

Citizen participation in Ukrainian regional centers: The role of local patronal networks

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Abstract

Since the 1960s, a “participatory turn” has swept over a variety of policy domains and sectors of society in Western democracies (Bherer et al., 2016). Ukraine, a long-term recipient of democracy promotion, is no exemption from the participatory trend. The 2014 decentralization reform in Ukraine revitalized the matter of open government at the municipal level, especially the issues of transparency and accountability of local authorities and citizen participation in local policymaking. Despite the national legal framework for open government is in place (Hughes & Huss, 2017), a considerable variation in openness of local authorities and in citizens’ participation opportunities has been recorded across Ukrainian cities (Fedynchuk et al., 2018; TI Ukraine, n.d.). While participatory procedures in some cities bear low participation costs and contain accountability measures, in others, citizen initiatives need disproportionately many signatures to be considered by local authorities and accountability tools are virtually ignored. To explain this puzzling variation, this paper adopts a local-level comparative perspective on structural factors and processes that lead to citizens’ opportunities to participate in local politics in Ukraine’s regional centers.

This paper theorizes that a necessary condition for citizen participation opportunities is the configuration of networks of local businessmen and politicians who are linked via actual personal acquaintance – the patronal networks (Fisun, 2012; Hale, 2015). The configuration of networks may vary from a single pyramid dominating the political regime to a coordinated network arrangement, where several networks reconcile their interests, to a competing network arrangement, where multiple networks of similar capacity contest for domination (Hale, 2015; Stefes, 2006). The paper demonstrates that more competition between patronal networks is generally conducive for more opportunities for citizen participation, because the increased uncertainty of the competitive environment prompts actors to create such institutional arrangements that prevent concentration of power. Participatory mechanisms are instrumentalized to hedge own risks of politicians in a competitive arrangement against loss of access to local government resources, if their patronal network loses competition. At the same time, the more concentrated the patronal network arrangement is, the less incumbents have the incentive to share access to local government with wider audience. Hence, participatory mechanisms for citizens are more restrictive, if at all available

Empirically, this paper relies on a comparative case-study that traces the process of adoption of participatory instruments in five Ukrainian cities in 2014-2019. The cases are selected to systematically vary the arrangement of patronal networks and outcomes for citizen participation (Kharkiv, Chernivtsi, Odesa, Lviv, and Kropyvnytskyi). The data for the arrangements of patronal networks is sourced from the author’s interviews with local informants triangulated with studies of local networks by Honorata Mazepus et al. (2020) and Oksana Huss et al. (2020). The process of adoption of local participatory regulation is traced based on the interviews with 47 local CSO members, city council members and journalists, conducted in March-May 2019 and March 2020.

1 Introduction

Since the 1960s, a “participatory turn” has swept over a variety of policy domains and sectors of society in Western democracies (Bherer et al., 2016). Enhancing the participation of the public in government decision-making was a response to perceived deficiencies of representative democracy and increasing policy complexity (Baiocchi, 2003; Dryzek et al., 2019; Florez et al., 2018; Kasdan & Cattell, 2013; Talpin, 2011). Democracy researchers conceived of citizen participation mechanisms as a means to broaden input into political systems, which were believed to be dominated by narrow elite interests. In this way, they expected to confront the alienation between citizens and their governments (Barber, 1984; Escobar & Elstub, 2019; Fischer, 1993; Fung & Wright, 2001). Governance researchers stressed the potential of citizen participation to improve the outputs of political systems, making the provision of public goods more responsive to citizens’ needs (Dickinson, 2016; Fung, 2003; Pradhan et al., 2014).

The local level of governance has long been recognized as a suitable arena for experimenting with citizen participation. Compared to the national level, here citizens can perceive the impact of political and administrative decisions on public service provision that affects them directly (Van Eijk, 2016). Hence, various experiments in facilitating citizen input and oversight of public authorities’ decisions gained traction at the local level of governance (Kapur et al., 2014; Sintomer et al., 2012). Participation-based approaches are introduced to local development as part of good governance promotion and community-based development projects (Blair, 2000; Kvartiuk, 2016; Nylen, 2014; OECD, 2009, 2016; OGP, n.d., 2019; World Bank, 2016).

Ukraine, a long-term recipient of democracy promotion, is no exemption from the participatory trend. Thanks to the concerted efforts of donors and Ukrainian civil society organisations, institutional mechanisms for local citizen participation are now partly pre-defined by the national legislative framework (Mizik & Kysla, 2017). At the same time, however, the political and fiscal autonomy of local governments allows their elected bodies to adapt national regulations and to develop their own participatory mechanisms within their competence areas.

The institutional mechanisms that frame opportunities for citizen participation in Ukraine vary from one municipality to another (Fedynchuk et al., 2018; TI Ukraine, n.d.). For example, in the city of Chernivtsi, every citizen can freely attend the meetings of the local council and the standing commissions of council deputies. In Kharkiv, the same action requires citizens to go through a procedure of non-transparent approvals from the local authorities, who routinely exclude critics of the mayor. In 2018, activists gathered to protest in front of Kharkiv City Council to assert their right to attend its plenary. They were brutally blocked by the municipal guards because they had not registered. Yet, according to several laws regulating procedures for local self-government (LSG), precisely such registration was not required, and its demand was the subject of the protest. In Lviv, a challenge to a questionable council decision on the grounds of a lack of public consultation failed in court, because the procedures of the responsible body did not allow for public access to its meetings.

These examples illustrate that locally adopted participatory mechanisms in Ukraine vary in the extent of citizen access to information about LSG activities, opportunities to initiate consulting processes, engage in joint decision-making with an LSG, and in the citizen right to control policy

implementation. **This paper seeks to explain the variation in institutional mechanisms for local citizen participation between municipalities in Ukraine.**

Classical accounts of conditions for citizen participation can at best explain the demand for introduction of the participatory institutions. These conditions can be grouped into three clusters: the characteristics of society, which include political culture and the sustainability of civil society; the political opportunity structure, which frames the input and output of the political system; and, especially relevant for developing countries such as Ukraine, democracy promotion by international donors. A brief survey of these conditions for the case of Ukraine (see section **Error! Reference source not found.**) illuminates the societal pressures and local government conditions for participation, but also shows that these conditions do not sufficiently account for the different choices made by local politicians and LSGs regarding their participatory mechanisms.

This study complements current research on citizen participation with a pragmatic account of politicians' incentives to open beyond normative considerations of input legitimacy or policy efficiency. With the spread of participatory practices, especially participatory budget (Porto de Oliveira, 2017; Shah, 2007; Sintomer et al., 2012), it is time to ask how regime features affect the designs of participatory mechanisms as they travel from democratic to hybrid regime settings.

The **central argument** of this study is that institutional mechanisms for citizen participation are by-products of choices that politicians make against the backdrop of local patronal politics. Such a type of politics is structured primarily around the pursuit of domination over LSGs and local public resources by patronal networks not conventional political actors such as parties. In such networks, or semi-hierarchical "pyramids", individuals are connected by personal acquaintance and personalized exchange of rewards and punishments, while networks themselves are informal and span private-public boundaries (adapted from Hale, 2015). Assuming that access to resources is a standard interest of power-seeking politicians (as in Kleibrink, 2015, p. 47), their primary goal in patronal politics is to secure access to LSG resources and, if possible, block such access for rival networks. Network arrangements shape politicians' strategies to satisfy this interest.

As patronal networks arrange into more concentrated or fragmented informal structures, they create environments with a lower or higher degree of uncertainty. Increasing uncertainty prompts local politicians to prefer power-sharing institutions to minimise the risk of losing access to an LSG altogether when outcomes of network interaction are unclear (adapted from Frye, 1997). Because citizen participation mechanisms extend access of external actors (such as citizens but also oppositional politicians) to information about and participation in local policymaking (Abers, 2003; Arnstein, 1969), their adoption is more likely in the contexts, where local politicians collectively prefer power-sharing institutions. Thus, competitive arrangements of patronal networks, with their high uncertainty, are more conducive for citizen participation than more concentrated arrangements.

To illustrate this argument, the paper explores the arrangements of patronal networks in a nuanced fashion in five Ukrainian regional centres (Chernivtsi, Kharkiv, Kropyvnytskyi, Lviv, and Odesa). The paper reflects systematically on how the varying degrees of uncertainty in such networks may explain different opportunities for citizen participation. It thus sheds light on how a political opening to citizens may become possible even in conditions of a hybrid political regime. In so doing, the paper complements the so far only study of a possible link between local patronal networks and

the opening of local social orders in Ukraine by Mazepus et al. (2020) who found an ambiguous connection between the structure of patronal networks and the transparency of local councils.¹

The paper is structured as follows. The section 2 addresses the non-normative conceptualisation of citizen participation in this paper, followed by operationalisation of participatory mechanisms for the case of Ukraine and mapping of the sub-national variation in their quality. Section 3 presents the theoretical approach, informed by the conceptualisation of Ukraine's hybrid political regime as "patronal politics". It justifies the attention to the informal structure and interaction patterns of local elites as forming incentives for the adoption (or not) of participatory mechanisms for citizens. Section 4 addresses research design, including the selection of cases, methods of data collection and discussion of limitations in a qualitative study of informal elite relations. The section 5 summarizes and compares the findings from the five cases in terms of their patronal network arrangements and quality of participatory mechanisms. Section 6 concludes with the discussion of the findings and their implications for our understanding of potential opening of hybrid political regimes to their citizens.

