Services for Effective Rural Governance: A Design Thinking View

[Diploma Thesis]

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Declaration:

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of the diploma thesis “Services for Effective Rural Governance: A Design Thinking View” and listed all used literature and sources in the attached list of references.

Prague, May 12, 2014

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Signature
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This thesis is dedicated to the mayors of the Czech republic.
Abstract:
This paper takes a look at the challenges mayors of Czech small towns face in their day-to-day job and presents a comprehensive overview of ways they can be addressed. It then focuses on the non-financial and non-legislative tools of cooperation and external support in particular, which are introduced under a collective name "services for effective rural governance". The thesis then presents on the concept of "service design" and its uses in the public sector. Consequently, this method is used to analyze and propose changes to the currently available services for effective rural governance so that they best serve the small town mayors.

Keywords:
Service design, public sector, rural, small town, governance, tools.

JEL classification:
D02, D03, D73, D83, H83, L24, L31, L84, R50
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Introduction

There are 6,532 towns in the Czech republic. 4,840 of them have population of less than 2,000. Most of their mayors have other full time jobs.

These three declarative sentences set up the stage on which this thesis plays out.

Having been raised simultaneously in three towns of the 4,840/less than 2,000 variety, I developed a certain general idea of how they are governed. In one of the villages, the mayor would hop into his tractor in winter and clear the streets of the freshly fallen snow. In another of three the mayor would welcome of, fifteen-year-old graduates of the local middle school in his office and proclaim several congratulatory words. In the last one, the mayor would through the power of his office effectively represent our landlord and a less than optimal one at that. Until a couple of years ago, all my interactions with mayors were similar to the instances mentioned. Strictly casual. Largely uninterested.

It wasn't until I was writing a motivational essay for an academic scholarship that I recovered within me the knack for public affairs, the concern for the public good. To bring this rater overly nostalgic introduction of an academic text to an abrupt halt, these were the motivations that led me to take advantage of the last remaining academic challenge to explore something uncharacteristic for an international management/business student.

Doing the preliminary research, I found out something peculiar about the Czech countryside: it is extremely heterogeneous. Coupled with a vague notion of the issues of managing a town, a topic emerged that later proved to be an actual issue: the Czech mayors of the small towns have in some instances hard time governing their municipality or at least for various reasons can't exploit the development possibilities that are available to them. Rather than focusing on legislative, systematic changes, I wanted to have a look at the options and possibilities that exist within the current status quo, are readily available and could be put to use. Being aware of the concept of "everything that performs a function is in fact a service", I named these options and possibilities "services for effective rural governance". Under this unassuming name is bundled everything that the mayor can use to his advantage in the process of governing.

Once established the object of the thesis were services, the concept of service design lent itself as a useful method of analyzing these with the special attention given to their users - the actual men and women presiding the councils of thousands of Czech small towns.

Initially, the thesis set out to pursue several objectives:

- In the theoretical part:
  - To present a comprehensive review of the design thinking concept, its practices and applications in the public sector (internationally and locally).
- In the application part:
  - To map out support service needs of small Czech town’s officials (mayor, council). These services are defined as those providing information, support or direct help for more effective governance and include development programs, consulting, information & learning services, legal and financial resources advice etc.
  - To provide an audited overview of these services and their suppliers (government agencies, NGOs etc.).
  - To create a prototype of an ideal service/bundle of services for the town’s officials and propose implementation execution.

As it became clear throughout the initial phases of work on the thesis, however, the objectives set up in the beginning provide a useful guidance but to gain a full grasp of the matter of what ails Czech mayors, there were too restrictive. That is why the thesis includes also other possible ways of tackling the issues before it focuses solely on the services for effective rural governance.
Eventually, the whole thesis and its tasks served two purposes depending on the readers of these words:

- The first group of readers this thesis is designed to attract is the organizations involved in the regional development\(^1\) on national level, such as the Department of regional development or (particularly) the Association of towns of the Czech Republic. To them, this thesis aims to provide a new perspective on the possible ways regional development in small towns can be achieved. As a subsection of this group, this work might also prove interesting to Czech regional development scholars.

- The second group of interest is the actual mayors of the small towns. For them the most relevant chapters (and appendices) are the ones elaborating on the actual measures and tools they can use in their day-to-day work to make it more effective.

With potential readers of the first group in mind, the fact that the thesis is written in English is slightly less problematic. Still, in the end not everyone will be interested in all 70+ standard pages of the thesis, some parts may prove more appealing than others. I would therefore urge you to browse first and focus according to your preferences.

The thesis is meant to be of practical value. However the issue it tackles is not only specific (remedied by a well defined action) but also conceptual - its resolution can only be archetypal. This is why I believe that despite my novice status in the regional studies and (as you keep reading) possible scoff-inducing flops coming from the limited grasp of the subject matter, there is an added value for you in my work.

The thesis strives to accomplish the task of re-conceptualizing the problem in the light of design thinking and as a complete work, it can itself be understood in terms of the service design process. It goes through the stages of the problem exploration and in the end offers a concept of an ideal solution. This concept, however (as will become clear later, requires further criticism and polishing from you, readers from the first category, before it can be turned into practice. The thesis doesn’t seek to provide a definitive solution as not all the pieces of the puzzle are on the table (and may only be provided by you), some in fact might not even exist. Its goal is to explore the possibilities and then point in a direction to show a possible way - however far-fetched this direction may be.

\(^1\) This thesis consciously takes liberties with the expression “regional development” and often understands it in its broad connotation so that it stands for both regional and local development.
Part One: Theoretical Background

1. The Rural Landscape

To understand the environment in which the thesis takes place, this chapter offers an insight into the realities of the Czech rural areas. It deals not with the literal meaning of the word landscape, however quaint that might be, but presents the stage on which the subject matter of the thesis plays out: terms like "countryside" and "rural areas" (which will be used interchangeably).

1.1 The Czech Countryside

The general connotations of countryside - or rural areas - vary greatly. To townsfolk, the idea often brings into mind the bucolic albeit archaic and often unpleasant images of agriculture, conservatism and traditions, stagnant development, seclusion, rolling countryside\(^2\), possible family roots and relatives. As some would jokingly have you, the countryside stretches out all around and only stops at the outskirts of Prague. Sarcasm aside, there is something to this negative statement. Both the notorious dictionary entries and academic texts use the town – rural dichotomy as the basis for their definitions. What is not urban is rural.

While this simple instinctive definition is perfectly fine for everyday, even academic use, there is actually a need for a more nuanced description for the purposes of this work. The enquiries about what exactly constitutes rural areas or rural towns reach back to the late 19\(^{th}\) century (Tönnies, 1887). Far from providing a set-in stone, definite solution, researchers as well as policy-makers face this issue up to this day.

To provide a theoretical overview, Maříková (2010) summed the definitions as either subjective or objective. As the labels suggest, the subjective are the personal views of anyone either generally pondering the question of what rural areas stand for or specifically deciding whether a certain region qualifies as such. The objective definitions are then unequivocally based on a set of predefined characteristics, which are either qualitative, grounded in numbers (urbanistic and architectural, historic, economic, social) or quantitative, based in words (legislative, population size, population density).

The number of different ways to describe a single concept exists because they are created to fit various purposes or objectives. For the use in statistics, the Czech Statistical Office (2008) presents eight different quantitative ways of defining rural areas and rural towns, none of which copies the relatively popular OECD methodology\(^3\). Other definitions are created for the purposes of legislature and development policies. The aim of the government regional development strategy of the Czech Republic (2013) is to promote sustainable development (a concept binding together social, economic, and environmental issues) through a so-called place-based approach. This Europe 2020 (2010) principle strives to provide tailored solutions to the local needs. Therefore to target the regions in the best suitable way, the Czech Department of Regional Development (MMR) devised their own definition and categorization of rural areas.

According to this methodology, the rural towns are "those with a population smaller than 3,000 and others with typically rural characteristics, though larger" (MMR, 2013). The strategy document doesn't provide a specific list of the "others" so discounting them this quantitative distinction accounts for 6,035 rural towns or 21.05% of the 10,251,074 total population (Český statistický úřad, 2013, own calculations).

Another, geographically oriented approach, then divides the rural areas into the following categories:

- Rural areas around large towns (the suburban countryside);

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\(^2\) And research validates this assumptions (Sociologický ústav, Akademie věd ČR, 2010)
\(^3\) OECD recognizes municipalities (local administrative units level 2) as rural when the respective population density is below 150 inhabitants per km\(^2\) (Eurostat, 2013).
Averagely developed rural areas further from large towns (the in-between countryside) but with fair transportation;

Peripheral rural areas (the far-off countryside), sparsely populated and isolated from the regional centers and transport network.

Using this largely geographical distinction and further criteria (socio-economic potential, population and the level of business development), the department then goes on to identify three general types of regions in the Czech Republic. The second and third qualify as rural:

- Developing regions – urban and suburban areas.
- Stabilized regions – the intermediate areas, mostly localized around microregional centers. Basically so-so functional regions.
- Peripheral regions – those endangered either by their isolated location or other negative characteristics (criminality, unemployment etc.).

Typologie území České republiky 2012 dle Strategie regionálního rozvoje

Figure 1 A typological map of the three different kinds of regions according to the regional development strategy (Šulák, 2013)

Such classification, though subject to formal criticism (among others Šulák, 2013), does serve as a basis for further strategy proposals. After the analysis part, the MMR document lists measures for addressing presented problems and achieving sustainable development. Out of four in total, the second measure (presented as “Priority Sphere II: Cohesion”) is aimed specifically the peripheral and stabilized regions. The implications and associations of the fourth (Public Administration and Cooperation) will be further debated in the following chapters.

