision-making, which is deemed key to the successful development of cities and communities (Úřad vlády České republiky 2017, 82, 85). It is pointed out that there should be systematic support and

development of tools for SD of municipalities (ibid., 91) and that the CR intends to look for inspiration from innovative approaches abroad (ibid., 103). Also, it is recommended that barriers which hinder such innovations should be removed and a long-term systematic enabling environment should be created for innovations. Society in the CR is envisioned as a "cohesive society of educated, responsible and active inhabitants", which is "cohesive thanks to functional families and participating communities" (Úřad vlády České republiky 2017, 29-32).

As can be seen below in Picture 17, the areas stress the importance of participatory processes and deliberative processes in policy-making, decision-making as well as in planning of the local development including all sectors of society. However, it is stated in the SF CR 2030 that this should be done to consult what the administration does or plans to do (Úřad vlády České republiky 2017, 83).

Picture 17: Strategic Framework Czech Republic 2030

Source: Author's work, 2022

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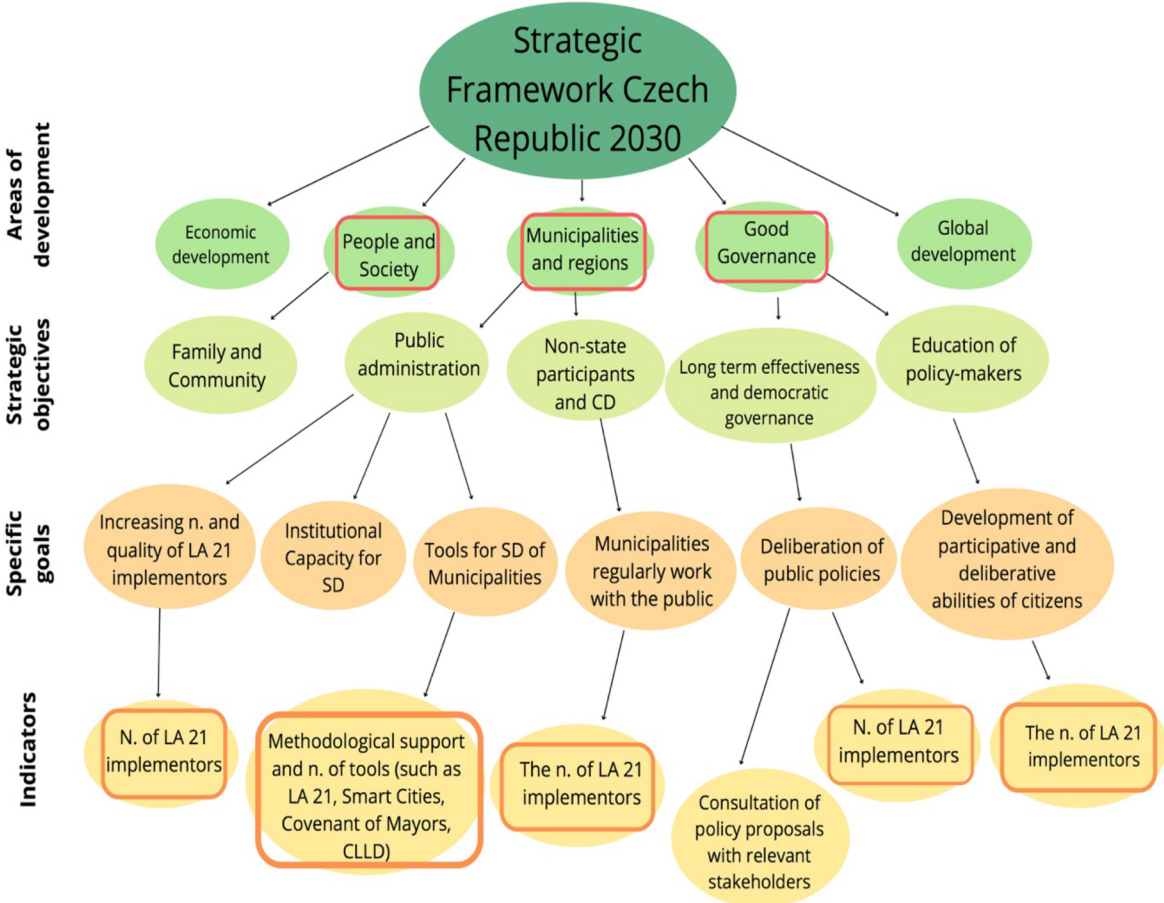
The tools which should be used for good governance, participation, and community development are LAGs, CLLD, ITIs[3] and IPRs,[4] which are not applied to (larger) cities, and LA21 which is an alternative tool that can be used for cities (Úřad vlády České republiky 2017, 83). Therefore, out of the suggested tools, only LA21 is relevant for larger cities (above 25 000 inhabitants). Accordingly, it can be seen in Picture 17 that LA21 is used as an indicator for all of the objectives at issue. In the meantime, it does not always specify other conditions (e.g. preferred or recommended areas of policy making and decision making etc.).

While there are relatively clear conditions and processes for LA21 implementors, the tool is entirely voluntary and does not necessarily define the level and output of citizen participation and the areas in which participative processes have to be used (see further in Chapter 8.5.). Also, apart from the participation in policy-making and decision making (mostly via LA21), there are no other tools, structures and measures for CD and CE suggested in SF CR 2030. The following chapters describe and analyse the status quo of national and local public administration in the CR to see if municipalities are ready for supporting community development (CD) and community engagement (CE).

---

[3] Integrated land investments used for regional agglomerations

[4] Integrated regional planning, Institutes of planning and development

3. Public administration and SD in the Czech Republic

Public administration in the CR is divided into direct (i.e. state administration) and indirect (i.e. self-government) administration, which means some powers of the state administration are transferred to and carried out by self-governing municipalities at the local level. This is reflected in a high degree of decentralisation of power in the CR (Špaček and Nemec 2018, 181-182). As described in the theoretical part, and as follows from the analysis of the SF CR 2030, good governance in public administration is crucial for SD in the CR.

However, public administration in the CR does not fully fulfil the principles of good governance so far (MŽP et al. 2021a; 2021b; Polášek et al. 2017, 7). The report on the evaluation of the SF CR 2030 concludes that since 2017, no indicators related to good governance in the SF CR 2030 were achieved and that no real progress was made as far as can be said (MŽP et al. 2021a, 7) The openness of public sector in the CR is also described by Špaček and Nemec (2018, 204) as "medium to closed". The data collected by Eurobarometer (2021) also show a lower level of quality of governance in the CR.

Specifically, evaluation of public administration in the CR shows that the participation of the public in planning and decision-making processes is very low and not representative of the public, that effectiveness of governance in public administration is weak, and low trust in public administration and political representation affects the legitimacy of policies (MŽP et al. 2021a, 7; 2021b, 10). Apart from that, the flows among and between the two layers of public administration are not interconnected well and effectively (Sýkora et al. 2017, 20; MŽP and MMR 2019)[5]. While the former is discussed and supported by literature and analysis further in detail in Chapter 8, the latter three are discussed in the following two sub-chapters to see the specific problems related to the implementation of SD in the CR.

3.1. State administration

Špaček and Nemec (2018, 200) describe the Czech government as having "a leading role in state administration and its rules of procedure are in line with majoritarian decision-making."

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[5] *Ministerstvo životního prostředí ČR* and *Ministerstvo pro místní rozvoj ČR* (used in abbreviated form for the sake of clarity).

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However, they also mention the weak degree of horizontal coordination of other governing entities and that "the silo mentality" prevails and created strategies often lack any existent evidence-basis (ibid.). And "While conceptual documents exist for almost all areas, their implementation is generally not conceptual and quite often the individual steps being taken go against the original strategy, or result in the original strategy being amended" (Transparency International 2011, 11).

The quality of government index in the CR is of rather poor quality as opposed to the Western and Northern countries where the quality of government is rated as *rather positive* or *positive* (European Union 2022, xxiii). In compliance with that, the data shows that citizens' trust in the government and parliament (who have the leading role in state administration) in 2021 is very low. And the data show that respondents' trust towards the government has plummeted from 40 % to 19 % in one year and towards the parliament from 25 % to 15 %, which is approximately one-half and one-third of average trust respectively in EU countries (European Commission 2021). This indicates that the principles of good governance in public administration in the CR are not met. Moreover, there are also deficiencies regarding the implementation of SD.

A network of focal points for SD was created in the state administration at all ministries (MŽP and MMR 2019). To evaluate its effectiveness, a questionnaire was created for the personnel in the focal points concerning their knowledge of SD and the experience and ability to use relevant mechanisms in strategic planning and decision-making (Ministerstvo pro místní rozvoj ČR 2019). The findings disclose that the knowledge, capacity and effectiveness of those focal points are low, and the administrative personnel have only a basic knowledge of the principles and priorities of the SF 2030 as well as its implementation plan. The effectiveness of collaboration between the focal points for SD is also low. And, the interconnectedness of the strategies with the SF CR 2030 is often rather ad-hoc or absent and SD is not promoted sufficiently (ibid., 22). The strategies should promote SD to more degree.

All of this among other things shows that respective policies do not have long-term binding character as well as it demonstrates an absence of a systematic and conceptual approach to strategic planning and problem-solving across public administration (Sýkora et al. 2017).

Apart from that, the report by Sýkora et al. (2017) points out that the administrative personnel in state administration is out of synergy with the real, hands-on life taking place at the local level resulting in reciprocal misunderstandings between the two layers of public administration.

As a consequence of this, respective policies are not in tune with local needs and possibilities. That is to say, if there is a framework for development, it should be made sure that this development is desirable, ambitious and feasible. The situation of local governments is described hereafter.

3.2. Self-government municipalities

A municipality is a basic territorial self-governing unit of public administration (Ministerstvo vnitra ČR 2005). The Czech Statistical Office (CSO) lists a total of 6,253 municipalities and districts in the CR (Český statistický úřad 2014). There are three types of municipalities, depending on the degree of delegated powers, i.e. the degree of autonomy of a municipality. Municipalities of the first degree are municipalities with the basic scope of the delegated powers. Municipalities of the second degree have wider scope of delegated powers and perform some delegated powers also for surrounding area. Municipalities (205) of the third degree are municipalities with extended powers. They perform public administration also on the territory of other municipalities falling within the surrounding region (Nemec 2016, 129; Ministerstvo vnitra ČR 2005).

Municipalities with extended powers usually have a higher number of citizens (usually more than 10 000 inhabitants) and they show a higher level of complexity as they are in charge of meeting the needs in the area of housing, health, protection, transport, education, cultural development, household waste collection, and protection of public order (Ministerstvo pro místní rozvoj ČR 2021b). Therefore, it is these municipalities that have a higher potential in contributing to SD in the CR.

As discussed in the theoretical part, this is due to the considerably higher occurrence of environmental problems in large cities than in smaller cities in the CR as well as due to larger and more complex administrative apparatus, i.e. capacities and competencies to deal with them more efficiently than smaller municipalities (Matějová 2014, 76). Likewise, it is rather medium and large-size cities that lack mechanisms for promoting and dealing with SD as well as engaging the local communities to take action towards SD as follows from the analysis of SF CR 2030 in Chapter 2 of the empirical part. Therefore, larger municipalities and communities should find more efficient ways of supporting community engagement (Matějová 2014).

However, apart from the problems common for public administration in general, Sýkora (2017) analysed the needs of cities and municipalities in the CR, where he highlights the main difficulties related to public administration that municipalities in the CR often unsuccessfully try to overcome and which may hinder the rhetoric related to the role of cities in achieving SD which is promoted as already described.

