Does Participation Matter?

Assessing Participatory Approaches to Local Development Planning in Municipalities in Bosnia and Herzegovina

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Abstract

Motivated by theoretical debates on the effectiveness of participation in development and the emphasis of international donors in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) on participatory approaches in development projects, this thesis has tried to assess whether citizen participation in the creation of local development strategies has been meaningful and has had an influence on local development policy-making, through in-depth case studies of three BiH municipalities - Petrovo, Maglaj, and Visoko. Findings are mixed: while all municipalities appeared to have defined the task of participatory planning well, provided adequate resources for planning, and ensured structured decision-making, transparency, and early involvement of participants in the process, adequate representation of all stakeholders in the process and its independence is doubtful. Furthermore, participants' influence on policy-making cannot be assessed positively from an implementation point of view in two cases, while influence in regards to institutionalization of participation appears to be lacking in all three cases. Given these findings, the study points towards some prescriptions of how these obstacles on the road to more effective participation may be overcome.

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List of Abbreviations

ALDI - Agency For Local Development Initiatives

BiH - Bosnia and Herzegovina

CCI – Centri civilnih inicijativa (Centers of Civil Initiatives)

CSO – Civil Society Organization

EDA – Enterprise Development Agency

EUR - Euro

FBiH – Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina

FOIA – Freedom of Access to Information Act

GAP - Government Accountability Project

ILDP - Integrated Local Development Planning

KM – Konvertibilna marka (Convertible mark)

LAG - Local Action Group

LEAP - Local Environmental Action Plan

LC - Local Community

MA - Municipal Assembly

MC - Municipal Council

MDP - Center for Management, Development and Planning

MDPC - Municipal Development Planning Committee

MDT - Municipal Development Team

NGO – Non-governmental organization

OHR - Office of the High Representative

OSCE – Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

OSFBiH - Open Society Foundation Bosnia and Herzegovina

PADCO - Planning and Development Collaborative International

PG - Partnership Group

RB - Rights-based

REC - Regional Environmental Centre

RMAP - Rights-based municipal assessment and planning project

RS - Republika Srpska

SWOT – Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats

ToR – Terms of Reference

UN – United Nations

UNDP – United Nations Development Program

WG - Working Groups

1. Introduction: Does Participation Matter for Development?

Citizen participation has become a buzz-word in contemporary development study and practice. While distinct development and democratization agendas have come to share a common belief that participatory fora not only generate new forms of citizenship, but are effective both in terms of communication between citizens and governments and public policy and equity, it is not always clear when normative assumptions about the benefits of participation are rooted in empirical evidence as opposed to political talk (Cornwall and Coehlo 2007, 4-5).

In the past, participatory approaches implemented by international development agencies have been criticized, mostly because they "managed to 'tyrannize' development debates without sufficient evidence that participatory approaches were living up to the promise of empowerment and transformative development for marginal peoples" (Hickey and Mohan 2004, 3). Recently, due to a "confluence of development and democratization agendas" (Cornwall and Coehlo 2007, 4), participation has become embedded in public administration's paradigm of "new governance" (Blomgren Bingham, O'Leary and Nabatchi 2005, 547), and thus appears to have become more institutionalized; however, there is still a gap between new technical and legal means devised to institutionalize participation and the reality that poorer and marginalized groups are excluded (Cornwall and Coehlo 2007, 3). This invites different prescriptions by different authors, albeit no definite ones, on what makes participation work..

In Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), international aid agencies have devoted large efforts to foster participation in development projects, encouraging a variety of participatory mechanisms, most of which have not existed in previous legal arrangements. One way in which participation bas been fostered is through so-called partnership groups or planning committees established for the purpose of drafting local development strategies[1]. The outcome of citizen engagement in these projects is yet to be determined. While one survey has shown that rates of nominal participation in the creation of strategies are high, their relevance and acceptance by the local governments appears weak (UNDP RMAP 2005). This invites the question whether participation in local development planning is truly effective or meaningful.

This thesis seeks to answer two questions: Is citizen participation taking place in a meaningful manner, or is it just a window-dressing activity employed by international organizations when it comes to participation in local development planning to build up a good image and pitch projects? Furthermore, has participation influenced local development policy, and has such policy consequently been implemented? To answer these questions, I have conducted an in-depth case study of three municipalities in BiH that have adopted a development strategy by involving a wider group of stakeholders in the creation phase.

The second chapter of the thesis is a literature review of the theoretical debates surrounding participation. In the third chapter, the legal framework for participation in BiH and participation practices will be tackled. In the fourth, fifth, and sixth chapters, I provide

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1   Further references to local development strategies in the text concern both local economic development plans or broader, multi-sectoral plans that include other sectors relevant to local development, such as health, social protection, culture, sports, etc.

insight into the analytical framework and methodology of my research, as well as findings
and analysis.

2. A Literature Review on Participation in Development[2]

2.1. Defining Participation

In the past two decades, participatory research and planning methods have been applied by donors and development agencies after externally-imposed, expert-oriented methods were seen as increasingly ineffective (Cooke and Kothari 2001, 5)[3]. A trend associated with radical development studies, participation became a part of neo-liberal development discourse, which shifted emphasis from market deregulation to social development and institutional reform (Mohan and Stokke 2000, 248). The move towards a "deepening" of democracy – an extension of representative democracy through participatory mechanisms rooted in "more robust views of rights and responsibilities of democratic citizenship" – has, *inter alia*, resulted from a desire to raise legitimacy by the state, to reconsider the role of know-how in public policy, and to meet social movements' demands for greater power (Gaventa 2006, 12). Since the 1990s, the "democracy debate" has shifted concern from government to governance, which implies new exchanges between states, markets and society (ibid). Moreover, participation is no longer seen as an duty, but rather a right of citizens (Hickey and Mohan 2004, 8).

Gaventa presents "deepening democracy" as an umbrella for four approaches to participation. In "civil society democracy" donors have recognized the role of civil society organizations (CSOs) in providing checks and balances on governments, and have built up

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2   This literature review is loosely based on the final paper I submitted for the "Institutions and Development" class, Spring semester, CEU 2009.

3   However, the idea of participation is not new to classic democratic theory (Gaventa 2006, 12). Hickey and Mohan trace the ideas of participation in development to the 1940s and colonial times, where participation was often exercised as a means of control over local populations (Hickey and Mohan 2004, 6).

their capacity, in addition to assisting institutions and electoral processes (2006, 14). "Participatory democracy" or governance implies that citizens have a significant role in policy-making (ibid, 15-16). "Deliberative democracy" is focused on deliberation's nature and quality in participation (ibid, 17)."Empowered participatory governance" focuses, *inter alia*, on bottom-up participation, pragmatically oriented at solving specific problems, as well as on the countervailing of power structures, so that public spaces can be opened up (ibid, 19). Gaventa emphasizes a conceptual overlap between the approaches (2006, 20). Therefore, this literature review will not attend to each in detail, but will mostly address "participatory" and "deliberative democracy" literature.

According to Rowe and Frewer, participation means "involving members of the public in the agenda-setting, decision-making, and policy-forming activities of organizations/ institutions responsible for policy development" (Rowe and Frewer 2005, 253). They make a distinction between three types of participation: public communication, where the public serves as a passive receiver of information delivered by a facilitator/sponsor; public consultation, where participants give information to the sponsors; and public participation, where an exchange of information between the two sides is taking place (ibid, 254-255). Some differentiate between strength and levels of influence exerted by participation: according to Michener, "weak" participation implies "consulting or informing", while "strong" implies "partnership or ceding control" (Michener cited in Brett 2003, 5).

