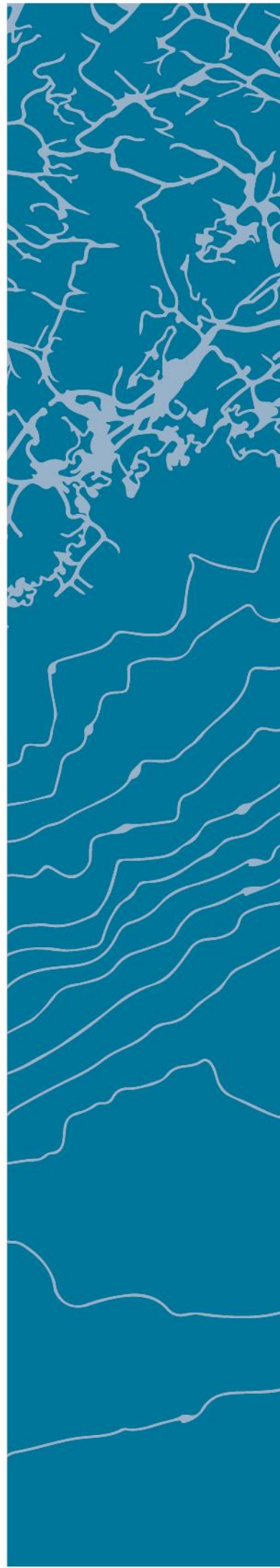# The Key to Local Development?

Citizen Initiatives and their Relations with Government Institutions

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Abstract

Against the backdrop of changes in the practice of local and regional governance, the role of citizen initiatives in development quickly gained attention in academia and policy making. Hailed as the ultimate form of citizen participation by some, citizen initiatives maintain and create public services and goods as they fill in the gaps left by government. Yet, government institutions remain present actors in these contexts, posing important questions of roles and responsibilities in the governance of rural development. By gathering empirical data in Germany and Uganda, this thesis examines the relations between citizen initiatives and government institutions, their effect on outcomes of citizen initiatives as well as factors influencing these relations. In doing so, the thesis aims to deepen the understanding of the role of citizen initiatives in local and regional development. In addition to the obtained empirical data the thesis relies on a thorough literature review, this thesis identifies different modes of relations between state and non-state actors, that entail different possible effects on outcomes. The thesis concludes that relations between citizen initiatives and government institutions critically influence outcomes of rural development citizen initiatives, especially over the long-term. It finds that relations are complex and dynamic in the sense that different relations can be present at the same time, depending on the specific issue or the individuals involved. Relations between different state and non-state actors are critically shaped by the context-specific degree of democratization and the institutional context that comes with it, either providing supportive measures and avenues for successful collaboration or not. Yet, another finding is that personal relationships between individuals of the different actors may present bottlenecks of the general relation.

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List of Abbreviations

CI	Citizen Initiative
CIGS	Citizen Initiatives for Global Solidarity
EU	European Union
GINGO	Grassroot International National Government Organization
LAG	Local Action Group
LC	Local Council *(Local government institution in Uganda)*
LEADER	*Bottom-Up approach by the European Union to strengthen rural areas*
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
NPM	New Public Management
NRM	National Resistance Movement *(Political party in Uganda)*
PDI	Private Development Initiative
PDM	Parish Development Model *(Policy of the Ugandan government)*

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1. Introduction

Due to the global, albeit uneven, shift of certain competencies from higher to lower government levels as part of so-called decentralization efforts, the focus on the role of subordinate levels of government has increased in the past decades. Governments, international development institutions as well as academic scholars have identified them as key actors for local and regional development (Ministry of ICT & National Guidance, 2021; Pike et al., 2016; UNCDF, 2021). In parallel to increased decentralization, researchers recognized changes in the act of governing itself, as actors from the private sector and civil society became increasingly involved in policymaking and the delivery of public goods and services. Over time, such non-state actors took over a number of tasks in rural development that used to be the sole duty of government institutions. So-called place-based approaches comprise different theoretical and conceptual approaches to the study of this phenomenon that center around the idea of mobilizing local or indigenous "under-utilized assets and resources" (Pike et al., 2016, p. 205) while emphasizing the significance of context sensitivity. From the perspective of place-based approaches, government institutions remain in a central position as they take on the role of coordinators and facilitators and are seen as responsible for identifying the potential of localities.

Due to neoliberal reforms and cutbacks in public spending, the performance of this assigned role has been proven limited, which resulted in gaps in the provision of public goods and services (Bevir, 2009). Besides, empirical case studies from the Global South uncovered shortcomings of participatory policies introduced by government institutions (Angeles & Gurstein, 2000; Phago & Molosi-France, 2018). Gibson-Graham (2010) as cited by Pike et al. (2016) make a case for putting local communities themselves in the focus and portraying them as key actors in local and regional development. In fact, empirical examples in both Global North and Global South document how citizens do get involved in local planning and the initiation, maintenance or improvement of public services and goods.

Different terms have been introduced to describe the phenomenon of citizen self-organization: bottom-up initiatives, grassroots initiatives, social enterprises, community self-management, community based organizations – just to name a few (Igalla et al., 2019). Some of these terms highlight a particular characteristic of the set of actors they want to

encompass. For instance, the term social enterprises emphasizes that actors seek to develop their own business models. Yet, such terms are not suited to cover the variety of citizen organizations out there. As it encompasses the heterogeneity of this phenomenon and for the sake of conceptual clarity, the term "Citizen Initiatives" (CIs) will be used in this thesis.

CIs are broadly defined as initiated by citizens, who attempt to fill perceived gaps is government service provision by mobilizing local resources (Haaland & Wallevik, 2019). Igalla et al. (2019) asserts that CIs do present the highest level of Arnstein's (1969) often-cited ladder of participation. CIs are a global phenomenon, present in the Global South and North and mostly dedicated to specific local or regional purposes. Although they are present in urban and local areas, researchers point out that they may play a larger role in rural areas where socio-economic decline and depopulation have led to cuts in government service provision (de Haan, 2019).

The research question examined in this thesis concerns the relations between citizen initiatives and government institutions and the influence these have on the outcomes of CIs. Despite the increasingly important role of citizen initiatives in many contexts, government institutions continue to be important actors for local and regional development too. Government institutions remain the center of law-making and execution and therefore set the frame in which CIs emerge and pursue their activities (Da Soares Silva et al., 2018). Besides, in many cases, government institutions do provide different resources to support citizen initiatives (Igalla et al., 2019).

In contrast, a decisive characteristic of CIs is that they strive "for autonomy, ownership and control regarding internal decision-making" (Igalla et al., 2019, p. 1182). Therefore, the increased involvement of CIs in rural development raises important questions regarding their relationship with government institutions that may perceive CIs as a challenge to their monopoly on power. As de Haan (2019) puts it: "In light of changing responsibilities, role patterns and power relations, the relationship between governments and citizens' initiatives is an important consideration." (p. 5). Assuming that in a considerable number of cases, the overall development of a village or rural region is dependent on the relative success of citizen-driven development initiatives, the possibly conflictive dynamic between CIs and governments emerges as an important point of inquiry.

Against this background, the research topic will be studied along the following research questions:

(1) How do government relations influence outcomes of citizen initiatives?

(2) What factors are influencing the relation between citizen initiatives and government institutions?

While the first question aims to identify different forms of relations between CIs and government institutions and to assess their influence on the outcome of CI's activities, the second question attempts to dwell on the factors influencing these relations. To tackle these research questions, this thesis develops an explorative research design and uses qualitative interviews to gain empirical data from two separate case studies from Germany and Uganda. In doing so, the thesis addresses the of lack of case studies on CIs from the Global South and the lack of comparative studies between CIs in Global Southern and Northern contexts (Igalla et al., 2019). Drawing on the findings of the individual case studies and their comparison, the overarching goal of this research is to expand the knowledge on the role of citizen initiatives for local and regional development across contexts. In this vein, it aims to determine implications for representatives of CIs as well as government institutions on how manage relations in a way that serves developmental outcomes.

This thesis is structured as follows: Firstly, the research topic is contextualized by reviewing general developments in local and regional development that explain the emergence and increasing importance of citizen initiatives. Next, the discourse on citizen aid actors is presented to define the term "citizen initiative" and put it into context. Secondly, throughout the literature review, theoretical concepts and empirical research on CIs in general and on the relations between CIs and government institutions is examined. In this process, three general modes of CI-government relations and their different effects on outcomes and four possible interdependent factors that influence these relations are identified. Thirdly, the methodology of the thesis is laid out. This includes the epistemological position of the author, the research design and its implementation and reflections about methodological limitations. Fourthly, the presentation of both case studies starts by illustrating the geographic and institutional context of the studied citizen initiatives. Next, the emergence, internal structure and the track-record of both CIs is examined before diving into the analysis of both cases in terms of government-CI relations, their impact on outcomes as well as along

the factors influencing these relations. Fifthly, the empirical findings are discussed and put into comparison. The last chapter summarizes this thesis' results and discusses implications for scholars, policy makers and civil society actors.

2. Concepts and Terminology

2.1. From Government to Governance

What is the role of government institutions? What is the role of local and regional government institutions? The answers to these questions have changed in past decades as a transition from government towards governance occurred. Different ideas and developments such as decentralization, the New Public Management (NPM) wave and a general neoliberal tendency to cut back on public spending have driven this transition that happened unevenly across contexts. All of these developments have shaped the political-administrative structure, practices of government institutions and thereby their relation to non-government actors, including CIs.

The term "government" refers to a traditional understanding of hierarchically organized governments that acts in a top-down manner and is solely responsible for the formulation and implementation of policies in a defined territory. On the contrary, the act of "governance" may involve government, but it additionally acknowledges the increased complexity of the relations between institutions of different government levels and the influence private and third sector actors exercise on policy-formulation and implementation via negotiations or direct collaboration. While "government" is a purely state-centric concept, "governance" puts attention to the relations between government and non-government actors across vertical and horizontal scales (Bevir, 2009).

Along this transition, the NPM wave that gained size in the 1980s called for different stages of marketization of public services to make public administration more efficient: Firstly, NPM entails the integration of private sector management concepts within the internal organization of government institutions. For instance, pay-for-performance schemes were introduced to measure the performance of civil servants along multiple managerial parameters. The underlying thought was that the performance of civil servants and therefore the output improves (Pike et al., 2016; Tubb, 2020). By this NMP connects to popular points of criticism of the traditional Weberian bureaucracy model that influenced the structure and practice of the public sector in many contexts. Weber's model is characterized by a fixed hierarchy, high degree of specialization and lifelong career paths for civil servants. Part of the NMP reform agenda is to break up these principles, for instance by introducing private

sector-oriented incentive systems (Treiber, 2016). Secondly, NMP encompasses the partial or full privatization or out-sourcing of public services to non-government actors. The motive behind this was not to empower citizen participation but to make public services less cost intensive (Bevir, 2009).

However, according to Bevir (2009) and Pike et al. (2016) the track-record of NPM reforms present a mixed picture as it lead to unintended consequences such as gaps in service provision and lack of accountability. Despite these shortcomings, NPM related reforms lead to cutbacks in public spending across contexts – spendings that often have not been reinstated. The influence of neoliberal ideas and the vision of a lean state persist not only in the Global North but in the Global South too as development agencies propagate such.

Due to the problems of NPM reforms, questions of coordinating multiple involved actors in policy formulation and implementation became more and more important for government institutions across levels. Decentralization encompasses the development that political and administrative functions have been increasingly shifted from upper to lower government levels. It entails very different stages from shifting a few administrative functions up to granting rights that make subordinated governments semi-autonomous. Up until now, research has been undecided about the consequences of decentralization.

On the one hand, it is argued that decentralization is an asset and important for the socio-economic development of a region and the participation of citizens as policymaking is more based on context-specific knowledge. If done right, local government institutions can be empowered through decentralization reforms and can thereby better respond to citizen's needs by actions independent from higher government levels. On the other hand, it is claimed that decentralization potentially increases administrative costs and possibilities for corruption. In conclusion, it can be stated that decentralization itself is no sure-fire success. Its benefits only appear when decentralization reforms are implemented properly in all respects (Pike et al., 2016).

Building on this contextualization, the next sub-chapter reviews different definitions of the phenomenon of active citizens. Consequently, the next sub-chapter seeks to formulate a definition of the term citizen initiatives that will be used in this thesis.

2.2 From "Citizen Aid" towards a broader Definition

As indicated in the introduction, the literature on CIs is scattered along different discourses that use different terms and definitions to frame the phenomenon. This chapter starts by presenting a variety of the most commonly used terminologies and points out their similarities, before explaining why this thesis adopts a wider definition.

As researchers from different country contexts use different terms, it is not easy to find a common label for the on-going discourse and the growing body of literature around the phenomenon. The umbrella term "citizen aid" (p. 1770) was introduced Fechter and Schwittay (2019) "not to reduce this variety, but to help counter fragmentation and the reduced theoretical visibility and impact that may result from it" (p. 1170). This umbrella term will be used here to distinguish it from the wider definition of citizen initiatives that will be introduced at the end of this chapter and used throughout the thesis. This wider definition will encompass actors that are active in their own surrounding. Fechter and Schwittay (2019) emphasize that the shared characteristics of the different terms that are used to describe the phenomenon of "citizen aid" are that such actors "are small-scale and usually operate on the margins of the formal aid and development sector" (p. 1770).

Back in 2009, the Belgic researchers Develtere and Bruyn cited by Fechter and Schittay (2019) described the increase in numbers of such actors as the emergence of a fourth pillar of development aid. By this Delvetere and Bruyn (2009) distinguish these actors from bilateral, multilateral and professional civil society aid organizations. They argue that the small-scale and non-specialized nature of their projects characterizes actors belonging to this new pillar. Furthermore, they capture the skepticism of actors from the established pillars questioning whether the new actors should be perceived as a positive or negative addition. Pollet (2017) finds that attitudes of central governments towards these actors still differ a lot between countries.

Researchers from different origins established other terms for the phenomenon. For instance, Appe and Schnable (2019) cited by Fechter and Schwittay (2019) use the term grassroots international NGOs (GINGOs) while researching citizen aid organizations that originate in the United Stated but aim to implement projects in the Global South. These projects come into being without the support of established aid organizations as Schnable (2017) states that such development projects "emerge in a personal, relational context" (p. 4). Appe and

Schnable (2019) point out that the initiators of such projects are rarely at the site of implementation but conduct "most of the organizational management and planning" (p. 1833) in the US. Furthermore, they found that the landscape of GINGOs in the US is fragmented as interaction and mutual support rarely exists between them. Davis (2020) draws on their terminology to study the phenomenon in the Canadian context.

In contrast, Valk and Schulpen (2005)introduced the term private development initiatives (PDIs) back referring to citizen aid actors that originated in the Netherlands but implemented projects in the aftermath of the tsunami in Sri Lanka in 2004. Building on this, Kinsbergen (2014) studied Dutch CIs implementing projects in other contexts in the Global South. Kinsbergen et al. (2017) investigates the sustainability of such projects on the ground by classifying the practices and approaches of their work. They found that the sustainability of projects by PDIs is often endangered as their focus is mostly on "direct relief" and not on "structural change" (p. 242). Besides, the collaboration with local stakeholders, including beneficiaries, local partners and government institutions, is found to be limited in many cases. According to Kinsbergen et al. (2017), this increases the risk that not much will be left of a project at the moment the PDI drops out.

The term Citizen Initiatives for Global Solidarity (CIGS) was coined in the aftermath of the so-called European refugee crisis in which countries of the European Union experienced an influx of refugees at a conference in Brussels in. Schulpen and Huyse (2017) refer to CIGS as "small-scale initiatives or projects not part of the traditional sector set up by private persons in the Global North and aimed at improving the living standards of people in the Global South" (p. 166). The term CIGS literally puts the focus on the motives of individuals to start such initiatives and suggests that they embody a sense of global solidarity.