To begin with, among the problems municipalities and cities face belongs the fact that state administration often proposes and implements legislative measures, tools, and policies which are not based on the real needs of municipalities, or which do not sufficiently take into account these needs. At the same time, the local level is not often in charge of the issues that could be managed at the local level had they had the power/authority (Sýkora et al. 2017, 19-20; Špaček and Nemec 2018). Therefore, the principle of subsidiarity (which is also stressed in SF CR 2030) is not applied to its full potential (Úřad vlády České republiky 2017b). Third, municipalities often lack the financial resources to administer their territory according to actual needs. Fourth, there are not enough human resources with appropriate qualifications (ibid.). In summary, there is a lack of synergies mainly within flows of vertical governance as well as of financial and human resources, all of which hinder municipalities from effective public administration including the transition to SD (Třebický et al. 2010, 35).

On the other hand, publicly available data from the Public Opinion Research Centre (PORC) collected in 2021 show that while citizens are dissatisfied with the political situation (55 %) local Mayors and local municipal councils are the most trusted representatives of constitutional institutions reaching (70 %) and (61 %) respectively (Červenka 2021). Also, another opinion poll conducted by PORC in 2020 in the CR focused on the assessment of the natural environment. Municipalities were assessed positively (56%) in environmental protection as opposed to the government and the parliament (Tuček 2020).

This might indicate that collaboration and community engagement at the local level towards SD in the CR as promoted internationally and in academia might be a feasible way for cities in the CR. However, on the other side of the coin is the problem related to citizens' engagement itself. Therefore, civil society, local communities and community development are discussed in the following chapter starting with civil society.

4. Civil society in the Czech Republic

Rakušanová (2005) civil society in the CR is rooted in a long and rich tradition of civil society movements (mainly in culture, art and education) in the Czech Lands which dates back to the era of national revival and continued through 1918 and further. However, the two totalitarian regimes in Europe that followed next represented a drastic cut in the development of civil society in the CR, most importantly by the communist regime after 1948 (Rakušanová 2007; Hruška et al. 2018).

During this time the leading communist party restricted public gatherings and abolished most of the then-existing organizations of civil society (ibid.). Potůček (1997, 38-39) even claims that the atomisation of the society was an imperative requirement for the political regime to survive and thrive and the systematic destruction of social ties was the goal of the regime. While the number of the civil society organizations was reduced from 60 000 to 683 (ibid.), and non-formal volunteering "self-help activities in local communities" played an important role in society during these times (Frič and Vávra 2012, 7; Frič et al. 2010, 42-47). Most of the organized civic activities were replaced by massive social organizations wherein attendance often became a civic legal obligation. However, Skovajsa (2009) and Mansfeldová et al. (2004) believe that active organized civil society has been never truly eliminated and the CR after 1898 takes up the rich tradition of active citizenship.

However, Pajas (2010) who focused on the larger European context claims that while the CR has managed the process of transformation from a totalitarian regime to a democratic one quite well relative to other post-socialist countries, it has been found that civil society in countries where the democratic regime had not been suppressed for a longer time-period thrives more than in the CR. This is also supported Linek et al. (2017, 202). However, both Potůček (1997) and Tůma et al. (2000) claim that the previously mandatory form of volunteering resulted in a reluctance to volunteer in public life. Furthermore, Kolářová (2020, 373) claims that "[m]ost of the civic NGOs that arose after 1989 were sports, recreational, and hobby organisations."

While there is a consensus on the relative rise of organized civil society, the unorganized civil society, which is the main focus of this thesis has been given less attention. This might indicate that "[g]roups tend to be more formally organised in central and eastern European countries" as Henderson and Vercseg (2010, 14) argue. One of the first researches on informal volunteering (as of unorganized society) by Frič et al. (2010) concludes that 38 % of citizens in

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the CR in 2009 participated in non-formal volunteering, though 72 % of those dedicated their time to neighbourhood help.

More recently, Matějka et al. (2015) conducted large-scale research (N=3876) similar to that of Frič et al. (2010) as they say, though focusing solely on unorganized (non-formal) volunteering in the CR which had not been given proper attention. The findings might indicate an increasing trend as 45 % of citizens participate in some form of non-formal volunteering in the CR. Although, a closer look at the data shows that respondents mostly engage through passive forms, such as financial help, filing a petition, or sharing opinions over the internet. For example, only 20,3 % of respondents engaged in manual work, 12 % in organizing, and 6, 8 % in educational and interest activities (Matějka et al. 2015).

Similar to Potůček (1997), Smith (2011, 33) argues that "[t]he communist heritage of forced political participation, as well as the importance placed on technocratic expertise, has also created very difficult conditions for civil society and grassroots political participation to develop." Similarly, Majerová (2009) argues that the regime resulted in indifference of local citizens toward local development. Based on a comparative study of civil society in various EU countries, Pospíšilová (2010, 140) attests that "[the] rise in civil society organizations is accompanied by decreasing citizens participation" and that there is a low degree of trust among the society in the CR (ibid.). Čermák et al. (2011) also present distrust among the reasons for insufficient development of civil society in the CR. Furthermore, Pajas (2010, 349) indicates that it is yet unclear "whether Czech civil society has acquired the form and extent of a fully developed civil society."

It is also stated in the SF CR 2030 that there is "a gradual increase in individualisation and fragmentation of the society in the CR as a whole" (Úřad vlády České republiky 2017, 238; Špaček and Nemec 2018). This individualisation and atomisation are then reflected at the local level in form of lower political participation, and civic engagement in general as it "disturbs the natural and useful activity of communities at the local level" (Úřad vlády České republiky 2017, 238). The following chapter focuses on how the weakened or not fully developed civil society is reflected at the local level, i.e. on the localized civil society. The interconnection between civil society as a whole and local communities should be borne in mind as the aforementioned literature will not be presented further.

5. Local communities in the Czech Republic

This chapter presents and aims to analyse the status quo of local communities in the CR. However, the thesis finds a gap in both theory and research as well as the understanding and conceptualisation of local communities in the CR. Local communities in the CR are therefore described mainly through the perspective of their dichotomy (rural and urban); social cohesion (the perception of the neighbourhood and sense of belonging; citizens' participation (e.g. formal and non-formal volunteering activities), and social interactions, trust, common vision. This is further complemented by cross-reading of three empirical pieces of research on social and environmental innovations requiring local community in the CR. To begin with, the problematics regarding the definition of local communities in the CR as well as its consequences are presented hereafter. Local communities in the CR are defined in the SF CR 2030 as:

> "[..] a group of inhabitants, the unorganised public, living in a shared territory consistently perceived as their neighbourhood, participating in self-government and respecting the constitutional and legal framework of the Czech Republic. A prerequisite for the functioning of a resilient community is the equal standing of its members, a sense of belonging, awareness and the ability to cope with failure, i.e. the ability to absorb disruption and change, while maintaining its basic functions and structure" (Úřad vlády České republiky 2017, 81).

It follows from this definition that local communities are perceived to equal the citizens of a shared territory without the need to share some common values, goals or vision and without the necessity to share bonds of trust among others. Such a definition is not in compliance with the way the local community has been conceptualised in this thesis. Also, such a conception of the local community is problematic in the study of local communities and their existence as all or nearly all municipalities and cities would qualify as local communities.

It should be noted however that the perception of a municipality as a community is also present in academic literature. For example, Bernard (2010a) in his research on endogenic development understands municipalities (up to 2000 inhabitants) as an equivalent of a community. Likewise, Capellán-Pérez et al. (2020, 3) argue that really small municipalities (such as under 500 inhabitants) "might qualify as community energy organizations" since small municipalities "emphasize participation" and there are "collective decision-making processes." Also, the literature discussing projects implemented within the programme LEADER (LAGs) often talks about participating (rural) municipalities as local communities (Nunvarova 2014; Konečný et

al. 2021; Konečný et al. 2020). Similarly, Sýkora et al. (2019, 339) perceive the traditional view of "municipalities as communities of local citizens".

Interestingly, Špačková (2011, 49) leans towards the use of the term "community ties" as opposed to (local) community precisely due to problematic and complex terminology. Yet, she argues that rural areas in the CR may be considered local communities. This is justified by higher voter turnout, a sense of belonging and a "higher degree of personalisation of formal relationships."

However, such possibly misleading perception of small municipalities could be accounted for by the apparent acceptance (or lack of criticism) of the presented broad definition by academia; the perception of a community-like environment in small municipalities; and the positioning of rural communities in contrast to urban communities as explained further.

Urban versus rural dichotomy:

For example, Reichel (2008, 108) claims that while the importance of community-like neighbourhoods is disappearing from cities in the CR, the community-like perception of small municipalities is strong. Similarly, Matějová (2014, 78) argues that small municipalities (under 1000 inhabitants) as opposed to larger urban areas may better engage a larger percentage of people in community life and decision making, which should naturally make them more community-like. Likewise, Sztwiertnia (2013, 2) agrees with this suggesting that a higher degree of trust, familiarity, communication and collaboration in smaller municipalities may result in higher social cohesion which can in turn positively affect community-building factors such as reciprocity and collaboration.

And lastly, Špačková (2011) infers from her research that while each area differs depending on many factors, social and community ties are strong in rural areas, which is reflected in primary relationships (family, friends and neighbours), collective and self-help activities, and in engaging in political and community affairs. Nevertheless, the author perceives the local community in terms of a neighbourhood and, as the author herself states, she does not address the local community from the perspective of social and human capital for local development.

On the contrary, Bernard (2010: 21) suggests that it is more difficult to build communities in smaller municipalities where there are not enough individuals and stakeholders who might and would "formulate and stand up for their group interests." This, the author puts in contrast with large municipalities and cities, where there is an array of people with similar goals who can

easily interconnect. Pixová (2020, 154) emphasises a lack of "charismatic leaders" for grassroots initiatives in smaller cities. This thought is even more developed by Konečný et al. (2020, 187) whose findings show that "multi-actor governance in rural areas is still far off in the Czech Republic [and that] [i]t is often the case that informal networks are not established and local partnerships are rather formal formations." And while Sýkora, et al. (2019, 339) understand municipalities as communities of local citizens, their study and work experience with strategic planning in municipalities show that municipalities are becoming rather "an aggregate of constituent individuals" due to a low degree of social cohesion. None of these authors however question the existence of local communities in the CR which is discussed further.

Existence of local communities in the CR:

However, through the perspective of the above-presented definition, the study of the existence of local communities would defy reason, which might explain the lack of literature and research dealing with the existence or degree of development of local communities in the CR. Ambrozková (2020, 35) who studied neighbourhood communities in the CR claims that neighbourhood relationships and communities in the CR are not mapped and analysed comprehensively. Only some cities or city parts have been mapped concerning the existence of active local community groups.

Such mapping has been conducted by the studio of applied anthropology called Anthropictures. The research consisted of monitoring non-formal community activities and community groups such as in Prague 14 and Plzeň, where dozens of active community groups were found using the methodology "being there" (Anthropictures 2013). Furthermore, Špačková (2011, 49) believes that the spatial relocation of social ties and thus the weakening of community ties took place in all residential areas (urban, suburban, rural), each having its causal factors and specifics. Yet, the author of empirical research concludes that "a number of local community ties can be found" in the CR.

The shortage of work on the existence of local communities may be also due to its lack or near absence. Klenovská (2011, 61) studied the (near) absence of Transition Towns in Eastern and Central European countries, and she indicates that there is an absence of "a culture of community" (as well as increasing individualism). She believes these findings are also relevant to the context of the CR where the development of civil society was also affected by the communist regime and people negatively perceive collective ventures for the common good.