2 Participatory mechanisms in Ukrainian regional centres and their varying quality

The paper conceptualizes citizen participation as "citizens [...] interact[ing] with and provid[ing] feedback to government at the policy formulation or implementation stage of governance" (Moynihan, 2007, p. 56). Consequently, it focuses on "*institutional mechanisms* that allow citizens [...] to participate in the formation, selection, design, implementation, and oversight of local governments and policy programs" (Benton, 2016, p. 38, emphasis added). This way, participatory mechanisms become a tool for citizens to take part in policy decisions, which are, in essence, the decisions on distribution of local public resources.

In accordance with this approach, I adapt Sherry Arnstein's "ladder of citizen participation" (Arnstein, 1969, p. 217) by delineating four dimensions in the process of citizen participation in local governance: informing, consulting, partnership, and control. These dimensions of participation reflect the direction and extent of exchange between citizens and governments. The main difference between the dimensions is the type of communication they encourage between LSGs and citizens (Ebdon & Franklin, 2006, p. 442). While informing is merely a one-way communication act from an LSG to a citizen (Fung, 2003, p. 522), consulting is primarily a one-way collection of input from citizens that does not require action (Elstub & Escobar, 2019, p. 25). Partnership, such as participatory budget, implies two-way communication in the form of a (often mediated) dialogue as the dimension presupposes joint action on a problem or project (Avritzer, 2006; Raudla & Krenjova, 2013; Sintomer et al., 2012). Finally, the control dimension is a one-way communication initiated by citizens (Baltazar & Sepúlveda, 2015), which ideally requires an LSG response thus serving horizontal accountability (on horizontal accountability, see: Lindberg, 2013, pp. 213–214).. I conceptualise these dimensions below.

¹ While *transparency of city councils* was associated with multiplicity of patron-client networks in the city, there was no systematic relation between the structure of networks and *citizens' perception* of political and economic access (Mazepus et al., 2020, pp. 17–18).

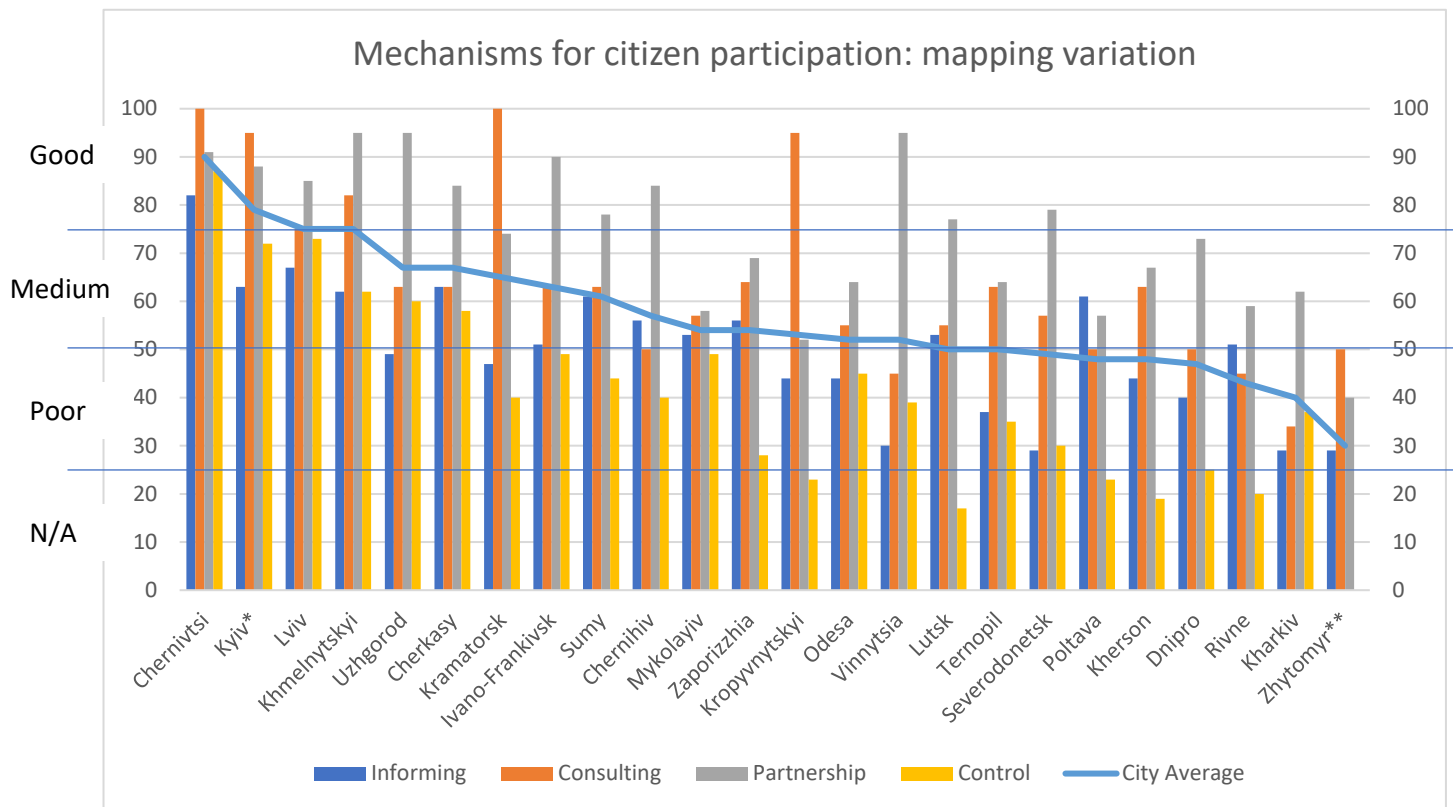
In Ukraine, local participatory mechanisms are the regulations and procedures adopted by the local councils (elected self-governing bodies with the right of local regulatory initiative) within the national framework (Krupnyk, 2017; Latsyba & Lukiniuk, 2019)². The study operationalises the four dimensions of citizen participation through participatory mechanisms that are available to local governments according to Ukrainian legislation. Depending on whether their focus is on a national or local, sectoral or general, application of the instruments, experts specify between 13 and 33 mechanisms of citizen participation available to citizens since the 2015 convocation of local councils.³ Within this variety, I narrowed down my operationalisation to 10 institutional mechanisms that facilitate participation for individual citizens at the local level and are subject to local adaptation. These 10 institutional mechanisms can be arranged into the four dimensions of participation (See section 8.2 in the Supplemental Material).

The variation, in turn, is captured by assessing the extent of opportunities for citizen participation that local adaptations of the available mechanisms enable. So I measure the variation in the institutional mechanisms for citizen participation by ranking the codified participatory mechanisms in each city with the help of an external assessment of their inclusivity, accessibility, and procedural clarity – the City Democracy Index (Fedynchuk et al., 2018). See Figure 1 for the illustration.

² The national framework for participation consists of approximately 11 Laws and 13 Decrees of the President or Cabinet of Ministers (an overview is available in Mizik & Kysla, 2017). The basic right of citizen participation in matters of state administration and the right to appeal to any state authorities and receive answers are enshrined in the Constitution (art. 38 and 40). The most relevant legislation directly refers to the operations of local governments (Law of Ukraine on Local Self-Government 1997), sets the framework for free and unrestricted access to public information (Law of Ukraine on Access to Public Information 2011 and Law of Ukraine on Citizens' Appeals 1996) and contains provisions for the state and local authorities to engage citizens in policy-making (Cabinet of Ministers Decree No. 996 of 03.11.2010).

³ In my assessments, I relied on publications by Ukrainian experts because they addressed the goals and intended use of the tools in their publications. The experts included Dr Andriy Krupnyk from the Odesa Regional Institute at the National Academy for Public Administration under the President of Ukraine (Krupnyk, 2017), legal experts Vitaliy Dorokh and Olena Cherniy (Dorokh & Cherniy, 2018), experts at the Ukrainian Center for Independent Political Research (UCIPR, a think tank) (Fedynchuk et al., 2018; Mizik & Kysla, 2017), experts at the International Republican Institute (Ukraine chapter) (Gorodok et al., 2016), and political consultant Oleksandr Solontay (Solontay et al., 2017). In addition, I interviewed several of these experts to clarify the confusion in some of the interpretations of the legislation (cf. **Error! Reference source not found.** for list of expert interviews).

Figure 1 Mapping variation in participatory mechanisms in Ukraine



Source: my calculation based on Fedynchuk et al. (2018) (City Democracy Index)

Quality of participatory regulation: good = 100-75 points (“+”); medium = 74-50 points (“0”); poor = 49-25 points (“-”); lower than 25% indicates an absence of regulation for most of the tools (scale provided in the same source).

* As the capital city, Kyiv is excluded from the case selection, but I provide the full list of assessed cities for reference

**The low results of this city are explained by the fact that, at the time of the study, its charter was not registered with the Ministry of Justice. Thus, it could not be considered by assessors as being in force.¹¹ For this reason, it was also excluded from the potential sample.

3 The theoretical approach: citizen participation as a by-product of patronal politics

3.1 Ukraine’s hybrid regime as an ambiguous case for local citizen participation

“Hybrid regimes that combine elements of both authoritarianism and democracy” (Karl, 1995, p. 72) present an equivocal context for citizen participation. On the one hand, they declare their intention of democratic development, adopt traditional democratic institutions, such as competitive elections, and commit themselves to the protection of civil rights and liberties. On the other hand, incumbents manipulate democratic institutions to create an “uneven playing field” (Levitsky & Way, 2002, p. 53), with the aim of excluding political opposition and dominating the political system. The common conceptualisation of non-democratic and non-authoritarian regimes as “hybrid” does

account for the specific features of their political institutions, which are different from both those found in consolidated democratic and authoritarian regimes. This conceptualisation fails, however, to account for the mechanisms of elite organisation and power struggles, which ultimately lead to exclusionary institutions (Gel'man, 2008; Hale, 2015, 2019; Levitsky & Way, 2020, 2002).