Regardless of which term is used to study the phenomenon of "citizen aid", researchers emphasize that actors encompassed by the individual terms do not present a homogenous phenomenon. In fact, they vary in size, ambition to professionalize, scope, funding and background. There are attempts to differentiate and classify actors associated with the phenomenon. For instance, Haaland and Wallevik (2017) differentiate between "accidental aid agents" (p. 206), "aid-entrepreneurs" (p. 206) and "young solidarity workers" (p. 207) and "trans-locals" (p. 207). While aid-entrepreneurs often have a professional background in the humanitarianism scene and often follow a rather concrete project plan, accidental aid

agents are getting involved "by chance" and possibly through "an accidental encounter" (p. 206) that triggers them to act. However, all these types of initiatives share the characteristic that they usually emerge in the Global North yet direct their actions to benefit citizens of the Global South.

Against this background, two aspects need to be acknowledged while taking the growing body of literature around the phenomenon of citizen aid into account:

Firstly, contributing researchers are skeptical about the impact and sustainability of citizen aid projects that are planned and financed by actors from the Global North and target Global Southern citizens as beneficiaries. Researchers from different contexts highlight that citizen aid actors are not automatically immune to replicate a paternalistic, top-down attitude that has been criticized with view to traditional development actors (Appe & Schnable, 2019; Haaland & Wallevik, 2017; Kinsbergen et al., 2017; Kinsbergen, 2019).

For instance, Appe and Schnable (2019) argue that decisions of citizen aid actors might not only lack effectiveness but may in fact "implicitly or explicitly disregard the local knowledge and capacity of their Global South recipient communities" (p. 1844). This matches with the case studied by Kinsbergen et al. (2017) in which the Dutch citizen aid actor was surprised that the women for whom it set-up a new, modern kitchen continued to use the old kitchen – "a corrugated shack" (p. 237) – as they were accustomed to it. The women were not interviewed on their perspective and needs prior to the planning and implementation of the new kitchen. Yet, while exploring a case of an accidental aid agent, Haaland and Wallevik (2017) find that citizen aid actors have the potential to act as "an intermediary in a local political field" (p. 220) and might have a positive impact as they potentially empower and increase the agency of local populations.

Secondly, contributing researchers do expand the geographic scope by investigating projects that are both designed and implemented within the Global North. For instance, Haaland and Wallevik (2019) and Shults et al. (2021) study initiatives that were initiated on the Greek island Lesvos, where thousands of refugees arrived and continue to do so from 2015 onwards. They state that citizen aid actors "are also increasingly engaged as active contributors to secure welfare in the Global North" (p. 1871). Additionally, Fechter and Schwittay (2019) highlight that "recent research is also examining South-South initiatives as well as responses to situations in the Global North" (p. 1770). In doing so, the research

community pays tribute to the fact that aid in general is a concept that cannot be understood exclusively along the North-South dichotomy.

Nevertheless, the citizen aid discourse and its theoretical and empirical focus remains narrow in the sense as it neglects the following set of actors: Firstly, initiatives initiated by Global Southern citizens that take action in their direct proximity. Secondly, initiatives initiated by Global Northern citizens that are active in their own proximity. Though neither of those two types of initiatives can be subsumed under concepts such as global solidarity or global citizenship, they do present yet another form of citizen-driven initiatives founded to tackle problems that governments are either unable or unwilling to solve on their own. From an empirical standpoint, it is clear that citizen initiatives are a global phenomenon and not limited to the Global North. However, as Igalla et al. (2019) find, research is generally biased towards Western-based CIs and thus largely neglects "truly" Global Southern CIs.

Therefore, the definition by Igalla et al. (2019) that is used in this thesis encompasses "truly" Global Southern as well as Global Northern CIs:

> "Citizen initiatives are community-based and often locally oriented […], provide and maintain an alternative form of traditional governmental public services, facilities, and/or goods themselves […], strive for autonomy, ownership […] often develop their own business models to increase financial stability […] but they are not focused on private profitmaking" (p. 1182-1183).

This definition entails a set of necessary and optional conditions for a group of actors to be defined as a citizen initiative. To match this definition, an initiative needs to be community-based and take over tasks that traditionally fall into the responsibility of government institutions. The characteristic that they preserve their own autonomy presents a potential point of conflict as government institutions are still present in the areas in which CIs engage. The definition includes initiatives that create their own sources of income under the premise that the income generated benefits the community and not individuals. Although this definition broadens the perspective on CIs, it does not exclude citizen aid actors. The main difference between the definition used as part of this thesis and the narrower term of citizen aid projects is that the origin of beneficiaries is disregarded in the broader definition. As a matter of fact many CIs are only active in their own immediate proximity and are not relying on transnational funding (Igalla et al., 2019).

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Thus, the next sub-chapter illustrates how CIs are a global phenomenon present in the Global North as well as the Global South, thus providing the conceptual background to this thesis' empirical investigation.

2.3. From Top-Down to Bottom-Up Governance

The broad topic of citizen participation is often viewed from the perspective of how Western aid agencies or central governments can increase citizen participation in Global Southern contexts. Therefore, it is important to shift the attention on cases of active citizenship and ultimately on citizen initiatives from the Global South that are founded by locals. More attention should be drawn on these actors as they can fill gaps that are left by government institutions and traditional aid agencies. In addition, citizen initiatives have the potential to overcome material and intangible dependencies and to empower local communities (Gibson-Graham, 2007) and thereby allowing them to climb up to the higher rungs of Arnstein's (1969) ladder of participation. For instance, the case portrayed by Llano-Arias (2015), cited by Igalla et al. (2019) shows how activism by citizens against the privatization of water supply created new forms of political participation in Colombia.

Why such alternative paths towards local and regional development are needed, can be explained by reviewing the criticism of traditional aid: For example, Mwenda (2006) points out how aid creates a charity culture and boosts corruption instead of bringing about structural change and lasting wealth. Dees (2012) states that charity can endanger empowerment and "self-esteem" (p. 328) of people and create a lasting dependency. In a similar vein, Sirolli (2012) argues that Western aid organizations are acting patronizing or paternalistic instead of listening to and supporting "entrepreneurs". CIs have the potential to create concrete, problem-solving measures that have the potential to become largely independent from external funding over the medium term.

The question of how much impact CIs could exercise to determine the future of rural development in the Global South remains yet to be answered. Across regions, education levels have risen in the Global South (World Bank, 2022b, 2022c, 2022d). This could imply that more and more citizens possess the knowledge as well as the resources to initiate a citizen initiative. Looking at fast-growing populations in developing countries (World Bank, 2022a), which in turns means rising demand for public goods and services, governments that

embrace and support local CIs and their engagement could thrive. Yet, parallel to an overall population growth, urbanization is a trend affecting many developing countries (Pike et al., 2016). Potentially, this may lead central governments to neglect rural areas even more and almost exclusively channel their resources into the development of their economic centers.

Under different auspices, the consideration to actively embrace the phenomenon of citizen initiatives was brought forward by governments in the Global North. Prominently, past central governments in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom have launched policies to empower citizen initiatives (Da Soares Silva et al., 2018; Kisby, 2010; Verhoeven & Tonkens, 2013). Kisby (2010), for instance, investigates the "Big Society" agenda by the former prime minister David Cameron that was targeted to promote bottom-up initiatives. Yet, Kisby (2010) urges that this policy served as justification for downsizing government spending. Regarding the Netherlands, De Haan (2019) explains that the central government introduced a policy called "the participation society" (p. 2) to support citizens engagement a thereby cushion the effects of significant cuts in government spending for public services.

According to the author, these cuts affected rural areas in particular as those are generally already lagging in terms of infrastructural development and face a declining population. Therefore, the need for citizens to take on tasks that used to be fulfilled by governments is higher than in urban contexts. Rural decline is also the motive for the citizen initiatives Li et al. (2016), cited by de Haan (2019), investigated in a Chinese and a Swedish village. Despite the different contexts, both cases present examples of villages who successfully prevented the decline of their local economies through the engagement of their citizens. Li et al. (2016) emphasizes that the challenge of decline is faced by areas beyond urban centers in developed as well as developing countries. Therefore, they call not only for an economic "revitalization" (p. 512) but for the "creation of desirable rural lifestyles" (p. 512) to attract people moving to these areas. Governments, Li et al. (2016) concludes, are not capable of securing both goals on their own.

Despite the different socio-economic, historic and political conditions across contexts, it can be claimed the activities of citizen initiatives as defined by Igalla et al. (2019) and their outcomes impact local and regional development in contexts around the globe. Therefore, it is necessary to not only look at citizen aid actors, who present a special form of CIs, but to raise attention on the variety of CIs that are engaged in the development of their own area.

Referring to the Dutch context, de Haan (2019) distinguishes between different types, as in some cases CIs may step in when governments tend to cut on public services, and in others CI may create a service that not existed before. No matter which type, CIs always interact with government institutions to a certain extent and researchers emphasize that these relations impact the outcomes of CIs.

In this chapter, the emergence of citizen initiatives has been situated in a wider context of changes in local and regional development. The development from top-down to bottom-up processes of policy-formulation and implementation potentially result in conflicts between government institutions and citizen initiatives, as the latter tackle the monopoly of power.

Since this thesis is concerned with the relationship between CIs and government institutions, the next chapter reviews what existing literature found out about the relations between government institutions and citizen initiatives. At the beginning, theoretic concepts on the relations between citizen initiatives and governments are reviewed. As a result of the analysis of empirical research how the relations between these two work in practice, three broad modes of relations with different possible effects on CI's outcomes are identified. Lastly, factors that influence these relations are retrieved from existing research.

3. Literature Review

3.1 CIs and Governments: Concepts of Interaction

The set of concepts that deals with relations between government institutions and non-governmental actors, including citizen initiatives, is called place-based or indigenous approaches. Generally, these approaches portray the importance of the regional and local level of government as the consequence of broader changes within government practices and the emergence of new governance actors illustrated in the prior chapter. What unifies these approaches is their "sensitivity to geographical context" (Pike et al., 2016, p. 207). This means that appropriate policy to enhance the development of a region varies from context to context as these local circumstances differ (Pike et al., 2016). The concepts of coproduction and post-development presented below differ especially in their view of the different roles government institutions and citizen initiatives take on.

Coproduction is an influential concept introduced by Ostrom (1996): She defines coproduction as "the process through which inputs used to produce a good or service are contributed by individuals who are not "in" the same organization" (p. 1073). In a similar vein, Ostrom (1996) and Evans (1996) argue that public and private actors can form networks "that are neither public nor private but fill the gap between the two spheres" (Evans, 1996, p. 1122). Da Soares Silva et al. (2018) state that citizens do have "some degree of control over the process, and not merely a consultative role" (p. 6), which makes them already more involved in development than in pure traditional top-down governing. Yet, the concept of coproduction views government institutions as facilitators that coordinate and moderate the collaboration of public as well as private actors. While these concepts acknowledge the added value actors such as citizen initiatives present for local development, government institutions remain the focal point of planning and "doing" development.

In practice, this is often the case as examples by Mees et al. (2019) suggest: They study the involvement of government institutions in CIs active in the field of climate adaptation in the Netherlands along a model called "ladder of government participation" (p. 200) that is leaned on Arnstein (1969). This model classifies the different degrees of government interventions from "Regulating", top-down governance, to "Letting go", cases in which governments are not involved at all. For the particular set of CIs investigated, they conclude

that "the network steering role is the most dominant role" (p. 205), meaning that government institutions create networks comprised of actors of different sectors. In this setting, government institutions have the role to coordinate the decision-making within the network. This resembles what Ostrom (1996) understands as successful coproduction but as the citizens are not taking "the lead as initiators" (Igalla et al., 2019, p. 1177) anymore, such actors would not fall under the definition of citizen initiatives used in this thesis.

In contrast to the concept of coproduction, post-development authors such as Gibson-Graham (2010) cited by Pike et al. (2016) put local communities in the center position and question the mainstream capitalist concept of development and top-down managing of development more consequently. Within post-development theory, citizen initiatives are the initiating actors and key to find alternative ways for development apart from established powerful capitalist interests. Gibson-Graham (2007) claims that the purpose of post-development theory is to "imagine and practice development differently" (p. 6). This claim is in line with the assumption included in the definition of CIs that these actors have a motivation and a sufficient degree of autonomy to plan and implement their activities. Gibson-Graham (2010) criticizes the uniform, mainstream development thinking that would be promoted by institutions such as the World Bank. Alike other place-based approaches, yet more insistent, she opposes the idea of a one-size-fits-all solution or a blueprint for regional development. Instead, she argues that it must be valued what practices, ideas and networks already exist in places that are determined as lagging behind. Therefore, she states that post-development theory "starts with what is in place and builds from there" (p. 229) and "recognizes and expands the diversity of development paths" (p. 226). In practice, this means for her that different actors from within the community engage together in multiple ways and "put community benefit before private profit" (p. 231). Likewise, the case of extending citizens influence on decision-making through resistance of citizens against existing government policies in Colombia, studied by Llano-Arias (2015) and noted above, serves an example for this.

Based on these different theoretical concepts researchers conducted a range of case studies from which three broad modes of CI-government relations, each with different possible effects on the outcomes of CI's activities can be identified.

3.2 CIs and Governments: Modes of Relations and Effects on Outcomes

As a result of the review of several case studies and broader literature on citizens relations, three broad modes of relations between governments and citizen initiatives are identified: Support, Tolerance and Oppression. While the bulk of literature focuses on government support, government actions apart from that are often not labeled. Consequently, two alternative categories are identified by the author. Each mode can may positively or negatively impact CIs' ability to achieve their desired outcome. Although boundaries between the different modes are not clear-cut, they help to classify different situations of the relation between government institutions and citizen initiatives. The following sub-chapter presents each mode and its possible effect on outcome separately.

Support

Regarding government support of CIGS, Pollet (2017) broadly distinguishes between financial and non- financial support. As such measures are likewise provided by government institutions for initiatives that fall under the wider definition of CIs used, these categories can be applied in this thesis. Within the category of financial support Pollet (2017) differentiates between direct support – for instance, funding via government schemes or grants – and indirect support, such as tax exemptions. For example, in Germany most CIs are legally registered as associations (German: *Vereine*) (Pollet (2017). Due to their legal status, many activities are largely exempted from taxes (Bayerisches Staatsministerium der Finanzen und für Heimat, 2021). Non-financial support measures encompass „training, workshops and exposure opportunities" (Pollet, 2017, p. 196). Through such measures, government institutions can "help with coordination and implementation efforts" (Igalla et al., 2019). Despite this form of technical support, government institutions can provide an overarching "facilitative policy and political environment" and "facilitative legal framework" (Igalla et al, 2019, p. 1186). Da Soares Silva et al. (2018) labels this an "institutional context" (p. 14) in which different government institutions provide supporting measures. The sum of supporting measures in the form of necessary funding and knowledge can enable CIs to maintain or scale-up their activities. Consequently, this can boost the motivation of participating members and attract other citizens to join the initiative.

Besides their organizational structure and their own leadership, Igalla et al. (2019) highlights government support as a key factor for the external and internal outcomes of CIs as government support often guarantees the long-term funding of activities. Likewise, the broad mode of *Support* resembles several stages of Mees et al. (2019) "ladder of government participation" (p. 200), as referenced in chapter 3.1. According to this, the level of intervention by governments can reach from punctual up to structural and long-term support. Yet, in both scenarios CIs are autonomous regarding decision-making and coordination of activities. In contrast to this, the highest stage of Mees et al. (2019) model "network steering" (p. 200) presents a setting in which CIs are part of a wider network of stakeholders, orchestrated by government institutions.