The purpose of participation differs to different theorists and practitioners. According to Cooke and Kothari, some see it as a basis for ownership or empowerment for local

stakeholders (2001, 5). For the World Bank, participation may have the objective of empowerment of the disadvantaged, building beneficiary capacity, increasing the effectiveness of Bank-supported activities, cost-sharing with people served by a project, and improved project efficiency (World Bank 1992, 177-178). More recently, the World Bank has tied participation to social accountability[4] (World Bank 2009).

The types of mechanisms for participation are numerous. Using different sources, Rowe and Frewer have put together over a 100 mechanisms, some of which may incorporate each other, ranging from specific techniques or tools to composite processes (2005, 256). The authors suggest that a significant theory instructing what mechanism to use in specific circumstances has not been determined to allow for effective participation (ibid, 260).

2.2. Does Participation Work?

There are many pro and counter-arguments to participation. While participation is seen as a way to empower local people and create sustainable development, many critics seem to throw off the possibility that these goals are, in fact reachable. Nevertheless, many authors have also tried to provide solutions to the overarching concerns regarding participation's viability.

Development discourses are criticized for being "technical, project-dictated imperatives of efficiency, with visible, manageable manifestations of collective action," often disguised as empowerment, while empowerment in development practice appears to have lost its

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4   World Bank links social accountability to "mechanisms that involve participation of citizens in the process of managing public resources", such as citizen monitoring of services, participatory budgeting, etc. (World Bank 2009).

transformatory and radical edge (Cleaver 2001, 37). Critics point to the need for extended

engagement beyond the project cycle with participating communities in order to normalize

new empowerment (Kesby 2005, 2052).

Williams challenges scholars' expectations that participatory projects have to result in radical

transformation of inequalities in a community (2004, 98). She argues that " judgments of

projects that see their problems merely as 'failures' *within the act of participation itself* are tilting

at windmills" (ibid, 98, emphasis in the original). Thus, while participation may be one of the

goals of a project, it should not be labeled a failure for not resulting in more radical

empowerment, because this may not have been its purpose. Williams challenges the notion

that local power is "systemic, totalizing and irresistible" and argues that a re-politicization of

participatory development can take place through long-term political projects and reshaped

political networks, oriented around citizen rights (ibid, 103). Similarly, Kesby suggests an

institutionalization of participatory discourses through social groups, which can recreate

participatory arenas, or through groups and local initiatives that exist regardless of issue-

specific participatory processes (ibid, 2058).

Participatory processes can also be exclusive. They may strengthen status and power of

existing elites (Hailey 2001, 94). Citizens that do not want to become engaged are seen as

deviant, and may be excluded from the process (Kothari 2001, 148). Furthermore, incentives

for (non)engagement may not be understood, and may be based in and inhibited by social

norms, while participatory approaches assume citizens behaving as rational economic actors

(Cleaver 2001, 48). Furthermore, a development project, by forming a "construct" of

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community to satisfy the need for administrative boundaries and formal institutions, may exclude members of more informal communities in that region (ibid, 40-44).

According to Coehlo and Cornwall, different currents in representation literature advocate different approaches to including marginalized groups in participation: either a direct democratic approach, where participatory spaces are open to anyone who wants to participate – which invites the risk of self-selection; a random selection that mirrors the population's makeup; or an approach where a parallel process of mobilization and definition of collective identities and agendas takes place (2007, 15). In order not to reproduce the power and resource imbalances of the society, authors emphasize the role of good facilitation, or techniques explicitly oriented to amplify the least vocal voices, " allowing positions to be openly debated rather than defensively asserted" (ibid, 16).

Concerning representation, the issue of legitimacy is also debated. Who should be invited, and who has the legitimacy to speak on the behalf of someone else (Gaventa 2006, 25-26)? While participation can imply representation through claims to legitimacy such as identity, experience or authority, these new forms of legitimacy often lack definite rules or norms in order to be held accountable, and need to be further researched (ibid, 25-26). Furthermore, with engagement literature placing an emphasis on participation of "individuals" and not just interest groups in participatory spheres (Levesque 2008, 2), the implications of size and thus the inevitable exclusion of some may be difficult to overcome in practice (Rowe et al. 2005, 155). Levesque advocates the presence of interest groups as well as individuals, pointing to the advantages the former have over citizens in countering decision makers' power to better

access to information, but also their advantages in terms of time and interest in participating by the nature of their work (Levesque, 3).

Recently, participation, seen as a citizen's inherent right, has been expanded to new decision-making arenas and " legal and constitutional frameworks for participatory governance" (Gaventa 2004a, 30-31). However, Gaventa emphasizes that, regarding such mechanisms, it needs to be ensured that pro-poor outcomes are happening, deep-rooted interests are prevented from co-opting the mechanisms, and that transformative processes of these approaches are recognized through analysis of local power structures (ibid, 39).

Institutionalization of participation appears to be at the heart of many success stories of participation, such as participation of citizens in public budgeting in Porto Alegre, Brazil, or thousands of villages in grassroots planning processes in Kerala, India (Gaventa 2004b, 19-20). Heller emphasizes that grassroots movements in the two cases were successful, *inter alia,* because of political parties' and state's support (2001, 158).

Participation seen as a right may be more difficult to depoliticize, especially if there is an emphasis on accountability and holding the governments responsible for their actions. However, certain preconditions need to exist for participation on both the government and the citizen sides, such as awareness of rights, the capacity to assemble and act collectively or communicate effectively (Gaventa 2004b, 21-22). This is also reiterated by Cornwall and Coehlo who refer to Coehlo's findings:

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"…it is the conjunction of enabling policies and legal frameworks, committed and responsive bureaucrats, well-coordinated, articulate social actors and inclusive institutional designs that produces greater diversity among representatives, thus expanding access if not the influence of historically marginalized groups (Cornwall and Coehlo 2007, 22).

Working towards such an enabling environment may be the road to take for development practitioners and governments to take in order to ensure more effective participatory processes.

3. Participation in Bosnia and Herzegovina

3.1. The Legal Framework and the Practice of Participation

Fourteen years after the 1992-1995 war, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) is still undergoing a painful process of political and economic transition. Administratively, it is a complex country, composed of two entities, the predominantly Serb Republika Srpska (RS), and the Croat and Bosniak Federation (FBiH) (Dizdarevic et al. 2006, 25). While the RS is centralized, made up of 62 municipalities, FBiH is highly decentralized, comprising 10 cantons and 79 municipalities (BiH Statistics Agency 2009). In 1999, the municipality of Brcko was given a District status, placed under the direct sovereignty of the state and with an independent administration. The state, entities, Brcko district, cantons and municipalities all have their own political structures and administration (Dizdarevic et al. 2006, 25).

The international community plays an important role in BiH, with the UN-appointed Office of the High Representative (OHR) as the main organization responsible for civilian aspects of peace implementation in the country. The OHR's High Representative can remove public officials that obstruct the peace implementation, but also stop the adoption of, or impose laws (Dizdarevic et al. 2006, 22-23). The international community is largely in charge of the BiH policy agenda (Struyk, 2004).

Basic rights to political participation in BiH are ensured through the Constitution, which guarantees the freedom of peaceful assembly and association, but also provides for the

"highest level of internationally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms"
(Hodzic and Maglajlic, 313).