Having defined the "Czech rural areas", let's turn the attention to what research shows about their condition and developmental trends in general. What the "state of the Czech countryside" is.

Pělucha et al. provide a comprehensive insight into the Czech countryside in the 2012 book "Venkov na prahu 21. století", the lasting appeal of which is best demonstrated by its continuous appearance on the lists of obligatory reading materials on multiple syllabi of the Faculty of Economics courses (University of Economics, Prague). The authors go to show that apart from the general demographic tendencies in the Czech Republic (the predicted population pyramid/demographic tree slowly morphing from the shape of a pine into a juniper, i.e. the ageing of the population), rural towns show a net increment of their
populations, mostly due to migration. Still, the number of elderly, especially in small towns, will keep increasing (just like anywhere else) and is likely to pose a challenge in terms of care.

With regard to education, despite a balancing trend it is still a fact that there is fewer high school and university educated people living in the rural areas than in larger towns. The unemployment rate tends to vary seasonally but is only slightly higher than in urban areas (by about 0.5 percentage points). The significance of agriculture as a source of employment opportunities has dwindled; currently it employs 3.1% of rural workers. However, it is still an important actor of landscape formation.

The level of technical infrastructure, public services, and transportation are highly dependent on the size of a town and troubles mainly small towns (also Střeleček & Zdeněk, 2006). This is also reflected in the lifestyle of rural residents, which is affected by traveling to larger towns for work, shopping, or culture. Their life, however, doesn't only take place in towns and cities; research shows that especially in stabilized and peripheral regions people embrace the relative isolation by taking advantage of local resources (Maříková, 2002). This means the heightened relevance of local cultural (libraries, cultural centers) and sport facilities, traditions, social life and community - or simply gardening and home improvement.

1.2 The “Small Town”

When it comes to regionalism and population distribution, the Czech Republic is characterized by its fragmentation. The settlement structure generally laid out after the Thirty Years’ War (Illner, 2006) has remained true to the tradition of a large number of evenly distributed small towns and a limited number of cities (today, there are only 6 cities with a population larger than 100,000). With 6,532 municipalities comprised of 15,067 settlements (clearly distinct inhabited areas but not legal entities) to date (Český statistický úřad, 2013), the Czech Republic has again neared the pre-consolidation numbers of independently governed towns of the early 1970s (Hebáková, 1985). After the democracy-fuelled surge of splitting in the early 1990’s (Vajdová, Čermák & Illner, 2006), it is safe to say the number of towns has stabilized and along with France, Italy, and Slovakia is among the highest in Europe (Horváth, 2006).

Both the Czech Constitution and the 2000 adopted code “Zákon č. 120/2000 Sb. o obcích and obecních zřízeních” legally state what constitutes a municipality. It changed the previous purely geographical distinction so that these days a municipality is a “fundamental autonomous community of citizens; it constitutes an administrative unit delimited by the boundaries of the municipality domain”. As such, it is a legal entity and “cares for an all-round development of its domain and the needs of its citizens”. Paragraph 7 differentiates between the autonomous agency (self-government) and delegated agency, through which the municipality executes the central government’s authority.

There are three tiers of municipalities as stated by law in 2002. They are differentiated according to the level of delegated responsibilities bestowed by the central government.

- The towns of the third degree, municipalities “with extended agency” are (despite a few exceptions) the largest and in their position within the public administration system emulates the no longer existing district towns (okresní města) although there is more than four times as many of them (205). All of them are towns in the legal sense of the word (města).
- The towns of the second degree, municipalities "with the authorized town hall", generally also enjoy the town legislative status. Out of the 388, 205 are simultaneously "towns of the third degree".
- The municipalities of the first degree sport no epithet and are known simply as "towns". Functionally (not legislatively), some authors recognize two further categories:
  - Towns with a civil registry (matrika) and

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4 The term "town" will be used both as a general term for a municipality (obec).
5 It is worth mentioning that the number of settlements resembles the total sum of towns that existed in the year 1800 (Sekera, 1978), revealing continuity in the Czech geographic population distribution.
- Towns with a department of construction (stavební úřad) (Brůna, Marek, Pájková & Šimová, 2005).

The status of Prague, the capital, is a subject of a distinct code (Zákon 131/2000 Sb. o hlavním městě Praze).

There are 6,143 "towns" in the Czech Republic. This represents 94% of municipalities in the country and accounts for 37.78% of population (Český statistický úřad, 2013, own calculations). When compared with the rural statistics (6,035 rural towns according to the methodology of the Department of regional development), this shows that some of "towns" are in fact larger than 3,000 people. These 108 towns might be the missing "others" - towns with "typically rural characteristics, though larger". The two methodologies are not complementary however so this is only an educated guess.

Beside the rural distinction and the three different kinds of towns according to the legislature, there is one more important category: a "small town". This concept with no traceable roots, used both in academia and government policies, refers to towns with the population of less than 1,000. Quite like the other quantitative definitions, this too is quite arbitrary. Its usefulness is in its universal acceptance and usage as a label for a category of towns particularly prone to exclusion generally due to their size and ensuing limited capabilities (and as some mayors argue due to the absence of the former districts (okresy)), which used to be in charge of the development of towns in their jurisdiction). There are 4,840 small towns in the Czech Republic governing 57% of the country’s area (HAMPL & MÜLLER, 1998). 1,481 of them have smaller populations than 200 (Český statistický úřad, 2013). Small towns are the core focus of this thesis.

1.3 Governance

The pivotal task of a municipality is "an all-round development of its domain and the needs of its citizens" (Zákon č. 128/2000 Sb.) - everything else indeed revolves around it. While many residents' idea of what such an activity entails appears to be hazy at best (Binek et al., 2011), academics tend to somewhat agree on a universal (though broad) interpretation according to which "local development is a social change leading to an improvement of the quality of life for the majority of the locals" (BERNARD, KOSTELECKÝ, ILLNER, VOBECKA, 2011). The definitions of the quality of life aspect and how can one tell whether a town succeeds in its improving also vary. Quality of life could be expressed theoretically in terms of economic development, appearance, demographics, infrastructure and facilities, and community involvement (Perlin, 2008) or demonstrated tangibly, as e.g. by being awarded the title "Village of the year" (Vesnice roku: Ocenění, n.d.).

Bernard (2010) unveils a new perspective on the means to reach the (perceived ad objective) quality of life. Drawing on the theoretical and practical development in the United States, he contributes to the debate with a theory of community development at the core of developing a town. The inner community capacities (human, economic, and natural capital, cooperation capabilities, and communal leadership) employ the existing conditions of a town to improve its measurable qualities (infrastructure, services provision etc.). The constant interplay between these three parts of the model then contributes to the enhanced quality of life.

While searching for the human capacities, the specific someone in charge of bringing a town up to these standards, one comes across the concept of development actors. That is to say entities, whose doing creates (and furthers) the level of development of a specific town. BINEK & GALVASEVÁ (2008) sort them in four categories:

- All public participants - these include self-government of municipalities and regions;

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6 Quite expectedly, some authors instead use the limit numbers of 500 or 1,999. The 1,000 limit has gained some traction and widespread acceptance in the recent years, though, and will therefore be used throughout.

7 With that ended the "Second Phase of the Public Administration Reform", the third phase (delegation of further responsibilities to the regional offices (krajský úřad)) has not finished yet (Matula, Kuba, 2007 and SPOV, 2012).
• Semi-public entities such as Regional development agencies, innovation centers, and cross-border structures;
• Non-profit subjects - NGOs and other interest groups;
• Commercial subjects such as the Chamber of Commerce, private enterprises, clusters, and industry lobbyists.

All of these have a role to play in the follow-up work by the same authors: in their hierarchic "synergetic model of development actors" (Svobodová et al., 2011), which explains and interlinks the actors' roles along multiple lines of effects, interests, and fundamental essence.

It is crucial to mention that truly all the development actors do have the power to steer the course of their town in the desired way or at least contribute to its "success" and improvements in the quality of life. The efforts of determined few can in fact make a difference (Bartoniček & Blažková, 2013) and broadly speaking, many a societal change does start from the bottom up (Shermer, 2012).

From the practical point of view, however, there is a reason why so many academic articles on regional development end with more or less the same paragraph disclaimer that goes along the lines of "despite [the findings of the study], little can be achieved without an active involvement of the local municipality". There really is no one with a greater impact as well as proximity to the "actual matter of things" than the men and women behind the local municipality. They are endowed with the mandatory legitimacy and authority by the way of municipal elections and wield several managerial tools to further their causes, most importantly the town's budget.

The financing of towns is twofold: budgetary allocation of taxes (RUD) and grants and subsidies. The budgetary allocation was long subjected to critique for unfairness to smaller municipalities as it based its algorithm on the level of economic activity in the town's domain (Klusáček, 2008). Since the foundation of a "Živý venkov" protest initiative in 2006 (Jufenčaková, Kovářík & Randus), the situation has been remedied through appropriate amendments of the legislative, which came into action in 2013. Still considered as unfair my many (the per capita allocation is significantly skewed in favor of large towns and cities), the change had nevertheless profound positive impacts on the financial standings of smaller towns (Eliášová, 2012) and despite current worries (Kamberský, 2014) the towns are not likely to become worse off.

As was noted previously, the point of the three-types division of towns (of the first/second/third degree) is based on the level of delegated central responsibilities from the central government. These include keeping up citizen records, ID card services, care for the elderly, unemployment benefits payout, DMV services etc. and are not of a direct concern of the small towns. The autonomous agency duties are the same for the town of any degree, however. And there are many. Grouped under "provision of public services", they range from housing and schooling services to safety and waste management to mowing the soccer field (Mohelská & Šabatová provide an exhaustive list (2006)). These, along with task of general town development, all together bundled in a pursuit of a higher quality of life - constitute the job description of a local municipality. The actual work, carrying out of the job is also called governance.