This paper goes beyond a focus on defective institutions in the conceptualisation of hybrid regimes. Instead, it explores the mechanisms of elite interaction over the distribution of public resources, which ultimately lead to these unique features of hybrid regimes. According to the adopted conceptualisation of regime hybridity, politics cannot be understood without grasping the “fundamental social context” in post-Soviet non-democratic countries (Hale, 2019, p. 8). This context is patronalism: “a social equilibrium in which individuals organize their political and economic pursuits primarily around the personalized exchange of concrete rewards and punishments, and not primarily around abstract, impersonal principles such as ideological belief or categorizations that include many people one has not actually met in person” (Hale, 2015, p. 20).

Central to politics in such societies are “roughly hierarchical *networks* of actual political acquaintance through which resources are distributed and coercion applied” (Hale, 2015, p. 10, 2019, p. 8, emphasis in original). These patronal networks comprise politicians, bureaucrats, and entrepreneurs, thus blurring the boundaries between political and economic institutions (Fisun, 2012). Interactions between such power-seeking networks then produce political institutions which reflect the balance of power and resources between the networks, and are often exclusionary in nature (Gel'man, 2008). This dynamic then enables dominant networks to limit access to societal functions, and to political and economic resources, with the purpose of extracting rents from their gate-keeping position. These patronalistic states have been referred to as Limited Access Orders (LAOs) (North et al., 2009, pp. 18–22). Such a setting thus assumes as narrow a decision-making circle as possible, so that the incumbents can keep their rents high.⁴

3.2 Conceptualising patronal networks and their arrangements

Network members stick together as long as they expect greater gains from loyalty to the patron than from defection to another network, or else that defection would cause them more harm than they would suffer if they remained loyal (Hale, 2015, pp. 36–37). As Henry Hale notes, networks hold together thanks to the “great power of expectations” among the clients (Hale, 2015, p. 33). According to the theory of collective action by Mancur Olson, if clients expect patrons to be sufficiently resourceful to distribute rewards and punishments, patrons prove resourceful *as expected*. This is because clients’ expectations about the power of a patron make them invest their own resources (time, money, expertise, authority) into the patron’s network, thus making that patron’s network resourceful indeed. Hale calls this phenomenon a “self-fulfilling prophecy” (ibid.). Whether or not

⁴ Although the interest of dominant coalition members in maintaining an LAO is extensively discussed by Douglas North and colleagues (2009), it is even better theorized in selectorate theory. According to the latter, incumbents try to keep the winning coalition (i.e. the range of actors on whom incumbents rely for their rule) as small as possible in order to receive the highest possible rents (the difference between what they receive in taxes from citizens and what they spend on public goods provision) (Bueno de Mesquita et al., 2003, pp. 37–76).

clients group around one patron affects the arrangement of patronal networks and the distribution of organisation and resources among them.

According to Henry Hale (2015), dynamic arrangements of networks can be understood as a “movement along a broad spectrum between two ideal-type configurations” (p. 64). The first ideal-type structure is reminiscent of the single pyramid, such that several patronal networks in a polity are organised under a “chief patron” (Hale, 2015, p. 64), and where networks that do not belong to this arrangement are marginalised. At the other end of this spectrum is the competing-network arrangement, wherein several patronal networks arrange into distinct pyramids with roughly similar resources and capacities, and strive for domination of the polity. Importantly, the single-pyramid arrangement is not the monopoly of one network but rather reflects a state of extreme coordination among networks in this typology. Just like Hale, I discuss patronal networks as hierarchical “pyramids” with a patron at the top and a range of sub-patrons and their respective clients. This is “intended as a heuristically useful simplification of a complex reality” (Hale, 2015, p. 21), where multiple horizontal links exist between actors, while hierarchies may be either temporary or long-lived.

While this typology accounts for the dynamic of these two networks’ arrangements, it leaves much of the dynamism of the arrangements that fall between these poles unconceptualised. To obtain a more fine-tuned conceptualisation of the arrangements of patronal networks, I add the in-between category of a coordinated network arrangement to Hale’s typology. This reflects the logic of a “*cartel-like deal* [...where] the dominant actor would share some of his resources with the subordinated actor, while retaining control over major decisions without constraints from the subordinated actor” (Gel’man, 2008, p. 162, emphasis in original). Adding this category allows for the conceptual differentiation between two types of arrangements under a dominant network: one, in which the dominant network has enough resource advantage to rule without the cooperation of other networks, and one, in which the resources of the dominant network are insufficient for single-handed rule, i.e. whose costs of coercion are too high (Gel’man, 2008, p. 162).

Based on the above considerations, the following three types of network arrangements, and their consequences for composition of local governments are distinguished (see Figure 2 for representation):

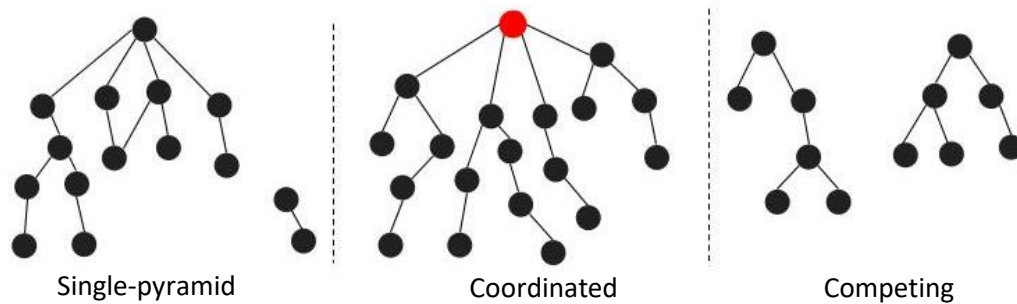
A **single-pyramid arrangement** emerges when the networks group around a chief patron forming a relatively coherent “pyramid” of authority. This hierarchical structure captures access to the main political and economic resources, subordinating and disregarding any other network (Hale, 2015, pp. 64–65). Under such an arrangement, a powerful patron maintains a coherent pyramid-like structure of clients while simultaneously coercing or punishing deviators and opposition. In an electoral democracy under a single-pyramid arrangement, major elected and executive posts, such as those of mayor and mayors’ deputies, are taken by the members of the single network; only very few (minor) elected posts may be distributed to outsiders through elections (adapted from Stefes, 2006, p. 30).

In a **coordinated network arrangement**, the dominant network does not have enough resources to coerce other networks and seeks alliances instead. Concessions are provided to dominated networks while access to major resources and decision-making opportunities is kept within the dominant network. This is what Gel’man calls “cartel-like deal” (Gel’man, 2008, p. 162). In such arrangements, rent-seeking and information exchange are coordinated by a broker who may or may

not be a patron of the dominant network (Boissevain, 1969, pp. 380–383). The presence of a broker who facilitates information exchange and, by extension, mutual trust allows more clients to be satisfied with the existing arrangement as their expectations for rewards are better accounted for (as in Kleibrink, 2015, pp. 110–116). Executive posts will be distributed according to internal agreements and will roughly mirror the balance of resources between the participating networks.

Under a **competing arrangement**, several patronal networks with relatively equal resources and ambitions for domination compete for political and economic resources, and no one network is superior to the others in the long term. Unrestrained corruption, which Christoph Stefes refers to as “decentralized corruption”, is a feature of such arrangements (Stefes, 2006, p. 30). This interaction creates competitive political regimes: they may appear democratic, but their internal logic remains patronalistic (Hale, 2015, pp. 13–16; Levitsky & Way, 2020, 2002). Political competition during elections is “real”, elected posts will be filled by candidates from competing networks, and it is likely that multiple interests will be represented in the government. These politicians will have to engage in bargaining and concessions in the competition for decision-making, otherwise a stalemate (manifested as a political crisis) is likely. This is a competition only among self-selected networks, to which no outsiders have access. However, current outsiders present potential allies in the competition between networks.

Figure 2 Typology of arrangements of (local) patronal networks: schematic representation



Source: adapted from Henry Hale (2015, p. 65)

Note: the dots symbolise individuals, and the lines indicate their ties (a mix of coercive and reciprocal relationships); higher vertical positioning represents a more powerful individual; the red circle in the coordinated network arrangement symbolises a patron-broker between networks.

It is important to note that while network arrangements can be typified as above, qualitative differences will be observable in the in-depth case studies. Moreover, while networks themselves are “sticky” (Hale, 2015, p. 36), their arrangements shift over time in response to external factors (e.g. a war, a global financial crisis, state failure) or because of changes in the resources balance of the networks themselves (e.g. one of the networks mobilises unexpected voter support for the next elections and claims more power). This way, for example, a generally single-pyramid arrangement may experience “moments” of competition (Hale, 2015, pp. 472–478). Therefore, when studying local patronal networks, the question of the arrangements that they formed when participatory institutions were being developed, is an empirical one. This calls for the inclusion of a temporal dimension in the empirical work.

3.3 Uncertainty in patronal network arrangements and the institutional preferences of local politicians

The arrangement of patronal networks has been shown to shape political institutions in states characterised by patronal politics both in moments of transition between regime types and through the stabilisation of regime hybridity (Hale, 2015, 2019; Magyar, 2019; Sidel, 2012). One aspect of the interaction of patronal networks is particularly relevant for the institutional choices that political elites make. This is the degree of uncertainty that emerges in networks' interactions because of actors' limited information about each other's resources and intentions.