Indirect and direct democracy is ensured through the RS Law on Local Self-Governance
(Self-Governance Law RS 2004) and a the FBiH Law on Principles of Local Self-
Governance (Self-Governance Law FBiH 2006).[5] Some of the participatory mechanisms
outlined in the laws are referenda, local communities[6] (LCs), municipal citizen assembly,
citizen initiatives, citizen associations, citizen panels, proposal schemes or "citizen hours" in
municipal assemblies; other mechanisms can be included in the municipal statute in both
entities if they are not explicitly against the law.[7] Citizens are allowed to attend council
meetings and municipal organs are obliged to submit to the public annual reports comparing
achieved results with planned program goals (Self-Governance Law FBiH 2006; Self-
Governance Law RS 2004).

As a result of NGO advocacy, other institutionalized forms of participation have recently
been introduced, such as a "Decision on the survey as a method of citizens' opinion research
regarding priority problems at the level of local community" and "Criteria according to
which the priorities are ranked and selected". This allowed for an increase in participatory

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5   A number of other legal documents at different levels of government allow for some sort of citizen
     participation, such as consultations with parliamentary commissions, public hearings, referenda, citizen
     initiatives (CCI 2007, 18-19).
6   LCs are the lowest-level administrative units linked to smaller inhabited neighborhoods. Through LCs,
     citizens decide on issues such as urban plans, economic development and social services and other matters
     established by the statutes of the LC (Self-Governance Law FBiH 2006). Establishment of the LCs appears
     to be mandatory in FBiH only. For an analysis on how LCs operate in BiH, see Bajrovic and Stojanovic,
     2008.
7   The RS law has a few more mechanisms listed than the FBiH law; in neither are these mechanisms
     explicitly defined by the law.

budgeting practices and a more transparent selection of priority problems (Central and Eastern European Citizens Network 2006).

Despite the existing participation legislation, results of citizen participation at the local level are not exactly encouraging. A 2008 Center for Civil Initiatives (CCI) survey on participation in 14 municipalities showed that the use of participatory mechanisms is falling or stagnating, with only the use of LCs slowly increasing. Openness of municipalities and communication towards citizens, as well as the number of citizens aware of the participatory legal framework is declining. The percentage of citizens that respond to municipality calls for partnership is also declining, mainly due to the uncertainty regarding the outcomes of such engagement. Nevertheless, the willingness of citizens to participate in decision-making and to work together with municipalities is growing in comparison with 2007, as well as interest in solving specific issues (CCI 2009).

In the aftermath of the war, more traditional mechanisms of participation, such as the LCs, have been plagued by a number of issues, including lacking competences; control over financial resources; inconsistent, sporadic budget allocation by the municipality; lacking formal procedures defining them as a compulsory participant in policy processes; and non-transparent selection of their councilors or leaders (Bajrovic and Stojanovic 2008, 29-39).

This may be one of the reasons why the international community has ensured that participation remains on the development agenda in BiH through a variety of projects that

focus on participation.[8] Citizens have, *inter alia*, become involved in local development or spatial planning processes, capital investment planning or participatory budgeting. International organizations have also been heavily engaged in Civil Society Organizations (CSO) building, which has raised concerns regarding the financial sustainability of CSOs and their frequent shift in program orientations in line with donor priorities (Hodzic and Maglajlic 2006, 321-323).

Misic (forthcoming), through a case-study of participatory mechanisms in two BiH municipalities, looks at more traditional forms of participation, such as LCs, *versus* new forms, mainly local partnerships. According to the author, partnerships are usually perceived as parts of planning methodologies, as temporary structures, and are dissembled after the completion of the planning process, as municipality administrations are not used to managing them in the long run. As a result, the effect of these bodies on local development is diminished. Misic urges for greater institutional strength and better definition of partnerships. The results of the authors' study support this recommendation: she finds that while traditional mechanisms such as the LC are an accepted participatory mechanisms in municipalities, citizens and authorities are ready to embrace new participatory mechanisms as well (Misic, forthcoming).

3.2. Participation in Development Planning in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Planning literature has increasingly promoted the idea of participatory planning (McClaran and Moote 1997; Innes and Booher 2004; Swinburn et al. 2006, 7; OECD 2008, 46). In BiH,

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8   However, donor agencies have largely ignored traditional LCs (UNDP 2005, 65).

development planning agenda appears to be as complex as its administrative setup (Miovcic 2007, 17-18).

Participation of citizens in planning is regulated by the entity laws on local governance in BiH. Both laws stipulate the adoption of development plans (programs) as a competence of the municipality. In FBiH, the LCs can participate in economic development initiatives or activities (Self-Governance Law FBiH 2006; Self-Governance Law RS 2004). However, Miovcic points to the incompleteness of the current legislation, which makes local development planning compulsory without proper mechanisms in place for its realization, and the generally weak competences, lack of resources and too many responsibilities of municipalities (2007, 15-18). Moreover, there are discrepancies between the actual competences for planning at different levels of government and the planning processes in practice, which generates even more confusion (ibid, 18-19). As Miovcic points out, while "there are almost no development competencies at the local (municipal) level … nearly half of municipalities have prepared local development strategies" (ibid, 19).

A number of international projects are concerned with participatory planning at the local level in particular. These practices are not restricted to development planning only.[9] OSCE's "Ugovor" project, which has a strong emphasis on participation, focuses, *inter alia*, on participatory planning through the creation of a municipal planning committee (OSCE "Ugovor" 2005). The Center for Management, Development and Planning (MDP), formerly the Municipal Development Project sponsored by the Swiss government, has worked with municipalities on participatory spatial plans and local development plans (MDP 2009).

9   All projects were not included due to space constraints.

UNDP's Rights-based municipal assessment program has introduced rights-based

development strategies at the local level (UNDP RMAP 2007a); the Regional Environmental

Centre (REC) has worked with municipality's on the creation of Local Environmental

Action Plans (LEAPs) (REC 2009). USAID's "Governance Accountability Project" (GAP)

has worked together with municipalities on capital investment planning (GAP 2009).

Miovcic points out that international support, however, is often limited to the development

planning phase (Miovcic 2007, 15). This may change with greater emphasis on

implementation, monitoring and evaluation of local development strategies in new

international projects, such as OSCE's "Local First Initiative" (Budisa 2009) and UNDP's

"Integrated Local Development Planning" (ILDP) project (Dimova 2009).

A 2005 UNDP survey shows that a majority, 81%, of local development strategies in

municipalities have been at least nominally developed with the participation of citizens, civil

sector and CSOs (cca. 51% of BiH municipalities had a strategy of some sort at that time).

International organizations developed about a half of them. Nevertheless, only 23% of

municipalities considered strategies completely relevant to their work, and only 49% of

strategies had an action plan. Moreover, only 11% of municipalities declared they had

adequate financial resources to support strategy implementation (UNDP RMAP 2005, 2).

Interviews by representatives of international and national organizations in the field of

development planning reflect some of the obstacles to strategy implementation. The most

frequent appear to be a lack of project management skills and capacities (Miovcic 2009;

Heinzl 2009; Misic 2009), financial management skills (Misic 2009) and capacities to finance projects, as some municipalities have small development budgets (Heinzl 2009).

A report by ALDI (2008), commissioned by UNDP BiH, gives a review of key actors and methodologies in local development planning in BiH. According to the report, while most approaches try to identify most vulnerable groups in order to engage them in the planning process, most strategies do not define their key needs and goals to realize these needs. Citizen opinions, especially those of vulnerable groups, do not have a major effect on the final version of the development plan (ibid, 35). While most methodologies encourage participation in planning, municipal administrations often cannot provide adequate technical assistance necessary for the process, so that the advisory and technical assistance is provided by the external service provider instead. Participation of the civil sector in the planning process is said to be very high, but the significance of participation is said to decline after the process ends because the civil society minimally is involved in the implementation, and its role in monitoring and evaluation is neglected (ibid, 37). Miovcic's study of strategy implementation in BiH municipalities also shows that involvement of stakeholders ended with the adoption of strategies, despite their significant contribution to the creation of the strategies (2007, 23).