In a broad sense of the word, governance is "all processes of governing, whether undertaken by a government, market or network, whether over a family, tribe, formal or informal organization or territory and whether through laws, norms, power or language." (Bevir, 2013). It is the process of making and carrying out decisions from a position of authority. Rural governance in the title of this thesis then refers to "governing of small - rural - towns by the municipality".

It is in the interest of the public that public governance should adhere to certain level of standards. The American Society for Public Administration's code of ethics (2013) bases these on 8 principles, chief among them being "advancing the public interest" as the officials ought to work to "promote the

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8 If interested, turn to page 86 of said book to delve into the graphic depiction in detail. It is quite cleverly thought out.
9 The resources coming from local charges (as in for the ownership of a dog or for a slot machine operation - effectively the gambling tax) are excluded as they constitute relatively minor contribution to the local budgets (Provazníková, 2007)
interests of the public and put service to the public above service to oneself.” This is the ground on which all the other principles stand, from the commitment to "Uphold the Constitution and the Law" to "Advance Professional Excellence through one's own professional and ethical development as well as encouraging others to do likewise".

According to Christian Huillet (2004), good governance denotes "efficiency, effectiveness, good-value-for-money, and use of alternative mechanisms". It also incorporates community building and development (Stark, n.d.). It is a principle on how governance should be carried out in the interest of the public.

As it appears from these two examples, public interest is at heart of good governance and its practices should adhere to the standard of effectiveness. The prominence of this concept (instead of efficiency) in the title of this work is intentional. It puts emphasis on the scope of activities, possible actions and goals the municipality can concern itself with. The focus is not merely on the economic maxim of minimal outputs and maximum outputs as is the usual understanding of efficiency; it is the broadening of the municipalities’ horizons in terms of what is possible and achievable. Efficiency does play an important role in governance, however, and is understood as an inherent component of effectiveness (effectiveness being a superior - more general - concept) for the purposes of this thesis.

The key to understanding of what lies at the bottom of rural governance effectiveness is the physical representation of the municipality. What it is represented by, what (and who) it actually is. As the law states, a town is governed by the elected municipal council (Zákon č. 128/2000). This means that in effect it is the mayor voted into office by the council that holds the executive power and is the face of the local government. His/her person is the subject of the following chapter.

1.4 The Mayor

The Czech popular culture paints the picture of the Czech small town mayor as a man of the people, well intensioned if sometimes at loss about the intricacies and vast interconnectedness of the job. Whatever the aspirations to elevate the town, the reality often comes swooshing in to snuff them out. Though perhaps inspiring an approving nod from the viewers living in small towns, films like "Muži v říji" (Levová & Sedláček, 2009), "Nesvatbov" (Konečný & Hníková, 2010), or "Vesnice roku" (Moravec, 2011) - to name the most obvious of the recent production - do not provide a solid enough insight into the personality of Czech mayors.

Now despite its obvious allure with shows such as Countryfile (Lyons, 1988) and many a fictional character of a small mayor in the rural US, rather than delving into the depths of the popular culture abroad, let's explore the research available. In his popular book "If Mayors Ruled the World" (2013) Benjamin Barber conveys the notion that the management skills and impact of the towns' representatives often far surpass the leaders of the national government. The solely focus of the book is on large cities and their role in today's world, however, so apart from it being a stable companion of many US town representatives (Dubner, 2014), the applicable takeaway is just this: mayors certainly do matter. And this realization isn't limited to the mayoral superstars of Michael Bloomberg (New York City, former), Eric Garcetti (Los Angeles) of Jón Gnarr (Reykjavík).

Continuing the enquiry in a more academic manner, there is not an abundance of research on the subject of small town mayors anywhere, much less that of Czech provenience. Steyvers & Reynaert (2006) found that the recruitment base of the "European Mayor" can be defined by three characteristics - male, middle aged, and middle-class - and in the context of central Europe, he (or in a minority she) tends to be a local and come from a professional background and rarely has political ambitions. Apart from the compendium, from which this article is drawn, relevant international literature is yet to be found.

A large comprehensive survey on the demographics and sociology of Czech mayors was conducted in 1997. Supported by the Norwegian Research Council for Applied Social Science (NORAS) and carried out by the Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences, the research’s sample was defined by a 73% response rate from a frame of 710 Czech towns of less than 2,000 inhabitants.
The results of the research provided one of the best representations of small town mayors at the time of the study, however now it is invariably dated. As a side note, it is puzzling that many of the surveyed demographical items should be available to the Czech Department of Regional Development or the Department of the Interior by default, alas as the publicly accessible databases as well as “on demand” queries suggest, this is not always the case. Still, the research provides both a useful template for future academic studies as well as a general perspective on:

- How the mayors viewed their role in the development of their town (key decision maker, town’s representative, fund raiser, and especially the executor of the will of the citizens (based on their electoral program));
- What entities they regarded most important for cooperation (close coworkers, other mayors, private sector, citizens);
- What sources of information were crucial for their job (talking to the citizens were in a considerable lead);
- What their outlook on towns’ merging was (the cons reportedly more than outweighed the pros);
- What character traits were the best predictors of a good town council member (sound morals and local knowledge);
- Or where the direst problems in the governing of a town laid (shortage of quality candidates for both elected and non-elected functions within the municipality, the lack of match between the resources and responsibilities).

In 2004, Pavlina Maříková completed a sociological overview of small towns, which included several items on the satisfaction with the local municipality as well as the willingness to form a co-joined (merged) town. The respondents, however, were the citizens, not representatives of the municipality. In 2008, Jaroslav Čmejrek focused on the small town representatives and established a negative correlation between the distance to the nearest university and number of university graduates within the municipal council (today, 22.52% of mayors are university educated (ePUSA, 2014, own processing)).

It would seem that large-scale sociological and psychological studies\(^\text{10}\) on the subject of small town mayors allude the Czech regional development academic field, unlike similar endeavors in the area of entrepreneurship studies (an epitome being Lukes & Laguna’s 2010 ”Entrepreneurship: A Psychological Approach“) or in fact the whole of management studies. In the apparent lack of comprehensive research similar to the one from the year 1997 in the recent years, the Czech Academy of Sciences’ Josef Bernard provides a remedy. He has dedicated much of his professional career to the study of the small town governance and some of his studies focus on the personal side of the town’s representatives. A 2012 study sought to establish a causal relation between the personality traits of candidates and the election results (the level of education, age, and incumbency (previous involvement) proved to play an important part but gave way to the much more impactful status of the position on the candidates’ slate).

A preceding 2011 research conducted for the purposes of the book "Samospráva venkovských obcí a místní rozvoj" (Bernard, Kostelecký, Illner, Vobecká) was however much more significant for the purposes of this thesis. Not only did it cover much of the same ground as the mentioned 1997 research, the authors also plunged into the typology of a Czech small town mayor.

It applies a theoretical distinction developed for the purposes of cities by Getimis & Hlepas (2006)\(^\text{11}\) on the collected data. The theory is devised as interplay of two dimensions based on attitude-oriented research questions (what the mayors believed the job to constitute). These two dimensions are:

1. The **leadership style**:

\(^{10}\) The emphasis on large-scale research is due to its high representative value as opposed to local-specific studies that are the staple of many student theses.

\(^{11}\) The theory is presented in the already mentioned 2006 book "The European Mayor: Political Leaders in the Context of Local Democracy" that is a result of research among mayors in 17 European countries. The scope of the book is admirable but proves lacking in the depth of the research (the Czech sample was only 78 mayors ranging from the towns of 10,000 to 385,000 inhabitants (Brno)). As such it was rather unrepresentative and the ensuing theoretical framework should be assumed with caution. The sample size of Josef Bernard and his colleagues amounted to 209 towns (mayors).
- **Strategically-oriented mayors** focus on change and long-term goals, which they believe to be possible to achieve through political tools and planning.
- An unfortunately named **reproduction-oriented mayor** would then strive to maintain the status quo, be distrustful of grassroots as well as local political movements and relies on top-down national policies and market forces.

- **The execution style:**
  - **Cooperative mayors** try to mobilize the community and facilitate communication among all the actors of development.
  - **Autocratic mayors** on the other hand prefer and respect the hierarchical administration.

The combination of the two dimensions results in 4 mayoral types as depicted in the following table:

The emerging mayoral types are hence distributed in the sample and described. There were:

- **69 "visionaries"**, who are strategic leaders and place emphasis on the consensus and citizen participation;
- **55 "protectors"**, taking advantage of the formal power of the mayoral office, rather disregarding the other actors of development in town but not creating a strategic vision of his/her own;
- **46 "town bosses"**, whose main concern is to turn their own plans into reality; and
- **31 "consensus facilitators"**, extremely well-connected individuals, who give voice to all involved but might forget a unifying strategy to guide the discussions.

Apart from analyzing the mayors' personalities based on their opinions and attitudes, the authors also created another typology constructed from the behavioral characteristics of the mayors. In practical terms, this analysis was based on the activities and their corresponding time allocations the mayors choose to spend the time working for the municipality on. These were examined in terms of their orientation outside of the town or inward (activities dealing with the external actors or actors within the town itself), delimitation, first introduced by Buštíková (1999). The other aspect is the frequency and intensity of resulting interactions. This distinction brought about four types of mayors:

- **54 of those "complexly engaged"** - devoting considerable time to both local and out-of-town relationships;
- **47 "engaged out-of-town"**, who spend a lot of time dealing with the outside agents, spending relatively minimal time on meeting with the locals and office work;
- **47 of "locally engaged"** mayors are quite the opposite as the administration and local meetings present the majority of their working hours with little thought to the outsiders; and

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12 She talks about two sources of legitimacy for a mayor - one (traditional) based locally, the other (modern) derived from the external ties and relationships.
• 53 "weakly engaged" mayors, who don't devote much time to their work for the municipality in general.