Combining the logic of expectations with insights from incomplete contracts theory, it is possible to expect that the uncertainty a political actor faces varies depending on specifics of patronal network arrangements (Frye, 1997; and Kleibrink, 2015, pp. 47–50). Competing arrangements of patronal networks reflect the divergence of expectations among clients regarding the patron, one large enough to allow for the formation of comparably resourced networks striving for domination. Competition creates an environment of high uncertainty for all participating patronal networks in local politics, and thus forces local politicians to adopt hedging behaviour. A single-pyramid arrangement, on the contrary, reflects clients' expectations about the power of a single patron prompting the emergence of a dominant network around this patron with considerable resource advantages. Relative clarity about the patron and informal hierarchies provides local politicians with an environment of low uncertainty, where loyalty to the status quo is the most gainful choice. Finally, coordinated network arrangements would pose more uncertainty than single-pyramid ones but less than competing ones. On the one hand, information exchange between networks through a broker mitigates the uncertainty of their future actions (Kleibrink, 2015, pp. 110–116). On the other hand, there is little incentive for the co-opted networks to refrain from challenging the dominant network once they have enough resources, and this increases uncertainty (Gel'man, 2008, p. 162).

Varying levels of uncertainty shape different elite priorities for the establishment of new institutions. High uncertainty encourages actors to “hedge their bets more than they would under low uncertainty” (Frye, 1997, p. 533). So, in the process of institution-building under high uncertainty, the choices that elites make must take into account a situation in which they and their patronal networks are not on the winning side. These hedging considerations prevent the emergence of political institutions that disproportionately advantage one of the patronal networks, because actors try to maintain their own access to formal bodies. Under low uncertainty, the dominant patronal network has more leeway to shape institutions to its advantage.

A similar logic is applied in this theoretical framework to patronal networks' preferences regarding participatory institutions. Recall that participatory institutions target governments' discretion over the distribution of local public resources (budget, land, development programmes). Ideally, every patronal network would prefer to maintain full control over the government's distributional decisions, so it is not in the immediate interest of patronal networks to introduce citizen participation (Bueno de Mesquita et al., 2003, pp. 51–57). However, while pursuing this goal, local political elites will have to account for the uncertainty that impinges on their ambitions for control of local government, and, thus, adjust their preferences accordingly (Kleibrink, 2015, pp. 47–50).

Therefore, a single-pyramid arrangement, due to its low uncertainty, incentivises incumbent politicians to further cement their domination by creating exclusionary, or power-concentrating, local institutions. By contrast, the rise in uncertainty when multiple networks coordinate and, even more, when they compete, forces all actors to hedge their risks of losing access to an LSG. Because of the varying uncertainty, the concentrated or fragmented arrangements of patronal networks incentivise actors to prefer, respectively, power-concentrating or power-sharing institutions. Thus, I advance the following **propositions** (Gerring, 2007, pp. 71–72) to explain the variation between the cities as shaped by the varying levels of uncertainty among patronal network arrangements in these cities:

1. Competing network arrangements create favourable environments for the promotion of participatory institutions, because uncertainty in these arrangements prompts local politicians to prefer power-sharing institutions more generally. This reflects the risk-hedging mechanism behind institutional preferences.
2. Conversely, coordinated arrangements and — to an even greater extent — a single-pyramid arrangement produce more incentives for incumbents to concentrate power, and avoid institutions that broaden access to an LSG, including participatory institutions.

4 Research Design

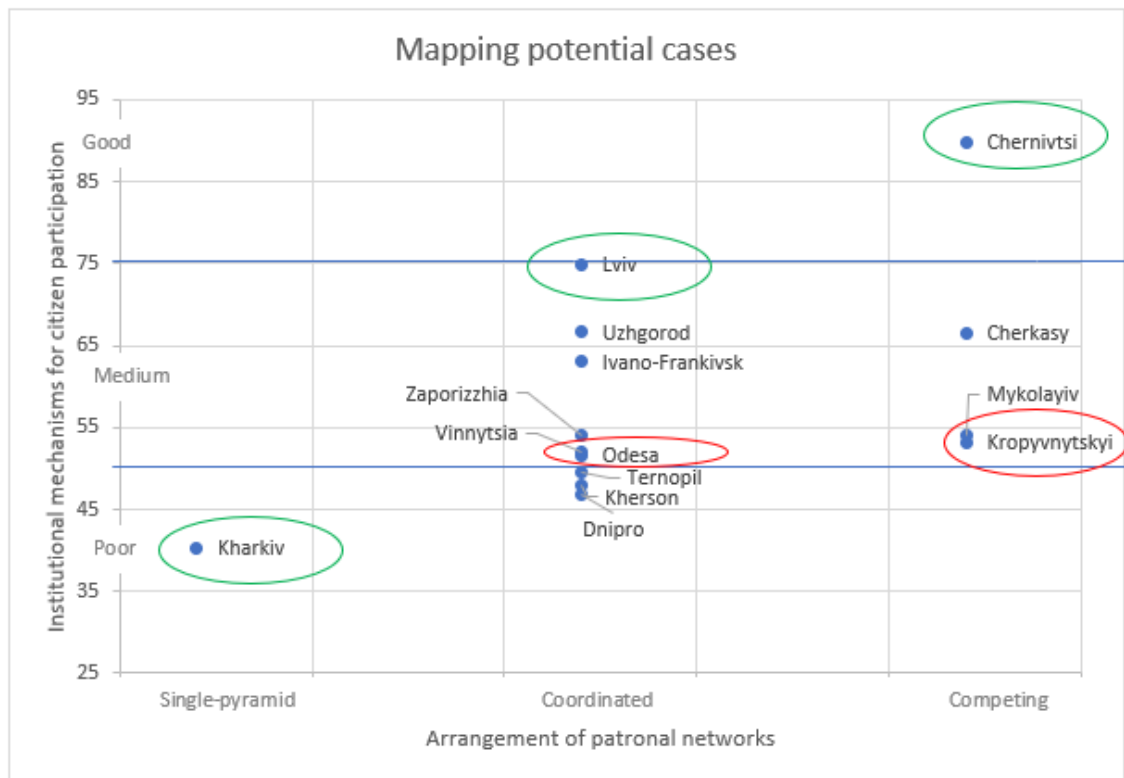
4.1 The Ukrainian hybrid regime and regional centres as focus of the study

In Ukraine, the political regime has been marked by “the competition between different patron-client groups over political/economic institutions, which can provide opportunities for rent extraction” (Roberts & Fisun, 2014, p. 8). Different tendencies in elite structuring resulted in the regime oscillating between authoritarianism and democracy, to the former if structuring tended towards domination of one network and to the latter if towards competition between several patronal networks (Hale, 2015, pp. 129–131; Kubicek, 2009; Kuzio, 2016; Matsiyevsky, 2018; Riabchuk, 2008).

This paper uses comparative case studies of five regional centres in Ukraine. Choosing cases in Ukraine is beneficial both analytically and empirically. On the one hand, the internal dynamic of Ukraine’s hybrid regime has been shown to largely depend on informal conflicts and agreements between several patron-client networks (some examples of studies include Fisun, 2012, 2017; Hale, 2015, pp. 123–174; Huss, 2016; Kuzio, 2016; Minakov, 2019). On the other hand, regional centres, the focus of this study, demonstrate negligible variation in the structural conditions for citizen participation, as discussed above. Importantly, they are politically and financially the most autonomous units of local governance in Ukraine (Dudley, 2019). At the local level, business and politics overlap (Mazepus et al., 2020; Roberts & Fisun, 2014; UNDP Ukraine, 2019) and there is evidence of local patron-client networks claiming control over local resources in these cities and their regions (INEKO, 2015). Against this backdrop, cities in Ukraine present a fertile ground for researching the analytical links between structures of patronal networks and opportunities for citizen participation.

City cases were selected from a sample of fourteen regional centres,⁵ for which both secondary data regarding arrangement of patronal networks and the measurement of the quality of institutional mechanisms for citizen participation was available (Fedynchuk et al., 2018; Huss et al., 2020; Mazepus et al., 2020). The five cases selected vary systematically in the arrangement of their patronal networks and the quality of opportunities for citizen participation provided by the local institutional mechanisms (See Figure 3).

Figure 3 Matching the arrangement of patronal networks and institutional mechanisms for citizen participation in 14 cities



Note: The green ovals contain cities which roughly fit the originally expected patterns of connection between the arrangement of patronal networks and opportunities for citizen participation. The red ovals contain cities which do not follow the expected patterns — Odesa and Kropyvnytskyi — and were selected for comparison with the other cases.

Data sources: opportunities for citizen participation – City Democracy Index 2018 (Fedynchuk et al., 2018); arrangement of patronal networks – Huss et al. (2020), with additional data from Mazepus et al. (2020).

Graph source: author's compilation

Kharkiv was selected as a city with a single-pyramid arrangement and poor, i.e. restrictive and unclear, institutional mechanisms for citizen participation. Lviv and Odesa are both cases of a coordinated network arrangement but the participatory mechanisms in Lviv were of medium to good quality; in Odesa they were rather poor. Chernivtsi and Kropyvnytskyi are both cases of a competing network arrangement, but Chernivtsi offered the most accessible and inclusive participatory mechanisms of all the regional centres; Kropyvnytskyi provided only medium to poor opportunities.