While participatory planning may be taking place through international projects, it is unclear what its implications may be on the final outcomes of the process, given that development strategies may not be implemented in the end. Obstacles to implementation – such as a lack of human and financial resources for implementation – have to be taken into account when considering whether the participatory approach was conducted in an effective manner, for

even if participatory processes are well-led and may yield relevant and realistic strategies, such obstacles may reduce their significance as policy documents. These issues will be taken into account when trying to assess whether participatory planning processes in municipalities were, indeed, meaningful and effective.

4. Analytical Framework

As outlined in the introduction, this study attempts to answer the questions of whether participation took place in a meaningful manner in development planning at the local level in BiH, in the three selected cases, and whether it had an impact on policy making processes relating to development.

For the first question, "meaningful" is taken to imply that the participation process was effective. According to Rowe and Frewer, to answer what constitutes effectiveness, "it is important to understand what results of a participation exercise constitute 'good' outcomes and what processes contribute toward these" (Rowe and Frewer 2000, 10) Their evaluation framework, which assesses effectiveness of participation, was used as a basis to answer the question (ibid). Drawing from other research on evaluation of participatory mechanisms, the authors construct and divide up their criteria into *acceptance* and *process* criteria. These respectively relate to the potential acceptance of the participatory procedure by the public and whether its creation and implementation were effective (ibid, 11).

In line with a modified Rowe and Frewer evaluation framework by Rowe et al. in 2004, *process* criteria include *resource accessibility*, *task definition, structured decision making,* and *cost-effectiveness* of the procedure while acceptance criteria include *representativeness*, *independence*, *early involvement*, *influence, and transparency* (See Rowe et al. 2004, 93). Rowe et al. have devised a set of questions that correspond to each criterion (ibid, 99-101) These have been modified to fit

the context of this research[10], and incorporated into in-depth interviews[11] with stakeholders: international agency representatives, municipal representatives or members of the public that participated in the creation of development strategies.

Thus, for the purpose of my study, under *process* criteria, *task definition* concerns the clarity of task, aims and scope of the process; *resource accessibility* is assessed through the prism of participants' skill and understanding and access to adequate financial, human, physical resources, time, and information. Under *structured decision-making*, the organization, adequacy of decision-making and discussion procedures, their consistency and flexibility and participants' common understanding of the process and competence was assessed.

Under acceptance criteria, *representativeness* concerns the selection, identification of all relevant stakeholders, balance between individuals and delegates of certain groups, participants' engagement, and the municipality's commitment in getting them engaged. *Independence* focuses on participants' control over the process, external facilitation, and external checks on the process. *Transparency* concerns respect of legislation on access to information and publicity on the process. *Early involvement* concerns the entry-point of participants in the decision-making part of the process. The criterion of *influence*, although addressed in the

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10 Questions were reworded and adjusted to the interview format, as the original framework was constructed as an evaluation tool to be filled in by external evaluators (Rowe et al. 2004, 96). Some questions were excluded in the interview guide as they would have merited research beyond the scope of this study, or did not comply with the context. This is in line with the recognition that the importance of criteria can vary, in accordance with the circumstances of the participatory process (ibid, 92). For example, the criterion of cost-effectiveness was excluded, because it would have been difficult to do a cost and benefit analysis of these processes in relation to other potential participatory methods, and to how much participants gained from the process..

11 Interview guide available upon request.

original framework under acceptance criteria, will be addressed under the second question posed by the research.

The question on participation's impact or influence on policy-making in the realm of local development is addressed by looking at the *intensity* of participants' impact on policies (strategies), *the implementation* of adopted strategies, and *institutionalization* of participatory practices[12] Here, the effectiveness of the process is "tested" again, but the division between meaningfulness of the process itself and its influence are divided up for the sake of clarity, and to be able to differentiate between well-led processes which did not lead to certain outcomes because of objective external constraints posed on the municipalities' financial ability to implement strategies, for example.

Intensity of impact on policy concerns the amount of participants' input in the final version of the strategies, i.e., whether the proposals of development projects that are usually included in the final proposal of the strategy were those of participants and whether and to what extent the strategy proposal, as delivered to the municipal council/assembly[13], was changed during adoption. In that sense, intensity implies something about the extent of impact of participants on the final version of the strategic document.

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12 This question is in line with a question in the original framework regarding the influence on corporate style, i.e. whether there was a change in the approach to handling certain issues. Another question from the framework regarding influence, impact on specific decisions, was reworded to address implementation of certain projects from the strategies. A question of impact on policy-making procedures was essentially incorporated into the question of corporate style (Rowe et al. 2004, 100)

13 The municipal legislative bodies are called differently in the two municipalities.

By evaluating *implementation* of strategies' action plans, the question of what, and to what extent, has been implemented from the adopted strategy, and what the reasons for non-implementation are, is answered, trying to take into account obstacles to implementation that have been addressed above. Whether the strategy is realistic or not is also assessed.

Under *institutionalization*, the focus is on whether the actual participatory practices and strategies have become the part of the institutional fabric of municipalities. The impact of the participatory exercise on the municipality in terms of adopting new participatory practices in handling other issues, its continued communication with the participants of the exercise, or their further involvement in the strategy's monitoring or evaluation phases are seen as forms of institutionalization, in both a formal and informal sense.

5. Methodology

5.1. Research Design and Techniques

The thesis has a qualitative research design, and comprises a comparative case study of three municipalities in BiH that created development strategies. Primary and secondary research was conducted. Primary research entails 20 semi-structured interviews[14] with key stakeholders, such as representatives of international organizations, municipal officials and local citizens involved in the strategy creation process. Secondary research focuses on reports, surveys, and available documentation of the planning processes.

5.2. Sample

To ensure for some variation both in approaches to participation, planning methodology, and control for bias, the following criteria were applied when selecting three cases:

- The strategy had to be derived through participation.

- Strategies had to be sponsored by an international development agency or donor, where municipalities would be selected according to predominant donors in the field.

- Strategies had to be adopted in 2006 the earliest to ensure participants' memory of the process and sufficient time to determine the outcome of the process, and 2007 the latest to be able to see the extent of its implementation.

- The municipality could not be acutely undeveloped, smaller than 5,000, or larger than 80,000 inhabitants (Working Group 2009; Federal Development Planning Institution 2009), as small and acutely undeveloped municipalities may lack financial

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14 See Annex 1 for the full list of interviewees. Interviews available upon request.

and human resources to implement strategies, while larger municipalities, due to strategic location and access to greater financial and human resources, may bear successes in terms of outcomes despite the strategy adoption.

- As municipal strategies may be abandoned if there is a change in government during the period they cover (Domancic 2009), only municipalities that have had political continuity since 2006 were chosen, given that local elections were held in 2008. Only municipalities with a same party mayor before and after 2008, and at least one term where mayor and council's majority party corresponded, were chosen (BiH Central Election Commission 2004a, 2004b, 2004c, 2008). .

- At least one of the cases had to be from a different entity, RS or FBiH, because of the different levels of functional and fiscal decentralization and slightly different legal frameworks.

- Due to time and budget constraints, proximity to the capital was a last criterion.

By conducting research, primarily via the Internet, 99 out of 142 BiH municipalities were found to have some sort of development strategy adopted. By consulting relevant reports and analyzing the strategies, three predominant donors that sponsored development strategies were identified – OSCE, UNDP, and MDP. [15] Their methodologies show some variation, as explained later in the thesis. After applying the remaining criteria, three municipalities were selected: Petrovo in RS (MDP), Maglaj, FBiH (OSCE), and Visoko, FBiH (UNDP).