By combining the two typologies, the study starts to yield particularly useful results.

The "protectors" differ the most in their behavior from the other attitude asserts mayoral types. They preoccupy themselves with the common administration of the town rather than seeing through strategic visions. As they rely heavily on their authority and give little value to the involvement of the public, they also tend to be pronouncedly less connected and spend very limited time engaged in meetings with either the local or out-of-town actors.

This is also prominent when looking at the "weakly engaged" - proportionately, their base consists mostly of the "protector" type of mayors (autocratic, reproductive oriented). Somewhat counter-intuitively, the "local bosses" (autocratic, strategically oriented), are not exclusively "locally engaged" but reach beyond the immediate town's domain to realize their strategic visions.

Using correlation analysis, it turns out the focus on strategic goals is in a relation to the openness towards cooperation with the citizens as well as engagement with the out-of-town agents. The other point of view is that the mayors open to cooperation do tend to have strategic goals in mind. The outside contacts are however more important as the local resources for execution of the strategic goals are limited.

When analyzing the role of personal characteristics of a mayor (gender, attained level of education, age, place of birth), as heterogeneous as the sample was, no significant relationship was found apart from one: whether the mayor is devoted to the governing of the town on a full time basis or has another employment. 42% of the mayors simultaneously employed elsewhere were to no surprise due to the simple reason of time constraint found to be of the "weakly engaged" category. Only 16% of them were "complexly engaged". Such a mayor is called "unrelieved" and as is implied, he/she devotes only a minority of their time to the mayoral job. He/she, however, still may be remunerated for the work for the town by the decision of the council (Zákon č. 128/2000). These "unrelieved" mayors are quite common in the case of small towns: only 1,146 (of 4,840) 23.68% - are working as full-time mayors (Ministerstvo vnitra, 2014, ARES, 2014, ePUSA, 2014 own processing).

As is often the case for small towns, in the lack of administrative apparatus, the mayor is not only the dominant decision-maker but also runs the office, takes care of the administration (Postránecký, 2004), often handling virtually everything save accounting (Binek et al. 2010). The number of responsibilities and the corresponding amount of work might then be overwhelming to a small town mayor with little resources - time, money, and administrative support. The following chapter investigates the possible solutions to this conundrum: how to accomplish effective governance.

1.5 The Ways to Effective Rural Governance

As discussed, the geographical distribution of the Czech population as manifested in the existence of thousands of small towns, coupled with many of their mayors having other employment, make the challenges to govern them effectively quite innate. The issue got even more pronounced with the growth of the number of small towns in the 1990's and so originated the search for a solution.

One way to ameliorate the situation would be for small towns to join again (integrate administratively), effectively pooling resources and exercising the economies of scale. Such line of thought was reflected in the central government policy as the budgetary allocation of taxes was set up in such a way that motivated integration. This became apparent in the law 243/2000 Sb. o rozpočtovém určení daní (2001) that disposed of the previous dependence of the town's budget on the local economic activity and replaced it with a system based on 14 different town sizes. This way, the budgetary allocation was supposed to directly "motivate small towns to integrate in a desirable way" (Viáda ČR, 1999). This measure, however, did not deliver. A series of protests then ultimately lead to changes in the law in 2007 and 2013 and the idea of solving the issue through integration was abandoned.
For this and other reasons, in 2004 the Department of Regional Development commissioned a dedicated research initiative: Výzkum pro potřeby regionů (ISVAV, 2014a). As a part of this wide sweeping program, two projects particularly stand out:

- **WB-04-04 - Systém k podpoře rozhodování na úrovni regionálních a místních správ** (2004-2006, MMR/WB) and

The two projects were not interconnected and went on separate ways. In fact each research project of the program was executed separately from the others.

The first one mapped out the agenda, basically scope of activities of small town representatives. These were analyzed and translated into a comprehensive list of possible information needs of municipal council members. In practical terms, an online application (Support System for Decision-Making of Regional and Local Self-Governments: http://mmrapp.kapos.cz/) was created aiming at providing the answers as well as guidance through the decision-making processes of the responsible town representatives in multiple areas he or she might come across (Trávníček, Kavka, Kavka, Kavka, 2006).

The system is still working and updated quarterly. According to one of its creators, Miroslav Kavka (personal communication on March 5 and an in-person interview on May 7), the application is accessed about 100 times a day - which is quite impressive for such a specialized tool, especially since it was only directly introduced (training) in two districts (Benešov & Rakovník) and further informed about through one round of e-mails - all this seven years ago. As it turns out from the final report, however, the system is mostly used for its list of links to other websites (Kavka, 2006). Currently, the application is partial to outdated information and appears to be more of a relict of the previous administration than an active developmental tool (Svojtková, personal communication, April 8, 2014).

The second project, focused on "Enhancing the quality of management of towns with less than 5,000 inhabitants" covered a larger scope of problems. Through extensive research in the regions of Hradec Králové, Pardubice, and in Germany, it analyzed the management practices of the municipalities ad the general state of towns with populations smaller than 5,000 (Kala, 2005). Most of the research, however, stayed within the analysis phase (Kala, 2006a, Kala, 2006b, Kala et al., 2007a, Kala et al., 2007b, Kala et al., 2007c) with few exceptions of an applicable solutions (an e-learning course (Kala et al., 2007d) - though only created for the purposes of the Institute for Lifelong Learning of the University Hradec Králové). The outcomes then were distributed among the municipalities of the Pardubice and Hradec Králové regions in print form (Kala, personal interview, April 29, 2014). They also were likely to be incorporated in the government regional development strategy of the Czech Republic for the years 2007 - 2013. Past this, the true impact of the research is unfortunately lost to history (Svojtková, personal communication, April 8, 2014).

The Department of regional development commissioned another similar (but more specific) research program in the years 2007 - 2011. It was called WD - Výzkum pro řešení regionálních disparit (ISVAV, 2014b). The key project was " WD-48-07-1 - Management pro řešení regionálních disparit (2007-2011, MMR/WD)" and was targeted at solving disparities among regions (Kala et al., 2011a, Kala et al., 2011b).

It provided a situational analysis of management practices of regional government offices (krajský úřad) as well as municipalities and provided a manual-style overview of managerial methods and practices for governance (project management, requests for tenders, providing information to the public, crash course for newly elected representatives). The research also yielded an e-learning course similar to the one from the 2007 project. The outcomes were presented in a more accessible way (apart from the e-learning course, all relevant information was to be found in one book) but unfortunately were not distributed in the whole of the Czech Republic. The research’s impact on the state government policy in a way of affecting the 2014 - 2020 regional development strategy (Ministerstvo pro místní rozvoj, 2013) is possible but unconfirmed (Svojtková, personal communication, April 8, 2014).
The research to rationalize the work of mayors did not stop with the end of the Departments' programs. Among further enquiries, it is particularly the "Identification of Competencies Impeding the Governance With a Special Attention Given to Small Towns" conducted in 2007 by the company GaREP (Galvasová et al.), a consultancy focusing on regional development, that deserved special attention. The study is highly practical in its findings and after identifying the scope of competencies of small towns, it provides suggested solutions in eighteen areas. Four of the areas of responsibility are recommended to be taken away from the small towns and delegated to the larger towns of the second (with the authorized town hall) and third (with extended agency) degrees. Another eight would need to be solved legislatively.

In the summary of the report, the authors mention the human factor - the mayor and members of the municipal council - as the key to the effectiveness of governance. Similarly to previous studies, the part-time involvement and a lack of a tailored educational program tend to negatively affect the quality of their work the most.

This work was further the basis of an impressive 2008 dissertation thesis by Petr Klusáček, who also focused on solutions through cooperation among towns and modern management approaches (eGovernment, New Public Management etc.). As it appears, the results of this project too were favorably accepted but have not been implemented in any way (Binek, personal communication, April 8, 2014).

The previously mentioned Czech regional development strategy (2013) concerns itself with the effectiveness of the local governance as well. Its analysis mirrors the ones of previous studies and highlights the small towns as particularly prone to deficiencies in the quality of their governance as the responsibilities excessively burden the municipalities who are unable to effectively cope with some of them. This situation is among other reasons caused by the confusion about the actual scope of responsibilities as well as resistance towards a modern concept of governance as a public service. Some of these issues have been addressed by the national Smart Administration Strategy, which focuses on bringing the principles of eGovernment into the Czech public administration.

In its proposals, the strategy's fourth part ("Priority Sphere IV: Public Administration and Cooperation") is aimed at "optimizing the institutional framework for regional development" and as such is a cross-section with all the other three priority spheres (Growth, Cohesion, Prevention). It groups 2 priority categories:

- 8. Improvement of the Institutional Framework for Regional Development, and

These are further developed into 5 specific measures:

- 8.1 Improving the Administrative Capacity of Public Administration;
- 8.2 improving the Systemic Framework for the Support of Local and Regional Development;
- 8.3 Information and Communication Support of Regional Public Administration.
- 9.1 Strengthening the Strategic and Conceptual Tools and Approaches for Local and Regional Development;
- 9.2 Supporting the Regional and Local Cooperation.