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Similarly, based on an ethnographic study, observations, as well as in-depth interviews, Kolářová (2020) goes along with this view as she claims that there is an absence of community organising in the CR. In addition, she indicates that the word community is not even in common use in the CR. Similar to Klenovská (2011), she believes this might be related to the fact that the terminology (community and communitarianism) resembles the term communism. Yet, there are other ways to study local communities in the CR.

Social cohesion in Czech society and other factors:

Academic literature asserts that the existence of (local) communities might be studied also through their fundamental building factors. Among those belongs social cohesion (which is not based only on social capital, e.g. the number of existing groups, but also community engagement, trust among people and overcoming barriers in collective planning and decision-making) as well as a sense of belonging to the local place/neighbourhood. Most of these factors were studied in the following literature and analysed through other data.

To begin with, Musil (2005, 15) argues that the CR after 1989 and forward saw "a birth or disparate, insufficiently interconnected variation of social cohesion which entails numerous characteristic of social anomalies [resulting in] social and moral crisis of Czech society" which is manifested by social disintegration and indifference towards public affairs among many other things. Such anomalies are also presented in the following literature.

Second, the findings of Prudký (2003, 148) who researched the value preferences and orientation of Czech citizens argue that Czech citizens do not consider public life, civic activities and more considerable acts of solidarity as an important or relevant aspects of their future to which they would relate and therefore to which they would contribute to. On the contrary, it follows from their value preferences that they prefer hedonistic values over altruistic ones. Prudký (ibid.) concludes that the differences in value preferences and orientations among Czech citizens will probably intensify.

Third, the research conducted by Tuček (2011, 122) shows that only 26 % of Czech citizens fully trust their neighbours. Less than half of Czech citizens (47 %) are fond of the city they live in, only 16 % of Czech citizens feel affiliated with their neighbours, and 26 % of Czech citizens fully trust their neighbours (Frič and Vávra 2012, 8). This might suggest that the majority of Czech citizens do not belong to the local community since they do not feel like a

part of something larger and do not want to, or that they do not live in a place where such a community would exist.

Fourth, Frič and Vávra (2012, 8) specifically focused on whether towns, urban settlements and whole cities in the CR can be indeed considered communities. For this purpose, they used the degree of volunteering (its extent and intensity) focusing on the development of the community and its members as an indicator of a good quality of community life. The researchers claim that the results of this study indicate the status quo and the level of community building in the CR. The research uses data from Eurobarometr (2004) and shows a relatively low degree of volunteering (47 %) and low degree of intensity (ibid, 54) in comparison to other EU countries, which according to the authors suggests that Czech citizens expect the state, rather than the civil society, will take care of both their personal and public concerns and that this trend will probably deteriorate. Based on their research, Frič and Vávra (2012, 121) believe that it is not typical of the CR to build their communities and that Czech citizens do not have the ambition to build a society of communities as is common in other Western democratic countries.

While the previously discussed research conducted by Matějka et al. (2015) shows that 45 % of citizens participate in some form of non-formal volunteering in the CR, only 11,6 % of those respondents indicated they engaged in local community non-formal volunteering. Data from (Eurostat 2015b) show an even smaller percentage (16,6 %.) of citizens' engagement through non-formal volunteering (while formal volunteering is even slightly smaller 12,2 %). Given that citizens' engagement belongs among the basic factors of social cohesion and therefore local communities, the data presented show that both formal and non-formal volunteering has decreased, which supports the theory of Frič and Vávra (2012).

Trust, common vision and other data:

To study the degree of cohesion in society, trust, common vision among people, solidarity and communication interaction between people, the data from PORC from the years 2013, 2015, and 2018 were used. In 2018, 38 % of respondents perceived Czech society as divided into three, i.e. lower class, the major middle class and the elite, and 67 % of respondents believe that envy prevails in Czech society over tolerance regarding financial divisions, both of which might affect reciprocity and indicate low degrees of social capital. However, as for solidarity, 36% as opposed to 35% of respondents are willing to help socially excluded people. Though, 47 % of respondents are convinced that the assertion of opinions is pushed by a show of force and pressure (Tuček 2018).

It is therefore unsurprising that only 24 % of respondents believe that trust prevails over mistrust in Czech society. While this number is low in itself, the data from 2013 and 2015 show that there was a continuous increase in this conviction over the years (from 15 % to 24%) (Tuček 2015; 2013). More specifically, recent data on interpersonal relations show that around 50% of Czechs do not think people can be trusted and that they need to be cautious (MŽP et al. 2021b,12). Around 45% of Czech citizens also believe that they would be cheated by others if given the opportunity (ibid.). While the numbers are slightly more optimistic than in the preceding years, they still reflect the high degree of individualisation and mistrust.

In addition to that, the percentage of respondents believing that a common vision about the future prevails in Czech society has decreased from 33 % in 2013 to 29% in 2018 (Tuček 2015; 2013; 2018). Taking all this into consideration, the data indicate a rather unfriendly social environment in the CR wherein the emergence, building and development of local communities seems to be difficult. These data feed into and support the previously presented data, findings, theories and experiences regarding the non-existence or low degree of development of local communities in the CR. Most markedly, the absence of a common vision, widespread mistrust and miscommunication are "tangible" barriers which have been identified as problematic in the implementation of sustainability and climate change adaptation projects as is demonstrated further. This brings us to the final section on the assessment of local communities in the CR in this chapter.

Overcoming barriers in collective planning and decision-making

Little attention has been given to one factor of social cohesion, i.e. overcoming barriers in collective planning and decision-making. While the engagement of the public in collective planning and decision-making in specific areas is analysed in Chapter 8 of the empirical part, overcoming of barriers is briefly analysed based on cross-reading of three pieces of research related to social and environmental innovations projects which were implemented or were meant to be implemented in Czech cities and municipalities.

The research of Frantál (2010) and Frantál and Kunc (2010) shows that one of the four barriers to the implementation of wind energy innovations in Czech cities and municipalities is the socio-communicative barrier among the local citizens as well as between the citizens and the local authorities. The findings indicate that local citizens lack positive goals ("we want as opposed to the problem is") and social learning capital, which would enable collective evaluation of the proposed projects as well as public participation in the decision-making

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process where local citizens and stakeholders would see how the proposed measures impact the goals they would benefit from (e.g. economic once). Interestingly, the findings also show that it is municipalities with extended powers (such as Jihlava, Znojmo, Bruntál, Krnov and Rýmařov) who are the most sworn opponents of community energy projects (ibid.:194).

Also, the research by Capellán-Pérez et al. (2020) which mapped energy initiatives and energy organizations in the CR demonstrates that as opposed to other EU countries where citizens have been initiating and organizing community energy projects, only a few groups of citizens in the CR (e.g. in one building) organize community energy projects and the rest of projects implemented in the CR (around 45 at present) are all municipality-led owing to the general mistrust of citizens to collective ventures.

The research conducted by Krkoška Lorencová et al. (2021) focused on climate change adaptation planning in cities employing ecosystem-based approaches to adaptation using participatory, community-based approaches in three cities (Prague, Brno, Pilsen). One of the main aims was to study "the institutional context of the decision-making processes concerning implementation of those measures in order to enhance adaptation planning" (ibid., 2). The research shows that while successful cooperation between all stakeholders from all sectors took place in Brno, it was found that obstacles in form of an absent institutional framework as well as a lack of coordination, hindered the process in Prague. Also, stakeholders in Pilsen did not share a common vision, awareness, and opinions regarding non-action.

Functioning local community with a shared vision for a sustainable city, and well-established ways and modes of cooperation would create a combination of pressure and positive motivation for the engaged stakeholders to adopt measures aligned with such vision. However, the hindered process of adaptation measures in the city of Pilsen and Prague shows that there is not such a set of attributes which a functioning community should possess. The research also highlights the shortage of research focusing on stakeholder perspective and institutional analysis in climate change-related planning processes (Krkoška Lorencová et al. 2021).

On a brighter note, there are examples affirmative of existing communities or at least neighbourhood groups as well as active citizens. This may be seen in the activated local communities/neighbourhood communities found in Prague 14, Plzeň by Anthropictures, in Brno as confirmed by Krkoška Lorencová (2021) and also in other cities which could not be discussed in the scope of this thesis (see Schuringa et al. 2021). Also, this may be seen in the

number of projects proposed for funding from developmental agencies, for example, Nadace Via. Also, there are undoubtedly many active individuals and groups of people who engage in public affairs e.g. in municipality planning (see Chapter 8), as well as citizens science (Duží et al 2019).

This chapter described and analysed the status quo of local communities in the CR based on academic literature and research, publicly available data and other sources. It demonstrates that the definition and perception of a local community in the CR are problematic and inconsistent. The inconsistency lies in the academic discourse on the conflicting ideas of whether local communities are present and/or more developed in urban or rural areas which cannot be conclusively assessed in the scope of this thesis. On the other hand, the problem consists in the misleading or at least confusing definition of (local) communities in the CR which is not questioned in Czech academia alongside the existence of local communities in the CR which is only rarely dismissed or discussed at all.

While the findings cannot conclusively assert the existence or non-existence of local communities in the CR, they show that there is a rather adverse social environment for the emergence or development of local communities as defined in this thesis and the fundamental components of existing and functioning local communities (i.e. trust, solidarity, reciprocity, sense of belonging, common vision, communication in interactions, both formal and mainly non-formal volunteering and community engagement, overcoming barriers in collective planning and decision-making) are weak, nearly absent or missing, which indicates the absence of local communities. However, the findings also show that there are some networks of activated neighbourhoods already mapped by other researchers and that there are some good practices and examples affirmative of existing or emerging local communities. It is, therefore, necessary to persistently, consistently and systematically engage local citizens to elicit their collective action and uncover and stimulate their potential, which is given attention in Chapters 8.6. The following chapter briefly focuses on sustainable communities and bottom-up initiatives in the CR.

5.1. Sustainable communities and environmental bottom-up initiatives in the CR

Historically, there is a rich tradition of citizens' bottom-up engagement in the CR since the 19th century as has been already described in Chapter 4 of the empirical part. Duží et al. (2019, 243)

note that many of these activities relate to "the fields of nature protection, beekeeping, entomology, ornithology […], hunting and gardening, etc." On the contrary, environmental movements (mainly of protest character) were suppressed during the previous political regime and gained more momentum only after the 1980s. However, it follows from Císař (2013) that the arrival of freedom, capitalism and liberalism brought about general passivity in political grassroots action (including environmental), which was based on a misunderstanding of democratic principles (Pixová 2020).

Those grassroots movements which formed after 1989 were mostly either radical, protest-oriented (though based on bottom-up self-organization of citizens) or transactional (Císař 2008). The latter was based mostly on environmental issues among other things (Císař 2013). Transactional activism though led to the professionalisation of grassroots movements in the CR and focused on specific topics (national politics, campaigns, enlightenment, media coverage) rather than working at the local level and engaging larger numbers of citizens (Císař 2010). This resulted in the lack or absence of community-oriented associations. Kolářová (2020) suggests that climate scepticism is another reason for the absence of solutions-based initiatives related to climate change as she describes in the following words.

However, Krajhanzl et al. (2018) disclose that the majority of Czechs believe in climate change, 19 % do not know whether it exists, and "only" 29% refute its existence. Yet, two years later, PORC collected another set of data which shows that more than three-fifths of the public are interested in climate change at least a little. However, only 3 % are interested a lot and 17 % quite a lot. The remaining 43 % are interested just a little. Remarkably, less than half of the public (39 %) feel responsible for the climate change while the rest does not. Yet, 54 % of Czech citizens believe they may (or rather may) contribute to the mitigation of climate change (by change of behaviour, and activities) (Hanzlová 2019). Even though the majority of Czech citizens believe in climate Czech and that they may contribute to its mitigation, most of them do not volunteer in environmentally oriented activities.