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[15] Another dominant actor identified was a USAID/PADCO project that appears to no longer operate in BiH. For easier access to information, I chose the MDP. Municipalities where different sponsors worked simultaneously on the creation of separate strategies, or where activities and methodologies overlapped significantly, were eliminated due to potential difficulties in evaluating the planning process and its outcome.

While selecting interviewees, the aim was to interview at least three stakeholders in the process for each municipality, who were preferably representatives of different sectors (municipality, private, NGO, sponsor etc.) to have a wide range of views. The selection of members of partnerships or planning committees was based on available documentation of participation records in individual municipalities. Municipal representatives involved in the planning process were identified and interviewed. They were asked to provide contact details of three to four participants they recommend as active in the planning process and as potential valuable sources of information on the process. The first two or three participants called from the list that were willing to talk were then interviewed. This method was applied primarily because of difficult access to participants. A total of 15 semi-structured interviews on specific planning processes in municipalities were conducted in June and beginning of July 2009. For the case of Petrovo, four were conducted, for the case of Maglaj, six, and for the case of Visoko, five.[16] Five more interviews were conducted with key international or national development agencies/organizations conveying their experiences regarding participation in the planning processes in general. [17]

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16 See list of interviewees in Annex 1 for details.
17 The total number of interviews reflects the number of interviewees. In some cases, the interview was led with two persons simultaneously.

6. Findings and Analysis

6.1. Municipal Profiles

6.1.1 Petrovo

Petrovo, a rural municipality with a population of cca. 9,290, is located in central BiH, in the RS (Petrovo Municipality 2006, 5; 59). In addition to participatory mechanisms ensured through the legal framework, Petrovo has, with the assistance of CCI and MDP, adopted the *Decision on the public hearing procedure*, *Decision on opinion polls (surveys) in LCs and criteria for the prioritization of projects/problems*, and *Decision on NGO projects selection procedure and criteria* (Misic, forthcoming). Petrovo implemented OSCE's "Ugovor" project (OSCE "Ugovor" 2008a).

Petrovo's 2007-2012 Strategic Development Plan was financed by the MDP and by the municipality to a smaller extent (MDP 2008, 4). EDA provided expert and advisory assistance in the creation of the strategy (Petrovo Municipality 2006, 3). The plan was prepared and adopted by the Municipal Assembly (MA) in 2006 (Pejic 2007, 33). It is a local economic development strategy, rather than a multi-sectoral development strategy as developed by OSCE and UNDP. A multidisciplinary Municipal Development Team (MDT) was formed for the purpose of strategy creation, made up of four municipal staff and one NGO representative. A wider Partnership Group (PG) for municipal development was also formed, made up of representatives of the private, NGO and public sectors, with 70 members (Pejic 2007, 39-40).

World Bank methodology was used in the strategy creation (Petrovo Municipality 2006, 4). Four PG meetings were held, normally after the MDT had drafted important parts of the strategy to offer their comments and suggestions (Pejic 2007, 13-22). A situation analysis also included inputs from agriculture and private sector focus groups (ibid, 13).

6.1.2 Maglaj

Maglaj is an industrial municipality, located in central BiH, in the Zenica-Doboj canton (FBiH). Its population is estimated to be around 26.460 (MDPC 2007, 17-18). Like Petrovo, the municipality has institutionalized the above-mentioned decisions (MDP 2006a). With the municipality of Doboj, Maglaj is participating in a Local Action Group (LAG), based on public-private partnership, with one of its aims the implementation of projects from the development strategy (LAG Doboj-Maglaj 2009). Other participatory activities include implementation of other "Ugovor" modules (OSCE "Ugovor" 2008b) and the drafting of a Local Environmental Action Plan (LEAP) (MDPC 2007, 28).

Maglaj's Development Strategy 2006-2011 is a multi-sectoral strategy encompassing geography, economy, ecology, infrastructure, culture, education, sports, health and social protection, and the local administration. It was created through OSCE's "Ugovor" in 2005 and 2006 . OSCE provided training and guidance during strategy creation. Within the project, a Municipal Development Planning Committee (MDPC) [18] was established by the Municipal Council (MC) (OSCE "Ugovor" 2008b). The MDPC is described as consultative body that supports the municipality in the preparation and implementation of strategies in a

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18 According to OSCE's ToR members of the MDPC have to act in accordance with the best long-term interests of municipality and citizens before any other interests (political, religious, etc) In addition, youth, gender, minority, and sectoral and managerial expertise is required in the MDPC, which should involve representatives of LCs, local trade unions, education institutions, civic groups, the private sector and local NGOs. (OSCE "Ugovor".n.d)

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participatory manner (OSCE "Ugovor".n.d.). It was a committee made up of 16 members: the mayor, the president of the MC[19], and 14 other members that were experts in areas such as economics, culture, sports, engineering etc (MDPC 2007, 98). Within the MDPC, a Core Group of up to 5 members was created to manage the work of the committee. The committee was divided up into 6 sectoral Working Groups (WGs) and one WG for SWOT situation analysis (ibid, 98). The strategy was adopted on 8 February 2007 by the MC (Municipal Council Maglaj, 2007) Membership, responsibilities, procedures and tasks and methods of strategy creation, including individual steps, were defined by OSCE's ToR.

6.1.3 Visoko

Visoko is an industrial municipality located in FBiH, near the capital of Sarajevo. Its population is estimated at around 40,000 (UNDP RMAP 2006a, 5; 13). In addition to participatory mechanisms prescribed by law, Visoko has taken part in "Ugovor" (OSCE "Ugovor" 2008c).

The multi-sectoral Rights-Based Development Strategy 2006-2015 for Visoko was created with the assistance of UNDP's RMAP. The rights-based (RB) approach implies that priorities and development interventions are planned for the municipality in line with the international and national legal framework; moreover, the RB approach is to transform what are perceived as needs of citizens into claims for realization of their rights (UNDP RMAP 2006a, 4) There is an emphasis on participation, and inclusion of vulnerable groups in the planning process (ibid). RMAP's methodology dictates a process where RMAP representatives serve as facilitators, and together with the wider community (representatives

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19 The Mayor and the president of the municipal council are mandatory members, according to the MDPC ToR (OSCE "Ugovor" n.d.)

of NGOs, LCs, municipal officers), conduct an initial assessment on the human rights

situation in the municipality, before the start of planning (UNDP RMAP 2006b, 5).

The planning process took place between January and September 2006. Through this

process, an MDT[20] and a PG were set up as planning bodies, made up of 11 and 32

members respectively (Visoko municipality 2006). Members of the PG were divided into

thematic WGs; at meetings of PGs and WGs, they would discuss and decide on parts of the

strategy such as vision, development goals, or concrete projects (UNDP RMAP 2006a, 4).

The strategy was adopted by the MC in December 2006 (OSCE "Ugovor" 2008c, 5).

6.2. Meaningfulness of Participation

For the purposes of evaluation of participation's meaningfulness, the PG as a participatory

mechanism in Petrovo and Visoko, and the MDPC in Maglaj were assessed through

interviewees' responses and documentation, where available. The following sections are

organized according to *process* and *acceptance* criteria.

6.2.1. Task Definition

Judging by respondents' answers, the context, scope and aims of the respective participatory

mechanisms, the PG and the MDPC, appeared to be clearly defined. The rationale for

choosing the respective approach option and its adequacy generally also received a positive

assessment by the respondents.