In terms of implementation, there are some measures that have been taken into account in the mentioned Smart Administration Strategy (Blahoutová, personal communication, May 9, 2014). The relevant projects are:

- Procesní modelování agend veřejné správy
  - The project analyses the processes taking place throughout regional and local public administration. It was due to end in March 2014 but its results have not been published yet.
- Elektronická metodická podpora tvorby rozvojových dokumentů obcí
  - Through a web application, e-learning, and consulting, the project is meant to provide support to towns creating their strategic development plans. Currently under development (not open to all towns at this stage).
2. Services For Effective Rural Governance

In the context of regional development, tools are understood as "any instruments facilitating the achievement of the developmental goals of a specific region" (Marzelli, 2011).

In the Czech academia, the theoretical concept as such was first introduced by Marek Jetmar in his doctoral dissertation (2004), which was later adopted and expanded by Toth (2005). Unlike Wokoun & Mates, who focus on tools as a way government policies are put into practice (2006), Jetmar (and consequently Toth) takes a broader approach. In his truly comprehensive review, Toth's tangible or intangible "resources" are those parts of the system (Bertalanffy's General System theory (1968), in this case the system of public governance) that serve the endeavor of achieving socio-economic goals. "Tools" are then instruments assisting the planned activities carried out in pursuit of these goals. Their main purpose is to prospect for, define, save, and maximize the efficiency of exploiting the resources. A "technique" is a way of using (or utilizing) the tools and "method" is a specific compilation of tools and their associated techniques that when applied to the same problem brings an identical result.

Past the basic terminology, Toth differentiates among:

- Economic tools,
- Administrative tools, and
- Tools for cooperation and participation.

Neither the economic (finances of all provenience) nor administrative (issuing of sub-legislative regulations and decrees) are the center point of this thesis. The tools for cooperation and participation are. These offer more potential than the former two as they tend to be under-exploited and often considered more of an afterthought (or even a threat) than an indispensable part of a municipality's toolbox (Toth, 2005). Their presented classification comes from Toth (2005), who differentiates tools based on their role in a public-private/public-public/public-nonprofit partnerships. In general, they are:
Based on an exchange of information and technologies,
Contractual (various forms of contracts are made in order to provide public and private goods or to lower their costs),
Combination of resources (to achieve economies of scale and/or scope. In reality, they lead to the creation of joint ventures, municipality partnerships, public interest citizen groups, or umbrella associations),
Nonreturnable provision of resources (subsidies, grants, contributions, donations, and other financing),
Returnable provision of resources (loans, leasing, but also temporary personal assistance),
Outsourcing/agency takeover (in cases the public involvement is not deemed efficient or desirable),
Price differentiation ("a hidden subsidy" intended to motivate the recipients to a certain behavior),
Innovations (in various forms).

Due to their origin, these tools spread over many areas of the municipalities' agencies and some would rather qualify among the category of "economic tools". Despite this imperfect fit, such multitude of tools shows that there truly are many possibilities for the municipalities to take advantage of in order to lower the overall costs of governing - whether they are previously unexplored or their potential not fully exploited.

A comparable classification is provided by Binek et al. (2009, 2010), who in the context of their synergic model of rural development also reach similar conclusions in terms of the importance and relatively low current levels of exploitation of non-financial tools for rural governance. In their presentation, these are:

- **Institutional tools** (cooperation with various entities and actors of development, "soft infrastructure"),
- **Physical tools** (infrastructure, provision of goods and services),
- **Socially-psychological tools** (education, communication, motivation).

This thesis draws on both previous classifications and is focused on non-financial tools with direct impact on the effectiveness of the rural governance. They are those based on the exchange of information, providing education or other support services coming from outside of the domain of a municipality (as opposed to endogenous resources and tools (Bernard, Kostelecký, Illner, Vobecká, 2011)).

As such, describing them is only possible in a rather amorphous way. To arm this thesis with a characterization that can be grasped more easily, an analogy is drawn from a similar conceptualization in marketing. In 1985, professor Gordon Foxall of Cardiff Business School expressed his views in this sentence: "Marketing is service marketing." Confusing and perhaps unrelated as this statement might seem, it lends a hand to illustrate this point: anything that performs a certain desired function is a service (therefore as everything and anything the marketers try to sell arguably does perform some sort of function, "everything and anything" could be understood as a service). In the context of tools for regional (local) development, the subject of this thesis is simply this: the **services for effective rural governance**.

### 3. Service Design Thinking

So far, this thesis has been solely dealing with the subject of its enquiry, the factual essence: rural governance and services that aid in search for a greater effectiveness. Now it is the time to introduce the method through which they will be inspected: (service) design thinking.

#### 3.1 Services

At the end of the previous chapter was a thought that at first appeared unusual or perhaps rather unobvious. Almost thirty years ago, the economic psychology and consumer behavior professor Cardiff Business School, Gordon Foxall, expressed his idea that virtually all marketing is in fact marketing of
services. To backtrack a little so as to understand this line of thought in a greater detail, it is first necessary to grasp the notion of services: what they are and how they are treated in today's world. The concepts of marketing will in this case serve as a useful proxy.

The development of the human market economies has long passed through its production, product, and sales phases and has established in its current - marketing-based - status quo\(^\text{13}\). Most markets no longer put emphasis only on the companies ability to fulfill the demand that is taken as a given (production-based markets), what specifications their products have (product-based markets), or whether they are able to sell to a many customers as possible (sales-based markets). The marketing-oriented companies combine all these priorities and aim to "...make products and services a customer will want to buy" Torres, Bernardo & Cigánková (1998), through understanding the customer so well that the actual process of selling is something unnecessary (Drucker, 1973).

The reason for this marketing introduction, painted in very broad strokes, is to demonstrate the importance of the consumer/customer/client in marketing. In fact many of the marketing classics put him/her in the center of the famous marketing mix (Culliton, Borden, McCarthy, in the context of services marketing then especially Payne (1996)).

![Figure 3 The 7 Ps of marketing. Inspired by Payne (1996), own devise.](image)

In this holistic approach, "when it comes to marketing everything matters" (Kotler & Keller, 2007).

Why is then marketing equated by the marketing of services? It because the consumer/customer/client plays an indispensable role in their creation. Services as understood in the traditional sense (e.g. financial services) are intangible and only created as they are being consumed (Estelami, 2006). In this sense, even tangible products are only as important as the service they provide. Therefore the marketers' focus shifts from describing a product (or service - if retaining the traditional dichotomy) as "what it is" to "what it can do for you". This how this thesis approaches the services for effective rural governance as well.

Such thinking gave rise to thoughts of re-imagining the current market society as something that is no longer engaged in what is physical but what the effect on the person that consumes is. Most notably this movement is represented by Danish Institute of Future Studies' Rolf Jensen and his 2001 book "The Dream Society" and James H. Gilmore & B. Joseph Pine II and their book "The Experience Economy" (1999). These authors brought up to light and general business practices what has been known e.g. in the advertising industry for a while: as "we live in a world made up more of story than stuff" (Safran Foer, 2013), emotions matter, even (or especially) when it comes to business\(^\text{14}\).


\(^\text{14}\) As also testified by the creation of consultancies such as the Disney Institute, focusing on helping other companies convey emotional experiences not only towards their customers but also inwardly to their employees (Disney Institute, n.d.).
Such approach in practice could however prove limiting should it be taken out of context and understood not as an extension of the holistic approach but as a principle that is superior to it. The following two chapters show a way of preventing such a blunder.

3.2 Design

Thinking about design, one’s mind (the one writing these words for sure) is flooded by images of white architectural models, the smooth curves of a F1 racecar, the sleek appearance of the latest technological gizmo or a 110 pounds model showing off this spring’s crucial fashion statement. With such a wide specter of connotations, it is actually useful to get a unified view from a dictionary entry. Cambridge Dictionary of American English (2014) says this: "Design is a plan or project or an activity of creating such a plan or project as a of the form and structure of a work of art, an edifice, or a machine to be executed or constructed.". In less dictionary-worthy words: design is both a way of creating an elaborate plan (for something) or in fact this elaborate plan itself. When executed, this design may or may not be recognizable in the appearance of the finished product (or service), because "if design is done right, it’s 99% invisible" (Mars, 2014).

Having this basic definition cleared up (or as it’s not unequivocally unambiguous, then at least "dealt with"), let’s focus on how it relates to this thesis. The process of designing can be applied to services as well. Possibly unintuitive, it is a fact that much in a way a mobile phone can be designed so can be the services of the telecommunication carrier. And since services revolve around their consumer (customer/client), so the design process needs to be sensitive to the motivations, needs, and quirks of people intended to use said service. People who are irrational, use heuristics and mental shortcuts to make even the most important decisions, and are unknowingly constantly affected by their biological nature.

As Jon Wiley, the head of design for Google search puts it, "First and foremost I look for empathy, because design is not art, it’s actually solving real problems for people." (Cain Miller, 2013). The widespread application of design processes gave rise to a discipline/approach/practice named Design Thinking. When design thinking is applied to services it is called service design.

3.3 Service Design (Thinking)

As tricky as defining "design" was, with "service design" it is only getting worse. It can be expressed in a rather straightforward way, however as service design is exactly what is sounds like: the act of designing services. It is only the "designing" part that proves a loaded element as became clear in the previous subchapter. The level of ambiguity is possibly further heightened by the usage of the term "design thinking".

Ideally, design thinking as a mental tool is the opposite of reactive thinking (Stone, 2012), the einstellung effect (Morozov, 2012), which means addressing problems mechanically, in an automated way. (Service) design thinking stands for discarding of the lens of the past experiences and held beliefs and facing any problem anew with no expectations or proven solutions in the back pocket as the familiar solutions might not be optimal or in fact impossible. As Udaya Patnik puts it: "In an ambiguous problem, you don’t know what you don’t know so you have to be responsive and adaptive to whatever the situations and how they are changing." (Tsai, 2012). Consequently, just like Kotler & Keller’s take on marketing, service design is holistic, it takes everything into account. In this sense, it is integrative as the designers’ focus is

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"For quite a brilliant introduction into the history and basics of design, turn to Fabian Segelström and his 2013 doctoral dissertation Stakeholder Engagement for Service Design.