⁵ The measurement of the quality of participatory institutions was available for all twenty-four regional centres. However, reliable secondary data was only available for fourteen of them; therefore, the sample is smaller than the total number of regional centres.

For background socio-economic data on the selected cities, see section 8.1 in the Supplemental Material.

4.2 Comparative case study of adoption of participatory institutions in five regional centres

In each case, I operationalise and compare uncertainty in the arrangements of patronal networks. In doing this, I carefully reconstruct the structures of patronal networks using interview data and triangulating it with journalist and academic accounts, and open data, where available. The indicators for networks include family and business (e.g., co-ownership or employment at a top executive post in a company) ties between actors, shared patterns of party affiliation or switching, and relations of patronage in local bureaucratic appointments (based on operationalisation of ties as in Broms et al., 2019; Kostiuhenko, 2012; Mazepus et al., 2020). Within the networks, I identify the main actors and their ties, and also trace the “touchpoints” of patronal networks for the local government. For example, I identify the positions of mayors and holders of other crucial posts vis-à-vis the arrangements of patronal networks. Simultaneously, I pay attention to the formal LSG bodies into which the interaction between networks flows: consolidated arrangements use the executive-dominated arena, the executive committee, while actors in fragmented arrangements prefer the wider public forum of the city council plenaries. This helps me to demonstrate the general preferences of local politicians for either power-concentrating or power-sharing institutions. Next, for each case in 2015-2019, I reconstruct the process of adoption of institutional mechanisms within each of the four dimensions of citizen participation. I pay attention to the sequence of major events and the preferences of key actors: most often mayors, but also council secretaries and deputies. Having identified these actors, I then explore to what extent, and in what ways, the functional fit of these actors played a role in their preference for citizen participation mechanisms. To do so, I explore the resources of these actors and their position in the arrangement of patronal networks.

4.3 Data collection methods

Conclusions about network arrangements are primarily based on data from interviews with forty-seven stakeholders in the cities, triangulated with various secondary sources. Academic publications by Ukrainian scholars who study local elites, scholarly accounts of informal power structures, journalistic investigations were the secondary sources for the triangulation of the interview data. Finally, I tap into open-access registries of asset ownership and the ultimate beneficiaries of business and civil society organisations to cross-check the ties of individuals that were reported to me by informants.

To reconstruct the process of adoption of participatory mechanisms, I rely on the data from the interviews with process participants, which I triangulate with the information from council plenary protocols, public statements of the stakeholders, and reports in the local media. After a careful comparison of the answers given by the interviewees, I identify the actors within the formal domain whose preferences shaped the final design of the participatory institutions.

4.4 Coping with the challenges of studying informal relations

The study of informal structures poses challenges. In patronalistic regimes, “[r]elationships of privilege, patronage, and control are rarely public, and even when they are ‘known,’ they remain nearly impossible to capture with [a] high level of precision and certainty” (Mazepus et al., 2020, p. 17). Members of patronal networks prefer not to disclose their membership as these networks may sometimes engage in illicit or at least socially undesirable activities (Hale, 2019, pp. 8–9). Moreover, even those not directly involved, but who only know about these networks, may be unwilling to talk about them for the same reason. Conversely, those who speak about informal links may be either insufficiently informed or biased, making it hard for a researcher to draw indisputable conclusions. That being said, this study uses triangulation between primary and secondary sources in constant comparison with each other: where I could not find a second source with the same information, I discarded such evidence (Stefes, 2006, p. 8). Moreover, because I use the same approach in mapping patronal networks and reconstructing the interactions of local actors around participatory mechanisms in all cities, the differences between the cases are illuminating (Mazepus et al., 2020, p. 17).

I mitigate possible biases in the data from interviews by carefully selecting a mixed group of interviewees and using an interview guide. For information on local patronal networks, I interviewed scholars and civil society experts who had published on local political elites in the cities of my interest. I also interviewed anti-corruption activists, as the study by Leiden University and Kyiv-Mohyla Academy showed that these actors are knowledgeable regarding local informal structures (Huss et al., 2020). For the introduction of participatory mechanisms, I first reviewed national and local policy publications on this topic and read local media reports on local politics to identify experts and potential informants. Often anti-corruption activists promoted participatory mechanisms from the civil society side in the cities. Since I acknowledge that both media and civil society representatives may be biased or even engaged in inter-network interactions (Wilson, 2016), I consulted with a media expert regarding who in the local media outlets could be considered least biased, and with an expert who has developed regional civil society coalitions regarding the trustworthiness of local experts. Finally, I interviewed local politicians and public officials in every city who had been instrumental in introducing citizen participation based on my prior reading of relevant official documents, news reports, policy reports, and interviews with scholars and civil society activists. A mixed sample of experts on citizen participation and participants in the process of its introduction in the selected cases helped increase the reliability of the obtained data.

5 Findings

5.1 Comparing the arrangements of patronal networks and their related uncertainty

Based on the data from the fieldwork and cross-checking it with Ukrainian elite academic studies (if available), the grey literature, and news reports, I refined my understanding of the nature

of the patronal network arrangements under study. This allowed a better grasp of the differences in levels of uncertainty for actors in the different cities. In this section, I present the comparison of arrangements vis-à-vis each other in terms of their uncertainty. The main conclusion of this comparison is that the patronal network arrangements in the case-cities may be put on a continuum from one dominated by a single network to one marked by “pure” competition in an order of increasing uncertainty within each arrangement for the local power-seeking actors. This comparison – of the levels of uncertainty – helps to understand the conduciveness of each context, and its specific characteristics, for citizen participation.

To delineate the sources of uncertainty, I compare the cities not only in terms of the number of relevant networks and the patterns of their interaction, but also in terms of the inductively derived characteristics of that interaction, summarised in Table 1. For each arrangement I note whether, over 2015-2019, there was (1) any change in the dynamics of the arrangement to either coordination or competition. Because the adoption of participatory mechanisms is done by an LSG embedded in patronal arrangements, in the table I summarise the main findings for each case study on (2) the position of the mayor vis-à-vis the patronal network arrangement, (3) the distribution of patronage resources in the executive and the representative bodies of the council, (4) the role of the local politicians who do not belong to the relevant networks and (5) the patrons’ tactics for dealing with (potential) opponents. The first category indicates a possible shift in clients’ preferences towards patrons (following the logic of Hale’s patronal politics, in which the power of patrons is sourced from their clients’ expectation that the patron is powerful). The next three categories together indicate the power (im)balance between the networks, and the fifth category summarises the sanctions an opponent could expect for challenging the patron, or that a client could expect for defecting. Finally, differentiating between prioritised arenas for bargaining around the distribution of public resources (category 6) is informative of the “width” of the decision-making circle in an arrangement, the largest being the council, and the smallest being the executive committee. Taken together, these indicators constitute components that enable comparison of the uncertainty in the different city-cases. The more dynamic an arrangement is, the more comparable the resources of the participating networks are and the larger the bargaining arena, the higher is the uncertainty of the outcome of such an arrangement for each individual politician, whether affiliated with the relevant patronal networks or not.

Following the ranking from lowest to highest uncertainty, I summarise the main findings for the patronal network arrangements in Table 1 and in the remainder of this section.

For **Kharkiv**, my data supports the conclusions by Honorata Mazepus and her colleagues (Mazepus et al., 2020) that local self-government bodies are dominated by members of one patronal network under the mayor. The domination is executed through the conflation of the representative and executive branches of the LSG: the heads of executive departments and city districts are simultaneously elected council deputies. Even though at least three patronal networks are represented in the Kharkiv city council, two of them are marginal (in number of members) for the council’s decision-making. Opponents of the mayor’s network are either coerced into subordination through the influence of the executive (for example, withholding permits for business activities), or marginalised and made irrelevant (especially, anti-corruption civil society efforts). Thanks to such a concentration of power, not only in one network, but effectively to one person, the decision-making process is concealed and personalised in comparison to other case-cities. Among the LSG bodies, the executive committee and, to a lesser extent, the standing commissions serve as the arenas where

distributional decisions are made. While the executive committee is reportedly subordinated to the mayor's personal will, the standing commissions still serve as arenas for negotiations where even marginal politicians can promote their agenda. The council is left with a rubber-stamping role in this arrangement. Throughout the studied period (2014-2019) the arrangement remained stable, while its roots could be traced as far back as 2006, to the formation of the mayor-secretary duo (at the time). The capture of essential public resources by one network, and the concentration of decision-making authority (formal and informal) in the mayor's hands, makes Kharkiv the city with the lowest uncertainty among the case-cities.

For **Odesa**, I found evidence of multiple patronal networks coordinating their activities through the mayor. Yet the network in which the mayor reportedly acts as a sub-patron is relatively more resourceful than the other networks participating in the coordination. Since 2016, it gradually increased its domination over the city's resources, especially regarding public procurement contracts and land allocation. Opponents of the dominant network are either coerced or co-opted, depending on whether opponents question the network's domination and methods, or rather criticise decisions within the realm of local self-government. For example, anti-corruption activists who investigated rent-seeking schemes have reportedly been threatened (even by the municipal guard), while the participation-related proposals of a marginal political opposition were supported. Nevertheless, despite demonstrated ability for coercion, the domination of the mayor's network is enabled mostly through co-optation. Selective compromise and satisfaction of the resource claims of other networks allow the mayor to keep his brokering position. As in Kharkiv, the main decision-making arena among LSG bodies is the executive committee, followed by the standing commissions. Despite the attempts by marginalised politicians to bring their agenda up for discussion at the council plenaries, the latter mostly confirm the decisions made at the two more significant platforms. The multiplicity of networks entails greater fragmentation of the city council than is found in Kharkiv. Despite its coercive potential and greater resourcefulness compared to other networks, the dominant network relies on coordination with those other networks for decision-making. Therefore, uncertainty, even for the members of the dominant network, is higher in Odesa than in Kharkiv. Yet it is still lower than in Lviv (which also has a coordinated arrangement), because of the one-sided, though incomplete, prevalence of resources and authority in one network in Odesa.