Recent data on both non-formal and formal volunteering shows that only a small percentage of Czech citizens (5,7 %) engage in public affairs and community engagement related to environmental protection. These activities relate to "clean air and rivers, improving the environment around us, shelters for abandoned animals, animal rights, species protection, climate protection and anti-coal mining activities" (Krajhanzl et al. 2015, 21). Based on a comparison of environmental "movements" in the CR and abroad, Kolářová concludes that we

can find only bits and pieces of sustainable individual lifestyles, rather than community movements (Uhde 2017). And, community organising related to the environment does not take place even though the data collected by PORC in 2020 show that 65 % of the population is interested in the condition of the environment in the CR (Hanzlová 2020).

Yet, this might explain the increase in new ways of lifestyle, relating mainly to food self-provisioning and energy independence. (SF CR 2030: 238) Also, the research of Duží et al. (2019) shows that there are more individual activities related to the environment and nature protection. They found out that citizens' science, which is the engagement of citizens in scientific research (Bonney et al. 2009) often takes place in the CR. The research shows that 80 % of projects where citizens' science was detected relate to natural sciences (e.g. protection and conservation of nature, biodiversity, and natural resources).

In addition to that, self-provisioning is practised by 43 % of Czechs as opposed to 5 % in Great Britain (Jehlička et al. 2013). And while these individuals mostly do not practice sustainable lifestyles explicitly with the view of helping the planet, their activity is more large-sized than that of pro-environmentally oriented individuals.

Previous chapters have shown that community organising and mostly non-protest community organising (both in general and concerning environmental issues) is out of the common in the CR probably due to socio-political development presented previously. This is reflected in the fact that a large majority of Czech citizens do not take action even though there has been an increase in the number of Czechs who believe in climate change and in their possibility to contribute to its mitigation. While there are citizens devoted to new sustainable lifestyles and other "environmentally friendly" activities, there are many reasons to believe that sustainable communities in the CR are not being formed due to the possibly lower degree of community organising and development in the CR.

6. Community development in the Czech Republic

This chapter focuses on CD in the CR. It briefly summarizes historical development and in general initiatives of CD in the CR. While the non-profit sector in the CR has significantly contributed to activities related to CD (Třebický et al. 2010), this chapter represents only a brief introduction to CD. More attention is paid to top-down CE in Chapter 7 and Chapter 8.

Kinkor (2003) argues the informal organizations of civil society which were active in Czech lands from the 19th century up to the first half of the 20th century cannot be considered CD because they did not originate with the aims of social change or other changes, even though they might have helped some or other causes (Kinkor 2003: 257). The second half of the 20th century saw a decline of what might have developed into CD as it did in other EU countries and the US in the 60s and 70s (Henderson and Vercseg 2010). CD has emerged in the CR after 1989 (ibid.), mostly thanks to external help and due to the initiative of non-governmental organizations, occasionally also from the initiative of public administration at the local and regional level, and rarely from the initiative of the private sector (Kinkor 2003) as opposed to grassroots initiative (Henderson and Vercseg 2010).

As for the public sector, the CD is crucial for achieving some of its national objectives (e.g. in SF CR 2030). The regional development strategy of the Czech Republic 2021+ of the Ministry of Regional Development deals with CD in more detail (Ministerstvo pro místní rozvoj ČR 2021a). Several of its objectives aim at increasing community life, communication and collaboration in the planning of public services. However, these objectives and measures are focusing on rural areas in the CR to promote economic development. The focus on cultural development in regional centres, the development of community and cultural centres and the use of libraries for such purposes is highlighted throughout the document to promote community life.

The way the community approach is implemented in cities in the CR is described and analysed in Chapter 8. However, when planning and implementing (community) projects and strategies, Kinkor (2003: 258) claims that there are several difficulties which hinder this process. These are summarized in Table 7 below.

Table 7: Barriers to CD in the CR, Kinkor (2003)

1.	"Unpreparedness of people to solve common problems together – as a result of a strong tendency in society to engage in 'individual consumption, but also due to forty years long manipulation of citizens and the abuse of their natural need to participate in community life";
2.	"the prevailing expectations of local citizens that other people will solve the existing problems at the local level";
3.	"the predominant setting of local authorities to "manage people" rather than to promote participation in problem-solving (the notion that a passive citizen is a good citizen)";
4.	"limited financial resources, which make it impossible for some projects to be completed or to be completed as necessary";
5.	"so-called islands of positive deviation are created when community work is used, but conditions (legislative, financial, organizational) for systemic changes are missing."

To overcome these barriers, Kinkor (2003: 256-257) suggests that the "partnership of several sectors of society in the CR will need to be established and the key to all of this will be the initiation of such aims". Such initiatives have already come into existence, e.g. the initiative PAKT which motivates the public sector to engage citizens at all levels (Hanken et al. 2016). However, participation in this project takes the form of formal declaration while other methodological tools are publicly available. However, these outer initiatives have not had such an impact as will be discussed in the following chapters. The following chapter deals with participation and CE in the CR and it focuses mainly on the role of local public administration in participation and CE.

Attention should be given also to state-subsidized organizations (such as schools, libraries, and research organizations) and state-run community centres, which are also crucial in initiating CD. This is evident, for example, from the research of citizen science as discussed previously (Duží et al. 2019). Citizens science includes not only research organizations but also libraries, schools and others. Černý (2016) believes that libraries in the CR possess a unique position in Czech society owing to their complex network across the country. Černý (ibid.) even talk of libraries as having a leading role in promoting the engagement of locals in citizens' science and social innovations in general (Zbiejczuk Suchá et al. 2021). Accordingly, Henderson and Vercseg (2010, 37) see cultural centres in Eastern EU countries as having a strong link to CD and that they are "equivalent to the community centres found in many parts of western Europe."

7. Top-down community engagement in the CR

This chapter provides the wider context of top-down community engagement (CE) in the CR. Citizens' participation is anchored in several international treaties, many of which the CR is a contracting party, e.g. Aarhus Convention (UNECE 1998). However, the political system of the CR is based on representative (indirect) democracy wherein possibilities to directly participate in public decision-making are generally very limited (Hanken et al. 2015). In line with the international treaties emphasising citizens' engagement, there have been aims in recent decades to incorporate some aspects of direct democracy into this system.

Public administration in the CR aims to create and "warrant" opportunities for citizens' participation in planning and decision-making processes in local development and for "joint solutions" (Ministerstvo životního prostředí n.d.). It is presumed and aimed that such engagement should prevent conflicts, questioning of implemented policies and that it should improve and inform the policies before their implementation (ibid.). In this context, citizens' participation is understood or used by public administration in the CR mainly in the mechanistic sense rather than the humanistic one (Hanken et al. 2015, 15).

8. Areas and mechanism of top-down community engagement at the local level in the CR

The following sub-chapters firstly deal with the main top-down development processes which take place at the local level in the CR, may have a considerable impact on SD, and may apply participative methods to engage local citizens. These are strategic planning, land-use planning, community planning and cultural planning. Secondly, it deals with the programme Local Agenda 21 (LA21). Employing qualitative content analysis (QCA), the following sub-chapters describe and analyse whether these top-down engagement processes are used in the CR (i.e. level of participation) and to what degree they are community-building. The last sub-chapter discusses what forms of collaboration and mechanisms might be employed so that citizens' engagement in local development planning takes a systematic, consistent and permanent form, which not only engages but also elicits activities from the grassroots.

8.1. Top-down engagement in Strategic planning

This chapter describes citizens' engagement in strategic development planning (SDP) in the CR. It is anchored in the legislation (Act n. 128/200 Sb.) that municipalities must care for the development of their territory and the needs of their citizens. Although, the duty to conduct SDP is not anchored in Czech legislation. The creation of strategic plans in cities, as well as community engagement in the process of creation, is recommended in SF CR 2030. However, the right to participate in SDP cannot be enforced by citizens and the decision to engage citizens is up to individual municipal governments and their capacity (Hanken et al. 2015, 25).

The nature of SDP in the CR transformed significantly for the better (Ježek 2015; Sýkora, et al. 2019; Lorens 2019). Attitude toward SDP in the public sector in the 1990s was negative due to the former political regime and has become more popular only after the 2000s (Dimitriou and Thompson 2007). The findings of Ježek (2011) show that in 2010 54% of cities had SDP (Ježek 2014, 53). However, the plans were created due to financing opportunities from the EU and were assessed as a "necessary evil" (ibid., 54). These plans and the process of their creation were very formal, technical and technocratic as well as static as opposed to creative, resulting in "planning for planning" (Ježek 2014; Hruška 2011). Partially as a consequence of that, the participation of local citizens and other key actors was also problematic. The public is treated

as consultants with their opinions and values taken hardly into consideration (Sýkora et al. 2019). At the end of the day, participation was aimless, haphazard or non-existent resulting in the concentration of power among local politicians (Ježek 2014).

Nonetheless, recent data from large-scale empirical research conducted by Ježek (2015) shows that 62% of all cities have SDP (which means that nearly all cities above 10 000 inhabitants have a strategic development plan). The purposes of creation changed into the need to understand the present and plan for the future. Also, the participation of local actors became commonplace. The number of actors taking some part in the creation of the plan is 35,2. Although, the bigger the city the higher the number of participating stakeholders. The most frequent form of CE are consultations in Public Forums and talks with citizens (32,5 %), objecting and opinion polls (27,1%). Forms of partnerships in working groups are less common (17,7%) and co-deciding is rather rare (2,5 %).

On the other hand, working groups in the process of creation of SDP are becoming commonplace (nearly 90% and more in cities above 10 000 inhabitants). Although, they are mostly composed of thematic groups (73,9 % in cities). This might contribute to the engagement of expert public and representatives of organizations etc as opposed to target groups (23,2% in cities) where there would be a probably higher possibility of the representation of the general public. Also, the research shows that the choice of stakeholders into working groups was guided by the representativeness of key stakeholders (citizens, NGOs, entrepreneurs).

While 23,2% of cities perceive the process of creation of SDP as creative (23,2% in cities), open to the public and ideas (49,3% in cities), and that a sufficient number of key stakeholders was engaged (56,7 % in cities), it was found out that only (4,2%/6,9) cities believe the status of dominant representatives was overcome; 7,4% of cities believe that lasting information and communication structure was created among the participants, and 10,3% cities believe that large-ranging space was created for meaningful participation of the public. All in all, the findings of Ježek (2013; 2015; 2017) show that while some forms of citizens' and stakeholders' engagement in SDP became nearly commonplace in the CR, there are rather non-participative and passive forms of citizens engagement in strategic development planning in cities and that it is necessary to pay attention to the engagement of the public. Also, the attitudes of the public are not often reflected in the final solution which is also supported by Sýkora et al. (2019) and

Hruška (2011). These findings are also supported by the analysis conducted as part of this thesis.

The analysis of documents and other material related to strategic development planning in thirty-six ORP cities (above ten thousand inhabitants) active in LA21 in the CR was conducted. A detailed description of the analysis is attached in Attachment B. Key findings are presented in the following Table and summarized further.