Good introduction into irrationality and its business implications as well as inspiration provide e.g. Ariely (2010), Estelami (2006), or Cacioppo & Patrick (2008).

For the purposes of this chapter the two terms are used almost interchangeably. Design thinking is a broader term, however, and signifies the general intellectual application of design practices. Service design then simply refers to the act of designing services (through design thinking).

Any introductory course in evolutionary psychology (Cosmides & Tooby, 1997) or neurobiology provides a great illustration of how difficult (and in fact impossible) such an approach actually is.
not solely on a disparate issue but also on the relevant system (the broader environment) within which it exists.

However intricate this process might be, it invariably strives to achieve purity in its solutions. "There is nothing more complex than simplicity" (Krause, 2012, also Norman, 2013) might as well be a tagline of a car company: the simple, intuitive feel of driving a car is a result of immense design and engineering efforts "under the hood". What is important is the result: the interaction of the product (service) and its user. It is people-centric.

The history of service design doesn't start with the beginning of its usage in business. It is arguable that it has been around for quite a while, used intuitively. The ambiguity about this is well represented by the following example from the advertising industry.¹⁹

According to Krajicek (2011), in the 1960's a need for a new category of employee within advertising shops arose. The problem lay in the rocky cooperation between the "creatives", the "researchers", and "the accounts" (also Morrison, Haley, Sheehan, and Taylor, 2002). As the research yielded complex (and complicated) outcomes, the creative department often disregarded its results, effectively cutting the researchers out of the campaign creation process. In 1965, Stanley Pollitt, later of Boase Massimi Pollitt suggested specially trained (in data interpretation) researchers should closely work with the account managers, tying up the campaign creating process more closely to its scientific basis.

This process of advertising development based on detailed analysis of the consumer’s and the client’s needs was further developed by Stephen King of J. Walter Thompson who also coined the expression "account planning" in 1968 (JWT, 2014). Today, account planners are the key actors in any advertising development. They rely heavily on research and try to "find out what makes customers tick", have to understand the client's concerns and aspirations (whether he/she can express them or as it’s most often the case they can't), and in a creative brief (an outline, instructions for the work of the agency's creative tram) explains why the project exists, what is the underlying issue and describes what consumer should think, feel, believe, do when faced with the finished advertising (Kelley & Jugenheimer, 2011). Apart from its specific use for the purposes of advertising, account planning in essence quite resembles service design.²⁰ The fact that no actual links apart from the apparent resemblance seem to connect the two concepts points to them being simple examples of a business-related multiple discoveries.

Service design's roots in its present form are generally considered to come from the realms of management and marketing (Shostack, 1982 and Shostack, 1984). In 1991, service design reached academia as it was introduced at Köln International School of Design (Moritz, 2005).

The history, however, is less relevant than the merit and what service design offers. It is by default an interdisciplinary practice that combines knowledge, tools and approaches of many traditional fields. The many various definitions prove this. Marc Fontein (2008) described service design in this way:

- "When you have two coffee shops right next to each other, and each sells the exact same coffee at the exact same price, service design is what makes you walk into one and not the other."

It captures the idea and at the same time gives the inclination that it might as well come from William J. McEwen's 2005 book "Married to the Brand", dedicated to customer experience in the world of branding (and advertising in general). This is to illustrate that design thinking is not a strictly clear-cut concept. Rather than being "discovered", it is a movement that is characterized by the people doing service design, using its tools for the same purpose: "(...) to innovate (create new) or improve (existing) services to make them more useful, usable, desirable for clients and efficient as well as effective for organizations." (Moritz, 2005).

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¹⁹ This example is of little interest to the readers interested in the subject of the thesis, rural governance, and are welcome to skip it.
²⁰ Some of the tools used by account planners in advertising are also similar - compare the concept of brand archetypes (advertising, Mark, Pearson & Pearson, 2001) with creating personas (service design, presented in the "Tools" chapter).
3.4 Service Design Tools

A true crash course into design thinking, its concepts and tools is provided by Stickdorn in his book "This is Service Design Thinking: Basics-Tools-Cases" (2012). He introduces service design as an iterative process of four phases among which a service designer cycles back and forth. As such the process is ever changing and responsive. It consists of:

- **Exploration** - this phase is about understanding the issue at hand from the point of view of the intended service customers as well as the provider. The goal is to reach a point at which the designer is fit with a "well defined problem" (Ball, 2010a) and its context within the service structure,
- **Creation** - is a generative stage, during which the service concept is created,
- **Reflection** - in this stage the concept prototype of a service is put to a test in reality or simulated environment close to reality (test market). The last phase is:
- **Implementation** - in which the resistance to change within the implementing organization needs to be coped with.

Again, all the phases are interconnected and the whole process is therefore much more fluid and flexible. A similar model was introduced by the British Design Council in 2005 (Design Council, 2007). It’s "double diamond" model consists of four phases:

- **Discover** - in which various kinds of exploratory research are used to provide hypotheses of the

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21 The first diamond is also known in market research as "detective funnel", in which hypotheses are first gathered through exploratory research, then a solution is found using descriptive and causal research (Ball, 2010b).
problem,

- **Define** - which functions as a filter where findings from the discover phase are analyzed and re-defined as problems ("design challenge") and solutions ideas are prototyped.
- **Develop** - where solutions are developed and iteratively tested within the company.
- **Deliver** - in which the product (service) is finished and launched.

The specific tools used during the service design process are numerous. When taking a really accepting (broad) approach in the understanding what a tool for service design is, they may in fact be counted in hundreds (Martin & Hanington, 2012). A concise overview and logical distinction into three categories comes from a group of Czech authors in a 2013 book "Skvělé služby" (Hazdra, et al.). They divide the tools into those devoted to the research, analysis, and design phases of the service design process (similarly, Martin & Hanington (2012) divide them into 5 categories: first two being used in a fusion of research & design phases, third and fourth used for prototyping and development, the fifth for the official launch). Taking a pick of both approaches, the tools most relevant for this thesis are:

- **Exploratory research** - typically conducted in the very early stages of the design process, exploratory research aims to "ground" the designer in the territory (especially if previously unfamiliar) through various research methods.
- **Service safaris** - analogical to the market research observation technique (Ball, 2010c) the goal is for the designer to personally experience the studied services, gaining the insight from what a typical customer experiences.
- **Personas** - these are profiles developed to represent particular groups based on their shared characteristics. They replace the demographic information about the users with compound characters that can be better operated with in the design process.
- **Stakeholder maps** - a visual representation of all parties involved or affected by the service provision and consumption. They help to focus on the key customer of the service as well as to provide an overview of even the most remote stakeholders.
- **Customer journey maps** - they are visualizations of the step-by-step customer journey through the service. They generally also capture all points of customer-service interaction (physical or virtual).
- **Service Blueprint** - is a technique that divides the service by a line of visibility into several components. The customer actions take place in the frontstage through direct interaction with the service (talking to a representative, using a website), the artifacts that they use are known as physical evidence. These interactions are then reflected in the processes in the backstage, which are invisible to the customer and are carried out in the internal line of interaction - the support processes of the service (Shostack, 1982).
- **Prototyping** - testing the designed service in a finished or semi-finished form through actual engagement of a customer as a tester.

At this point, it should be stated, that the tools of service design are not the key to the design thinking process. They are just what the name suggests: tools. This statement dangerously resembling tautology is meant to draw the attention back to the core of service design, its purpose and essence as an intellectual way of approaching problems. Despite defined tools and stages, it would be antithetical to view service design as an algorithm, a mental roadmap to follow. It is the constant questioning and backtracking, the iterative nature of the process that is at core of what design thinking is. The tools are the means, not the end.

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22 The "synergic model of development actors" (Svobodová et al., 2011) mentioned in chapter 1.3 is an example of such a map.

23 A fitting pop-cultural example would be Anna Kendrick’s character designing a journey map for laying off employees in the 2009 Jason Reitman’s film "Up In The Air".
3.5 Service Design in the Public Sector

Similarly to other innovative practices, service design is an invaluable instrument for the public sector as it expands the possibilities for solving problems and improving services in the environment traditionally strapped for resources. Unlike the usual top-down approach through policy-making, service design can have much more immediate impact when used directly. This is what the authors of the Design Council’s 2013 report “Design for public good” refer to when talking about the public sector design ladder, particularly the first step:

![The Public Sector Design Ladder (Design Council, 2013)](image)

As the graphical depiction shows:

- In the first step, service design can be used to tackle discrete problems;
- The second one entails incorporating the service design practices into the way public institutions work;
- In the third step, service design is used in a strategic way to help formulate policies.

Laid out in this hierarchical manner, it suggests that first there is a need for experience with relatively simple, manageable problems before moving on onto fixing the whole public sector system through design thinking.

Based on the number of cases (Parker & Heapy (2006), Parker & Parker (2007)) as well as actual entities involved (Design Council (2013), Design Commission (2014)), it appears United Kingdom is the true pioneer in applying service design in the public sector. In the Czech Republic, service design is a very emergent field. Even after breaking the ground in 2013 by Hazdra et al. with their introductory publication, service design and its practices are not widely spread in the Czech business environment\(^\text{24}\), even less in the public sector.