Despite the positive influence this range of government support measures potentially has, it can likewise have a negative effect on CIs' outcomes. Researchers do emphasize that government support presents an double-edged sword: First, Gonzales (2010) cited by Igalla et al. (2019) reports that government institutions in Italy took a demanding stance towards citizen initiatives. Instead of acting collaboratively in a co-productive manner, their behavior resembled traditional top-down governing. Similarly, de Haan (2019) points out that too strong ties with government institutions can maintain or deepen dependencies of CIs even when concrete responsibilities have already shifted to them. This can result in a situation in which government institutions dictate the initiative's agenda. Da Soares Silva et al. (2018) warns that especially financial support increases the risk of CIs becoming dependent on them and vulnerable to "abrupt political changes, policy shifts, or budget cuts" (p. 7). Second, by referring to Coy and Hedeen (2005), Da Soares Silva et al. (2018) highlight that apart from manifesting dependencies, co-optation through government institutions is another risk of government support.

Focusing on social movements in the US, Coy and Hedeen (2005) define co-optation as a process in which social movements are vulnerable to being gradually institutionalized into existing government structures. Again, the risk for citizen initiatives is losing their independence while adapting their structure and goals to fit the agenda of government institutions. Whereas Coy and Hedeen (2005) assume that this process of co-optation happens over decades and therefore without a far-sighted intention by government institutions, research on autocratic regimes and regime stability suggests that there are indeed governments who follow a tactic of co-optation rather than oppression so silence

divergent opinions (Bove & Rivera, 2015; Tsourapas, 2021). Gerschewski (2013) identifies co-optation besides legitimation and repression as one of the three pillars of autocratic regime stability. Yet, it needs to be acknowledged that co-optation in autocratic regimes is mostly orchestrated by central governments and concentrated on already existing elites that possess traditional or financial power and not on small-scale citizen initiatives. However, as CIs do have the potential to impact at least the development of their own region, the temptation to co-opt such initiatives for local and regional government institutions is real.

In summary, it can be stated that support of government institutions presents opportunities for citizen initiatives to fund or scale-up activities. However, government support bears the danger of CIs becoming too dependent or being co-opted by government institutions which ultimately can lead to the de facto dissolution of citizen initiatives. Current research suggests that this is often not in the interest of neither citizen initiatives nor government institutions as benefits for local and regional development are squandered. Consequently, de Haan (2019) appeals: „Government institutions need a balance in providing support on the one hand, but without interfering too much with the process of the initiatives on the other hand." (p. 85).

Tolerance

Tolerance, the second mode of relation between governments and CIs, means that government institutions take a neutral stance towards CIs or that they might be in favor but without providing any means of noteworthy material or non-material support. Igalla et al. (2019) states that particularly in developing countries, a lack of government resources can be a reason for the absence of such support. This lack of support can be problematic for CIs as they might lack the resources to maintain or even scale-up activities in the long-run. Such insufficient funding may also negatively affect the motivation of members to keep up their involvement in the citizen initiative. Hence, the tolerance mode characterized by a lack of government support poses a risk for the continuity of initiatives.

Mees et al. (2019) points out that there might be activities of CIs that are just so low-key that government institutions are not aware of or interested in them. This resembles the lowest stage of the ladder of government participation, meaning that albeit CIs are without government support, they do enjoy full autonomy over their structure, agenda and decisions. This can have a positive effect on the outcome of CI's activities as the case of an initiative

in Portugal, presented by Da Soares Silva et al. (2018) suggests: "The institutional context is less supportive for citizen initiatives, and this can trigger the emergence of alternative and innovative forms of social organization and provision" (p. 16). Judging by this and similar examples, what first looks like a weakness may in fact be an asset for CIs and their outcomes as the lack of government involvement grants them more autonomy over decisions and activities. This assumption is supported by the finding that too much government support can negatively influence the outcomes of CIs. Furthermore, the tolerating mode of relation reduces the risk of CIs becoming dependent on government budgets and political favor.

Oppression

This mode covers a wide range of possible measures taken by government institutions towards citizen initiatives. It encompasses less oppressive measures, such as the impediment of activities through administrative, legal or financial barriers, as well as highly intruding repressive means to suppress the doing of citizen initiatives.

Impediment refers to cases in which government institutions impede the activities by citizen initiatives through administrative, legal or financial barriers. Interestingly, these barriers are not necessarily intended by government institutions. Their creation might as well just be an unintended consequence of another policy. Such obstacles can be present even if the overall attitude of government institutions towards CIs is supportive. For instance, Da Soares Silva et al. (2018) citing Seyfang and Smith (2007) indicate that the process to apply for government funding is a time-intensive process due to the complexity of bureaucratic procedures. Such obligations weigh heavy on CIs and may force them to spend less time on actually implementing their activities. Accordingly, at least in the short-term, the impeding mode has only negative effects on CIs' outcomes.

An admittedly special example of impediment of CIs by government institutions presents the case of criminalization of citizens who participated in sea rescue missions in the Mediterranean Sea to save the lives of refugees trying to reach Europe. These private missions attempted to fill the gap that emerged after large-scale governmental search and rescue missions were terminated. Italian and Maltese authorities began to prosecute citizens participating in these missions, accusing them of smuggling illegal migrants into their territories (Cusumano & Villa, 2021). It can be argued that it was this very criminalization that drew attention to the issue of refugees drowning in the Mediterranean Sea that in turn

lead to increasing donations for sea rescue initiatives. However, it must be considered that for some initiatives, such as "Jugend Rettet", the criminalization of their activities and the seizure of their vessel meant the end of their main activity (Jugend Rettet, 2021). This shows that impediment at a certain stage can pose an existential threat to CIs.

Repressive measures that are taken to suppress citizen initiatives by force, are not a common topic within research on CIs. The lack of investigation into repressive CI-government relationships might be due to the fact that most research is focused on fairly democratic contexts where government institutions might use tools to impede activities of CIs but abstain from using coercive means.

In contrast, Gerschewski (2013) labels repression as the "backbone" (p. 21) of autocratic regimes – meaning that it is fundamental for their hold on power . In contexts where democratic principles such as sufficient separation of powers, rule of law and freedom of the press are regularly violated, repression, here defined as the ultimate end of oppression, can be a reaction to activities of CIs. Even such coercive means can result in positive effects for initiatives such as increased support, donations, and media coverage. Such publicity and financial support can help initiatives to prevail phases of repression. However, repression of any kind should not be whitewashed as it first and foremost presents an existential threat to the existence of citizen initiative and at times even to the lifes of participating members.

Three modes of relations between citizen initiatives and government institutions
Throughout the review of existing research, three broad modes of relations between citizen initiatives and government institutions and their respective effects on CI's outcomes have been identified. The three modes, the government measures they might entail, and the possible effects on outcomes are summarized in Table 1. Whereas possible positive effects are labeled in green, negative effects are colored in red.

Though the identified modes of relation undoubtedly present a simplification, they do provide helpful categories and terms to describe and classify empirical cases. Similarly, to Mees et al. (2019) model of different government roles, the modes of relation are not static in several respects as boundaries between them are permeable and there are gradual differences within each mode. It is important to note that governments are no unitary actors but composed of different institutions at different levels which themselves are composed of different departments and individuals with possibly diverging interest.

There are cases where one CI has different modes of relations with different government institutions or even different relations with different departments of the very same institution. Besides, both Mees et al. (2019) and Da Soares Silva et al. (2018) highlight that relationships between actors and with them effects on CIs' outcomes can change over time.

Consequently, the different modes should not be seen as clear-cut categories that definitively determine the state between a CI and a government institution. Instead, the modes describe the state of such a relation during a specific time frame or regarding a specific situation.

Mode of Relation	Measures by Government	Possible Effects on CI's Outcomes
Support	Financial support Non-financial support (e.g. trainings, knowledge, institutional)	Increased capacities to maintain or scale-up activities
		Limited autonomy, control, ownership leading to dependency or co-optation
Tolerance	No measures or only very limited supporting measures	Maintained autonomy, control, ownership
		Lack of resources to maintain or scale-up activities
Oppression	Administrative, legal or financial barriers (may occur non-intentionally) Repressive means (use of force)	Increased public support and donations
		Existential threat

Table 1: Modes of Relation and Effects on CI's Outcomes

3.3 CIs and Governments: Factors influencing Relations

There are a number of interdependent factors influencing the mode of CI-government relations and therefore also the effects on CI's outcomes: First, the institutional context, second, alignment of CIs' goals with government policies and political ambition of CIs, third, the overall level of democratization of the political system, and fourth, personal relationships between leading figures of CIs and staff of government institutions.

First, Da Soares Silva et al. (2018) emphasizes that it depends on the institutional context whether supporting measures are available to CIs. Pointing to the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, they assert that the central governments of these countries introduced support schemes for CIs to somewhat balance the budget cuts on government service provision. In these cases, this generally positive attitude towards CIs got entrenched within lower levels of government. As stated earlier, Da Soares Silva et al. (2018) claim that there are cases, for instance in Portugal, where less supportive institutional contexts provided more independence for CIs, which in turn had positive effects on outcome.

Second, Li et al. (2016) cited by de Haan (2019), find that government institutions take a more supportive stance when CI goals are aligned with their own policy agenda. The degree of alignment depends on the satisfaction of citizens with these policies. CIs are in the position to choose sides and influence political bargaining and elections. Depending on their willingness to use this influence in their favor, government institutions may adjust their mode of relation. The case of criminalization of private sea rescue missions presents an example where the goals of CIs clashed with the interest of government institutions.

Third, depending on the level of democratization, government institutions may take different intentional measures to either support or oppress citizen initiatives to different degrees. This factor is interdependent with the alignment of goals and political ambition of CIs. As stated above, government institutions within autocratic regimes have the possibility to use more oppressive means than institutions in democratic settings. Besides, an underlying assumption of this factor is that government institutions at lower government levels are more independent regarding their competencies and resources and thereby better suited to respond to citizen's needs in more democratic settings (Green, 2015; Pike et al., 2016).

Fourth, personal relations between leaders of CIs and political and administrative actors can influence the overall relation between CIs and government institutions. Igalla et al. (2019) note that "leadership style" (p. 1186) influences not only the internal organization of CIs but their relation to government institutions as well. Especially in rural settings, leadership is identified as more contested compared to higher government levels and therefore as important for local and regional development (Beer, 2014).

By themselves, none of these five factors alone explains how a relation between CIs and government institutions are shaped by influencing factors. The factors presented above are interdependent and can vary from case to case and within a case over time. The empirical case studies may uncover if an approximate ranking regarding their importance is possible. Next, the research design including the epistemological position and the methodological approach that underpins the empirical part of this thesis, bridges the gap between theory, literature review and the case studies.

4. Methodology

This chapter will look at the methodological choices that have guided the case selection, data collection and the analysis of findings. At first, by presenting the epistemological position of the author the decision for taking a qualitative research approach is reasoned. Next, the case study design and the different stages of the research process are described. Then follows an acknowledgement of ethical issues and how they are approached within this research project. Finally, the methodological choices and the research process are reflected, and limitations identified.

4.1 Epistemological Position

Ultimately, this thesis aims to expand the knowledge on the effects of relations between citizen initiatives and government institutions on the outcomes of CIs as well as on factors influencing these relations. On a more general level, the thesis thus contributes to an expanded understanding of the role of citizen initiatives for local and regional development. The research design described in this chapter was developed against the background of the above-stated research interest and the author's interpretivist epistemological position (Bryman, 2016). Given its aim to explore and analyze the relations between CI-government relations in different contexts and acknowledging the limited amount of research available on the subject, the author employs a qualitative, explorative research design (Döring et al., 2016).

Following the principle of openness, explorative research does not mean to test a pre-defined set of theoretically founded assumptions. Rather, explorative research aims to acquire empirical insights to achieve a detailed understanding of the research object as well as the dynamics affecting it. Embracing this case-based approach to acquiring knowledge, the author of this thesis rejects the post-positivist assumption that corresponds with the epistemological position of most quantitative research in the field of social sciences. Post-positivism assumes that by researching a set of cases unbiased results that are easily generalizable to a wider population can be revealed. In contrast, this thesis seeks to obtain empirical data and interpret them to arrive at well-founded, yet not necessarily impartial, unbiased or universal conclusions. While results should still provide insights beyond

individual cases, they are not viewed as absolute "true". This stance follows the assumption that everyone, including the interviewees and the author of this thesis, sees the world through a unique lens influenced by personal and professional backgrounds as well as current circumstances, for example, and thus arrives at its own interpretation of reality.

Accepting that any research will suffer those biases described above at least to some degree, qualitative explorative research does not disregard preliminary research in its field of interest. Instead, it aims to develop a theoretical sensibility for relevant concepts and phenomena important to the research process (Strauss & Corbin, 2010). Both broad-based, systematic reviews of existing literature and qualitative case studies building on semi-structured interviews of individuals are characteristic for explorative research designs and represent the data collection methods of choice for this thesis.

4.2 Case Study Design

4.2.1 Semi-structured Interviews

In accordance with the researcher's epistemological position, the research process started with a literature review to rigorously assess previous research findings and position the thesis within the existing literature. The findings of the literature review were structured and analyzed along the research interest of this thesis. On this basis, different modes of relations between citizen initiatives and government institutions with different possible effects have been identified (see Table 1). Again, it should be noted that this simplified illustration of complex and dynamic processes serves not as a rigid classification to categorize knowledge that is collected within the field. Instead, it provides an overview over the multiple modes of relation and effects on outcomes and the terminology to analyze these.

To fulfill acquire the in-depth, case-based knowledge needed to answer the research questions stated in this thesis, semi-structured qualitative interviews are the chosen method and were conducted along two different cases. The semi-structured approach was chosen for a number of reasons: On the one hand, the method provides a sufficient degree of guidance as an interview guide with sub-sections is pre-formulated. On the other hand, it grants interviewers the flexibility to adjust individual questions as well as the general angel throughout an interview (Bryman, 2016; O'reilly, 2012).

4.2.2 Case Selection

To overcome the lack of comparative and qualitative case studies on citizen initiatives in the Global South beyond the discourse on citizen aid actors, the case selection for this thesis was oriented to find one case of a Global Southern initiative and one case of a Global Northern initiative. The case selection therefore presents a non-probability sample (Bryman, 2016):

The initiative from the Global South, an initiative from Uganda founded in 2019, was chosen due to personal contacts of the author that existed prior to this research. The author already met founder and head of the citizen initiative, who was interviewed for this thesis. The interviewee was approached via a private message at an early stage of the research process to determine if he would like to participate.

The second initiative is from Germany and was identified through a reference from the author's personal environment. The initiative was contacted via e-mail. In this case the interview was conducted with a co-founder of CI, who still is one of its leading figured. As a result of this interview, two contacts at government institutions were established and an interview was conducted with each of them. One of the interviewees works in the department concerning regional management, climate protection and tourism at the district administration that is responsible for the initiative's municipality. She works. The other interviewee serves as the head of department for demography-management and social-planning within the administration of the neighboring district. Both civil servants were not only interviewed about the relation to the CI studied as part of this thesis but also questioned on their relations to civil society actors and their view on the implementation of bottom-up activities in general.

4.2.3 Interview Guides

To conduct semi-structured interviews, interview guides are prepared before the interviews to structure the questions in different thematic sections. However, interview guides are not determining an interview's flow in a rigid way, as the researcher can still flexibly react to possibly unexpected answers and is able to follow such trails in more detail (Bryman, 2016).

For this thesis two different interview guides were prepared as on the one hand representatives of citizen initiatives and on the other hand representatives of government

institutions were interviewed. Both interview guides were structured into three to four sections:

(1) The guide for the interviews with the representatives of the CIs was set up as follows: After the introduction, the aim was to get to know the initiative better, meaning to understand its emergence, activities, organizational structure, outcomes, challenges and its development over time. Then, the focus was shifted towards the research interest, the relations of the initiative with government institutions and their effect on outcomes. In the same course, a set of questions was designed to acquire knowledge on possible factors influencing these relations.