6.2.2. Resource Accessibility

Respondents in all three cases were generally satisfied with the availability of resources, such

the level of participants' own skills and understanding, financial means for the planning

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20   The MDT was constituted by the mayor, and was made up of municipal representatives, and a few
     representatives of the NGO and business sector (Omerbegovic, 2009)

process, facilities, equipment, expert knowledge and access to adequate information. Nevertheless, two respondents in Maglaj expressed opinions that more expertise would have been beneficial in the process. In Petrovo, respondents generally noted the problem of limited human resources due to the municipality's small size. Reading Maglaj's strategy, one can note a colloquial language, and a looser structure to the content. Although members of the MDPC were professionals in their respective sectors, greater facilitation of the process by strategic planning consultants and experts may have been beneficial.

6.2.3. Structured Decision-Making

Respondents overall seemed content with the way that discussions were held and stressed that decisions had been made by consensus. They agreed on the flexibility and consistency of decision-making and discussion procedures; most thought the process had been well-organized, participants competent to contribute to debate and decision-making, and that they shared a common understanding on the issues at hand.

6.2.4. Representation

In terms of representation, respondents assessed the selection procedures as adequate, as well as the commitment by municipalities in inviting relevant participants. In all three cases, respondents' referred to participants' expertise as the key selection criterion. Moreover, approaches appeared to target representatives of groups, rather than individuals. In Maglaj, participants of the MDPC had a predominantly political background. As a municipal representative explained, political parties and NGOs were called on by the mayor to give their proposals on MDPC membership; proposed members were then chosen, together with the OSCE, according to expertise (Bradaric 2009). An MC representative explained that four representatives of the MC were included in the committee, and that some other members were partly also in politics (Nalic, M. 2009). In Visoko and Petrovo, the process appeared to

be open to anyone who was interested. In Visoko, UNDP representatives drafted the list of participants together with the municipality, according to respondents. While the MDT drafted a list of participants in Petrovo, PG members could invite persons who had been omitted from the roster of participants. In Maglaj, few respondents mentioned that additional stakeholders joined the WGs or were consulted in the process by MDPC participants; in that sense WGs ran a sort of public hearing, where they asked for opinions of different actors, depending on the sector.

Representation seems to be problematic for a number of reasons. First, MDPC in Maglaj, rather than a mechanism of participatory democracy, appears to be an extended arm of representative democracy. Although the committee may have had the purpose to be more expert-oriented, rather than participation-oriented, declaratively, it was supposed to "enable citizens and interest groups to have an input into the strategic planning process" (OSCE "Ugovor" 2005, 17). While additional stakeholders were consulted through the WGs, it appears to have been up to MDPC members whom to consult.

Another problem concerns the inclusion of vulnerable groups. As addressed above by Coehlo and Cornwall (2007), there is a need for strong facilitation in including vulnerable groups in participatory processes. Only UNDP's RB approach to planning seems to place an emphasis on the engagement of vulnerable groups, for example through focus groups "and individual meetings … organized in locations most convenient for ensuring full participation of the vulnerable parts of the population … to avoid elite, or majority capture in the

process" (UNDP RMAP 2006b, 6).[21] Although UNDP served as a facilitator in the processes, even in Visoko, it is not certain whether facilitation amplified least vocal voices.[22]

One may also wonder whether facilitation of the planning process, an extensive assessment of the human rights' situation and consultation with vulnerable groups through focus groups may be enough to overcome local power relations. VeneKlasen et al. criticize the RB approaches for lacking elements of education for the most vulnerable (VeneKlasen et al. 2004, 42). However, as former Chief Technical Advisor of RMAP Christian Henzl pointed out in an interview, the goal of RMAP was not to create a "vulnerable groups strategy" but "a true community strategy" that targets vulnerable groups and brings them into the process (Heinzl 2009). He stressed that unlike processes that have more narrowly focused areas or that focus on certain groups, in a multi-sectoral process that had to result in strategy that can be implemented, as in the case of RMAP, one needed to make sure, while selecting MDT and PG members, that the people had knowledge. Heinzl also stressed that all depended on what the main objective of the project was: Whether it was to empower these groups or include them in mechanisms and create different fora where they can participate (ibid). One can tie this back to Williams (2004) and her emphasis on the multiple objectives of development projects, where empowerment through participation may not necessarily take precedence.

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21 In Visoko, however, focus groups with vulnerable groups were not conducted; this was approach was piloted by RMAP later (Heinzl 2009).
22 This cannot be determined through this research, and requires a more in-depth study of the local situation in Visoko

Inclusion of vulnerable groups appears to require stronger mediation on the side of external consultants or the municipality, which signals the need for formal mechanisms for inclusion. A vulnerability assessment, such as one piloted by RMAP *via* focus groups in two municipalities (UNDP RMAP, n.d.) or an analysis of power-relations at the community level (see VeneKlasen et al. 2004) can be used to inform the municipality about the situation on the ground, coupled with appropriate communication mechanisms, participants familiarization with the aims of the participatory mechanism and favorably capacity building of these groups to deliberate on an equal ground[23]. However, such mechanisms need to be developed with care: Coehlo and Cornwall mention the risks of either depoliticizing the process of deliberation during facilitation by placing an emphasis on consensus, or stifling authentic communication while mediating and coaching vulnerable groups to enhance their chances at deliberation (2007, 13-16).

If referring back to Rowe et al. (2004) and Levesque (2008), another problem with representation has to do with ensuring a balance between representatives acting as delegates and participants acting in individual capacity. A small MDPC cannot include "individuals" by default; the PG is also a forum restricted in size. Due to limitations in size and manageability of the groups, and the emphasis on expertise that respondents stressed, it appears that opening the process up may not be effective in this particular participatory mechanism. After all, the process calls for at least two things: some familiarity with the subject, and motivation to dedicate time to the process.

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23 In an interview, Marina Dimova, the Manager and Chief Technical Advisor of UNDP's new Integrated Local Development Planning (ILDP) project, explained that tailored capacity building of local LCs, NGOs or the private sector will be conducted before technical assistance in the creation of local development strategies is provided by the project. The capacity building will be based on an appraisal of capacities on the ground - the organizations' abilities to participate in local development planning. (Dimova 2009).

In terms of engagement in decision-making, responses were generally positive, with some respondents saying that some participants were, normally, more engaged than others. In Visoko, the falling engagement of PG members near the end of the planning process was brought up by a municipal representative; a MC secretary in Visoko mentioned weaker engagement by representatives of the private sector in the PG (Cosovic 2009; Omerbegovic 2009).

Here, one may wonder whether all participants recognize participation in the process as a right or a civic obligation or do they still see it as representative bodies' responsibility to make decisions? Should participants feel they are benefited by giving up their time voluntarily because they may influence decision making processes? One may wonder whether a greater group of participants – a PG – would be more "comfortable" for individuals, as it may reduce the individual responsibility and possibly create a tragedy of the commons. Although the reasons are not clear, one could attribute lacking engagement in the case of Visoko to the voluntary nature of the process, its length, or participants' busy schedules. However, even when participants receive compensation for being in a committee, as in the case of Maglaj, the latter case shows that members may be replaced for not doing their work[24]. What is positive is that for some respondents, the very act of participating was a benefit in itself. Motivation to participate may thus depend on participants' increased awareness on the benefits of a "participatory democracy" when it comes to influence on policy; and the government's ability to provide feedback on the outcomes of the process.

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24 Some members in Maglaj's MDPC had been replaced because they had not been active and hadn't delivered their inputs on time, according to an OSCE officer from Zenica (Gavranović, 2009).