**Step 1: Design for Discrete Problems**

As explained in these cases service design is used to address specific isolated issues, redesigning individual public services. The possibilities are truly vast. They could be very specific, e.g. taking a look at

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\(^{24}\) There are, however, agencies taking a service design approach in the Czech Republic (Direct People, Idealisti).
the interactions a person has at the local DMV (Department of Motor Vehicles) when registering a new car, but also rather complex, like redesigning the health insurance enrollment experience (IDEO, 2012), a creation of a new government communication website gov.uk in the United Kingdom (Design Commission, 2014), or reframing the city council meetings (Mathews, 2014). Multiple other examples are presented in the Design Council’s 2013 report "Design for Public Good" (available in an electronic form).

**Design as Capability**

By developing design as a capability, the public administration takes active steps in the service design process and starts to use its tools regularly as a part of their work. This is the example of the British government’s "Digital by Default" strategy (Government Digital Service, 2014). This strategy is aimed at redesigning all governmental digital services so that they meet a common standard. This is described by 26 criteria, the first of which is the focus on the user and the understanding of his/her needs; the very next one revolves around establishing multidisciplinary teams with design capabilities.

One of the main features of service design is its iterative nature. This could pose a problem as public administration may traditionally be focused on providing stable services and be aversive of experiments (and therefore prototyping). A founder of Code for America - a non-profit organization with mission to "help residents and governments harness technology to solve community problems" (Code for America, 2014) - Jennifer Pahlka expresses the status quo: "One of the things that people as citizens don’t realize is that bureaucracies have evolved because of our needs and our demands. We’ve made them what they are. Certainly we have made city officials, elected officials, bureaucrats extremely afraid to do anything wrong because we hold them so accountable to doing it right every time” (Tsai, 2012).

The issue of the fear of failure needs to be slowly dismantled as the public administration learns to use service design in their work. To take advantage of service design while remaining within the traditional comfort zone of the government officials, the software development platform GitHub introduced its "GitHub and Government" platform that is currently being used by government entities and interested public in over twenty countries (GitHub, 2014). The platform is based on open source cooperation on projects. The governments can collect ideas and contributions on any public issue/project they introduce in the system in a way that according to a former Presidential Innovation Fellow of the White House Ben Balter represents the public sector as "one giant open source project" (Jellinek, 2013). Yet the actual implementation of proposed changes still remain safely in the hands of the government.

In the Czech republic there is also an example of design used for extending the capabilities of a public entity. It was a project heralded by Adam Hazdra in spring of 2012, in which several dozens of librarians explored the serviced provided by seven different academic libraries in the Czech republic. Aimed mostly at providing different perspectives and ways public library services may be improved, this immersive experience showed signs of a lasting influence even after the projects conclusion at a Library Marketing Tuesday conference in September 2012 (Hazdra, 2012). The manifestation of this influence is the involvement of libraries in the project of "Experimental librarianship" that provides inspiration for innovative ways of providing library services and remains somewhat active to this day (Sekce EXperimentálního knihovnictví, 2014). Another emerging project is the "Institute for public services" introduced by Hazdra in 2013, which is likely to focus on discrete problems as well.

**Design for Policy**

The final stage of introducing design thinking in the public sector is its use in crafting of policies. In one part, co-creation of policies was not been brought to the public sector by design thinking but has always in some way been an integral element in policy development because of the number of stakeholders and involved parties (Riege & Lindsay, 2006). What service design brings, however, is the focus on the impacted, the ones at whom the policy is targeted - along with the tools to actually design the policy in a way that leads to the fulfillment of the government’s objectives in the best possible way.

25 Meaning effective, efficient but also sensitive and tailored.
There are several semi-governmental institutions throughout Europe that work in this way and creates policies by design. Apart from the now discontinued Finnish Helsinki Design Lab (HDL, 2014), it is the Danish MindLab (MindLab, 2014), and especially the very successful British Behavioural Insights Team, commonly known as “the nudge unit” (Design Commission, 2013) that takes a real human-centric approach in their work, analyzing the heuristics of citizens’ everyday behavior and designing ways to execute the government’s priorities through public policy and services.

There are also other, independent movements, generally formed around existing design consultancies such as the Open Ideo platform, whose recommendations may be implemented by the governments of lobbied for by the non-profit sector.

Given the scope of this thesis, the coming analytical part deals almost exclusively with finding solutions for discrete problems (separately or collectively) and only slightly ventures into introducing design as a capability of public sector (or associated organizations).

### 3.6 Design Thinking and Regional Studies

Apart form the impact service design can have in public sector, its services and the way it operates, there is also an argument for introducing the design thinking practices into academia. As it is the case for regional studies as well as many other areas or social sciences, the research and the mode of the academic enquiry may become enclosed upon itself, limiting both its abilities to draw from and affect other fields.

Design thinking may provide an extension of the intellectual toolkits the scholars regularly operate with to at least partly remedy this situation. Design thinking could provide a deeper focus on the context of the studies subject and its relevance within the system of public administration, the appreciation for its complexity and the number of stakeholders. It can also reflect in a heightened awareness of the role of the actual people behind the policies and give way to analyses of their behavior on both rational and non-rational, heuristic bases.

In general, bringing service design into academia is not necessarily concerned with the whole design process but mostly with the tools designers use to understand and describe the examined reality. All scientific enquiries may benefit from such an expanded view. In the case of regional studies, design thinking may also further the cooperation with other relevant areas of social sciences outside of the general political science such as sociology, psychology, or anthropology. Most importantly, however, it could help to bring the attention of the scholars to the life and utility of their research after its publication date.
Part Two: Application

The first part of this thesis introduced the subject as well as the method through which it will be analyzed. The -so far - unconnected worlds merge to answer the questions that are indeed its fundamental interest:

- What are the services available to small town representatives in the Czech republic that they can use to make their work more effective?
- Are these services adequately designed to respond to the needs of the small towns?
- What changes should the providers of these services make to reach and serve the small towns better?
- How can the small towns' representatives better take advantage of the services available to them?

To begin to answer these questions, more information about the way small towns are governed and what tools they use is needed. This is where the exploratory research starts.

4. Exploratory Research

Exploratory research in general serves to provide as many hypotheses about the studied subject as possible. As Hanington & Martin (2012) put it, "exploratory research should be an immersive experience for the designer, inspiring creative momentum and empathy through intense exposure to people and products relevant to the investigation, utilizing a broad variety of diverse yet complimentary methods."

With this in mind, the research branches into two areas:

- Investigation of the small town mayors' realities by the means of in-person interviews, and
- Exploration of the various services from multiple secondary sources.

4.1 Methodology

Secondary Research

The purpose of the secondary desk research was to uncover as many various services for effective rural governance as possible. With such a broad goal, the sources are many and they vary in their validity and reliability. They come from the library research conducted on the subject of regional studies (for the purposes of the first chapter) as well as other selected areas (volumes of specialized publications (Moderní obec, Veřejná správa, Obec & Finance), NGO databases\(^\text{26}\), and other).

Primary Research

The research philosophy is pragmatic and finds itself in the realm of interpretivism (Saunders et al., 2009). That is simply to say its methods are suited for the purposes of social sciences and are qualitative. The data collection is done through interviews in person and the interviews' design is semi-structured in order to take advantage of open-ended questions and probing. It was the intention to counter the possible response bias by elimination of leading questions as well as conducting the interviews in the usual neutral professional manner. Due to the very specific object of the research as well as the nature of the researcher's personal involvement, this might not have been entirely attained. The interviews were pre-tested with three subjects (two deputy mayors and one mayor\(^\text{27}\)) and their outline can be found in Appendix 2.

\(^{26}\) In particular the databases of Neziskovky.cz, Department of the Environment, Department of the Interior, Portal veřejné správy, Kormidlo.cz, and Asociace NNO.

\(^{27}\) Onřej Mikmek, deputy mayor of Slatinice (population 1,534) on 2/7/2014; Petr Ducháček, mayor of Drnovice (population 1,221) on February 8, 2014; Miloš Jašek, deputy mayor of Kunice (population 153) on February 9, 2014.
The sample frame consists of all mayors and their deputies of the towns of the second degree (with the authorized town hall) that simultaneously are not towns of the third degree (with extended agency). There are 183 of such defined towns in the Czech Republic. The frame was further reduced to include only towns of a population larger than 5,000.

![Figure 7 Population, sample frame, and sample of the primary research](image)

It might seem counterintuitive to pick a sample frame different from the actual concern of the thesis - small towns. The reasoning behind its selection is defendable on a basis of these two points:

- The mayors (and deputies, possibly also the head of administration (tajemník)) of larger towns are all full-time public employees and their scope of responsibility and experience is greater than that of small town mayors. Therefore they are more likely to also have actual experience with services for effective governance.
- The second degree towns’ administrative apparatus is smaller than that of third degree towns, meaning their mayors (and deputies) are likely to be more actively engaged in all processes and activities of the municipality.

In this way, the selection of second degree towns’ representatives is a useful compromise. Quota sampling method as then used (1 town in each of the 13 regions of the Czech Republic (excluding the capital) to accommodate for possible geographical differences, with a preference for larger towns (again because of the assumption of more relevant experience of the representatives)). The sample was then ultimately chosen on the basis of convenience so that the interviews could be conducted in a timely manner. The majority of interviews then took place between February 12th and February 27th 2014. Two interviews had to be rescheduled and were subsequently both conducted on March 19th. By that time the research object was depleted and no new insights were gained. Appendix 1 offers the final schedule along with the list of interviewees.

4.2 Secondary Research Outcomes (Services for Effective Rural Governance - An Audited Overview)

Despite the abundance of sources available, there aren't too many services for effective rural governance in the Czech Republic. The ones that do exist, however, have very varied possibilities of impact. So make sense of how they fit within the area of the Czech rural development, they can be summed up into the following categories:

- Large national associations and unions (such as Svaz měst a obcí ČR or Sdružení místních samospráv),
- Regional associations and unions (e.g. Sdružení obcí Libereckého kraje),
• Local associations (local action groups and microregions),
• Various NGOs, and
• Private sector companies.