(2) In contrast, the interview guide for the interviews with the civil servants were structured as follows: Following the introduction, both interviewees were asked about the general scope and the daily practices of their work. In this context, the attention lied on the different funding instruments available to civil society actors, including citizen initiatives. Next, questions focused on government's general relation to citizen initiatives and the studied CI in particular (see Annex). The preparation of this interview guides drew on insights from the interview with the CI's representative. Following the above-named principle of openness, both interview guides provided just a coarse structure and the author followed the narrative of the different interviewees.

4.2.4 Data Collection and Analysis

Because of the continuous Covid-19 pandemic and restrictions concerning international travel, all interviews were conducted digitally. By this, the author ensured to avoid or limit the risk of physical harm (Forskningsetikk, 2021b). All interviews were conducted within two weeks. The interview with the Ugandan CI was interrupted several times due to connectivity issues. However, the connection could always be restored quickly

Transcripts of the interviews, produced with the help of recording, present the basis for the analysis that was performed as follows: In a first step, the data was analyzed with respect to its sequential structure, as the given information only unfold its meaning in context (Meuser & Nagel, 1991). The information contained in the form of thematic sequences was then paraphrased in a such way that no information is lost, and the complexity of the shared lived

experiences is not reduced. As part of the next step, the paraphrased parts were sorted under headings or "categories", which were derived inductively from the material. If considered necessary, categories were ascribed deductively based on preliminary literature (Bryman, 2016; Meuser & Nagel, 1991). Following the approach of "constant comparison" (Döring et al., 2016, p. 603), each interview was benchmarked against the rest of the interview material. Yet, each case was analyzed separately before findings were ultimately compared with each other and the findings of the literature review.

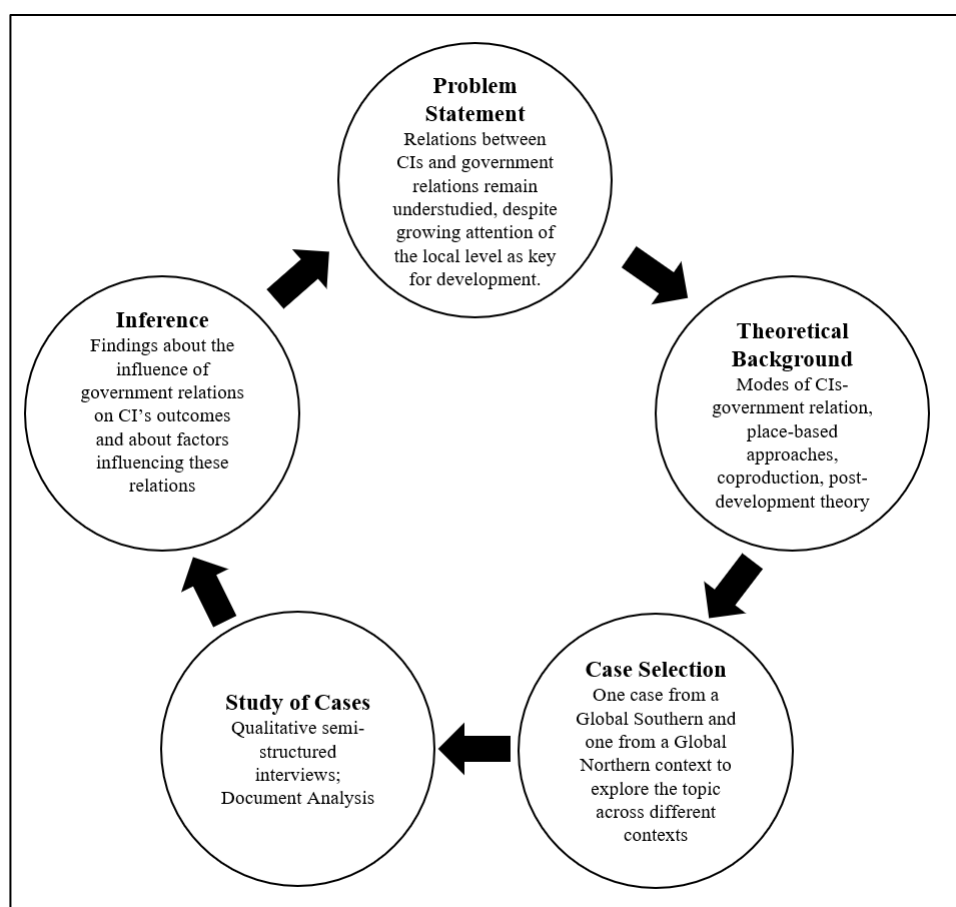Figure 1 below illustrates this case study design.

Figure 1: Case Study Design (Source: Author's own illustration based on (Muno, 2009, p. 127; Pickel et al., 2009, p. 127)

4.4 Ethical Considerations

In research in general but especially within qualitative research in which the researcher directly interacts with participants – in this case the interviewees and their organizations – it as an obligation to certain ethical principles. According to Bryman (2004) researchers in social research must prevent any harm to participants, a lack of informed consent, an invasion of privacy and deception. The author of this thesis followed the guidelines set by the Norwegian National Research Ethics Committees (2021a, 2021b) and by the University of Agder (2021). Thereby, the duties prescribed within the General Data Protection Regulation (2019) are considered as well.

Consequently, all interviewees were informed about the general objective of the research and already at the first point of contact. At this stage the interviewees were assured that their personal data and all the data generated during the research process would be treated anonymously. After they showed the will to participate in the research project, the interviewees received a letter of consent. This letter entailed again the scope and aim of the research project and information about data protection issues and the rights of interviewees such as access to the data processed and the right to request the deletion of any of their data. Interviewees were invited to ask any question regarding the letter of consent and were asked to sign it before the conduction of the respective interview. Before the interviews the permission of the Norwegian Centre for Research Data to conduct the interviews was secured by filling out the notification form and presenting a data management plan. In accordance with the guidelines of the Norwegian Centre for Research Data, the transcripts of the interviews are not included in the thesis to protect the anonymity of the interviewees.

At the beginning of each interview, interviewees were asked if they have any unanswered question and requested to reaffirm their consent verbally. By this, it was ensured that interviewees had given their consent "voluntarily, explicitly and based on secure information" (Universitetet i Agder, 2021). To avoid the disclosure of interviewees personal data including the names as well as the exact geographic location of the initiatives and the government institutions, they were anonymized through codification during data analysis. Thus, the interviews provided a safe space, allowing interviewees to share insights that they may not have disclosed if anonymization was not ensured.

Though the snowballing method could be used in the German case to identify additional contacts through the initial interview partner (Bryman, 2016), this was unfortunately not possible in the Ugandan case as no contacts of government institutions were forwarded by the initiative. To prevent any harm to the relations between the CI and government institutions, the author of this thesis refrained from contacting government institutions without the knowledge and consent of the initiative.

4.5 Limitations and Reflections

A critical appraisal of this thesis' contribution calls for a closer look at potential limitations that arise against the backdrop of its methodological approach. As pertains to the literature review, it should be noted that some previous research may have been missed due to flaws in the search strategy, the variety within the terminology used for the phenomenon or language barriers. It should be noted that the findings in the reviewed literature as portrayed in this thesis were subject to the interpretation of this thesis' author. Others might interpret the same literature differently, for example due to their personal and/or scientific background.

This also needs to be taken into account when turning to the case studies and the interpretation of empirical results. Within the interviews, the respective interviewees articulated their subjective views and experiences. These narratives were then interpreted by the author. Inevitably, this interpretation is shaped to a certain extent by the author's own experience, believes and knowledge. Of course, the author strived to interpret and present the findings "as they are" as Bryman (2016) states: "After all, if there can be several possible accounts of an aspect of social reality, it is the feasibility or credibility of the account that a researcher arrives that determines its acceptability to others." (p. 384). Yet, complete subjectivity is impossible to be reached in qualitative research. Though posing a particular challenge in the context of qualitative, small-N case studies, it should be noted that even quantitative research methods do not necessarily capture social realities subjectively. Rather the choice of method and its execution may blur results that still need to be interpreted by individual researchers, just as in qualitative research (Bryman, 2016).

Regarding the language of the interviews and their transcripts, it needs to be mentioned that the three interviews conducted on the German case were held in German as it is the native language of the author while the interview with the founder of the Ugandan CI was

conducted in English. As this thesis is written in English, there is the risk that some accuracy of the information and statements of the German interviews was lost in translation. When conveying subjective experiences such as statements on relations between individuals or institutions comprised of individuals, people use proverbs, metaphors and other linguistic idioms that vary between cultures and languages. Therefore, such linguistic idioms cannot be easily translated from one language to another. There is the risk that the intention or importance of a statement is not exactly conveyed (van Nes et al., 2010 cited by Fylkesnes, 2016). Nevertheless, the author attempted to ensure that the translations and thus interpretations in this thesis are as close and as true to the original language and meaning as possible.

Without restrictions regarding physical meetings and travel that remain in place due to the Covid-19 pandemic, additional methods to obtain data could have been applied. Possibly, interviews on a face-to-face basis would have resulted in other or more complex findings. Maybe interviewees would have been more open and more detailed in their answers. Besides, physical interviews would have made it possible to consider the body language of interviewees (Oltmann, 2016). Concerning the interview with the founder of the Ugandan CI, the interview was interrupted several times due to connectivity issues. A face-to-face interview might have allowed for a steadier flow. However, the decision to conduct all interviews digitally assured that neither the interviewees nor the author itself have been exposed to a risk of Covid-infection as a result of the research underlying this thesis. In addition, this ensured that all interviews were conducted in a uniform format.

It was only manageable to interview representatives of government institutions within the German case. Regarding the Ugandan case, it was not possible to establish contacts to government institutions via the initiative itself. As the research risked touching on sensitive issues that possibly would have caused negative consequences for the CI, the author decided not to approach government institutions on his own terms.

The following chapter "Empirical Findings" is structured in four sub-chapters. Firstly, the geographic context of both citizen initiatives is outlined. Secondly, to situate the activities and outcomes of both CIs their emergence, organizational structure and goals are explored. Thirdly, the relations between the CIs and government institutions and their influence on

outcomes are analyzed along their different activities. Fourthly, factors that are influencing these relations are outlined and estimated.

5. Empirical Analysis

5.1 Geographic and Institutional Context

Germany: Navigating the Federal System

The German initiative was founded in 2010 as a collaborative endeavor of four villages that belong to the same municipality. The municipality lies in a rural area and about 17,5 % of its inhabitants live in the four villages. These villages have longstanding historic ties as they already belonged to the same administrative entity before being incorporated to the municipality in the 1970s. These ties persist as the foundation of the joint CI and the statements of the interviewee indicate. The next larger town with over 100,000 inhabitants is approximately half an hour away by car. In past decades the area of the initiative's municipality has faced industrial decline, decreasing population due to urbanization and a decreasing government budget (Interview No. 1).

In general, the German political and administrative system is characterized by the principles of federalism and subsidiarity. Federalism means that federal states have their own governments, parliaments and authorities. Subsidiarity means that as much governing competencies as possible should be shifted to lower levels of government. As a result of the application of these principles, lower government levels have relatively far-reaching competencies compared to regional and local governments in other countries (Rudzio, 2011).

In the studied case, most funding instruments are provided by the federal state government itself or by sub-ordinated authorities so that the CI itself has no direct contact to institutions above federal state level. These instruments include the LEADER program, set-up by the European Union (EU) to support rural development from below. At an operational level, local action groups (LAGs) that are comprised of representatives from the public, private and third sector have been established to decide about the distribution of the LEADER budget. (European Commission, 2021). Because of their composition, they can be labeled as multi-actor institutions as they engage actors from different government levels.

Within the LAG, the district *(Landkreis)* administration represents the government within the LAG and acts as an intermediary between authorities of the federal state government,

municipalities as well as private and third sector actors including CIs (Interview No. 2). In general, the districts perform specific overarching administrative functions for all municipalities belonging to it. Municipalities present the lowest administrative entity to still possess some competencies and resources following the principle of subsidiarity (Rudzio, 2011). This political-administrative structure including vertical and horizontal institutions sets the institutional context of the German initiative and is illustrated in Figure 2.
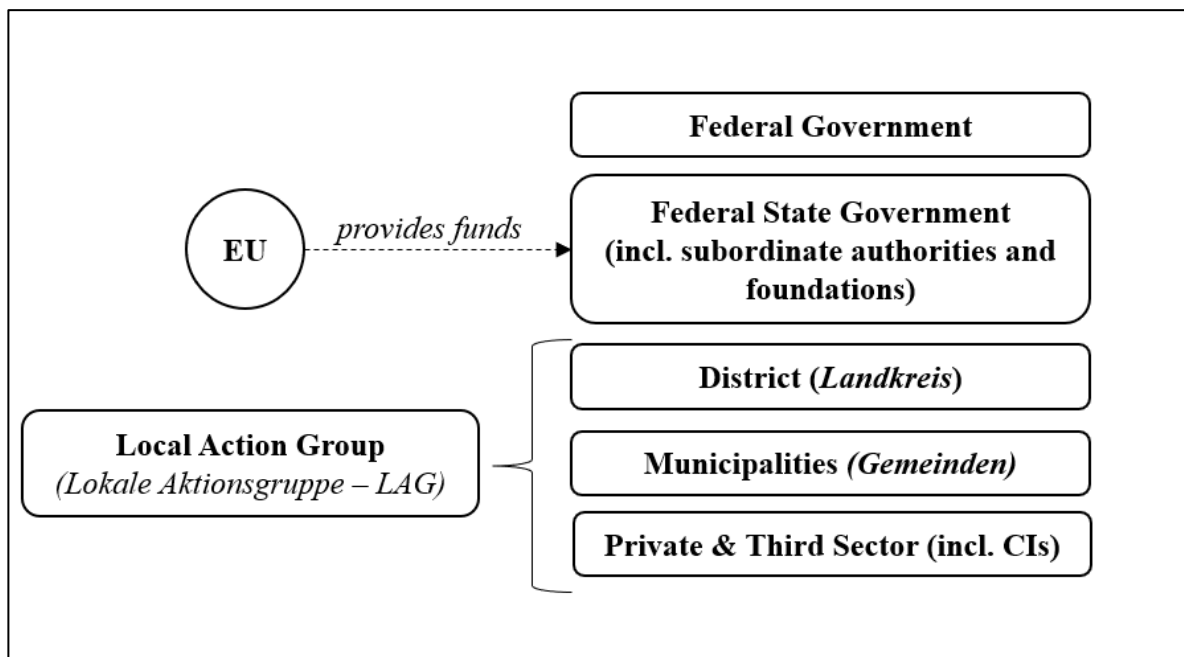
Figure 2: Institutional Context of the German Citizen Initiative (Author's own illustration based on Rudzio, 2011; Interview No. 2)

Uganda: Challenging/Circumventing a Centralized System

The Ugandan initiative was only founded officially three years ago, in 2019, and is situated in a rural area in Northern Uganda. The provincial capital is a two-hour drive over unpaved roads away. As many regions in Northern Uganda the district where the initiative is active faced serious security related challenges as the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) was raiding villages until 2004 (Kasaija, 2004). The region is considered as one of the most underdeveloped ones in Uganda regarding health and education related indicators (Interview No. 4). However, the size of the district's population has more than doubled between 2002 and 2020 and is expected to rise further (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2022). By referring to Kansiime (2019), Korsvik (2021) portrays that Uganda has a diverse set of different civil

society organizations with different aims and internal structures. Yet, she also states many of these organizations are dependent on aid and that Uganda generally faces a "lack of democracy and problems with corruption" (p. 21). These problems can be linked to the country's institutional context that is characterized by a powerful central government (Green, 2015; Mwesigwa, 2021).