Table 8: Citizens engagement in Strategic development planning

Form of engagement:	N. of cities	%
Informing:	2	5,6 %
Objecting (public opinion polls, surveys, objecting of the public):	33	91,7 %
Consulting (Discussions, public meetings, public forums, round tables):	17	47,2 %
Partnership (working groups, workshops with engagement of the public)	22 - 12: including the expert public - 8: including both the expert public and the general public - 1 expert, 1 unclear	61,1 % - 33,3 % - 22,2 % - 2,8 % - 2,8 %
Co-deciding (delegation of decision-making and responsibility):	1	2,8 %
Without the engagement of the public (expert creation) :	1	2,8 %

Source: author's findings, spring 2022, N= 36 ORP cities, categorization of the degree of engagement borrowed from Ježek (2015)

Regarding the degree of engagement of the public, the analysis shows similar findings as those presented above. Thirty cities (83,3%) explicitly declare a community approach (participation of the public, mixed-method approach) in the creation of SDP. However, the analysis shows that nearly all of the studied cities engaged citizens in SDP mostly through non-participative and passive forms, which reflects a low degree of community-building potential. While the general findings resemble those of Ježek (2015), it shows a higher percentage of consultations (47,2 %) and working groups (61,1%) held by cities. This difference may indicate either an

upward trend in more active citizens' engagement in SDP or it may be due to the sample composed of cities active in LA21.

However, the analysis demonstrates that more advanced forms of citizen engagement are also limited or absent as co-deciding took place only in one city. Also based on the analysis, the general public in the analysed cities is not directly included in the process of vision-making and the work with vision in public meetings is limited or absent. Therefore, the findings show that the community building potential in nearly all of the cities does not capitalize on its full potential and is mostly limited or absent at all.

8.2. Top-down engagement in Urban Development planning

This chapter describes the state of the affairs of citizens' engagement in urban development planning in the CR. Specifically, the creation of urban plans and the creation of public spaces.

8.2.1. Land-use planning

It is anchored in Czech legislation that land-use planning should comply with SD (*Zákon č. 183/2006 Sb)* (Třebický et al. 2010). Already 92 % of the land in the CR is regulated by a land-use plan (Úřad vlády České republiky 2017a, 313). The minimum standard of citizens' engagement is regulated by Czech Law. Citizens must be informed about all planned proposals and changes and they must be allowed to comment and give objections as the case may be to urban development changes (Rozmanová et al. 2019). However, more active forms of engagement of the public in the process are not required by the law, and therefore further engagement depends on given municipalities (Kopáček 2019; 2021).

Hanken et al. (2015) claim that effective citizen engagement in urban-land planning at the local level in the CR is virtually absent or it is conducted through non-interactive forms of participation. Kopáček (2021, 3) claims that participation "often takes on a mostly pro-forma character, and participatory mechanisms are very weakly institutionalized." These findings comply with those of Šlemr (2014) who even claims that the participation of the public does not often have any particular effect as the objections are not often taken into consideration, and therefore urban development planning is based on the agreement and collaboration between elected authorities of the local municipality and the assigned experts. Similar findings of the

engagement of the public in the creation of a land-use plan utilizing the minimum participation follow from the analysis conducted as part of this thesis.

The analysis of documents and other material related to the creation of land-use plans in thirty-six ORP cities (above ten thousand inhabitants) in the CR was conducted and the findings are summarized in the following Table and described further.

Table 9: Engagement of the public into Land use planning

Creation of Urban plan:	N.:	%	Form of public engagement:
Expert creation without engagement of the public above legal minimum/standard	32	88,9 %	X
Expert creation with unclear or partial engagement of the public above legal minimum	3	8,3 %	Call to the public for applying their intentions (163 intentions of private investors were kept a record of)
			40 discussions as part of preparations for obligatory public forum
			Requirements by the public and the municipality were included.
Expert creation with engagement of the public (in progress)	1	2,8 %	Engagement of the public before commencement of the official procedure

Source: author's findings, spring 2022, N= 36 ORP cities

The findings show that at least thirty-three cities did not engage the public above the legal minimum standard or they do not declare such engagement in the plan. This analysis indicates that the scale of citizens' engagement in the CR in the creation of urban plan/land-use plan is limited and ranges mostly from *informing* to *listening*. Also, there are no institutional or institutionalized instruments that would facilitate smooth communication between urban planners, municipality officers and the public (Kulíková 2009, 22). For a more detailed description see Attachment C.

The solution Hanken et al (2015, 30) suggest is that the legislation related to urban planning is changed to compel municipal governments to actively engage citizens in these processes or to change the process of land-use planning wherein participation takes place before the creation of official proposals of the urban plan. Rozmanová et al. (2019, 9) also suggest that

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municipalities should inform and engage the public before the official process of urban plan creation starts. In addition, Zahumenská (2014, 243) sees the limitation not only in minimal engagement and informing of the public by municipalities but also in the participation of citizens themselves as a larger part of citizens in the CR does not participate in land-use planning. To summarize, active engagement (in form of consulting and co-planning, such as through face-to-face meetings and discussion) of the public in the creation of the urban plan in ORP cities above 10 000 inhabitants in the CR which are active in LA21 is currently absent.

8.2.2. Planning and revitalization of public spaces

Revitalization of public spaces represents a viable way for citizens' engagement as it is less complicated and technical than a land-use plan. The findings of Hlaváček et al. (2016) show that the engagement of local citizens in the regeneration of public spaces (i.e. creation of public spaces) is generally low, the projects do not reflect the needs and wishes of local citizens, and communication about the projects with local citizens is conducted mainly ex-post or employing questionnaires. In addition to that, Hanken et al. (2015, 32) claim that usually, it is not the municipalities of the CR who initiate the engagement, but mostly civil society organizations such as Nadace Via, and Nadace Partnerství (Kinkor 2003).

While this may be the general trend, there are municipalities which do engage local citizens in the creation of public spaces and their participation has an impact on planning and decision-making in the project at issue and its final form. The analysis of participatory activities in entities active in LA21 shows that most cities from the sample engage citizens in the revitalization of public spaces. Nevertheless, it is limited mostly to consultations.

To conclude, both the academic literature and the presented analysis indicate that the engagement of local citizens in land-use planning is very limited and that municipalities are passive in citizens' engagement above the legal standard. However, contrary to the presented literature, it was found that there are municipalities and other entities that increasingly engage local citizens in public space creation. While this engagement does often have a direct impact as local citizens do take part in some form of *co-planning, co-creation* is not common in public space creation. The community-building character is either absent, limited or not fully capitalized on. The following chapter synthesizes aforementioned findings and best practices regarding top-down CE in the CR.

8.3.   Top-down engagement in Community planning

Community planning in the CR is understood mainly as an approach (planning along with the community) (Diváková, n.d.) rather than planning for the local community. Community development, community work, and community engagement is dealt with in more detail in a sectoral strategy of The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs "Social Inclusion Strategy 2021-2030" (Ministerstvo práce a sociálních věcí České republiky 2021). However, its objectives are focused mainly on integration of socially excluded citizens or those threatened by such exclusion. Therefore, systematic top-down community planning with the view of community building is not commonly practiced in the CR.

The study of official documents in municipalities shows that community planning in the CR is used regularly and systematically only in the sector of social care, known as community planning of social care (CPSC) (Ministerstvo průmyslu a sociálních věcí ČR 2020). It is a specific area in public policy planning at the local level, which has become relatively common in the CR since the 2000s due to financial grands and subsidies (Bernard 2009). There were certain aims which intended to make CPSC obligatory for municipalities in the CR, but it has eventually remained only as recommended. However, as a consequence of that, the "bottom up" process has become institutionalized (Bernard 2009, 65).

Bernard (2010b) asserts that the participatory character of CPSC in the CR is in fact hardly achieved. The problems Bernard (ibid.) identifies relate mainly to the engagement of municipality workers and representants, and the users of the social care without the engagement of the public. This is caused by the institutionalised context as well as the disinterests of the users and public at large to take part in the planning (Bernard 2009, 69). Similarly, Havlíková and Hubíková (2007) emphasize the technocratic character of CPSC, which lacks the participatory character. Similar problems are identified by Kailová (2005). Trnková (2017) in her diploma thesis also found shortcomings in citizens engagement in community planning of social care in the Southern region of the CR. These relate mainly to representativeness of engaged citizens, transparency, and influence over the plans.

The qualitative content analysis (N=36) conducted as part of this theses supports these findings. All of the cities follow the recommended methodology and establish working groups for the creation of CPSC (Ministerstvo průmyslu a sociálních věcí ČR 2020). However, only 14 (38,9 %) cities declare engagement of the general public. Other 4 (11,1 %) cities declare that the

general public is invited and may participate. However, in neither of the aforementioned categories is it possible to conclusively assess how many people from the general public were engaged. When this information is provided, it can be seen that only 1-2 people from the general public attended. Also, when the number of users of social care is provided, it shows that 0-3 users attend.

Sometimes the attendance of the general public is declared, however the records show only the attendance of deputies from individual clubs and societies. The records also show that sometimes attention is specifically focused on the providers of social care, and the needs of the users are articulated through their mediation. Moreover, action is sometimes based on information from questionnaires older than four years.

Only five cities (13,9 %) from the sample also conducted activities for the general public, such as focus groups, round tables, forums, and public meetings. The rest of the cities based the work in their working groups on the probably low number of users and people from the general public as well as public objecting and questionnaires for the representatives of the local governments, providers of the social care and/or the users.

It is difficult to conclusively assess the degree of participation of the general public since it is seldom provided. However, from the available information, it can be seen that the attendance of neither the general public nor the users is representative of those groups. Moreover, the working groups usually work very formally based on information from questionnaires and objecting. From the available information, it can be said that CPSC ranges from *informing*, through *listening*, to *co-planning*. However, as described above, the *co-planning* character of CPSC is doubtful. The community-building nature of engagement in CPSC is therefore in most cases low or absent. The following chapter describes and analyses top-down engagement in cultural planning.

8.4. Top-down engagement in Cultural Planning

Cultural planning as described in the theoretical part of this thesis complies with Czech legislation *(Act n.128/2000 Sb.)* *(§ 3 Act n. 248/2000 Sb.)*, national objectives and policies (Úřad vlády České republiky 2017b), cultural policies (Ministerstvo kultury ČR 2021) and international principles related to culture and development. However, it is still voluntary in the

CR and generally not recognized as a necessary tool for urban and socio-cultural development (Vojtíšková et al. 2016; Vojtíšková 2015).

Nonetheless, culture itself is increasingly more debated in the CR in the context of urban, socio-cultural and economic development (Vojtíšková et al. 2016; Vojtíšková 2015; Ministerstvo kultury ČR 2021). This may be because CR is unique for its rich cultural infrastructure (there are more than 5300 libraries, community centres and many amateur theatre and folklore societies). And culture plays an important role for Czech citizens as around 3,8 % of their expenses end up in culture-related services (Eurostat 2015a). Also, literature shows the importance of cultural centres and libraries as the hub of community life (where people meet, network and where the creation of social cohesion gathers momentum) (Henderson and Vercseg 2010; Černý 2016; Zbiejczuk Suchá et al. 2021).

The vision of culture and cultural life is described and given attention in SF CR 2030, though without mentioning cultural planning. Also, the Cultural Policy of the Czech Republic 2021-2025+ determines culture as crucial for the creation of social cohesion, a sense of belonging, local identity and local community (Wurst 2020, 6). Therefore, the policy outlines the need for citizens' participation in the creation and development of culture so that citizens "feel responsible for the development of culture," which could be done through "various forms of participative activities" (Ministerstvo kultury ČR 2021, 26). Yet, it does not specify the kind of participatory activities (ibid., 52). Likewise, one of the objectives of the National Cultural Policy of the Czech Republic 2015-2020 + was to "develop creativity, support cultural activities and creation of cultural goods, provision of public cultural services, access to culture, work with the public and development of participative culture" (Ministerstvo kultury ČR 2015, 2). Systematic cultural planning at the local level may contribute to all of these goals.