In **Lviv**, I could identify at least three patronal networks represented in the council and at least two more loose groups of urban activists and businessmen who, although not represented in the council directly, see the mayor as their focal point in the council. The mayor serves as the broker between networks, while simultaneously being the patron of the largest network, one of the oldest in the city, consisting of executives, medium-sized businesses and (urban) civil society activists. The arrangement in Lviv is, however, more symmetrical as regards the distribution of power between the mayor's and other networks than in Odesa. Although the mayor acted as a broker since about 2006, managed to co-opt some of the civil society actors and businesses, and consolidated the executive under his patronage, other networks have individually or jointly tried to prevent the domination of the mayor's network. For example, in the latest convocation, council deputies from other parties demonstrated their ability to create an "alternative majority" without the mayor's party. They made it a condition of their support for a candidate for the secretary position that the nominee does not represent the mayor's party. By doing so, the other networks signalled to the mayor the possibility of a worst-case scenario, in which enough votes could be collected to veto the mayor's proposals or even to dismiss the mayor.

Table 1 Comparing the patronal network arrangements in five case-cities

<i>Uncertainty</i>		low	high →			
City	Kharkiv	Odesa	Lviv	Kropyvnytskyi	Chernivtsi	
(Refined) interaction patterns →	Domination of one network (single-pyramid)	Coordination under the dominant network	Coordination through co-optation	Competition / selective coordination	Competition	
Characteristics of the arrangement ↓						
(1) Changes in dynamics of arrangements in 2015-2019	No	No	Yes, joint action to prevent concentration of power by the mayor's network in early 2016; occasional direct action, associated with one of the networks (2017-2018)	Yes, competition in 2015-2016, gradually moved to selective coordination since 2017	No, "swing"-like competition	
(2) Position of the mayor in local patronal network arrangement	Patron	Sub-patron of the dominant network & coordinator of the arrangement	Patron of the dominant network & coordinator of the arrangement	Sub-patron of one of the competing networks	Sub-patron of one of the competing networks	

(3) Repercussions of the arrangement for management of patronage resources	Majority-holding party is dominated by executives of the LSG under direct supervision of & with business-family connections to the mayor-patron	Top executives of the LSG are affiliated to mayor's network, links to top officials in local law enforcement; in the council, reliable coalition with 50%+1 vote	Appointment of "compromise" secretary & chairs of standing commissions, <i>but</i> controlled executive committee	Reshuffling of secretaries 3 times in 2016, until the patron of the challenger network received the post; reshuffling of standing commissions & increasing their accountability to council; boycotts of the plenary by the "mixed group" protesting selective coordination on land issues; reshuffling of mayor's deputies	Dismissal of mayor by council (2011 & 2018); protracted negotiations for the secretary position (2015-2017); return of the mayor via court decision (2019); reshuffling among mayor's deputies, incomplete executive committee (conflict between mayor & secretary on its composition)
City	Kharkiv	Odesa	Lviv	Kropyvnytskyi	Chernivtsi
(3a) Touchpoints of patronal networks with regard to LSG	Executive & council dominated by the mayor's network	Executive dominated, council co-opted by the dominant network	Executive dominated, council co-opted; small but vocal opposition to the mayor	Representation of patronal networks divided between executive & council (each network has almost symmetrical representation); there are unaffiliated executives & council deputies	Executive & council split between two networks (exception: between 2014 snap mayoral elections & 2015 municipal elections council leaned towards mayor); there are unaffiliated executives & council deputies
(4) Are non-affiliated council deputies	No	No	Yes, their support was necessary at the beginning of convocation to	Yes, their support was decisive to enable increasing coordination	Yes, their switching & situational support was crucial for tipping points in competition

relevant to the patronal network arrangement?			counter-act (symbolically) perceived increase of mayor's dominance		(especially the mayor's dismissal; appointment of secretary)
(5) Tactics, employed by patrons, towards opponents & defectors	Coercion, and exclusion of opponents	Co-optation, and selective coercion of opponents	Co-optation of (potential) opponents (also proactive, by creating formal institutions for dialogue)	Selective co-optation of opponents	Exclusion of opponents
(6) Formal arenas, into which bargaining for distribution of resources flows (in order of priority)	Executive committee, Commissions	Executive committee, Commissions	Executive committee, Commissions, city council plenaries	Commissions, city council plenaries, executive committee	city council plenaries, Commissions, executive committee

Table 1 Continued

Additionally, one of the patronal networks uses its direct-action civil society clients to disrupt the work of the council, directly challenging the mayor's authority. Despite these events, the overall arrangement, thanks to the mayor's brokerage and preferred co-optation of (potential) challengers, remains a coordinated one. The coordination, just as in Odesa, runs through the executive committee and concerns the construction of housing and the allocation of municipal property and land, inter alia, for tourism. Yet, unlike in Odesa, the standing commissions and even sometimes the council plenaries are meaningful arenas of bargaining between networks. Despite the mayor's network being entrenched in diverse spheres (executive, business, civil society, media), it does not coercively dominate other networks. Instead, it co-opts them by compromising on their needs – which only reinforces the mayor's role as broker. The fragmented patronal network landscape and occasional power claims by the other networks lend dynamism to Lviv's patronal network arrangement, something which I did not observe in Odesa. In this more dynamic environment, the uncertainty for all the power-seeking actors is higher than in Odesa.

Kropyvnytskyi turned out to be the mixed case, combining elements of the ideal types of competing and coordinated patronal network arrangements. In line with the expectation of a competing network arrangement, two similarly resourced networks claimed domination over the distribution of public resources. These claims manifested themselves in a genuine competition for the mayoral post and in informal competition for the support of unaffiliated council deputies. To simplify the situation, the arrangement's reflection in the Kropyvnytskyi city council is reminiscent of a triangle – with two networks in two separate corners, and the third corner “inhabited” by a mix of political newbies and independent small and medium entrepreneurs. One of the competing networks is patronised by big business owners of heavy industries, whose top managers are council deputies – and includes the mayor. The other is organised under the patronage of a former MP and large food processing business owner who has been the city council's secretary since 2016. The “mixed” group is not coherent, but was collectively instrumental in tilting the balance of power between the two major networks and inadvertently enabled their selective coordination towards the middle of the council's convocation. Although at the beginning of the convocation, the mayor's network appeared to have co-opted the mixed group, the challenger – the patron of the competing network and eventually the secretary – acted to split the mixed group, turning critical actors against the mayor. Thanks to these actors, the challenger was able to increase the representation of the members of his network in key posts of the executive and the standing commissions, and eventually claim the post of secretary. Having achieved the most powerful non-elected post in the executive, the secretary engaged with the mayor, his erstwhile, in selective coordination. For example, while the mayor's faction supported increasing the membership of crucial standing commissions to satisfy the secretary's demands for authority over utilities planning, the mayor kept the standing commission on construction under the leadership of his client. Similarly, although deputies were reshuffled to include those affiliated to the secretary, some crucial spheres remained under the mayor's control through his appointees. However, what differentiates Kropyvnytskyi's selective coordination from that found in Lviv and Odesa is the arenas where the distribution of local patronage resources is genuinely discussed. In the three previously discussed cities, major appointments are not routinely discussed or debated at the council's plenaries, but this is what happens in Kropyvnytskyi. For example, several chairs of standing commissions were dismissed and appointed, much to their surprise, at the plenary. The debates around the agenda are also informative here. While in Kharkiv, Odesa and Lviv, new agenda points proposed by the plenary's chair (the mayor or, more rarely, the secretary) are usually included and voted upon without debate, in Kropyvnytskyi, the same manoeuvre by the secretary prompted a

backlash from half of the council. As a result, for about three months, the council either did not convene (no quorum) or convened in a legal “grey zone” (quorum achieved only by counting the mayor). The rejected agenda points all concerned questionable land allocation decisions. Despite selective coordination between the two major networks starting around the midpoint of the convocation (March 2017, approximately), the arrangement does not have a universally accepted broker. Both major networks strive for a single-pyramid arrangement but do not have the capacity to achieve it. Therefore, they bargained directly with each other over some matters and temporarily co-opted members of the mixed group on this or that specific issue. The lack of a universally accepted broker and the switching between networks by the members of the “mixed group” create a situation of relatively high uncertainty. At the same time, the demonstrated ability of the networks to selectively coordinate makes the uncertainty that actors in Kropyvnytskyi must deal with less than in Chernivtsi.