In Uganda, parishes comprised of several villages present the lowest administrative level. Parishes belong to sub-counties, which themselves belong to one of the 135 districts. Within each district, the so-called Local Council (LC) forms the elected government (Green, 2015). This structure is illustrated in Figure 3. Green (2015) states that despite decentralization policies have "somewhat succeeded in creating democratic and legitimate local governments" (p. 495) an economic as well as political dependency on the central government level persists. This is confirmed by the interviewed founder of the Ugandan CI as he mentions that local governments lack financial resources and are dependent on central government institutions (Interview No. 4).
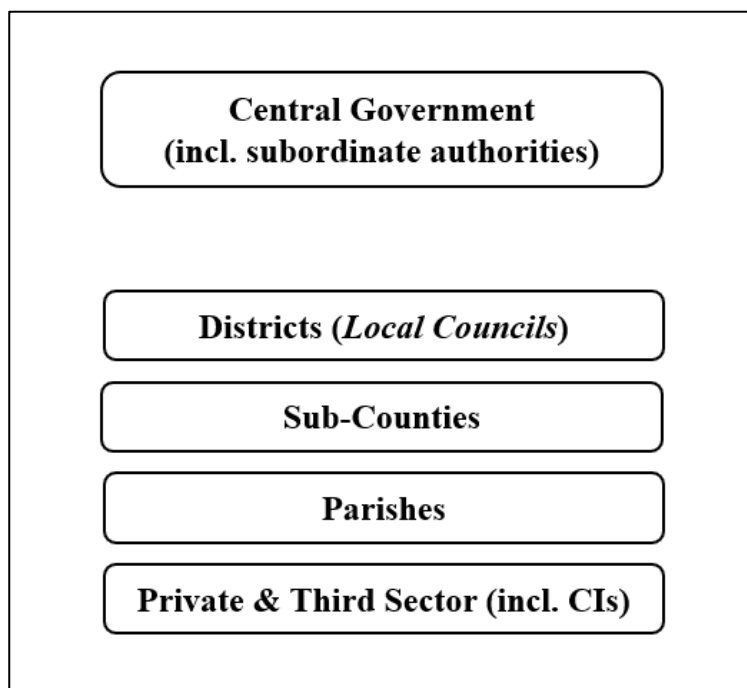

Figure 3: Institutional Context of the Ugandan Citizen Initiative (Author's own illustration, based on Green (2015); Interview No. 4)

Furthermore, it needs to be noted that Ugandan politics and therefore its government institutions are dominated by the National Resistance Movement (NRM), the leading party since long-term president Yoweri Museveni took over power in 1986 (Green, 2015). Green (2015) highlights that ineffective decentralization reforms that benefit the central government's hold on power, such as those seen in Uganda, are typical for (semi-) autocratic regimes. Additionally, Mwesigwa (2021) illustrates a number of challenges to effective citizen participation, for instance, the marginalization of women, dominant traditional elites and opportunities for bribery.

Both the Ugandan as well as the German initiative are situated in rural regions that are labeled as declining or lagging in development respectively. Still, the contexts of both citizen initiatives differ a lot considering socio-economic indicators such as material wealth, health and education infrastructure and regarding the general administrative structure in which their local governments are embedded in. While the German system is generally characterized by federalism and a relatively high degree of decentralization, the Ugandan system is still very centralized despite the reforms that attempted to shift political and fiscal competencies to local government institutions. The analysis and comparison of the government relations institutional context matters for CIs' outcomes.

Within the next three sub-chapters the findings of the four semi-structured qualitative interviews that have been conducted are presented. Firstly, the background and characteristics of both initiatives are examined. Secondly, the relations between CIs and government institutions and their effect on outcomes is explored. Lastly, factors that influence these relations are identified.

5.2 Getting to know the Citizen Initiatives

5.2.1 Emergence, Goals and Activities

Germany: Resisting the Rural Decline
The German initiative was founded in 2010 by citizens of four different villages as a reaction towards the announcement of the municipality that a local elementary school would be shut down in a few years due to declining population and government budget. The interviewee describes this as the initial motive for the foundation of the initiative, albeit debate between citizens about overarching developments such as deindustrialization, depopulation and

decline of social infrastructure existed prior. Because of general disagreement with the reaction or inaction of local and federal government institutions, a local businessman organized a public gathering in cooperation with a think tank that is specialized on supporting citizen participation. At this event, different problems in the local development of the villages were identified – the impending closure of the local school being the most pressig. The result of the event was the foundation of the citizen initiative (Interview No. 1).

The CI initiated a process to remodel the school into a school with afternoon childcare. This process was completed in a few months and presented the first success of the initiative. Today, the CI is completely responsible for the organization of the afternoon care program that includes the organization of different activities for the children. The second large project is the maintenance of a public outdoor swimming pool. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the pool was closed in 2020 and has not re-opened since. Other projects include the restauration of an old sight in a nearby forest, the installation of a charging station for electric vehicles public gardening and a village shop to strengthen the local retail (Interview No. 1; Interview No. 2). The funding for the activities is provided through donations of citizens or local entrepreneurs and grants of government institutions and other private or third sector actors. The ratio between these two revenue sources is almost equal (Interview No. 1).

The interviewee highlights that the overarching agenda of the initiative is to initiate projects that positively influence the local development of the region and not to protest a specific cause. Without having been asked, she explicitly distances the CI from single-issue protest movements. The initiative itself is presented as a platform where every member, regardless its socio-economic background, can suggest and discuss ideas, find supporters and contribute skills. Decision-making processes are descrived as flat with smaller financial matters being decided directly between members engaged in the specific project. Apart from regular meetings, large financial issues and strategic guidelines are debated at an annual general meeting (Interview No. 1).

Furthermore, the citizen initiative has exchanges with different initiatives within the federal state. These individual exchanges with other initiatives mostly have a concrete relation to a specific project and happen with aim of learning from the experiences of each other. In this regard, the interviewee also mentions that most other initiatives do not have such a wide scope as her initiative. Rather, they focus on a single project (Interview No. 1). Nevertheless,

these insights do show how mutual learning between initiatives happens and positively affects outcomes . This is also supported by statements of one of the interviewed civil servants, who highlights that more experienced CIs do assist initiatives that lack such experience with issues such as application forms for funding instruments provided by government institutions (Interview No. 2).

Uganda: Not a Charity Organization

In contrast, the history Ugandan CI is much shorter as it was just founded in 2019. Its emergence is much more closely tied to the personal background of its founder, who was interviewed for this thesis. His family originates from the parish in which the CI is active. The founder studied in Kampala and London and started a career in the development sector in Kampala. Yet, he maintained ties to his rural origin and was concerned about the lack of infrastructure within the parish. In the interview, he describes that a lot of people had left the villages as they fled towards urban areas to protect themselves from LRA-rebels that were hiding and battling in rural areas. This, he says, explains why local health and education services were largely absent when LRA was defeated in 2004/2005 and citizens remigrated to their villages. The interviewee started to initiate projects with his own financial resources before he officially founded the CI together with other citizens. Today, 21 members belong to the team that coordinates the set of activities outlined below. Decisions are made collectively during meetings that are related to a specific activity (Interview No. 4).

Activities of the initiative range from the opening of a health center to the establishment of several education facilities for children and teenagers as well as adults to tackle the widespread issue of adult illiteracy. Additional leisure activities including a football and a boxing club were founded to create community spaces. Besides, a village bank was established to institutionalize a possibility to lend each other money or to decide on joint investments. Another main activity resulted out of the anger of the interviewee and other citizens about the cutting of shea trees. The wood of these trees has been mainly used for charcoal, which represents the main source for heating and cooking, although cutting shea trees is forbidden by law. The initiative initiated a campaign to prevent the cutting of shea and to promote their "environmental and economic value" (Interview No. 4, l. 106). Collectively, the production of shea butter from shea nuts was started. Shea butter is a relatively expensive cosmetic product sold around the world. The initiative is busy to distribute the product in larger cities within Uganda to generate income. This goal is central

to the overarching approach of the initiative as the interviewee emphasizes: "So our model really is not to build a charity model, charitable operations […] but establishing social businesses that then are able to finance themselves." (Interview No. 4, ll. 213-216). In a way, the interviewed founder resembles what Haaland and Wallevik (2017) describe as "aid-entrepreneurs" (p. 206). Aid entrepreneurs are characterized by having sound experience of the development system, which they use while setting up their own initiative. This case illustrates that aid-entrepreneurs are not necessarily of Global Northern origin.

5.2.2 Major Outcomes and Challenges

Uganda: Successful Start Despite Lack of Funding
Given the relatively short history of the Ugandan CI, the general set-up of the range of different projects can be determined as a success. The interviewee states that from 5,000 approximately 3,000 citizens of the parish are using at least one of the services initiated by the initiative. The main challenge concerns funding, as currently most projects have been financed directly by the interviewed founder. In addition to his own resources, some donations from friends and former colleagues were collected and a grant from a German foundation, the former employer of the interviewee, could be obtained for a specific sub-project. Yet, the interviewee states that the current financial resources are not enough to scale-up the activities and to realize the goal to develop social enterprises that enable the initiative to get independent from donations (Interview No. 4).

Germany: Impressive Track-Record but Lack of Active Members
In contrast, the funding of activities is not mentioned as a challenge by the co-founder of the German CI. As the most urgent problem, she mentions the shortage of active members as only ten to fifteen out of 150 members of the CI are actively engaged in its activities. De Haan (2019) outlines that member shortage is a common and critical problem among CIs. The interviewee suspects that the lack of physical meetings and the challenge to switch to digital communication due to the Covid-19 pandemic are a reason for this. She explains that digital communication bears the challenge to spread necessary information on different communication platforms as not everybody uses the same. Besides, particularly older members of the CI had problems to adjust to digital communication. Despite these challenges, the initiative was realize at least two major successes: Apart from the

maintenance of the school, the interviewee illustrates how thanks to the initiative, the socio-economic decline of the villages has been reversed. To underpin this, the interviewee explains that population numbers and prices for real estate are rising especially because of the inflow of young families. Bases on this observation, she concludes that the demand for public goods and services has risen again (Interview No. 1).

Different Baseline – Similar Goals

The circumstances of both CIs are different, as the foundation of the German initiative for the most part is a reaction to the impending loss of a service provided by the government, while the Ugandan initiative started to set-up services that had simply not existed prior. They also differ in the sense that the Ugandan initiative plans to develop self-sustaining social enterprises, whereas the German initiative has no such interest (Interview No. 1, Interview No. 4).

Despite this different baseline, three similarities can be identified. Firstly, both CIs pursue tasks that are traditionally with government institutions. Secondly, both are locally oriented and concerned about the overall development and human wellbeing of their respective region. Thirdly, both interviewees explicitly state that their CI are apolitical without any party affiliations or political ambitions. While in Uganda, local politicians suspected such ambition due to the CI's activities targeting the whole community, internal conflicts broke out when members attempted to use the initiative for political aims in Germany (Interview No. 1, Interview No. 4).

5.3 Government Relations and their Influence on Outcomes

5.3.1 Germany: Mixed Relations and Overarching Obstacles

The co-founder of the German initiative reports that the CI fosters relations to a range of different government institutions as these are involved in different activities. These institutions encompass the municipality, the administration of the district *(Landkreis)*, the administration of the neighboring district, the LAG – a multi-actor institution at district level – and several authorities and foundations that are subordinate to the federal state. In this chapter, the relations towards the municipality and the administrations of both districts are

analyzed individually. Then, overarching obstacles that are not attributed to specific government institutions are investigated.

The Municipality

The statements of the interviewee about the relationship with the municipality do not paint a one-dimensional picture but illustrate the different modes of relations a citizen initiative can have with one and the same government institution. On the one hand, she clarifies that the municipality is "always the first and direct point of contact" (Interview No. 1, l. 387, translation by author) and that "without the municipality and its support, a lot of projects would not have been possible" (Interview No. 1, l. 341-342, translation by author). Especially regarding the maintenance of the school, she points out that the good cooperation with the municipality which still runs the school while the CI is in charge of the afternoon care. The interviewee acknowledges that the municipality itself lacks certain financial resources as she explains that it has suffered due to industrial decline and has been under the watch of a financial support program provided by the federal state until recently. Furthermore, the interviewee emphasizes the positive relationship of the initiative and the mayor of the municipality who openly acknowledges the value of volunteerism for local development and therefore seeks to support the initiative (Interview No. 1).

Considering these depictions, the relationship of the CI and the municipality seems to be at eye level and supportive: the municipality cooperates with the initiative on different projects but does not attempt to limit the initiatives autonomy regarding their decision-making processes. Besides, the fact that the CI has other – larger – governmental and non-governmental sources of funding limits the initiative's financial dependence on the municipality. On the other hand, the interviewee describes how the municipality impeded two projects: the maintenance of the public swimming pool and a project called "village renewal" *(Dorferneuerung)*. This project is a scheme of the federal state with the goal to support the renewal and maintenance of public as well as private infrastructure in rural areas. The interviewee states that the municipality undermined the application process by not forwarding the application to upper government levels on time. She describes this behavior as "active and inactive, so to speak, subliminal" (Interview No. 1, ll. 477-478, translation by author). As a reason for this behavior, she notes that over the course of some projects financed by funding instruments of higher government levels, the municipality must provide a share of the funding itself. Concerning this and the subtle nature of the municipality's

behavior, she argues that the leading figures within the municipality are primarily not civil servants but politicians who cannot officially admit that the municipality does not want to or cannot afford t participation financially (Interview No. 1).

The interviewed civil servant of the district administration acknowledged the problem of financially weak municipalities. When asked generally about the issue of municipalities not being able to contribute even smaller shares of funding, she states that during the decision-making process within the municipality, the district administration is parallelly looking for other funding possibilities to fill such gaps (Interview No. 2).

The District Administrations

The relationship between the CI and the district administration is described as explicitly positive by the co-founder of the initiative and by the interviewed civil servant of the district administration. The co-founder reports that the interviewed civil servant was the only government representative ever to proactively approach the initiative with an idea for a cooperation on a project. Other than that, it would always be the initiative to identify a need and launch a project to adress it. This project proposed by the civil servant was about the designation of "village moderators", who take over the responsibility to initiate and coordinate community projects. By this, government institutions encourage the foundation of new or – as in this case – increase the legitimacy of existing initiatives. Originally, this concept was developed by the interviewed civil servant of the administration of the neighboring district. All three interviewees emphasized the exchange with each other concerning the implementation of this project (Interview No. 1; Interview No. 2; Interview No. 3).

The interviewed civil servant of the CIs district emphasizes that the studied CI presents a role model for other initiatives as it has experience concerning the application processes for funding instruments as well as project implementation. In this sense, she states that this CI does not need as much assistance as other actors and describes the exchange that started immediately after the CI's foundation in 2010 as "positive" and "very inspirational" (Interview No. 2, l. 362, translation by author). The interviewee particularly praises the effort the representatives made to share their experience with similar yet much less experienced actors within the greater region (Interview No. 2). This view mirrors the statements of the CI's co-founder. Therefore, it can be asserted that the relationship between the CI and its

district administration is indeed a supportive one and positively effects the outcome of activities.

Both civil servants describe their role as consultants on a wide range of funding instruments provided by federal state authorities and assisting civil society organizations during the application process as well as (occasionally) implementation. As one of them states: "My department is a partner, a colleague, a consultancy" (Interview No. 3, l. 308, translation by author). The same interviewee laments that many civil society actors view her department as an obstacle, possibly because other departments within the district administration represent a more demanding attitude. Yet, this statement was general and without reference to the studied CI. The civil servant of the neighboring district administration describes the relationship to the initiative as positive, although – because the CI is not located within the scope of her administration – contact is limited to exchanges at cross-regional events. Still, both civil servants highlight the intensity and quality of the exchange of the different district administrations within the region and the relevance of this network for the development of the region (Interview No. 2, Interview No, 3).