Nevertheless, Vojtíšková et al. (2016) who have working experience in cultural planning claim that it is conducted rather sporadically in the CR, giving examples of large cities (Praha, Plzeň, Ostrava, Brno) and others, such as Děčín and Louny. However, two more dozens of cultural related planning processes were conducted by the private company ONplan (ONplan, n.d.). During their work in cultural planning, Vojtíšková et al. (2016, 75) came across several barriers hindering the process of cultural planning, mainly sectoral narrow thinking in municipalities. Therefore, the authors suggest that an interdisciplinary or rather "interdepartmental" post is established to facilitate cultural planning, but also other activities related to planning and interdepartmental communication among others.

Hanken et al. (2015, 34) believe that the expansion of cultural planning in the CR will not be feasible unless it is anchored in legal documents of the CR, e.g. in the constitution. Petráková (2018) suggests that the institutionalization of cultural planning can be achieved by pressure from bottom-up initiatives requiring that city development strategies reflect a shared vision of a community.

The analysis looks at ORP cities above 10 000 inhabitants, which are active in LA21 and it aims to find out how many of those cities do implement community planning and whether and how they engage local citizens in this process. The analysis conducted as part of this thesis shows that less than half of the cities active in the LA21 program conduct cultural related planning. The findings are summarized in Table 10 and Table 11 and described thereafter.

Table 10: Number of cultural plans in a given sample

Culture plan:	Number (16/36):
Strategic or Conceptual plan for Culture	9
Cultural planning as part of Strategic planning for SD	4
Strategic or conceptual plan in progress	3

Source: author's findings, spring 2022, N= 36 ORP cities

The analysis shows that there are 16 cities out of a total of 36 cities from the sample, which conduct cultural related planning, or the process of creation is in progress. However, four of these cities have a cultural segment policy only as part of their strategic plan for SD which is implemented as part of the participation in LA21. The way citizens are engaged in cultural planning in these cities is summarized in the following table.

Table 11: Engagement of the public in Cultural planning

Cultural Planning	Engagement of the public:	N. of cities	Forms of engagement:
1.	The focus is solely on the expert public and key stakeholders from cultural life	1	working groups
2.	The focus is on the expert public and the key stakeholders from the cultural life with some engagement of the public	6	Working groups, seminars and interviews (composed mainly of expert public and key stakeholders from culture), questionnaires for the general public, presentations, meeting with the public before the commencement of planning. Workshop with the public, Forums

			of 10 problems and opportunities (focused solely on culture)
3.	Engagement of the public in at least two forms	2	Forum of 10 problems and opportunities (in general), objecting,
4.	Engagement of the public solely by a questionnaire	4	Questionnaires
5.	Without engagement of the public	1	Expert creation
6.	Unclear	2	Documents not published yet

Source: author's findings, spring 2022, N= 36 ORP cities

The findings show that fourteen cities out of sixteen cities declare engagement of the public in cultural planning (including bot already published documents of cultural planning and those which are in progress). However, as it is displayed in the Table 11 above, the public is engaged in different ways and degrees. A closer look at the documents recording the process of creation shows that the general public was either engaged (in 8 cities, 22,5 %), not actively engaged (in 4 cities, 11, 1%), or the engagement was limited and absent at all (in 2 cities, 5,6 %), or unclear (5,6 %). The rest of the cities (55,4 %) does not conduct cultural planning (see Appendix D).

To conclude, both academic literature and the absence of cultural planning in national policies show that it is not perceived by municipalities as a necessary tool for urban development in the CR. However, the QCAs show that there is an increasing number of municipalities implementing cultural planning in their policies. Although, it was found that the engagement of the general public and key stakeholders from the cultural scene is still limited in some of the cities or even absent. This demonstrates that the community-building potential in cultural planning is mostly untapped – most the cities do not engage in cultural planning at all and the ones that practice cultural planning do not fully capitalize on its community-building potential. Yet, there are examples of good practices, such as in the city of Jihlava, Olomouc and Liberec (see Appendix D). In addition to that, cultural planning might be an appropriate and feasible way for citizens to participate in the CR due to the interest of Czechs in culture and its potential to build social capital and cohesion in society.

8.5. Local Agenda 21

The working group for LA21 in the CR came into being in 2003 and only after that in 2006, the criteria for quality management of LA21 at the local level were created (CENIA 2017). Since

then, LA21 in the CR is the only state-guaranteed (top-down), well-structured programme for good governance at the local level with monitored and assessed indicators. Therefore, LA21 in the CR outlines and describes key processes of public administration, which must be undertaken for a successful implementation of LA21 principles of SD. It also creates a set of indicators for monitoring the implementation of criteria in respective entities (small towns, city parts, cities, regions, and local action groups). The implemented criteria determine whether a given entity reaches a category A, B, C, or D (CENIA 2020).

One of the core aspects of LA21 is the engagement of local citizens in local planning and decision-making to improve the management of public affairs. However, the programme is voluntary, resulting in a relatively small number of participating municipalities and other entities relative to the total number of municipalities (6248). Moreover, there are only very few entities in category A and category B. Table 12 shows the categories of LA21 and their respective numbers of participants as of winter 2021.

Table 12: Number of applicants and participants in Local Agenda 21

Category:	Number:
Category A	4
Category B	3
Category C	34
Category D	32

While the aforementioned description highlights the top-down approach of LA21, there is a disagreement on this in the CR. While Kostalova and Vavra (2021) understand LA21 as a top-down approach, Kveton et al. (2014) seem to understand it more as a bottom-up approach with the municipality taking the role of a facilitator. And Hájek et al. (2011, 83) view the tool as combining both top-down and bottom-up approaches.

Nonetheless, studies show that cities participating in LA21 in the CR focus mainly on the environmental pillar and that there are noticeable impacts on local development in comparison with municipalities not participating in the programme (Kveton et al. 2014). Also, the findings of Kostalova and Vavra (2021, 251) show that LA21 coordinators believe that the programme contributes to the "strengthening of regional togetherness of the citizens" and "responsibility

and interest in development of the region." They also see the benefit of LA21 in the availability of strategic planning of development involving the public among others (ibid.).

Hájek et al. (2011) contribute to the discourse on LA21 in the CR by emphasizing the notion of culture as the key component of a shared identity in cities. They believe that LA21 in the CR could benefit from including local culture in the planning processes and that cities should try to find synergies between sustainability and local culture.

Despite the objectives found in SF CR 2030, where LA21 belongs among the tools for CE and CD in the CR as well as the aforementioned literature, it follows from the expert interview that LA21 is not a tool for the development of communities. It is a programme for the sake of good governance in public administration, wherein the objective of engaging citizens is to build the trust of local citizens in local administration. This interpretation inclines to the mechanistic approach of participation, wherein participation is done for the needs and benefits of the municipality as opposed to humanistic participation, wherein CE pursues more profound goals (as explained in the theoretical part in Chapter 8.2.2.).

However, there is an implicit assumption that LA21 indirectly supports the development of local communities and that it probably initiates CE in some of the municipalities. While there are indicators of success for the entities active in LA21, the impacts of top-down CE in the context of LA21 on the local community are not evaluated. It follows from the interview that since municipalities engage citizens for their own sake, there is no need to monitor the participation in more detail for further impact evaluation. This means that it is enough that municipalities engage citizens at least in the minimum way prescribed in the criteria of LA21. Therefore, the assumption that LA21 contributes to CD cannot be assessed either directly from the official LA21 assessment.

To assess to what degree the participatory events taking place in the context of LA21 are community-building, they were analysed using qualitative content analysis. The results are summarized in Table 13 and commented on thereafter. A detailed description can be found in Attachment E.

Table 13: Results of analysis of participative activities in LA21 entities

Degree of engagement:	Number of participatory activities:
Informing	9

Listening	64
Co-planning	44
Co-creating	3
Without engagement of the wider public	13
Undetermined	7
Total:	140

The analysis shows that most of the participatory activities are conducted employing less active or passive forms. If the activity included several forms of participation, it was evaluated based on the one with highest CE potential. The most common form of participation is *listening* (45,7 %), followed by *co-planning* (31,4 %), absence of engagement of the public (9,3 %), and *informing* (6,4 %). Only three events (2,1 %) are determined as *co-creating* and therefore carry the highest community-building potential. Also, only three events (2,1 %) from *co-planning* were determined as advanced *co-planning* with higher community-building character.

Therefore, the records do not show high involvement and engagement of participating citizens. Only a few activities resulted in citizens offering help in form of volunteering, detailed ideas, ideas on who could take part in the creation of the project/event etc. This may indicate that citizens are not active in volunteering and working on their ideas for local development. Although, it may also indicate that the form of the participatory events does not encourage or stimulate collective action. Even though the number of events in the category of *co-planning* is relatively high, there is still plenty of room for improvement. Also, only 5 participatory events (3,6%) explicitly mentioned vision. And, only in one event (0,7 %) did the vision-making process take place.

Likewise, it results from the interview that there is still enough room for improvement when it comes to the criteria relating to work and collaboration with local citizens. It is believed that it could be intensified and that municipalities could be motivated to collaborate more with local citizens. Such changes might be included in the planned update of the LA21 methodology for cities which should be released by the end of the year 2022.

To conclude, the findings show that even the participatory events conducted by municipalities and other units active in LA21 do not always engage the general public. When engagement takes place, it is mostly conducted by passive or less participative forms, i.e. *listening* and

informing (in total 52,1 %). Therefore, the community-building character of most of the participatory activities is either absent, weak or not capitalizing on its full potential as only three events show a high degree of community-building character.

8.6. Collaborative structure for top-down community engagement

Based on both the theory as well as findings from the practical part, the following proposition is made to create a framework and a collaborative structure for systematic, permanent and consistent community engagement (CE) at the local level (McGee 2011).

Such collaborative structure should comprise both formalized municipal policy framework and internalization of systematic and permanent practices within municipalities. In practice, this would be materialized by the establishment of an interdepartmental post (Vojtíšková et al.) or a unit in local governments (McGee 2011), wherein officers would be interdisciplinary oriented and concerned with community engagement at large.

The unit (and the local government) should be guided by its policy framework, i.e. defined values and principles (based on CE, empowerment, and inclusivity) as well as a designed strategy of CE. As for the latter, it is necessary to set the goals of CE (mainly humanistic participation); vision (well-functioning or resilient local community); as well as strategy (how can the goals and vision be achieved, what degree of participation can be implemented, what tools may be used) (Van Waart et al. 2016; Ben Letaifa 2015; Luyet et al. 2012; Institut plánování a rozvoje 2016). It is, of course, necessary to allocate resources for such a venture to materialize theory into practice.

Such a unit could carry out the role of both municipality champion and community partnerships, which were identified as the best drivers for formalized municipality community engagement (McGee 2011). As for the former, officer/s from the unit would carry out a brokering role between the municipality and local citizens, initiatives, and associations (Grogan et al. 1995; Barnett 2001; Petráková 2018; McGee 2009; McNamara and Buggy 2017; Lund 2018; Adhikari and Taylor 2012). It would include both their engagement in projects and processes as well as municipal support in their projects, initiatives and innovative solutions. In practical terms, this would mean engagement activities before and throughout the processes of urban-land planning, strategic planning, community planning, cultural planning, participatory

budgeting and others. Most importantly, it should also include collaborative solution-making, i.e. *co-planning* and *co-creating*.

The role of community partnerships, on the other hand, would engage other relevant stakeholders, such as from the private sector, NGOs and last but not least, state-funded institutions. A collaborative network at the local level would be established by community partnerships. Throughout time, links and closer bonds would be fostered. This would, in turn, stimulate further collective action. The incorporation of culture into these processes would be beneficial in the CR due to the high importance of culture, especially libraries and cultural centres could play an important role.