In the case of **Chernivtsi**, the local political process was marked by competition between two major patronal networks, dating back to as least 2010. Unlike in other cities, this arrangement was as much shaped by the networks having similar incomplete resources as by the ramifications of the interactions of these networks’ national patrons. The latter exacerbated the competition in that it prevented at least selective coordination on local issues and the interests of local elites as was the case in Kropyvnytskyi. One of the indications of a lack of dialogue is that it took almost two years for the council to elect its secretary: the patron of one of the competing networks wanted this post, while the mayor would not support his candidacy. The competition further exacerbated the inherent tensions between the executive and the representative bodies of the LSG so that the council (encouraged by the secretary) occasionally blocked the mayor’s proposals, while the mayor vetoed council decisions. The mayor and the secretary started their convocation with incomplete resources, but each with the intention of dominating the council, which raised the importance of fringe politicians and members of minor patronal networks in the rush for a “majority”. The competition culminated in 2018 with the dismissal of the mayor, organised by the secretary and enabled by the additional critical votes of “neutral” council deputies and some of the mayor’s former supporters. Nevertheless, a year later the mayor was returned to his post by a court decision, having continued his political campaign throughout the time of his absence. The inability to compromise on the distribution of patronage resources (the secretary appointment, for example), the fragmented patronal network landscape, with two incompletely but modestly resourced networks, make Chernivtsi the city with comparatively the highest uncertainty among the case-cities.

In this sub-section, I sketched a more nuanced understanding of the structure, interaction patrons and related uncertainty of the patronal network arrangements than at case selection. In the next sub-section, I map the quality of participatory mechanisms onto the refined arrangements. I discuss the conduciveness of environments with higher uncertainty for power-sharing institutions – of which participatory institutions for citizens are an example.

5.2 Refined mapping of institutional mechanisms for citizen participation in the case studies

Considering the more nuanced understanding of patronal network arrangements in the case-cities, it is now possible to map the institutional mechanisms for citizen participation in the cities

according to the increasing uncertainty that these arrangements entail. Table 2 shows the results of this mapping.

Table 2 Mapping variation in institutional mechanisms for citizen participation on refined patronal network arrangements

Patronal network arrangement →	Single-pyramid	Coordinated		Competing	
City-case /Character of interaction	Kharkiv / one dominant network	Odesa /under the dominant network	Lviv /through co-optation of “equals”	Kropyvnytskyi /selective coordination	Chernivtsi / “pure” competition
Uncertainty (1)	low → high				
Quality of participatory mechanisms by context (2)	poor	mid (-)	mid (+)	<i>mid</i>	good

Source: author’s depiction based on Fedynchuk et al (2018) and data from case study; “+” = good (100-75 points); “0” = medium (74-50 points); “-” = poor (49-25 points)

Table 2 demonstrates that, when ordering the city-cases according to increasing uncertainty of refined types of their patronal network arrangements, the mechanisms for citizen participation improve and are associated with an increasing plurality of and competition among patronal networks (except Kropyvnytskyi). Why is that so? The short answer is that with increasing uncertainty actors try to hedge the risk of unfavourable outcomes of competition by creating institutions that prevent the concentration of power (Frye, 1997, p. 533ff). Conversely, when one network dominates the local government, it has no use for plurality in decision-making institutions.

Empirically, the preference of local politicians for enlarging the decision-making circle in a more competitive patronal context can be illustrated by comparing the preferred bargaining arenas of politicians/members of patronal networks in the five cases (see Table 1, line [6]). In the context of a single or dominant decision-making centre, the patronal networks tend to prioritise executive committees as bargaining arenas, and they are composed mostly of the mayor’s direct subordinates (Kharkiv and Odesa are illustrative of this). Where additional power centres emerge, even though the executive committee is still preferred, some bargaining is moved to the standing commissions, which may consist of representatives of patronal networks as well as unaffiliated council deputies and are not formally subordinate to mayors (Lviv is the most vivid example). A single issue would normally be discussed by several such commissions, according to their profile; the sheer number of actors would make the process more inclusive and offer more room for bargaining. Finally, in competing arrangements (especially in Chernivtsi, but also in Kropyvnytskyi of 2015-2016), the main bargaining arena is the council plenaries, routinely attended by media and residents.

The core argument of this study has been that with increasing uncertainty, actors are more likely to mitigate their risk of losing access to the LSG by preferring power-sharing institutions, of which participatory institutions are a case. While the expectations of the role of uncertainty correspond to empirical observation, the initial categorisation of patronal network arrangements proved to be too crude. Specifically, it did not account for the dynamics within an arrangement over time and for the patrons' preferences for co-optation or coercion with regards to unaffiliated actors and opponents. Taking into account these characteristics of the arrangements, I was able to order the five case-cities according to increasing uncertainty more precisely than at case selection. With one exception of Kropyvnytskyi, increasing uncertainty is indeed associated with more inclusive participatory mechanisms (see Table 1).

Kropyvnytskyi presents a border case between competition and coordination and breaks the expected pattern. Although the city was marked by competition between two major patronal networks after the 2015 municipal elections, the arrangement evolved into one of selective coordination by 2017. This change was reflected in the character of participatory mechanisms, too: those adopted during the time of competition were more inclusive and accessible; after the selective coordination started, some participatory provisions in the local regulations were rolled back. These patterns are informative of the variation between the cities which can be attributed to (un)favourable conditions for power-sharing institutions in general.

6 Conclusion

The present study places local politics involving citizen participation in the broader framework of a specific type of politics under a hybrid regime – patronal politics. In this type of politics, institutions are products of the arrangements of “extended networks of personal acquaintances [... that] typically have their people in all major spheres that can affect politics” (Hale, 2016, p. 29). Importantly, such semi-hierarchical “patronal networks” are fluid. They result less from the coercion of network members by a patron than from clients' expectations of benefits (rents and favours) that can be gained through network membership. Networks and their patrons are powerful when they enjoy the loyalty of resourceful clients. At the same time, actors further increase their access to resources by being members of powerful patronal networks (Hale, 2015, pp. 19–38). Therefore, political actors face a great deal of uncertainty regarding what network offers the best “investment” of their resources as it is hard to estimate the expectations of others. As power-seeking politicians navigate environments of varying uncertainty, they also produce more inclusive or exclusionary institutions (Frye, 1997).

This study applies the logic of patronal politics, as it revolves around domination over LSG bodies, to understand the variation in the local institutional mechanisms for citizen participation. It views the mechanisms for citizen participation as the by-product of “bargaining by power-seeking politicians who make choices under varying degrees of uncertainty” (Frye, 1997, p. 524). The present study assumes that when making these choices, politicians account for the arrangements of patronal networks and any associated uncertainty in their locality. These contingent evaluations translate into participatory institutions when the arrangements of patronal networks produce higher uncertainty.

The multiplicity of patronal networks and the patterns of their interactions, such as coordination or competition, shape the uncertainty levels for local politicians. For a local politician, uncertainty is higher where multiple similarly-resourced networks compete for access to an LSG. This is because the outcome is unclear, as is the decision regarding which network makes for the best “investment”. Similarly, where network patrons can efficiently distribute coercion and switching between networks incurs costs, uncertainty is lower. This is because rational actors prefer alignment with those networks where, along with benefits, costs of deviation are high. Thus, an arrangement with a single dominant network is the environment of the lowest uncertainty. Fragmented arrangements of patronal networks, especially when these networks compete, produce environments of the highest uncertainty. Between these two extremes, there is the coordinated type of arrangement, which is moderately uncertain.

Because of the varying uncertainty, the concentrated or fragmented arrangements of patronal networks incentivise actors to prefer, respectively, power-concentrating or power-sharing institutions. Thus, a single-pyramid arrangement, due to its low uncertainty, incentivises incumbent politicians to further cement their domination by creating exclusionary, or power-concentrating, local institutions. By contrast, the rise in uncertainty when multiple networks coordinate and, even more, when they compete, forces all actors to hedge their risks of losing access to an LSG. Within this logic, participatory institutions are likely to emerge where local actors operate under higher uncertainty.

This proposition has general empirical support in the case of the five Ukrainian cities in this study based on a careful examination of their patronal network arrangements. Four of the five cases (Kharkiv, Odesa, Lviv, and Chernivtsi) met the expectations regarding the arrangements of patronal networks and the character of participatory institutions. The increasing uncertainty of the political environment, as the number of networks and the competitiveness in their interaction patterns grew, was generally associated with more inclusive institutional mechanisms, conducive to citizen participation. This pattern breaks down when the type of arrangement is in flux between competition and coordination, as participatory mechanisms are being negotiated, as was the case in Kropyvnytskyi.

By analysing why local governments in Ukraine adopt different institutional mechanisms for citizen participation, I make several theoretical and empirical contributions to understanding the dynamics of politics and the opportunities for opening in hybrid regimes more generally. On a theoretical level, the adaptation of patronal politics theory to the local level of governance yields insights into the conditions and the rational drivers for opening from the *inside* of patronal network arrangements. The focus on politicians and their contingent and informal political context in this study helps to uncover the roots of mayors’ (non-)commitment to citizen participation. From the existing studies of participatory opportunities for citizens in hybrid regimes we know that the commitment of mayors and their offices to citizen participation is crucial, but the sources of commitment are rarely explored. This study sheds light on the sources of mayoral attitudes to citizen participation by examining the interplay between the uncertainty of the patronal network arrangements and the institutional choices of local politicians. I advance a non-normative approach to explaining an opening at the local level in Ukraine’s hybrid regime.

The empirical contribution of this study lies in the careful mapping of patronal network arrangements in five Ukrainian cities while also operationalising uncertainty in a comparative way. I develop comparative indicators of uncertainty, which include not only interaction between patronal networks but account for the role of the mayor, for the use of formal LSG bodies for interaction

between patronal networks, and for the modes of coordination within patronal networks. These indicators can be used to assess the intertwining of patronal networks and formal institutions in, at the very least, other post-Soviet hybrid regimes with similar local government organisation.