Overarching Obstacles: Too much Bureaucracy, too Little Communication
The level of bureaucracy involved in the procedures to apply for funding instruments is criticized by both the interviewed representatives of the CI and the district administration. The co-founder of the CI states that these procedures are "so bureaucratic that even bureaucrats cannot explain it anymore, so typically German" (Interview No 1., ll. 401-02, translation by author). Besides the time-consuming side of this problem, she mentions the problem of liability issues that each application inherits. If something goes wrong, the chairperson can be held liable. Due to this, the position as chairperson is not popular among the studied initiative's members and currently vacant. Concerning the different application procedures, the co-founder states that she feels like procedures are more complicated the higher the government level involved. Regarding the reason for this, she assumes: "[…] it's also a bit like maybe you should not even apply. Like, the funds have not been requested, so we can stop this again. So meanwhile, you have a bit of a whiff." (Interview No. 1, ll. 407-410, translation by author). This statement implies a general dissatisfaction with German government funding schemes. The interviewee goes further and criticizes a general impeding attitude of some civil servants that do not seem to be interested in really assisting CIs (Interview No. 1).

Finally, she labels the government funding instruments as a consolation prize for discontinued public service as the result of cutbacks: "It is like: 'Did I steal your lollipop? Here you get half a scoop of ice cream'." (Interview No. 1, ll. 456-457, translation by author). This feeling resembles the view of researchers on such policies in the United Kingdom or the Netherlands that are directed to support citizen initiatives (Kisby, 2010; Verhoeven & Tonkens, 2013). For instance, Kisby(2010) criticizes the policies of the then conservative-liberal central British government to disguise cuts in public spending as distribution of power from government institutions towards citizens.

Both interviewed civil servants assure that at least their district administrations share the interest that all government funds are used. However, the bulk of the funding is not provided by them but by higher government levels (Interview No. 2, Interview No. 3). The civil servant of the CI's district administration admits that the application procedures for the EU-financed LEADER funds are especially complicated. Besides, she confirms the tendency of procedures getting more and more bureaucratic over the years. Interestingly, she explains that not the EU institutions but rather the federal state government is responsible for this bureaucratization. She states that the federal state government has the competence to add certain requirements to the application process. By doing so, she suspects that the federal state government seeks to prevent misappropriation of funds.

However, the interviewee questions the added value of these requirements as it hinders the distribution of funds and ultimately the implementation of projects. She even states that she advises initiatives with limited experience not to apply for EU funding because the procedure is so complicated (Interview No. 2). Both interviewed civil servants complain about the trend of increasing bureaucratization as – adding to a shortage in personnel – this increases their workload. One of them even formulated an official complaint to the responsible federal state ministry. The ministry acknowledged the issue that more personnel is needed to provide assistance on funding instruments so that citizen initiatives are enabled to apply (Interview No. 2, Interview No. 3).

Another overarching obstacle that is portrayed by the interviewed CI is a lack of communication. She does not attribute this challenge to a specific government institution, but her statements indicate that this critique is mostly targeted at federal state institutions as she speaks of funding instruments provided by these. For instance, the interviewee mentions

that a long-standing fund that supported the maintenance of sports facilities was amended. Prior, five regional sport projects received funding. As part of the amendment, it was decided to only give funding to two projects, although the overall budget did not decrease. The co-founder of the CI expresses her dissatisfaction and frustration about the way this decision was communicated: "As a consequence, you may end up working for nothing" (Interview No. 1, l. 502, translation by author). Furthermore, the interviewee complains that a lot of seminar and training offers are communicated at short notice so that members of the initiative cannot manage do participate: "You get many offers, sometimes only days or a week before – utopian for employees." (Interview No. 1, ll. 507-508).

As a consequence of this communication-related challenges, the interviewee reports that the initiative collected contacts of relevant government institutions and created a list that indicates which person to approach for what information. Additionally, the CI itself tries to work at transparently as possible by sharing information publicly via YouTube, Instagram and their own website. Nevertheless, the interviewee states despite some productive exchange on projects with other citizen initiative, the overall exchange is limited as most other CIs are organized differently and focus on single projects only. Moreover, the interviewee gives an example of another CI in a neighboring region that has failed so far to achieve comparable outcomes. As a reason for this, she proclaims that the initiative was mainly politically motivated and initiated by one mayor, whereas the citizens were not motivated and self-driven to participate. She defines these characteristics as fundamental for a CI to be successful long-term (Interview No. 1).

When asked about challenges regarding communication, both interviewees of the district administrations assured that they are busy to make all relevant information publicly available via the homepage as well as local and regional media outlets. Besides, one interviewee mentions that the meetings of the LAG are open for the public. In fact, both civil servants seem to not view the communication towards citizen initiatives as a challenge, but rather the communication of their own institutions with the federal state level. Assuring that they get all relevant information from higher government levels and steadily reinforcing the exchange with these is a major concern for them (Interview No. 2, Interview No. 3).

Obstacles Threaten the Positive Effects of Government Support

Considering all the findings presented above, the interpretation of the author is that the relations between the CI and the range of different government institutions cannot be easily classified into one mode of relation. As a result of the strong institutional context, a range of financial funding instruments but also non-financial measures are established by government institutions to support citizen initiatives. The track-record of the CI and the statements of the interviewee indicate that these measures do indeed have a positive effect on the outcomes of the CI: A variety of projects has been realized and the socio-economic decline of the four villages could be evidentially reversed. What is more, there are no signs that government institutions would attempt to limit the autonomy of the initiative, neither intentionally nor non-intentionally.

These conclusions do resemble the first identified mode of relation, namely "Support". It seems that the initiative is spared from possible negative consequences of government support such as financial dependency (Da Soares Silva et al., 2018) as it is not too dependent on funds of government institutions (Interview No. 1). Especially, the relations to both district administrations are described positively by all three interviewees as they are characterized by mutual learning and cooperation at eye-level (Interview No.1, Interview No, 2, Interview No. 3).

Nevertheless, the identification of the overarching obstacles indicates that there is room for improvement in the set-up of support measures to ensure that citizen initiatives can utilize them. Additionally, the relation between the CI and the municipality is interesting. On the one hand, there is close cooperation and mutual support on, yet, according to the CI's co-founder, there as also been some impeding behavior that torpedoes projects.

This behavior resembles impeding measures of the oppressive mode of relation. A lack of transparency concerning decisions made by federal state authorities, subliminally delayed application procedures, and the high degree of bureaucratization – the combination of all these three factors has a negative effect on the CI's outcomes as the implementation of activities is hampered and motivation of CI members has dropped as a result. These factors can explain the challenge of the initiative to motivate more members to engage actively and take on leading roles. The interviewee does not conceal that the work for the CI is indeed

time-consuming, and the general circumstances do cause her frustration. These factors endanger the outcomes of the projects that are realized with government support.

Before looking at the factors that influence relations between the German initiative and government institutions, relations between the Ugandan CI and government institutions are presented.

5.3.2 Uganda: "We definitely need more than the moral support"

The interviewed founder of the Ugandan initiative talks about how his CI reaches out to local as well as central government institutions. He does not differentiate much between the different levels of local government institution but expresses that the Local Council at district level forms an important entity. In this chapter, the relations towards these institutions are analyzed.

The interviewee mentions that his CI followed the legal procedures and got officially registered at the local government as a community-based organization. However, he states that no financial or technical support is provided by the local government. Officials of local government institutions do visit the parish on a regular basis to monitor the development of certain projects initiated by the initiative. For instance, they come to check the school and feedback on the status quo and possible improvements. The interviewee summarizes "You know, it's like basically just about this – and moral support" (Interview No. 4, l. 264). By moral support, he likely means that the local government institutions are generally in favor of the initiative's activities. Although, he asserts that this kind of support has been "so far being very positive" (Interview No. 4, l. 250), he later exclaims: "We definitely need more than the moral support. We have a lot of moral support, you know *[Laughs]*" (Interview No. 4, ll. 317-318). The interviewee explicitly highlights that funding is needed to really scale-up the initiated projects and to fulfill the long-term vision of creating social businesses that are independent from external funding.

An actual expression of the moral support is the invitation to the local council the initiative received to talk about their work. As part of the event, the initiative was encouraged to possibly facilitate trainings for local leaders of other parishes. As the main reason for the absence of any financial or technical support, the interviewee names that the government

institutions themselves do not have the means to offer such. Yet, he also states that so far, citizen initiatives such as his are just not on the radar of government institutions and therefore no suitable funding schemes exist. Due to this circumstance, the initiative looks for alternative funding sources such as international and bilateral development organizations. For these application processes, the interviewee portrays that cooperation with local government institution is needed. For example, to obtain specific pieces information or a letter of recommendation by a government official. According to the interviewee, this sort of cooperation is not always easy, as the initiative is not continuously treated as a legitimate actor.

Despite this, the interviewee is hopeful that a new policy initiated by the central government, namely the Parish Development Model (PDM), presents an opportunity to secure funding. The PDM was officially launched in February 2022. According to Guloba (2022), PDM is a policy to support bottom-up approaches by directly funding parishes and villages, so the lowest administrative levels. Although it is still uncertain how PDM will work in practice, the interviewee hopes that his initiative can secure funding, for instance to establish better facilities for the shea butter production. He states that the initiative will definitely reach out to local politicians to collaborate in this quest (Interview No. 4).

Until now, the CI has not received any financial support but again only moral support from central government institutions. The interviewee mentions that the minister, who is responsible for the implementation of PDM views the CI's activities and previous achievements as "a national example of what other parishes in Uganda can do" (Interview No. 4, ll. 293-294). Yet, the interviewee doubts that any countable support is going to follow from this as he expresses a general distrust in Ugandan politics: "Of course, at the end of the day, you really don't know if the minister, you know the minister is a politician." (Interview No. 4, ll. 297-298).

Interestingly, the interviewee instead differentiates between local politicians and technocrats. He refers to politicians as individual representatives, who sometimes fear that he as the leader of the initiative has political interests and an ambition to take over their positions. He denies such ambitions and states that these issues with the politicians are not too problematic: "There is very little friction" (Interview, No. 4, l. 189). In contrast, he defines technocrats as the people most critical for decisions relevant to the CI: "The people

who run the operations of the local government are the big people, like the technocrats." (Interview No. 4, ll. 256-257). Therefore, he indicates that the politicians would also need to approach the technocrats if they have a specific goal on their agenda.

Financial Support Needed

Summing up, the author's interpretation of the obtained data suggests that the government institutions in the Ugandan case take generally a positive stance towards the CI by inviting representatives to their assemblies or visiting the parish of the CI to see the progress on the ground. These actions resemble the supportive mode of relation. Yet, this supporting attitude is not solidified in any form of financial resources that the initiative needs to fulfill its goals (Interview No, 4). Therefore, the absence of substantial measures taken by the government institutions are de facto resembling the mode of tolerance more than the mode of support. On the plus side, this means that the initiative's autonomy regarding its internal decision-making and doing is not really threatened. However, certain projects such as those related to education are monitored by local government representatives. Whether the new PDM policy initiated by the central government will materialize the verbal support by all government levels remains to be seen.

5.4 Factors Influencing Government Relations

Within the next two sub-chapters the factors that influence the relations between both citizen initiatives and government institutions portrayed before will be analyzed, before all findings will be discussed and compared with each other.

5.4.1 Germany: Personal Relations as the Most Prominent Factor

Out of all four factors identified as part of the literature review, the interpretation of the findings indicate that leadership and personal relations seem to have the highest influence on government relations. The co-founder of the German initiative explicitly states that the mayor of the municipality is a local leader, who acknowledges the doing of volunteerism and consequently looks out to support such activities (Interview, No. 1). Taking the positive and the negative incidents of the CI with the municipality (see Chapter 5.3.1) into account, the obtained data suggests that the relationship between these actors would be worse and less cooperative if the mayor as the municipalities leader would have a more critical stance

towards the engagement of non-government actors in providing public services and goods. Likewise, the positive relationships to both district administrations seem to depend on the sympathies between the leading figures of the initiative and the civil servants. Statements of all interviewees indicate a mutual personal appreciation that is the result of long-term cooperation.

However, the interviewed co-founder utters that the bureaucratization and lack of communication – factors that negatively influencing the outcomes – are attributable to personal relationships as well. She suggests that individual civil servants within government institutions are impeding projects out of personal motivation and commitment: "There is a special way of thinking: So, if I have my post because I want to be safe and that's why I become a civil servant" – then maybe I'm not in it with the right motivation either" (Interview No. 1, ll. 424-428, translation by author). Here, she refers to the special status many civil servants possess in Germany as practically irredeemable. Furthermore, the interviewee even indicates that there are impeding civil servants within the administration of the neighboring district and that other civil servants including the interviewee of Interview No. 3 are aware of this impeding attitude: "We have employees sitting where they [district administration] themselves say they are miscast" (Interview No. 1, ll. 431-433, translation by author).

Another factor influencing the relations with government institutions in this case is the alignment of the CI's goals with existing policies. The issue that the municipality possibly impedes specific projects suggests that alignment does not always exist between the CI's and the municipality's goals. Still the initiative defined its overarching goal as working for the socio-economic development of the region and defines activities based on local needs. To realize these activities, the initiative sought different sources of funding, some of them provided by government institutions.

However, the obtained data do not indicate that the initiative intentionally defines its goals so that they align with government policies. The CI's goals are designed to correspond with local needs that remain unmet as the result of government institutions discontinuing a public service due to budget cuts. The initial motive for the foundation of the CI – the impending closure of the local primary school – presents such an example. Hence, alignment with existing policies of government institutions is not an intentional decision but still proves to

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be positively influencing the relationship between government institutions and the CI. Government institutions do not view the CI as an obstacle and the CI can benefit from government funding.

On the one hand, the mere existence of the different government institutions across government levels and the funding instruments provided by them is providing a fertile ground for the emergence and continued existence of citizen initiatives such as the studied one. The existence of such government institutions, in particular of government institutions with their own competencies at the local level, can be partly attributed to the high level of democratization in Germany. Research suggests a correlation between democratization and effective decentralization (Green, 2015; Pike et al., 2016). Without such strong institutional context providing a range of possibilities to receive support, founding and continuing a citizen initiative is much more difficult.

On the other hand, the interviewed co-founder raises a set of obstacles such as bureaucratization and a lack of communication that can again be the result of the institutional context. Many different government institutions across government levels can have opposing interests resulting in malfunctions. The interviewee highlights that the collective motivation of participating members, volunteerism, presents the fundament of initiatives existence. The existence of a sound institutional context and funding instruments can enhance this fundament, but as argued in Chapter 5.3.1, it can also negatively impact it.

All four factors identified within the literature review can explain the relations between government institutions and the citizen initiative to different extents. The high degree of democratization explains the relatively strong institutional context with several lower-level government institutions with their own competencies and resources in place. Yet, the institutional set-up also partially presents an explanation for the obstacles that negatively influence relations and outcomes as found in Chapter 5.3.1. CI goals largely align with government policies, positively impacting relations. Nevertheless, the most visible factor "on the ground" influencing the relationships and therefore outcomes – both positively and negatively – are personal relations between individual leading figures of the CI on the one and civil servants within government institutions on the other side.

In the next sub-chapter, the factors that influence the relation between the Ugandan CI and government institutions are assessed.

5.4.2 Uganda: Consequences of Authoritarianism

As the modes of relation between government institutions and the initiative differ between the two cases, so do the individual factors that influence these relations. The founder of the Ugandan CI indicates that his citizen initiative is busy to establish and maintain personal relationships to relevant people across local government institutions. Albeit he is not speaking of any closer personal relationships as not much cooperation nor financial governmental support exists. The generally friendly, but not substantially supporting attitude can be interpreted as the result of the shortcomings of the institutional context that in turn is a consequence of the overarching autocratic regime.