6.2.5. Independence

Responses were positive about the independence of the process in each municipality. Respondents stressed that there had been no external pressures on the PG/MDPC; however, most couldn't cite any formal or external checks on independence. An MDP representative explained that while a formal mechanism hadn't been set up, this could be achieved in the future through a greater formalization of the PG (Misic, 2009).

One should stress the predominant political profile of MDPC members in Maglaj[25]; and the fact that in all three municipalities, the mayor was also a part of the PG/MDT and MDPC. While the presence of external facilitators in Petrovo and Visoko leaves an impression that at least formally, some independence may have been ensured, independence from political interests in Maglaj is uncertain.[26] The presence of mayor in the PG/MDPC in all cases may also invite questions on whether participants would be willing to speak out against the mayor's proposals.[27] One cannot guarantee that participants were protected against vested interests, bias, influence by executive and legislative power-centers.

6.2.6. Transparency

In all three municipalities, municipal representatives stressed that the Freedom of Access to Information Act (FOIA) was respected and that there was adequate publicity – usually via the media, bulletin boards, and newsletters. It is, nevertheless, not certain whether requests for documentation on the processes were filed and respected adequately. Public hearings were held before the adoption of the final strategy by the MA/MC in all three cases,

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25 Political parties were also included in the PGs in Visoko and Petrovo, but there was a greater number of members and representatives of other sectors involved.

26 Independence may have additionally been achieved through the fact that there were criteria for the ranking and selection of priority projects in each municipality (Pejic 2007; UNDP RMAP 2007b; Delic 2007)

27 Given the researcher did not take part in the processes, and a discourse analysis of minutes from the meetings would go beyond the scope of this study, one cannot claim that this was the case.

according to respondents, and citizens had access to the document before the hearings. Some respondents in Petrovo said that comments by citizens during public hearings were not included as they did not pertain to the strategy but other, everyday issues; in Visoko and Maglaj, respondents stressed that relevant comments had been taken into account.

6.2.7. Early Involvement

According to respondents, the criterion of early-involvement has been satisfied in that participants have been involved before any key decisions were made. This is also visible from the methodology employed in all three cases, as the respective bodies were instituted before the creation of the strategy began.

6.3. Participation's Impact on Policy Making

6.3.1. Intensity of Influence on the Strategic Document

In terms of intensity of their influence on decision-making, interviewees seemed to be unified in their stance that all or almost all of the proposals had been included in the final strategy. The MA had no changes to make when adopting Petrovo's strategy, while the MC in Maglaj and Visoko made small and insignificant changes, according to respondents. In that sense, participation seems to have significantly influenced the actual policy document as such.

6.3.2. Implementation

To discern the outcomes of participants' engagement, strategy implementation was assessed[28]. According to a municipal representative in Petrovo, the strategic plan is tied to the annual municipal budget. So far, Petrovo was able to secure co-financing of greater projects that could not have been financed from the municipal budget. The implementation

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28 Findings pertaining to the extent of implementation were informed by the interviews with municipal representatives or available reports and documentation.

plan is not strictly followed: where there was an opportunity to get earlier funding for a project planned later on, that project would get priority in implementation, and *vice versa*. Positive changes that occurred after the strategy's adoption is that special sub-accounts were also opened up for individual development projects that can only be spent on that particular project. A development department, as one project listed in the strategy, was established after its adoption. According to the municipal representative, while cca 30% of the strategy had been implemented in terms of the number of projects, around 50% had been implemented from the point of view of projects' value. She explained the strategy would most probably be revised this year and that certain projects may be changed together with the PG (Pejic 2009).

When looking at a 2008 municipal presentation on implementation, four projects, were implemented in 2007 while six were in the process of implementation in 2008 (Petrovo Municipality 2008). According to the municipal representative, around 12 projects had been implemented from the strategy so far (Pejic, 2009).

In Maglaj, a municipal representative stressed that more resources needed to be put aside in the budget for the strategy to be more significant as a document. The strategy had been adopted in February 2007; its implementation for 2007 could therefore not be linked to that year's annual budget, but the 2008 budget the earliest. Some projects were implemented in 2007, but depended solely on the creativity and contacts of municipal officials responsible for its implementation (Bradaric, 2009). When assessing the implementation so far, he estimated that some 20-25 percent of the strategy has been implemented, project-wise.

Looking at the annual report on implementation of the strategy for 2008, six projects have been realized and 34 are in progress (Local development, business and entrepreneurship department 2008).

For Visoko, a municipal representative explained that after the realization of a few projects together with the UNDP, the municipality faced financial difficulties; there were some technical obstacles in implementation, but also problems because not all projects had been well-defined, or their justification and how to realize them. He estimated some 20% of projects listed in the strategy had been implemented so far: seven or eight out of 21 (Cosovic, 2009).

However, if looking at the strategy, these 21 projects were planned in the first year alone, and a new action plan should have been drafted in line with the 2008 budget. However, given that the municipality is still implementing projects from the first plan, it doesn't appear that any revision of the plan has been done. Given that the strategy spans over an almost 10 year period, this is a serious problem for sound implementation. However, an MC secretary in Visoko mentioned that the strategy may be revised through a GAP project (Omerbegovic, 2009).

If looking at the inability of individual municipalities to implement strategies, one may wonder about the quality of the document. When respondents were asked whether the strategies were, in their opinion, realistic or not, they mostly gave positive answers. In Visoko, however, a municipal representative explained that issues weren't tied together

financially in the strategy. Even during the planning process, there were comments that it wasn't sustainable, which was amplified by the ongoing financial crisis (Cosovic 2009). A UNDP representative thought that the Visoko strategy was pretty realistic in terms of defined goals and deadlines; he however explained that the action plan wasn't realistic because too many projects were included in the first year, and wasn't revised later on, to his knowledge (Nalic, N. 2009).

In Petrovo's strategy, the fact that "only" 32 projects were included in the implementation plan for 5 years signals that the feasibility of implementation was taken into account.[29] For Visoko, given 21 projects that are planned in the first year alone[30], one could assess the action plan as a bit unrealistic. The feasibility of Maglaj's strategy is also questionable given the 75 projects planned over five years.[31]

While there is not enough information available to discern to what extent the participants influenced the quality of the strategy, as strong facilitation or influence by municipal representatives may have been crucial, one should take into account the findings that the strategies reflected participants' proposals. In that regards, while one cannot speculate about participation's potential negative influence on the relevance of the strategy, findings may signals to a need for even greater familiarization of participants on development issues, and

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29 The action plans appear to be set up realistically – the overall strategy, which spans over 5 years, costs cca 3,8 million convertible marks (KM; 1 KM is cca 0,5 EUR) and the municipal budget for 2004 was cca 1,3 million KM (Petrovo Municipality 2006, 49; 87).

30 The projects amount to cca 2,5 million KM for 2007 and half of 2008; the planned annual budget of the municipality was around 6,4 million KM for 2006. (UNDP RMAP 2006a 60; 9)

31 A municipal representative estimated that cca 45 to 50 million KM were needed for the implementation of the strategy; the annual municipal budget is cca 6 million KM. (Bradaric 2009)

the importance of good and professional facilitation in the process, which relates to the *process* criteria above.

While making the direct link between participation and implementation is difficult because of the many intervening variables, one should stress the responsibility on the side of the government to take this document seriously afterwards; this does not appear to be the case for all municipalities studied. Even if a strategy is unrealistic, one way to overcome this would be to do a revision of development projects included, which has not been done in any of the municipalities to date. While one can claim that Petrovo really follows the strategy, and Maglaj to an extent, Visoko does not appear to have become a full-fledged owner of the strategy, and appears to treat it in an *ad-hoc* manner.