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8 Supplemental Material

8.1 Background information on selected city-cases

The cases cover all four macro-economic regions of Ukraine: the East (Kharkiv), the West (Lviv and Chernivtsi), the South (Odesa), and the Centre (Kropyvnytskyi) (World Bank, 2015, p. xiv).⁶ The sample consists of three large cities (Kharkiv, Odesa and Lviv, with a population of more than 500,000 citizens) and two mid-sized cities (Kropyvnytskyi and Chernivtsi, hosting slightly over 200,000 citizens) (World Bank, 2015, Annex 5). At the same time, these cities can be compared as the largest urban centres in terms of population for their respective macro-economic regions, considering that the East and South have the highest levels of urbanisation, while the Centre and West have been catching up since the 2010s (World Bank, 2015, pp. 59–60). In other words, all these cities in their respective macro-regions, and even more in their *oblasts*, are “magnets” for labour force and capital. The cities that are paired based on the arrangement of patronal networks are similar in size and economic development, which helps the researcher better isolate the effects of patronal network arrangements on the preferences of local political actors (this is to “control” for both the resources of LSGs and the proximity of their offices to citizens, see Van Eijk, 2016, p. 260).

Table 3 Overview of the socio-economic statistics and scores for participatory opportunities for the selected case studies

Arrangement type of patronal networks (IV)	City	Citizen participation (DV)	City population 2018	Region's contribution to total GRP 2018, %	Gross Regional Product (GRP)/capita 2018, UAH	Contribution to national growth 2004-14, %
Competing	Chernivtsi	90 (good) +	266 366	1.0	37 441	2.0
	Kropyvnytskyi*	53 (mid) 0	239 699	1.8	67 763	5.3
Coordinated	Lviv	75 (good) +	758 398	5.0	70 173	5.5
	Odesa	52 (mid) 0	1 010 848	4.9	72 738	6.0
Single-pyramid	Kharkiv	40 (poor) -	1 450 361	6.6	86 904	4.9
<p><i>Source:</i> type of patronal networks arrangement (Huss et al., 2020; Mazepus et al., 2020), citizen participation opportunities (my own calculation based on Fedynchuk et al., 2018), population data (Timonina, 2018, pp. 40, 48, 54, 66, 77), GRP/capita (Nikitina et al., 2020, p. 13), region's contribution to total GRP (Nikitina et al., 2020, p. 14), contribution to national growth (Michalun & Allain-Dupré, 2018, p. 67)</p> <p>*prior to 2016 Kropyvnytskyi was named Kirovohrad</p>						

⁶ It is common in studies of Ukraine to account for a cultural-historical East-West divide. However, newer studies on the accountability of local governments and citizen participation suggest that “although long-term historical legacies may exercise a bearing on citizen civic attitudes, contingent, temporally proximate factors also matter, such as those related to policy choices or decisions taken by particular municipalities” (Lankina et al., 2017, p. 9). Indeed, no specific geographical patterns were found in citizens’ perception of the responsiveness of local governments (Aasland & Lyska, 2016) or in the implementation of participatory institutions in rural Ukraine (Kvartiuk, 2015). Surveys of progress in decentralisation or voting patterns also found variations in geographically proximate regions or within the same region that cannot be attributed simply to an “East-West divide” (Lankina et al., 2017).

The cities chosen are comparable in terms of their economic importance in their *oblasts* and macro-regions as well as in their contribution to the national economy. Since 2000, Kharkiv, Odesa and Lviv have been the most attractive cities for firms in their respective macro-regions and among the top 5 Ukrainian cities with the largest number of firms. Chernivtsi is in the top 20 most attractive cities for firms. Only Kropyvnytskyi has lagged behind in terms of economic attractiveness (World Bank, 2015, p. 55). Still, the Kirovohrad region (of which Kropyvnytskyi is administrative centre) has been one of the six regions that concentrated all of Ukraine’s economic growth, so it was catching up as this research was taking place (Michalun & Allain-Dupré, 2018, pp. 64, 67).

Because no official data for GDP per city is available, the regional equivalent of GDP – Gross Regional Product (GRP) – can be used for comparison at the regional level. Here, Kirovohrad,⁷ Lviv and Odesa regions have similar GRP per capita, while Kharkiv’s is slightly higher. Chernivtsi, on the contrary, has one of the lowest GRP per capita in the country. At the same time, Chernivtsi region’s contribution to total GRP is comparable to that of Kirovohrad region. Finally, the regions’ contribution to national growth is comparable: Odesa, Lviv, Kirovohrad, and Kharkiv regions each contributed between 5% and 6% to the national GDP growth until 2014, with only Chernivtsi tottering around 2% (Michalun & Allain-Dupré, 2018, pp. 65–66). All the selected regions demonstrate productivity growth, albeit at a different pace: while Kharkiv has had slower growth than the national benchmark calculated by the OECD, Chernivtsi, Odesa, and Lviv have kept pace with the national figure, while the Kirovohrad region exceeded it (Michalun & Allain-Dupré, 2018, p. 67). This dynamic reflects the development of the sectors of the economy that prevail in each region. Thus, Kharkiv’s slow growth is accounted for by stagnation in industrial production, the core economic sector in the region; Chernivtsi, Lviv, and Odesa have diversified economies with developed service industries (including tourism), Odesa has a transport industry (seaport), and all have small-scale production (especially Chernivtsi). The Kirovohrad region is catching up owing to the overall growth of the agricultural sector, the core economic sector of the region (ibid.) Table 3 summarises the socio-economic statistics of the cities, matched to the values of the independent (IV) and dependent variables (DV).

8.2 Operationalization of citizen participation mechanisms

Table 4 Assigning Ukrainian participatory mechanisms to dimensions of citizen participation: informing and consulting

<i>Criteria for dimension of participation</i>	Informing		Consulting	
	Participatory mechanism	Rules of procedure (RoP) ⁸ : city council, executive committee, standing commissions	Council deputies and mayor’s reporting to citizens	Consultation with public

⁷ This is the name of the *oblast*, of which Kropyvnytskyi is the regional centre (as mentioned above, the latter was renamed from Kirovohrad in 2016).

⁸ Adoption of the Rules of Procedure is a standard move that every new convocation of the local council must take before it can make decisions (Law on LSG, Art. 46, Part 14). Aside from participatory provisions in the focus of this paper, the RoP also include provisions on the formation of factions and groups as well as thematic standing commissions of the deputies.

Initiator of the process of participation within the mechanism	City council	City council, mayor	City council, mayor, respective departments of the executive branch of city councils	Citizens
Citizen input or action assumed via the mechanism	Indirect action only (especially via the court in case of procedural or substantial violations)	Indirect action only (courts or via electoral accountability)	Advise & Consult: suggestions for policy improvement	Advise & Consult: identifying the problem
Requirement for local council actions	Publish information on decisions, meetings, allow citizen access to meetings	To publish reports on activity online and in media; mayors to additionally conduct town halls	Local authorities must have an annual plan for consultations on draft regulatory acts and on reporting on budget spending. No explanation of not acting on the citizens' proposals is required.	Petitions are reviewed at a city council meeting if they collect the required number of votes
Possibility for direct citizen-LSG interaction	Mostly, no; speaking at council meeting; one-way listening and recording	Yes, in case of town hall meeting; no, if electronic or media	Yes, face-to-face; electronic polling is possible	No; authors may be invited to speak at the council
<i>Source:</i> dimensions of participation were adapted after Arnstein (1969); information on mechanisms is adapted after Krupnyk (2017) and Lukerya et al. (2016)				

Table 5 Assigning Ukrainian participatory mechanisms to dimensions of citizen participation: partnership and control

<i>Criteria for dimension of participation</i>	Partnership		Control	
	Local initiative	Participatory budget (PB)*	Public hearings	General resident meeting
Initiator of the process of participation within the mechanism	Citizens (“initiative group”) who need defined number of signatures	Citizens and citizen groups	Citizens, also: mayor, council deputies	Residents (provided they collect the required number of signatures, 50% of the community), local authorities
Citizen input or action assumed via the mechanism	Communicative influence: citizens prepare the draft decision of a local council on the problem, which may be altered, but is usually considered	Co-governance: Citizens and the local authorities jointly reach a decision regarding a portion of a city budget	Mixed. Communicative influence: citizens draw up suggestions regarding the problems, which are compulsorily reviewed at council meetings, but no decision is required; Co-governance: citizens join authorities to make decisions; Direct authority in case of construction projects	Direct (but limited to projects) authority – a decision made by majority must be followed (because of 50% participation)
Requirement for local councils’ actions	Local council must decide based on initiative; rejection must be justified.	Citizens’ projects are assessed for feasibility and relevance to local authorities by special commission (may or may not include CSO reps); winning projects will be adopted for implementation by relevant city council executive department	Council representatives to report at the hearings; city councils must call a public hearing to seek opinion on construction plans (if not, construction plans can be cancelled by court order).	Considered as direct participation of a community in decision-making, the decisions of the general meeting are compulsorily considered by local authorities.
Possibility for direct citizen-LSG interaction	Yes, when drafting a decision; possibly, when the initiative is considered at the council session	Yes, between project authors and executive departments of city councils when drawing up project budgets and receiving evaluations of their feasibility.	Yes, face-to-face dialogue	Yes, when local authorities participate in/convene general meeting; No, when general meeting is convened by citizens
<p><i>Source:</i> dimensions of participation were adapted after Arnstein (1969); information on mechanisms is adapted after Krupnyk (2017) and Lukerya et al. (2016). *many cities in Ukraine call PB the “public budget” (<i>hromadskiy byudzhet</i>) in their regulations.</p>				