The interviewed founder of the CI claims that local government institutions of which the district level presents the highest are financially dependent on the central government and do not receive enough money to provide support for CIs. This finding matches the research of Green (2015), who studied the decentralization policies of Uganda. Green (2015) finds that decentralization reforms by Uganda's central government have indeed created new institutions and positions at lower government levels, albeit without granting them a sufficient degree of independence, funding or training to enhance accountability and public services. All relevant – meaning powerful – positions at district level are not elected but rather appointed in a top-down manner by the central government. The district level is dependent on central government funding that "has been neither reliable nor adequate" (Green, 2015, p. 499). Most of this funding is directly spent at district level so that no funding for meaningful positions exists on subordinate levels (Green, 2015).

It can be argued that the reason for this ineffective decentralization is that Uganda's autocratic regime, spearheaded by president Yoweri Museveni, fears to really share its power as the result of reforms indicate: Green (2015) outlines that decentralization policies have even helped the central government to extend its grip on power in several ways. For instance, in elections, the central government can use civil servants at subordinate levels as scapegoats by calling them responsible for a lack of public services. Besides, the central government uses its power of appointing the important positions at district level for patronage. Likewise, the regular creation of new districts increases the number positions that can be appointed, thus creating new opportunities for patronage. Green (2015) highlights that the number of districts has risen from just 39 districts in 1994 to 112 districts in 2010. Until early 2022, the

number has even risen to 136 districts (Ministry of Local Government, 2022). The absence of financial support but also the issue that citizen initiatives are not perceived as relevant actors by government institutions can possibly be explained by the problems of Uganda's political-administrative system that originate at its top.

What the founder of the citizen initiative labels as "moral support" can be explained by the alignment of the initiative's goals with the agenda pursued by government institutions. As the activities of the initiative take place in the fields of education, health, sports and the production of shea butter, the CI does not act as a protest movement against a certain policy. Rather, it is taking its local development into its own hands, thus potentially even contributing to the government's general objectives concerning rural development. Though the interviewee mentions that this sort of autonomy makes some politicians with their own ambitions suspicious, government representatives are overall in favor of the CI's activities (Interview No. 4).

Again, the alignment seems not to be an intentional decision meant to please government institutions but the result of a match between citizens' as well as government institutions' interests. Still, it needs to be stated that if civil society actors do engage in political campaigns, they have to fear repression by government authorities as the events around the last presidential election in 2021 have shown (Ahluwalia, 2021). Thus, it is impossible to say whether Ugandan CIs such as the one studied as part of this thesis would take a more openly political stance if the circumstances allowed them to.

In Chapter 5.3.2 the author of this thesis described the relations between the citizen initiative and government institutions as distant in the sense that any governmental financial support is lacking despite a lot of verbal affirmation. This finding can be interpreted as the result of a relative lack of democratization as this in turn serves as an explanation for the incapacity of local government institutions to provide substantial support for the initiative, which is busy to establish public services in its parish.

In the following chapter, the findings of chapter 5 are discussed and compared to each other.

6. Discussion and Comparison

The aim of this chapter is to discuss and compare the findings of both case studies with each other and situate them within the existing scientific literature on CIs and on relationships between CIs and local governments that has been presented within Chapters 2 and 3. This is carried out along the same three sub-chapters of Chapter 5: Before the relations between the CIs and government institutions are compared, their background, development and activities are displayed. Finally, the dimension of those factors identified as influencing relations between CIs and governments are discussed.

6.1 Emergence, Activities and Internal Organization

While the initial motive for the emergence of the German CI was the impending dismantling of a public institution so far solely maintained by the municipality, the Ugandan CI emerged to create public services such as education and healthcare facilities in the first place as they had not existed prior.

Consequently, the emergence of the German CI largely resembles cases from existing literature (de Haan, 2019; Igalla et al., 2019). Its emergence took place parallel to the creation of new funding instruments by government institutions. Citizen initiatives do profit from these instruments. Still, the co-founder of the German CI argues that these funds are rather a consolation prize – an excuse for the drained budget of local government institutions and decreasing service delivery via these institutions (Interview No. 1). However, neither the German central government nor the federal state government have adopted a policy demanding more citizen participation in a similar fashion as those policies introduced by the UK and Dutch governments. Furthermore, the German CI exemplifies how CIs can change, evolve and broaden their agenda overtime, thus resembling different types of de Haan's (2019) typology (see Chapter 2.3): Starting from an initiative that engages to maintain a public service, the CI began to develop its own projects independent of services and goods that once had been provided by government institutions.

In comparison, the Ugandan CI is an outstanding case within the existing literature on CIs as there has been very limited government involvement during the emergence of the

initiative and only limited involvement via financial support for a single project. Instead, the emergence of the CI can largely be described as the result of the engagement of its Ugandan founder, who has a professional background in the development sector. Hence, to some extent, he mirrors what Haaland and Wallevik (2017) describe as an aid-entrepreneur, though in this case, the motives of the founder are much more personal at it is his home parish. This resembles the findings of Korsvik (2021), who explored CIs in Uganda, that indicate that "giving back" (p. 141) is a common motive for citizens within the Global South to set up a project in their home parish.

The attempt of the studied CI is not only to create basic public services but to found social enterprises such as the production and distribution of shea butter. This is in line with the post-development theory of Gibson-Graham (2010) as the initiative is preserving and utilizing a local asset that is already there but has not been used in this way before. There is no external, short-sighted investor involved, but citizens with the goal to collectively engage for the community's benefit. This is in line with the agenda of post-development theory that "starts with what is in place and builds from there" (p. 229). Furthermore, the CI's self-conception or rather its vision not to be a charity initiative dependent on donations but one that is financially self-reliable matches the critique on charity-based organizations and Western aid by Mwenda (2006), Sirolli (2012) and Dees (2012).

Despite the very different backgrounds and geographic contexts, both CIs share some similarities regarding their internal organization and their general scope. In contrast to a lot of single-issue citizen initiatives, these two CIs are distinct in so far as they are multi-project or multi-issue initiatives. In both cases, the initiative itself serves as the roof or the frame for a variety of different projects. Both CIs have flat hierarchies and decision-making processes as decisions are collectively made at individual meetings. Another similarity is that both initiatives explicitly define themselves as apolitical. Both interviewees of the CIs highlight that the interest of their initiatives is to enhance the overall development and of the region and not to engage in political combat.

6.2 Relations to Government Institutions and Effects on Outcomes

Regarding their relations to government institutions, the most striking difference between the CIs is that whereas the relations of the German CI center mainly around benefits and shortcomings of funding schemes provided by government institutions, there are no comparable funding schemes present in the Ugandan case. Of course, this absence of any financial and substantial non-financial support has an influence on the relation between the CI and government institutions and an effect on outcomes. Contacts to central as well as local government institutions exist in the form of mutual meetings and visits. The doing of the initiative is valued by a variety of government institutions. Yet, they either lack the resources and or the political will to support it beyond verbal affirmations. The lack of substantial support and the monitoring visits illustrate that citizen initiatives have not yet been recognized and valued as relevant actors in the field of local and regional development. In other words, they have not been recognized as bottom-up actors that independently set-up services and social enterprises that could use financial support to kick-start respectively scale-up their projects.

The relation between the Ugandan CI and its government institutions is not at eye-level as top-down planning and centralism remain the principles of the overall political-administrative structure. The Ugandan CI does not directly suffer because of this non-existent support, as it can continue to initiate and maintain projects on its own and thus sustain its autonomy. At the current stage, the CI is clearly not financially dependent on government support as no government support exists.

Yet, this lack of funding can negatively affect the future and continuity of the initiative as the interviewee made clear that more financial resources are indeed needed. The Parish Development Model (PDM) announced by the central government possibly presents a future opportunity. PDM aims at strengthening sub-counties and parishes as the lowest planning respectively implementing administrative units. The empowerment of these institutions presents an opportunity for Cis, as these are closer to them than the Local Councils (LCs) at district level. However, doubts remain as previous policies designed to truly strengthen lower government levels have failed. Considering the PDM, many open questions remain regarding its implementation and funding as the implementation guidelines are not yet

finalized. There is the danger that funds do not arrive where they are needed (Akena, 2022; Green, 2015; Guloba, 2022; Nakijoba, 2022).

As it was unfortunately not manageable to interview Ugandan civil servants for this thesis, only secondary literature can be reviewed to get the perspective of Ugandan government institutions. Wenene et al. (2016) questioned civil servants from central as well local government institutions about the role of citizens in the education and health-care sector. According to the authors, Ugandan government institutions view citizens as "not yet adequately engaged to the demand for and delivery of quality public services" (p. 169). It is argued that "there is little bottom-up pressure for improved responsiveness and quality of services" (p. 182) and concluded that more empowerment of citizens through government institutions is necessary. However, the case studied as part of this thesis shows that even when citizens do participate on a high scale by creating places of service delivery and social enterprises, the responsiveness of government institutions is low as no meaningful support is provided. In this vein, it needs to be asked how citizens are expected to substantially hold governments accountable when democratic principles and citizen rights are not rigorously implemented. As a result, elections at lower levels of government are rarely contested in rural areas due to the lack of political alternatives (Gibb, 2016; Green, 2015; Kakumba, 2010).

Decentralization reforms could entail the creation of new civil servants at districts or even at lower levels and thereby potentially lead to more facilitative structures for the support of citizen initiatives. However, the track record of past reforms suggests that these have merely used by the central government and the ruling party for purposes of patronage. The problematic budgetary situation of subordinate government institutions remained unsolved. Regarding Green (2015), Ugandan subordinate government institutions do not necessarily need more staff but rather better educated and accountable administrative actions. Therefore, the new PDM policy by the central government goes in the right direction as it seems possible that the government funds may be more directly targeted towards subordinate government institutions and more tied to concrete citizen initiatives on the ground. Again, it can be emphasized that increased democratization and change of the subordinate government institutions from below present a way for more citizen-oriented policymaking. The consequences of Uganda's autocratic setup however impede such processes.

In contrast, the German CI does not interact at all with federal government institutions or authorities as these are not responsible for and not engaged with such granular issues of citizen participation. Instead, the German CI interacts with its own municipality on a regular basis, but also engages with district administrations and federal state authorities to implement projects and raise financial resources (Interview No. 1). The findings in this case – especially on the relation with the municipality and the administration of the neighboring district – show what has been highlighted before by Mees et al. (2019) and Da Soares Silva et al. (2018): Relations between citizen initiatives and government institutions can vary over time, they can differ depending on the activity at stake and as well as between different departments or even individual civil servants from within the same department (Interview No. 1, Interview No. 2, Interview No.3). This illustrates that CI-government relations and consequently also their effects on CI's outcomes are not carved in stone and not dependent on a uniform set of factors. Overall, the outcomes of the German CI profit from its relations to government institutions and the financial support provided via funding instruments. So, the effects of these supporting measures are positive.

However, the high level of bureaucratization and the lack of sufficient communication are impeding these effects. Complicated and frequently changing application forms and the issue of personal liability present obstacles for CIs when applying for funding. Moreover, they can have a negative influence on the involvement of citizens as the case of the German CI that currently has no chairman shows. The interviewee even suspects that certain government institutions want to set the bar so high so that not all funds are called up and can used for something else (Interview No. 1). Such negative effects of bureaucratization have been studied by Da Soares Silva et al. (2018). The ability of new initiatives to 'get off the ground' is already limited as they lack the experience to tackle the application for certain funding instruments as the civil servant of the district administration explains (Interview No. 2). Additionally, the continuity of already existing CIs as the one investigated is endangered as citizens' motivation to engage decreases. Of course, government institutions should prevent misappropriation of funds. Still, as even civil servants, for instance, the interviewees from the district administrations, have issues to keep up with the pace of proceeding bureaucratization, the added value of further extended rules should be reconsidered.

Nevertheless, the German case serves as an example of successful coproduction following the definition by Ostrom (1996, 2000) as actors from two different spheres act together to

maintain or scale-up public services. However, though Ostrom (1996) identifies government institutions as the central actors, the German case makes clear that citizen initiatives themselves do fulfill the function of initiating projects, exchange and networks. In this case, government institutions are lo longer the only facilitating and coordinating body. This observation exemplifies the increased complexity of local and regional development with multiple actors taking over multiple roles at the same time (Pike et al., 2016).

Apart from the citizen initiative itself, it can be noted that horizontal as well as vertical governance plays a role in the provision of funding instruments and assistance for CIs in Germany. Both interviewed civil servants of the different district administrations emphasize the importance of the informal and formal exchange among each other and with federal state authorities (Interview No. 2, Interview No. 3). Furthermore, the interviewee of the neighboring district described sources of conflicts within the municipalities and villages in which citizen initiatives are active. These descriptions do not relate to the German CI of which the co-founder has been interviewed but only to places that are in the territory of the neighboring district.

The interviewee states that there are clashes between citizens engaging in CIs and traditional local elites. These elites are described as mostly old men and farmers that often act impeding and reactionary: "They do not want what the young people want. They do no not want what the women want. They do not want what the new residents want." (Interview No. 3, ll. 128-131, translation by author). However, she likewise criticizes engaged citizens that are not sensitive enough to the existence of such traditional elites that are often engage in voluntary work at the lowest political level and therefore enjoy a certain level of legitimacy. The lack of legitimacy on CIs' side is a prominent issue within the literature (de Haan, 2019; Igalla et al., 2019). As a reaction to such conflicts, the interviewee states that she instructs engaged citizens to be aware of local structures and seek cooperative exchange with important local figures. Yet, in both studied CIs, local legitimacy occurs not to be an issue.

A relatively surprising finding presents the impeding yet subtle behavior of the municipality in the German case as it has intentionally but subliminally impeded two different projects of the CI because it did not want to afford the necessary partial financing, according to the co-founder of the CI (Interview No. 1). Again, this type of behavior presents the risk that members of the CI get frustrated, and it shows the political dimension of the CI's activities

even if it does not define itself as a political actor. The provision of public services and goods in cooperation with government actors is per se political as the municipality is an administrative actor comprised of political parties and individuals that care about their own public image. This serves as an explanation for the subliminal nature of the municipality's behavior.

6.3 Factors influencing Government Relations

The subliminal impediment by the municipality is the only incident across the two cases where activities of the CIs seem not aligned with existing government policies. Apart from that, there generally seems to be a match between CI's and government's goals. As argued in Chapter 5.3, this alignment is not the result of an intentional decision-making process within any of the citizen initiatives but the consequence of a match between the needs of citizens and the goals of the government institutions. Both CIs define themselves not as protest or opposition movements but rather as an alternative actor that attempts to fill gaps in public service provision and is welcomed by government institutions for doing so. Nevertheless, the finding by Li et al. (2016) as cited by de Haan (2019) that such an alignment has a potentially positive or at least not a negative influence on the relations of CIs and government institutions and thereby on CI's outcomes can be confirmed. It seems worth noting that this alignment might be in danger as other politicians with conflicting agendas are elected or initiatives themselves may find an issue where they oppose the government's agenda.

A decisive difference between the two cases presents the overall political system. This yields consequences in terms of administrative structures, acknowledgement and support for citizen initiatives. According to Freedom House (2022a, 2022b) and the latest report by V-Dem (Alizada et al., 2022), Germany is rated as a democracy and Uganda as an (semi-) autocracy where citizens lack the right to freely participate in politics. Consequently, citizen initiatives in Uganda must be more careful not to place themselves in opposition towards government institutions as these may possibly take repressive measures against them.

In Uganda, the political-administrative structure is primarily not tailored to ensure effective service delivery and surely not the democratic representation of citizens. Rather, it is

designed to ensure that the executive and legislative power remains accumulated with the central government in Kampala. Therefore, the subordinate government institutions lack the independence, competence and funding to ensure a comprehensive provision of public services and goods. As a result of this, centralized government structures and top-down policymaking remain intact and opportunities for corruption occur on every level. Over the last years, the Corruption Perception Index by Transparency International (2020) regularly ranked Uganda among the 25 percent of countries with the highest corruption level. This can serve as an explanation for the circumstance that government institutions on the ground only offer "moral support", encouraging words, rather than financial or substantial non-financial support is provided for citizen initiatives such as the studied one.