6.3.3. Institutionalization

Interviewees were divided on whether the exercise of participatory local development planning had any influence on the municipality adopting new participatory practices in handling municipal issues. Some respondents in Petrovo and Visoko thought that nothing had changed, possibly because they did not receive any feedback after the planning phase was over. Some other respondents, in all three municipalities, saw participation as nothing new. In Petrovo, while a municipal representative said that participation was nothing new for the municipality, she explained that Petrovo had recently participated in a tourism development strategy together with Doboj municipality, and a PG was created for that purpose (Pejic, 2009).

In terms of continued communication with participants, experiences are mixed. In Petrovo, PG participants weren't contacted after the strategy was adopted. A municipal representative mentioned some PG members were consulted later for specific projects, but were not involved in implementation, monitoring or evaluation. She explained that she personally believed this it was a mistake that PG members weren't informed about implementation in person, as they will be needed again in the future. She also explained that for the future, she would like to better define responsibilities, competences, rights and benefits of all actors – both the MDT and the PG - so that they would be even more active in the process (Pejic 2009)

In Visoko, an MC secretary explained that communication with PG members continued via different departments in the municipality regarding issues that did not necessarily pertain to the strategy (Omerbegovic, 2009). A municipal representative, however, said that communication had ceded with the original PG (Cosovic, 2009).

Continued communication with participants is also indicative of whether participation was truly able to "change dispositions among bureaucrats as well as citizens, instilling greater respect, and enhancing their propensity to listen and commitment to respond" (Coehlo and Cornwall 2007, 23) If judging by the response of the municipal representative in Petrovo, there may be awareness among responsible stakeholders within the municipal administration in terms of recognizing the long term significance of partnership.

In terms of participants' roles in monitoring and implementation, this was to an extent realized in Visoko and Maglaj. In Maglaj, a smaller control and monitoring committee,[32] encouraged by the OSCE, was created that included some of the members from the original MDPC. While an executive board for implementation, made up of municipal representatives, a UNDP and an NGO representative (Visoko municipality 2006) was set up while the UNDP co-financed projects from the strategy in the municipality, its work seems to have stalled and may be continued through a new project, as explained above.

Creating the PG or an MDPC as an institutionalized body that is not only consulted on strategy revision and creation, but also on its monitoring and evaluation, and possibly other

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32 As explained by a municipal representative, the committee monitors the implementation of the strategy together with other municipal departments and produces annual reports on their work (Bradaric 2009).

issues that extend the scope of the strategy, may be a solution both in terms of creating a learning process, as advocated by proponents of deliberate democracy (See Barnes et al. 2007, 35) and continuous empowerment of participants. In an interview, Miovcic explained that modalities of further citizen inclusion in implementation, but also monitoring and evaluation, are currently being explored in practice (Miovcic 2009).

However, for the municipality to institutionalize participatory processes, or at least recognize the importance thereof, local champions are needed. This seems to be the case in Petrovo, where a municipal representative appears to have taken the implementation of the development strategy personally. Although it may be a very subjective conclusion, it is nevertheless one that was been confirmed by actors outside of the Petrovo planning process, through various interviews and informal talks conducted during this research.

7. Conclusion

This research has shown that while *process* criteria were largely satisfied in three municipalities in BiH, *acceptance* criteria seemed to be lacking, especially concerning representativeness and independence of the processes. In that sense, one cannot discern whether the participation was truly meaningful in these cases. More rigorous selection mechanisms, to ensure inclusion of vulnerable groups, as well as external checks on the independence of the participatory process, may contribute towards greater effectiveness of local partnerships and planning committees. The influence of participation on decision-making in the research also seem uncertain, except for the fact that participants' inputs appeared to have molded the final version of adopted strategies. This challenges to some extent the 2008 ALDI findings, although problems with representativeness, especially of vulnerable groups, and independence of the processes, may have been present in all three cases. Nevertheless, the inclusion of their proposals in this policy document can be said to empower participants.

When it comes to implementation and institutionalization of participatory processes, the research largely confirms the findings of others – engagement usually ends after the planning phase is over, and international projects are generally not concerned with implementation (UNDP 2005; Miovcic 2007; Misic, forthcoming). A result of such findings may be that participants will cede to see the benefits of participation, which was also confirmed by the CCI survey (2009). Findings can also be related to criticism of participation's technocratic nature in development projects, where local interests, power-dynamics, but also local capacities to implement policies may not have been neglected by the sponsors.

For participatory processes to be institutionalized and used, capacities to organize good participatory processes and awareness on participation as a right should be raised "on both sides of the equation," in line with Gaventa's prescriptions (2004b). After all, citizens and NGOs in BiH may not be able to recognize the benefits of participation, to be able to follow in the footsteps successful grassroots movements.

The research has had serious time and resource constraints, and did not include a greater number of municipalities that could have portrayed different results. There may have also been a bias in the fact that respondents that were interviewed were recommended by municipal representatives, but due to the limited time spent in each municipality, this method was preferred for logistical reasons; a wider group of participants may have yielded a more diverse set of responses. Moreover, a comparative dimension of participation in planning at the local level for the region of South-East Europe could not be conducted due to mentioned objective reasons, and may be the subject of future research. Further academic research or policy studies may also explore specific means of institutionalizing citizen participation in planning in the legal framework, especially municipality statutes.

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Annex: List of Interviewees (in alphabetical order)

Family name, Name	Organization	Date of Interview
1. Bajramovic, Nermana	Community Development Assistant, Democratization Department, OSCE Zenica Field Office	15 June 2009
2. Bradaric, Ferhat	Head of department for local development, business, and entrepreneurship, Maglaj municipality	15 June 2009
3. Budisa, Natasa	Program Assistant, Municipal Intervention, OSCE Head Office, Sarajevo	25 May 2009
4. Celebic, Sacir	Director of the Center for Social Work, Visoko	3 July 2009
5. Cosovic, Mugdim	Head of department of economy and development in the Office of economy, development, budget and finance, Visoko municipality	29 June 2009
6. Delic, Sulejman	Director of the Employment Bureau, Maglaj	16 June 2009
7. Dimova, Marina	Manager and Chief Technical Advisor, ILDP project, UNDP BiH, Sarajevo	27 July 2009
8. Domancic, Marinela	National Program Officer, Municipal Legislative, OSCE Headquarters, Sarajevo	25 May 2009
9. Gavranovic, Nihad	National Program Officer – Citizen participation, Democratization Department, OSCE Zenica Field Office	15 June 2009
10. Heinzl, Christian	Local Governance Portfolio Manager, UNDP BiH, Sarajevo	23 June 2009
11. Jovanovic, Ljuban	Director of "Duvaplast" company, Petrovo	12 June 2009
12. Kalota, Resid	Pensioner, former financial director of "Prevent" company,	3 July 2009

	Visoko.	
13. Miovcic, Zdravko	Director, Development Agency EDA, Banja Luka	29 May 2009
14. Misic, Snezana	Director of MDP, Doboj	29 May 2009
15. Nalic, Mirsad	President of the Municipal Council, Maglaj municipality	16.06. 2009
16. Nalic, Nasir	Capacity Building Associate, ILDP project, UNDP BiH, Sarajevo	29 June 2009
17. Omerbegovic, Zekija	Secretary of the Municipal Council, Visoko municipality	29 June 2009
18. Osmic, Muhamed	President of SDA party municipal board, Maglaj	16 June 2009
19. Pejic, Dragica	Head of the Department for development management, Petrovo municipality	12 June 2009
20. Vasic, Zoran	Director of OZ Petrovo (NGO)	25 June 2009