Based on the presented literature, purposeful engagement of local libraries (and librarians) as well as stakeholders from the cultural scene would be beneficial for attracting the wider public into CE and local development (Černý 2016; Zbiejczuk Suchá et al. 2021; Henderson and Vercseg 2010; Duží et al. 2019). This is due to the high importance of culture (and libraries) among Czech citizens. Not only would cultural perspective attract more people, but it would also broaden the scope of thinking and creativity in the projects and processes (Barnett 2001; Grogan et al. 1995; Duxbury and Jeanotte 2010). Contrary to more strict, rigid and technocratic approaches, cultural approach facilitates the participation of the general public. The combination of both community partnerships and the municipal champion can have multiplying effects as all stakeholders would be systematically engaged.

The effects of such networking and collaboration stimulated by local governments would strengthen local capital, social cohesion, a sense of belonging and trust among people (Hájek et al. 2011; Wurst 2020; Institut plánování a rozvoje 2016; Vojtíšková et al. 2016; Michael Greig 2002). Such a growth of local capital would elicit the emergence of local initiatives and networks (ibid.). Throughout time, such networks would form resilient local communities which can overcome forthcoming barriers in collective action planning and decision-making (Butcher et al. 2019; Lund 2018). This would strengthen individual social learning as well as collective learning (Evans et al. 2021).

As a consequence of that, (collective) projects presuming and needing local community such as community energy, community gardens, collective procurement, local movements such as TT and others would be emerging at the local level from the initiative of local citizens

themselves. And lastly, such a social environment would more likely generate community champions in the local community.

In summary, such a policy framework and structure would elicit individual and collective action, leading to the creation of functioning resilient local communities which are able to collectively deal with local problems. This in turn would contribute to the adaptation and mitigation of climate change and SD at large.

VI. Discussion

The presented chapter is structured to correspond with the two main RQs designed in the methodology in Part III.

It is argued in this thesis that bottom-up non-protest initiatives focusing on SD and climate change do not come into being in the CR due to the near non-existence or low degree of development of local communities in the CR, especially in larger towns and cities. This is brought about by a low degree of social cohesion (trust, sense of belonging, solidarity); a high degree of indifference towards public affairs (low level of volunteering in local "community" activities) as well as the difficulty or inability to overcome barriers in collective planning and decision-making (including miscommunication among people, reaching common vision). In addition to that, environmental action is not commonly taken by individuals. This might be caused by the hedonistic value orientation of Czech citizens; their conviction that they cannot contribute to the adaptation and mitigation of climate change; or the belief that the state should take care of these issues.

Czech society demonstrates signs of a culture wherein emergence, building and development of local communities as well as collective action to tackle forthcoming difficulties is difficult. Such a state of affairs may be partly accounted for by the political development both during the communist regime as well as the subsequent period of transformation into the liberal, capitalistic state. These findings feed into the assumptions of the absence of a "culture of communities" indicated by Klenovská (2011) and Kolářová (2020) in the literature review. Besides, it confirms a shortage of academic discussion and research on the point at issue.

The limitations of these findings lie in the theoretical approach employed based on the study of literature, cross-reading and employment of publicly available statistical data from research institutions, which were used due to the under-researched nature of this topic (Tranfield, Denyer, and Smart 2003; Webster and Watson 2002; Snyder 2019).

However, the thesis also contributes to the academic discussion by highlighting the inconsistencies related to the conceptualisation and understanding of the local community in the CR as well as a lack of academic literature on what constitutes a local community in the CR. This has implications for the study of the point at issue as it hinders further analyses and research. A more suitable conceptualization of the local community needs to be established

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(which is always open to further discussion) and the understanding of what qualifies as a local community needs to be unified in some theoretical approaches. Until then, proper research and comprehensive assessment of the existence and development of local communities in the CR will be difficult. Furthermore, valuable data and information in the process of emerging, overcoming barriers or disintegration of local communities will be lost. The author, therefore, recommends that attention is paid to what qualifies as a local community in the CR.

The literature review and the conducted qualitative content analyses of four urban development processes and participatory activities in the context of LA21 programme (N=36), (N=36), (N=36), (N=36), (N=140) respectively, confirm that local actors are increasingly more engaged in the urban development processes (even though in limited numbers and ways) as well as in the participatory activities. However, academia tends to focus on whether or not, or to what degree citizens are engaged. Attention is not paid to the degree these processes are community-building (komunitotvorné) and how they might become such. The presented thesis contributes to current knowledge about the participatory activities in urban development processes by proposing that most of the activities possess none or limited community-building character and the engagement does not capitalize on its full potential.

To support or fuel the emergence of bottom-up non-protest initiatives focusing on climate change mitigation and adaptation and SD at large in the CR, local governments should reorient from often rather ad-hoc, inconsistent, and unsystematic mechanistic participation or participation excluding the general public towards humanistic participation focusing on the development of the social environment and local communities.

To improve and increase community engagement, it is recommended in this thesis that a permanent interdisciplinary and interdepartmental unit is established for systematic and consistent top-down community engagement. Such a unit should be established based on internalized policy framework with defined values, goals and vision. However, the purpose of the unit would be humanistic participation concerned with the emergence and development of the local community, supporting the increase of social cohesion and social capital as opposed to mechanistic participation which usually seeks consensus and legitimacy. This would be carried out by a municipality champion and community partnerships within the proposed unit. It is recommended that both libraries and cultural centres are employed to address more people. As opposed to other approaches, it is important to keep in mind the community-building

potential of participatory activities wherein local citizens should define their roles and contributions to local development and take part in "real action," i.e. *co-creation.*

There are two limitations to the above-presented findings. The first is the small sample of analysed cities (N=36) in each of the development processes and (N=140) in the analysis of participatory activities in LA21. Second, the analysis is based on document analysis of available data and information in the LA21 database, the national database of strategic documents and the websites of respective cities. However, the sample includes all the cities and activities in the given sample and textual content analysis helps to avoid potential interpretative subjection of officials from respective municipalities.

VII. Conclusion

The thesis employs the system theory perspective to comprehend how international treaties and commitments related to sustainable development reflect in the CR. The thesis explores how these commitments are communicated to the local level by state institutions and how they are manifested there. Specifically, it is concerned with the systems of state administration, local administration, civil society, and local communities in the CR as well as the interactions between them. Especially, attention is given to the interactions between local citizens and local governments leading towards SD, i.e. top-down community engagement. To analyse these interactions, qualitative content analysis of four urban development processes and participatory activities in the context of LA21 programme (N=36), (N=36), (N=36), (N=36), (N=140) respectively was employed to see whether such interactions are conducted by local governments and to what degree the interactions are community-building. An ample degree of communication, self-organisation and interaction should exist at the local level for the systems to operate as a whole, and to be efficient and successful in their common purposes and adaptations to the outer environment.

CR belongs among the nations recognizing the necessity to act in climate change adaptation and mitigation as well as SD at large. More specifically, both the international and the national discourse in the CR accentuate the role of cities and communities in contributing to the adaptation and mitigation of climate change. The engagement of citizens is viewed as a tool for eliciting action and common and participative decision-making. Yet, it becomes clear that there is a discrepancy between theory and practice, which goes both against international treaties and recommendations as well as the national strategic objectives. The thesis demonstrates that the interaction and communication of institutions, groups of individuals or individuals in the respective systems as well as in between them has been problematic.

It is argued that this can be observed in the weak state of civil society in the CR and the (near) non-existence or low degree of development of local communities in the CR. Likewise, the (near) non-existence of bottom-up non-protest initiatives focusing on SD and climate change in the CR can be also explained on the grounds of the weak civil society. Such a state of affairs results from a low degree of social cohesion, social capital, trust, a sense of belonging, volunteering, inability to see a common purpose (vision) and inability to effectively communicate and collectively overcome barriers in planning and decision-making processes.

This is accounted for by the evolution of interactions in the past decades. These interactions have been formed during the communist regime by which CR has been affected as well as by the subsequent socio-political transformation into the liberal, capitalist state for which the systems had not been fully prepared.

Specifically, the conducted QCAs disclose that the top-down community engagement approaches have not been fully implemented and have been limited and/or have not fully capitalized on its community-building potential. The latter two instances take place even where SD and the application of community approaches are explicitly declared by given local governments. Moreover, it was found that top-down CE is commonly used to create consensus and improve policies rather than for the sake of community development.

Therefore, the thesis demonstrates that there are no top-down structures and networks that would explicitly and systematically address and pursue community development and fostering of social cohesion and social capital in the process of collective planning and decision-making in Czech towns and cities. For the creation and acceleration of social capital and cohesion, these structures and networks must be strengthened or created. One of such networks is Local Agenda 21, that could implement community building as an explicit goal for participating cities and provide tools and examples of good practice.

Since the emphasis is on cities which may contribute best to climate change adaptation and mitigation, it is suggested that local governments in cities with extended powers and above 10 000 inhabitants create an interdisciplinary and interdepartmental unit in their local government. The objective of this unit is the creation of "places of interaction" between the two systems and the active engagement of local citizens. Other stakeholders, organizations and institutions, which are part of the local social environment should be engaged too.

The engagement should focus on humanistic participation as opposed to mechanistic participation. Humanistic participation will fuel interest, a sense of belonging, trust and consequently social capital and social cohesion among local citizens. It will also usher in the process of social learning, where citizens gain new insights, knowledge, and competencies, which they may further apply to the local development. This will further give on to the emergence or development of local communities in the CR.

Well-developed and functioning local communities will empower the execution of projects and measures related to climate change and SD, wherein a well-functioning local community is

imperative to the successful implementation of those projects. From a larger perspective, this will facilitate the transition to a more sustainable society in the CR and it will contribute to the fulfilment of international commitments concerning climate change adaptation and mitigation as well as SD at large.

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IX. APPENDIX

Appendix A: Expert interview in LA21

SEKCE I – zaměřena na dostupnost primárních zdrojů

1) Máte k datům v databázi MA21 ještě nějaká doplňující nebo podrobnější data či analýzy, které už nejsou veřejně přístupná, ale jsou relevantní?

2) Máte nějaké doporučení, jak s těmi informacemi pracovat? (nějaké funkce, na co se zaměřit, jestli je něco zastaralé)

3) Máte v rámci CENIA další zdroje, které by se daly využít pro výzkum podpory zapojování občanské společnosti do rozhodování a plánování, případně i dalších aktivit se zapojením občanské společnosti?

4) Napadají vás zdroje dalších organizací, které využíváte, či které by mohly být užitečné? Například zdroje státní správy, SMOČR, NS MAS, Zdravá města apod.? (výzkum měst, hodnocení kvality života)

5) Existují zpracované analýzy, které tuto problematiku řeší? (podpora místních komunit a participace v ČR)

SEKCE II – Současná praxe MA 21

6) Jaké jsou z vašeho pohledu hlavní přínosy MA21 pro města?

7) Jaký je podle vás status MA 21 v ČR v porovnání se zbytkem Evropy?

8) Jaké alternativní nástroje a směry se uplatňují v zahraničí a u nás ne?

9) Je účelem MA 21 rozvíjet místní komunitu a občanskou angažovanost?

    a. Je to v rámci měst zapojených do MA21 explicitně formulováno?

10) Podporuje MA 21 rozvoj místní komunity?

    a. Do jaké míry podle vás podporuje MA21 rozvoj místní komunity a občanskou angažovanost?

    b. Vnímáte v tomto ohledu nějaké nedostatky (rozvoj místní komunity v rámci ma21)?

11) Existuje evaluace dopadu MA 21 na místní komunitu a občanskou angažovanost?

12) Využívají města zapojená do MA 21 další nástroje či metody rozvoje místní komunity a občanské angažovanosti? (co je používáno paralelně, e.g. komunitní plánování, koordinátor participace, participativní rozpočet)

13) Synergie MA 21 A MAS: Vnímáte, že může být přínosná kombinace s místními akčními skupinami?