The analysis of the two cases underlines that whether a regime is rather democratic or rather autocratic determines the true power of local government institutions and the level of government support for citizen initiatives. Albeit the identified obstacles the German case faces make clear, German federalism proves beneficial to the empowerment of subordinate government institutions from federal state and district level up until the municipality level. All these institutions have different competencies and abilities to engage with and lend support to citizen initiative: Federal state authorities mainly act as the providers of funds, district administrations as intermediaries and consultants and municipalities as the first point of contact and partner throughout the actual implementation of projects. Possibly, the identified obstacles occur as this institutional context is already too sophisticated and thus sets a rather narrow scope. The Portuguese case investigated by Da Soares Silva et al. (2018) suggests that a less supportive institutional context provides the possibility for CIs to come up with more "innovative forms of social organization and provision" (p. 16).

Especially the German case proves that personal relations between members of a CI and civil servants at government institutions have a large influence on the general relation between CIs and government institutions. Individual civil servants can act as bottlenecks as they have the competence to approve as well as to withdraw an application for funds or to just put it on hold. They can individually decide to what extent they reach out to citizen initiatives if they offer their assistance or rather not respond to needs and requests of these. Statements of the co-founder of the German CI indicate that a positive relation at eye-level provides a basis for good relations and positive effects on outcomes while negative relations characterized by a top-down attitude by civil servants negatively affects the relations and

thereby the outcomes. The number of situations in which personal relations determined at least part of the relation towards a government institution illustrate that these overall relations and their effects are dependent not only on the greater institutional context but to a large extent on individual persons.

While in light of New Public Management (NPM) wave, pay-for-performance schemes have been introduced on different government levels within Germany's public sector (Tubb, 2020), these did not lead to the abolishment of the intangibility civil servants enjoy that have been pointed out in interview No. 1. This is in line with Kuhlmann (2010), who back in 2010 highlighted that a total embracement of NPM's managerial values and mechanisms has not occurred in Germany. Instead, she states that there has been an opposite development as several local governments switched back to practices that resemble the traditional Weberian administration. Creating incentives for civil servants such as linking their performance regarding the allocation of grants toward CIs with an annual and variable bonus would enhance their commitment to their work. Yet, the effects of such performance schemes that target the extrinsic motivation of civil servants remain controversial.

Looking at the Ugandan case, personal relations to individual civil servants or politicians seem to matter here too. The interviewee repeatedly referred to technocrats as the "the big people" (Interview, No. 4, l. 257) that run operations of local government institutions. Therefore, it appears that there is a set of people that could influence the relation between the CI and local government institutions in one way or another. However, in comparison to the German CI, the founder of the Ugandan CI does not mention either negative nor positive specific relations to individuals that would affect the relation to the institution or the outcomes of the CI. This is not surprising against the background that no substantial government support and therefore no noteworthy collaboration has happened until now (Interview No. 4). Nevertheless, it can be noted again that the high degree of centralism and the dominance of the ruling party suggests that civil servants are not accountable to citizens but first and foremost to the higher ranks of administration and the interest of the ruling party. Its dominance leads to the circumstance that the spheres of political and administration overlap in a problematic way.

Considering all identified factors, it is difficult to determine which factor has the largest influence on the relations between CIs and government institutions. Judging by the studies case evidence, the felt effect of the factors in the everyday doing of the CI differ. Nevertheless, this suggests that the regime type or the degree of democratization matters greatly as it sets the background for the greater institutional context. Without a sufficient degree of democratization, efficient decentralization resulting in regional and local government institutions that possess competencies and resources independently of central governments is unlikely to happen. In Uganda and comparable autocratic regimes, centralism prevails as subordinate government institutions are de facto their extended arm and not equipped to support citizen initiatives. In contrast, in democracies, not necessarily as decentralized as Germany, citizens possess more power and abilities to hold governments accountable. Therefore, local and regional government institutions are likely to be more sensitive to citizens needs and also likely to be better equipped to respond to them. In the everyday practice then, personal relations between individuals on both sides can be the deciding factor determining whether the relation between the CI and the government institution is constructive and outcome-oriented or impeding.

7. Conclusion & Implications

Completing this thesis, the last chapter will firstly, summarize the thesis most important findings in response to the guiding research questions, and secondly point out key implications for individuals and institutions that seek to positively shape relations between citizen initiatives and government institutions in the future. Additionally, it points out avenues for further research in the realm of citizen initiatives.

The result of this thesis reveals that citizen initiatives may play an important role in local and regional development. In fact, they may do so not only by replacing public services or goods that have been formerly provided by government institutions but by creating innovative services or enterprises of their own. The comparison of the two cases as well as the review and discussion of existing research highlights the broad differences between citizen initiatives in developed and developing countries: CIs are a common phenomenon in the Global North as they emerged as a reaction to neoliberal policies and cuts in public spending in the first place. Their emergence is often accompanied, perhaps at times also driven by support schemes set up by government institutions. In contrast, CIs in developing countries often find themselves in settings in which it is necessary to initialize public services that had never existed in the first place due to a general lack of public spending.

The consequence of and the explanation for these differences can be found in the analysis of the relations between citizen initiatives and government institutions and the influence of these relations on CIs' outcomes along both case studies:

(1) In the German case, the citizen initiative has established relations to several government institutions across levels. The mode of these relations is first and foremost supportive and with certain civil servants even at eye-level. Government institutions mainly offer financial support via a variety of funding instruments CIs can apply for. This kind of support has a positive effect on the outcomes of the initiative as it enables the maintenance or scale-up of existing as well as the creation of new projects. The negative effects of government support on outcomes that have been found in other case studies, namely financial dependency or a government-takeover, do not present an issue in the studied case. The financial resources of the German CI are relatively diversified and government institutions have taken no

intentional or non-intentional action to intervene in the internal processes of the initiative. However, bureaucratization and a lack of communication have been identified as obstacles that may deter even experienced citizen initiatives from further applying to government funds. In the long run, such a decrease in motivation of citizen initiatives endangers the continuity at least of certain projects.

(2) The findings of the Ugandan case study portray different relations between the CI and government institutions. Albeit government institutions across levels are taking a notably positive stance towards the projects of the initiative, no financial or non-financial measures have been offered to substantially support the CI. Despite several meetings and on-site visits, the relation therefore remains somewhat distant as no noteworthy collaboration exists. The citizen initiative is on its own regarding the financing and the implementation of its projects but expresses the need of additional financial means to scale-up projects to realize its vision of creating social enterprises to be financially self-reliant.

Considering the factors that influence the relation between the initiatives and the government institutions, the findings of this thesis imply that the degree of democratization of a country sets the frame for the political-administrative structure and thereby for the institutional context in which citizens initiatives are constituted. The institutional context can either favor the emergence and continuity of citizen initiatives by inheriting supporting government institutions. Alternatively, it can cause obstacles that impede the activities of initiatives. This could serve as an explanation why the institutional context in autocratic leaning countries is likely to lead to weaker relations between citizen initiatives and government institutions as CIs struggle more to emerge and thrive in such environments. However, especially the German case shows that despite a high level of democratization and the existence of a rather extensive support network, personal relationships with individual civil servants can present a bottleneck and decide whether a relation between CIs and government institutions result in successful collaboration or not.

Although, the comparison between a German and a Ugandan has proven to be insightful, especially with regard to the factors that influence relations between CIs and government institutions, comparisons between more similar cases likewise provide pathways for future research on the topic. Regarding the case of Germany, for instance, it would be interesting

to investigate to what extent the relations of CIs and government institution and its effect on outcomes differ between cases from different federal states. In addition, it would be interesting to see whether the behavior of the municipality perceived as impeding by the representative of the German initiative is a phenomenon that occurs across different cases. Considering Uganda, a comparison within the greater region and with other CIs active in semi-autocratic regimes would be fruitful to see if such initiatives are better supported in other settings. Generally, more case studies from the Global South are needed to shed light on the circumstance that albeit causing citizen participation to remain rather low give rise to CIs such as the studied one that bear the potential to change local and regional development for the better.

Irrespective of these remarks, this thesis bears implications for the question of how to best set up relations between citizen initiatives and government institutions and leverage these very relations to improve the outcomes of CIs. Considering the German case, governments with existing support schemes in place should be cautious of potential obstacles that impede the support of initiatives. Such obstacles should be tackled, for instance, based on a survey of CIs to uncover their needs and expectations. Communication-wise, it is advisable for government institutions at all levels to value the outcome of citizen initiatives. For the initiatives themselves, increased exchange with other initiatives provides opportunities for mutual learning.

Concerning government institutions in the Global South, the value of citizens engagement should not only be valued through eulogies but with target-oriented financial resources to promote social enterprises initiated by citizen initiatives. Such enterprises bear the chance for local communities to create a source of income that enables the creation or improvement of services within the education and health sector. Consequently, empowered citizen initiatives present an opportunity for governments in the Global South to decrease their dependency on foreign aid.

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Appendix

Interview Guideline for Interviews with Citizen Initiatives

0. Introduction
- **Short personal introduction** + *"Thanks for your participation and time"*
- **Information on data protection issues and asking for consent to start the recording.**
- **Context**: *"I am interested in finding out more about the emergence and work of citizen initiatives and especially about the relations to gov institutions and how these may influence the initiatives activities."*
- **Short outlook on the interview:** *"The interview is structured into two parts. First, I'd like to learn more about your initiative, how it is organized and what activities you pursue to realize the goals. In the second part, I would like out to find out more about the initiative's relation towards government institutions and their implications on the initiative's activity."*
- **Def. of Citizen Initiative:** *"Actors who take over tasks that are normally associated with state actors. These actors seek to have a certain degree of autonomy regarding their goals, decision-making and activities. Yet, government institutions are of course still involved by setting the scope of action for these actors and possibly influence their activities."*

I.   Getting to know the initiative

- Please tell me how your initiative came into being.
  Possible follow-up questions:
    - What was the impulse that inspired you/the founder(s) to start the initiative? (Personal circumstances, political circumstances, availability of funding, public demand, etc.)
    - What were the initial steps that you tool/had to take when setting up the initiative?
    - How did you decide on who should become involved in the initiative?
- What were the initial goals of the initiative?
- What kind of activities/formats do you engage in to realize those goals?
- How is your initiative organized and has it changed over time?
    - How many members?
    - Do you have a formal structure/any formally appointed positions?
    - How do you agree on decisions?
    - Do you have meetings on a regular basis? (Virtually or physically?)
    - Is it only voluntary or also paid work?
    - Did the initial trigger to engage change over time?

Achievements & Challenges

- Please tell me about the greatest achievements your initiative has reached so far.
- What where the most important challenges your initiative had to face in the past?
    - Possible challenges: personal, financial, political, legal/regulatory, Covid-19 etc.
    - Do you try to attract new members? Do you follow a specific strategy when trying to attract new members/users?

II. Government Relations

- Does your initiative interact, or has it been interacting with any government institutions?
- With what government institutions/levels are you or have you been interacting?
- How did you establish contact with said government institutions? Did you actively approach them or was it rather the other way around?
- In what ways have government institutions supported or hindered the activities of your initiative?
    - Possible means of support: financial, political, legal/regulatory, public outreach (visibility), etc.
    - Possible barriers: legal/regulatory; financial; repressive means, etc.
- Are there any regular funding instruments provided by the government?
- What are your expectations/wishes toward the government institutions that are relevant for your initiative?

III. Outro

- Asking if they have anything to add.
- Thanking again for their time and stating to come back to them if needed.
- Outlook on the finalization of the research project and offering to share the results.
- Farewell.

Interview Guideline for Interviews with Government Institutions

(German)

0. Einleitung
- Kurze persönliche Einführung + "Danke für Ihre Teilnahme und Ihre Zeit"
- Anonymisierung der personenbezogenen Daten / Daten für MA / Wiederrufsrecht
- Kontext des Forschungsthemas:
  - *Fokus meiner Arbeit liegt auf Beziehungen zwischen Bürgerinitiativen und staatlichen Akteuren und den Einfluss dieser Beziehungen auf die Arbeit und den Erfolg der Initiativen.*
- Definition „Bürgerinitiativen":
  - *„Bürgerinitiativen nehmen teilweise Aufgaben wahr, die traditionell eher von staatlichen Akteuren ausgeübt wurden bzw. mit diesen assoziiert wurden.*
  - *Bürgerinitiativen streben dabei nach einem gewissen Maß an Autonomie bzgl. Entscheidungsprozessen und Umsetzung von Maßnahmen.*
  - *Gleichzeitig setzen Regierungsinstitutionen den rechtlichen Rahmen und fungieren oft auch via Fördermittel als bedeutender Geldgeber der Maßnahmen von Bürgerinitiativen."*
- **Ablauf**:
  - Zunächst den Aufgabenbereich Ihrer Institutionen kennenlernen, inwiefern sie BI mittels welchen Förderinstrumenten unterstützen und wie sich die Arbeit mit den BI gestaltet.

1. Einstiegsfragen zum Arbeitsbereich
- Wie beschreiben Sie Aufgabe und die Zielsetzung ihres Referats?
- Bitte beschreiben Sie die Aufgaben und die Zielsetzung ihres Referats innerhalb des Landratamts.

- Auf welche Weise unterstützen sie gesellschaftliche Akteure?
- Welche gesellschaftlichen Akteure unterstützen Sie? Unterscheiden Sie zwischen verschiedenen Kategorien an Akteuren? *Wie viele Akteure? In welchem Umfang?*

2. Fragen zu Förderinstrumenten
- Welche Förderinstrumente werden über den Landkreis zur Verfügung gestellt?
- Woher stammen die finanziellen Mittel?
  - Vom Landkreis selbst?
  - Vom Land *Name of Federal State*?
  - Von der EU?
- Mit welchen anderen staatlichen Akteuren/Ebenen arbeiten Sie zusammen?
- Inwieweit werden vorhandene Fördertöpfe ausgeschöpft?
- Woran liegt es, dass Fördermittel nicht vollständig ausgeschöpft werden?

3. Beziehungen zu gesellschaftlichen Akteuren/zu Bürgerinitiativen

- Wie kommt der Kontakt zu gesellschaftlichen Akteuren im Regelfall zustande? Gehen Sie aktiv auf diese zu oder ist es eher andersherum? Aktives Marketing?
- Sind bei den meisten Fördermitteln vom Landkreis und der BI abgesehen noch andere Akteure involviert?
- Was würden Sie als die größten Hürden in der Zusammenarbeit / der Förderung von gesellschaftlichen Akteuren bezeichnen? Woran liegt das?
- Welche Art von Zusammenarbeit gibt es mit anderen staatlichen Akteuren (Landkreise, Kommunen etc.)?

4. Kontakt zur *Name of the Initiative* & Zusammenarbeit

- *Only for Interview No. 2*: Projekt „Dorferneuerung"
  - Wie kam der Kontakt zustande?
  - Welche Rolle spielt der Landkreis im Projekt „Dorferneuerung"?
  - Lief das Projekt wie geplant oder gab es Probleme?

- *Only for Interview No. 3*
  - In welchem Zusammenhang sind Sie mit der Initiative Bollertdörfer in Kontakt gekommen?
  - Wie würden Sie die Zusammenarbeit beschreiben?

5. Schlusswort

- Gibt es etwas, das Sie noch hinzufügen möchten?
- *"Nochmals vielen Dank, dass Sie sich die Zeit genommen haben"*
- *„Wenn mir noch etwas einfällt, komme ich auf sie zurück."*
- Ausblick auf den Abschluss des Forschungsprojekts und Angebot, die Ergebnisse zu teilen.
- Verabschiedung.