14) Masky u menších měst naplňují kontinuální spolupráci aktérů z různých sektorů za použití bottom-up přístupů. Existuje v současné době nějaká alternativa MASek pro větší města (nad 25 000), která nemůžou být v MAS?

    a. Je něco takového podle vás potřeba?

15) Vnímáte MA 21 spíše jako přístup shora-dolů nebo zdola-nahoru (top-down nebo bottom-up approach)?

SEKCE III – Budoucí výhled MA 21

16) Jak vnímáte budoucnost MA21 V ČR?

17) Jaké jsou plány MŽP a CENIA?

    a. Plánuje se doplnění či modifikace MA21?

18) Víte o nějakých dalších připravovaných programech či nástrojích souvisejících s rozvojem komunit?

19) Myslíte, že by byl potřeba nějaký nástroj na rozvoj komunit?

20) Napadá vás někdo další, s kým by bylo dobré udělat rozhovor?

Prostor na dotazy

Appendix B: Detailed analysis of Strategic development planning

Thirty cities (83,3 %) explicitly declare a community approach (participation of the public, mixed-method approach) in the creation of SDP. However, the prevalent form of citizen engagement is employing non-participative and passive forms. In total, 5,6 % of cities mentioned informing as means of engaging the citizens.[6] And 91,2 % of cities engage the public through objecting (public opinion polls, surveys and giving the possibility of objecting to the proposed SDP). On the other hand, 47,2 % of cities held consultation events for the public (though the number of participants is not recorded in the documents and therefore the attendance cannot be studied).

In total, 61,1% of cities formed working groups and workshops before or during the creation of SDP. As for the working groups, however, 33,3 % of cities engaged in their working groups only the expert public (the most important stakeholders, representatives of organizations and institutions etc). And, only 22,2 % of cities which held working groups were also open to the general public. In addition, it was impossible to conclude the real number of participants from the general public in the vast majority of the working groups. When this information was included, it could be seen that only lower numbers (app. 1-4) of the general public participated in the working group.

This may be among others due to the formal character of the working groups, insufficient communication or lack of interest on the part of the general public. The former two are explicitly concluded by Ježek (2015) as problematic and the latter may follow from these and other researched problems (e.g. ignorance of participative tools on the part of local office workers etc.) Therefore, a real form of partnership in working groups and sufficient engagement of the public in the groups also seems to be limited.

Only the city of Opava (2,8 %) was determined as engaging citizens in SDP through co-deciding (in form of participatory budgeting). While there are also other cities which engage citizens in

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[6] While only 5,6 % cities mentioned informing as means of citizens' engagement, it should be taken into consideration that strategic development plans do not comprise complete information. While the author of this thesis does not have numerical foundation for this claim, the long study of the cities' websites shows high activity in informing citizens about held events (e.g. websites, Facebook etc).

participatory budgeting, it is explicitly pronounced in the SDP of Opava that the general public belongs among the key stakeholders in the implementation process of SDP. A website for both general project proposals as well as participatory budgeting proposals was created especially for this purpose as part of the strategic development planning process. However, co-deciding was not explicitly declared in the SDP.

Lastly, only one city (2,8 % of the analysed cities) did not engage the public at all.

It should be also noted that as far as the information goes, the majority of the surveys focused on the evaluation of residents' satisfaction with life in their city and with its services as opposed to future needs, challenges and the creation of a vision.

Also, citizens were not mostly engaged in the creation of a common vision at all or only through a survey. It is unclear whether working with a common vision is part of the consultation processes (as described above). Nonetheless, the more detailed analysis of participatory activities conducted by entities active in LA21 shows that nearly none of the public forums, meetings and round tables in the analysed cities and entities worked with a common vision, neither were visioning and vision-making parts of the participatory events.

Whereas nearly half of the studied cities did engage the public in consultations of some sort, the number of participants, the real proceeding, and the real impact in the final form of the SDP are often unclear and cannot be properly evaluated based on the recorded data.

Appendix C: Detailed analysis of Land-use planning

Land-use planning

The analysis shows that three cities declare some additional participatory activities. However, the meaning or relevance to the engagement of the public remains unclear as no further information is provided. It may be concluded that at least thirty-three out of the thirty-six cities did not engage the public above the legal minimum. The engagement of the public in the remaining three cities remains unclear.

Nevertheless, it was found out that the city of Rožnov pod Radhoštem is in the process of the creation of a new urban plan and declares its intentions to actively engage the public along with the creation of the plan, mainly before the plan is created. The first phase of the creation of the plan already took place and focused on a collection of data from local citizens as well as on discussions with local representatives and citizens. The discussion consisted of problems and opportunities of the city as well as the vision of future development. And most importantly, all citizens interested in the development of the city were invited to this discussion. Likewise, citizens may send proposals for the new urban plan which will be dealt with (Graclíková 2022). However, the real number of participating citizens from the general public is unclear so far and a more detailed analysis would be desirable once the plan is completed.

Creation of public spaces

Most of the cities, self-governed municipal districts, smaller municipalities as well as LAGs, which take place in the programme LA21 engage citizens in the creation of public spaces regularly. It is mostly the cities in categories C, B and A which engage citizens in the creation of public spaces but also those in category D. This is because in categories C and above, entities taking part in LA21 must conduct three-phase engagement of the public into planning and decision-making. And the creation of the public spaces belongs among the recommended and easiest projects which meet this criterium. The degree to which the municipalities and other entities are engaging local citizens is described in more detail in Chapter 8.5 and Appendix E below. In addition to that, the analysis shows that participatory budgeting often comprises of creation of public spaces in some form. Therefore, also cities which conduct participatory budgeting do often engage citizens in the creation of public spaces. However, while there is an increasing number of cities participating in LA21 or conducting participatory budgeting, the number is still quite small relative to the total number of municipalities).

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Appendix D: Detailed analysis of Cultural planning

The analysis shows that only sixteen cities (44,4 %) conduct culture-related planning. Fifteen cities (41,7 %) out of sixteen declare engagement of the public in cultural planning. However, as is displayed in Table 10, the public is engaged in different ways and degrees. For ease of description, the engagement of the public was divided into six forms. The analysis shows the following.

1. In two cities (5,6 %), the engagement of the public is unclear as the documents have not been published yet.
2. One of the cities (2,8 %) did not engage the general public at all.
3. One city (2,8 %) engaged only the key stakeholders from the cultural scene along with the expert public.
4. Four cities (11,1 %) engaged the public only by questionnaires.
5. Two cities (5,6 %) engaged the general public in at least two ways (combination of surveys, Public Forums of 10 problems and Opportunities, and objecting).
6. Six cities (16,7 %) engaged all the parties, i.e. the expert public, key stakeholders from the cultural scene and the general public. However, in most of the cities (5), the emphasis was put on the key stakeholders from the cultural scene rather than the general public. This can be seen for example in invitations for public meetings where the emphasis is put on key actors active in culture, even though the meeting is open for all participants.

The analysis also shows that some of the cities are becoming very active in cultural activities and planning. For example, the city of Jihlava has established a new post for the management of cultural planning and has been carrying out public forums related to culture regularly ever since. The increase in activities is seen also for instance in the city of Liberec as can be seen in the newly set-up website CreativeLiberec.

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Appendix E: Detailed analysis of LA21 activities

The analysis shows that the cities engage their citizens mostly in forums. These are usually called Forum LA21, Forum of Healthy Cities, 10 problems of cities, 10 opportunities of cities (which is sometimes specifically for the Youth), round tables (sometimes with a specific topic), and meetings with the Mayor. These events are often the same or similar in form, but they may differ in content. Cities also engage citizens in participatory budgeting, where citizens propose and vote for projects. Also, CE in specific projects is conducted where citizens comment on and contribute to the content and form of the final project. It is mainly the content of the participatory events that reflects the degree of citizens' engagement and the community-building potential it carries.

The analysis shows that nine events (6,4 %) were only of informing character. During those events, citizens were informed (in-person) about present changes in local development, and possibilities of participation, or the officials from the municipality answered questions from the public if needed.

There were sixty-four events (45,7 %) during which the municipality officials listened to the problems, wishes and needs of the public concerning the city. Sixty (42,9 %) of those events took place in person and the other four took place through questionnaires or polls. Many of the events included in this category are forums which are often considered by municipalities as "planning" with the public. However, forums are rather about prioritising by citizens concerning what needs to be improved or changed. The real planning and doing are done by the municipality, other stakeholders, or at least during a different event.

The way Forums are usually conducted in the CR is considered in this thesis as quasi-planning and therefore mostly determined as *listening*. The conclusion of these events is usually that about 2-3 problems or opportunities will be taken care of and the update to that and the other problems will be given in the next forum (usually in 6 months or a year). Some of the municipalities use the prioritised problems for their projects/ideas storage which can be used for action plans and strategic plans in the future. In this way, i.e. through 10 problems of the city, some municipalities "engage" local citizens in the creation of the strategic plan.

Forty-four events (31,4 %) were determined as co-planning. These were usually specific projects where citizens were contributing to and impacting the final form of the given project.

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And, there were three out of the forty-four events (2,1 %), which were determined in the analysis as advanced co-planning. During these events, citizens participated actively, giving specific ideas, defining the use of the project, coming up with ideas on who could take part in the implementation etc. Such active participation is precisely what may bring people together, act and create new networks.

However, only three events. (2,1 %) were determined as *co-creating*. In these activities, people came up with an idea which is important for all of them and they took an active part in the implementation itself by volunteering and taking shifts in the creation.

Thirteen events (9,3 %) were determined as without the engagement of the public as either they engaged only the expert public, there were not enough local citizens (e.g. 1), or public engagement was going to take place through a questionnaire. While even such events may be beneficial, they do not create the environment for collective gathering and collective action. Also, some of those polls focused on topics such as whether to open a new policy station or related to opening hours of the store Coop. And, seven events were not categorised as not enough information was found to determine the nature of the event.

As far as the records show, visions were not usually used in the participatory events. Municipal part Prague 14 is the only one which actively worked with vision. Specifically, students were creating their vision of the municipal part in the years 2020, 2040 and 2060. However, the follow-up activity focused again on the list of problems in the municipal part as opposed to what can be done, and how it can be done to follow the vision. The other two cities and one city part explicitly included vision in the participatory event. However, the records do not show any active work with the vision. While the records of the city of Ostrava (Slezská Ostrava) do not show a common work with a vision, the collective effort put into the project Farní zahrada suggests otherwise and further research on this project would be desirable.

As for the number of participants in respective events, the information is seldom provided. However, some events claim to host around 80 citizens, while others around few numbers or few dozens. Apart from missing information on the number of participants, it is not often clear how many of the participants were from the general public and how many of them were representatives of the local municipality, who often participate plentifully. To assess the interest and participation of local citizens (from the general public), more consistent and informed records must be acquired by the local municipalities.

Interestingly, it follows from the expert interview that forums are no longer recommended by LA21 since the change of official LA21 methodology in the year 2017. This change results from expert workshops on participation as well as from the feedback of municipality officials who often perceive Forums as task assignments by citizens. In addition, there are often suggestions which cannot be always changed by the municipality or only in the long term.

On the contrary, there are many suggestions which might be implemented by the citizens themselves (also in collaboration with the municipality and other stakeholders). However, such an initiative barely took place. Although, it cannot be conclusively assessed whether any collective action did not take place due to the format of forums, the passive attitudes of the citizens and low social cohesion or whether there are different reasons for that. Nevertheless, it results that many municipalities still use Forums as a tool for planning with the public. This may be also since Forums are recommended by the organization Healthy Cities, wherein many cities active in LA21 are also active.