**Large National Associations and Unions**

There are several national associations/unions, three of which play major role as actors of regional development. They are:

- **Svaz města obcí ČR (SMO ČR)**, 2,508 member towns;
- **Sdružení místních samospráv České republicy (SMS ČR)**, 1,090 member towns;
- **Spolek pro obnovu venkova (SPOV)**, 691 member towns.

These three are the major national actors of development, associating Czech towns, often lobbying for their interests with the central government and taking part in the legislative processes. From their own press releases and statements, it seems that there is little love among the associations, however it is not the subject of this thesis to parse out their relationships and standing within the Czech regional development system.

Apart from the membership base, their individual importance could be very roughly approximated by the number of mentions in the mainstream media. The following table presents an overview of their media presence in the past 5 years based on the media database Anopress (for 2014, the data included are up to May 11):

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<tr>
<td>SMO ČR</td>
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<td>224</td>
<td>185</td>
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<tr>
<td>SMS</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>49</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPOV</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>63</td>
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*Figure 8 Number of mentions in the mainstream media according to the Anopress database (2014), own devise.*

**Svaz města obcí ČR (SMO ČR)**

The association is the largest one in the Czech republic and among its 2,508 members there are towns of all sizes. Beside the issues of municipalities’ financing, it is also active in the areas of public transportation, energy, inclusion, fair opportunities, tourism, culture, and environment (Trhlínová, 2014).

Apart from lobbying and involvement in crafting of legislation, it provides several services to its members. They include:

- Periodic newsletters concerning regional development from a national perspective,
- Consulting about legislation, law, and grants,
- Organizes annual regional conferences as well as a financial conference and a mayors’ congress,
- Mediates international cooperation of its members,
- Runs the International Advisory Centre for Municipalities (MEPCO),
- Provides information through its “Odpovědný zastupitel” project formerly “Vzdělaný zastupitel”,
- Is preparing a system for cooperation among towns “Obce sobě”

In the scope of activities and the number of member towns, SMO ČR is the most important national association of towns.

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28 The full name of the project is “Systemic support for development of the cooperation among towns in the Czech republic within the domains of the towns of the third degree”.

32
Sdružení místních samospráv České republiky (SMS ČR)

The association's main historic purpose is lobbying for fair budgetary allocation of taxes. It mainly focuses on the development of smaller towns and rural regions through involvement in the legislative process. It also serves as a discussion board for the 1,090 member towns (SMS, 2014). The areas of its focus are education, culture, environment, and infrastructure in small towns (Trhlínová, 2014). The association doesn't provide any specific services for effective rural governance.

Splek pro obnovu venkova (SPOV)

First awarded two years after the association's foundation in 1993, Spolek pro obnovu venkova is best known for its annual "Village of the year" competition (Vesnice roku, 2014). Aside from this long-standing tradition, the association's main purpose when founded was to help municipalities take advantage of the "Program obnovy venkova" grants (SPOV, 2014). Otherwise its agenda is similar to those of previous two associations, although the membership base is at 691 considerably smaller (Špiková, 2014). The association doesn't provide services to its members per se, although some may be implicitly included in the activities of the association that cover "cooperation with municipalities and state government in the direction of regional development" (SPOV, 2014).

SPOV has a regional center in all thirteen regions through which it interacts with its members and gathers input for lobbying with the national government. It also closely cooperates with the National Associations of Local Groups (NS MAS).

Apart from the three major associations, there are also niche associations, whose membership bases consist of only some towns with a shared characteristic. They are:

Sdružení historických sídel Čech, Moravy a Slezska (SMS ČML)

The Association of Historical Settlements in Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia (SHS ČMS) binds together 213 towns with well-preserved historical artifacts. In cooperation with the Department of culture and the Department of regional development, it carries out a program of regeneration of urban monument reserves and urban monuments, awards the annual prize of its best implementation and holds the European Heritage Days (SHS ČMS, 2014). In terms of impact on towns' governance its importance is negligible.

Sdružení lázeňských míst ČR (SML)

The other niche association aligns the spa towns in the Czech republic. It mainly serves the particular purposes of common promotion and possible lobbying on behalf of its members (SML, 2014).

Regional Associations and Unions

There are several regional associations that operate within large geographical areas that are either identical with an official region (e.g. Svaz měst a obcí jihočeského kraje, Sdružení obcí Libereckého kraje) or are defined more generally (e.g. Severočeské sdružení obcí, Sdružení měst a obcí východní Moravy).

Regional Development Agencies

13 regional development agencies exist in the Czech republic (one for each region). Their role is to support the development of their region through providing information and consulting for private, non-profit, as well as public entities. They also provide help with drafting of local development strategies and grants applications. In these activities they mostly service local action groups and microregions.

Historically, they were either established by the state, by the regional governments, or by independent regional initiatives. They are criticized mostly for their unsystematic position within the system public administration (Ježek, 2005).
Local Associations

There are two specific forms of local associations, both are formed on a voluntary basis and vary mostly in their purpose.

Local Action Groups

Local action groups are voluntary associations of towns based on the European Union development program LEADER (Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l’Economie Rurale - The Linking of Activities for Rural Economic Development). There is 180 of LAG (Špiková, 2014), which are geographically homogenous with the total number of inhabitants between 10,000 and 100,000, and with the population density of less than 150 people per km² (Čermák, Vobecká et al., 2011). The local action groups cover 82% of the total area of the Czech Republic (Winter, 2013) and are associated in "Národní síť Místních akčních skupin České republiky".

![Figure 9 Map of local action groups (NS MAS, 2014).](image)

The members of the local action groups are recruited from the municipalities (up to 49% of the voting rights), private sector companies, and local residents. The local action group employs its manager and although its main purpose is meant to be practicing the LEADER method of community development, their purpose in the Czech republic almost exclusively revolves around distributing the financial resources from the associated grant program (Dočkalová, 2014).

Microregions

Microregions are an older way of local associations of towns and their original purpose is similar: to gain access to various grant programs, which towns wouldn’t be able to apply for on their own (Dočkalová, 2014). Nowadays, however, other purposes such as common promotion or other forms of cooperation are just as important and ideally (Trhlínová, 2014) would solve many problems small towns face due to their size and enduring limitations.

Microregions are often found on a basis of historical tradition or specific geographic area (surrounding a river). As such, they are rarely comparable with the local action groups (also, there is almost 750 of them - more than four times as many as LAGs) and sometimes lie in two regions. It is also not rare for a town to be a member in two microregions.

Unlike the local action groups, most of their finances come from members’ dues. The level of their activity varies greatly, some are only formal associations, others are actively engaged in the development of their area (Trhlínová, 2014).
NGOs

National NGOs

The non-governmental organizations applying themselves to a wide range of topics related to the public governance, development, or community vary greatly in their focus and impact. There are several foundations in the Czech republic that support regional or urban community development and numerous NGOs providing either specific relevant services or promoting certain developmental ideas in the public discourse. Appendix 3 presents their selection along with other relevant tools.

Locally Active NGOs

There is a great variability in the locally active NGOs. As the label suggests, they are engaged in the development and issues of the local community. They can, however, provide examples of practices to follow by others. Currently there is no entity monitoring or associating these small community-oriented NGOs, most likely for the sheer number and variability. Some of them, however, reach even the mainstream media and gain public awareness such as the Brno-born Brnění. Others are largely unknown to the general public (e.g. Ústecká komunitní nadace, Sdružení Neratov, ICOS Krumlov,...), albeit this isn't in any way suggestive of the impact they have in their respective communities.

Private Sector Companies

As the following primary research showed, the main interactions between the private sector and municipalities within the context of services for effective governance are in three areas:

- The administrative support for grant programs,
- The administration of public procurement and requests for tenders, and
- Legal services.

The agencies specializing in these activities are mostly locally based and frequently have a long-standing relationship with the municipalities. Among other, slightly less common support services that municipalities contract out, there are accounting, tax, or financial consulting.

4.3 Primary Research Outcomes

As the research revealed, the level of experience with the tools and service outside the domain of a municipality vary greatly. Some of the towns' representatives turned out to be the true lone wolfs in their realm, trusting only their own administrative apparatus and considering all external relations as "clutter". These representatives also tend to be wary of the grants and subsidies system of financing, which they regard as "unnecessary, complicated, and a distortive to the development efforts".
Generally, the most important external relations are **personal**. These may be with the other mayors in the region, a representative from the regional government offices (krajský úřad), or in some cases personal connections in the national politics (the government, chamber of deputies, senate, political parties). In the context of advisory and support services, the mayors (and deputies) have little desire for any algorithmized solutions and prefer communication with a person.

When coming into office, most of the knowledge about the work and its processes is acquired gradually, through communication with colleagues. Only in two instances a formal introductory workshop held by the regional government (krajský úřad) was mentioned. The law 128/2000 Sb., o obcích is the basic source of any information regarding the town governance (on several occasions the representatives referred to it as "our Bible"). A publication "Manual for a municipal council member" (SMO ČR, 2012) is also enjoying high popularity, especially among junior deputy mayors (and other municipal staff). Current news and inspiration is sought out in a multitude of ways. Most towns have a subscription of the "Moderní obec" and "Veřejná správa" magazines, the main source of information is however "the internet" in general and again personal relationships.

Skill seminars, training, and education are provided by the regional government offices, SMO ČR, as well as private companies. The mayors choose among the providers indiscriminately and base their choice on the subject covered by the training. Legislative changes are equally in part monitored by the municipalities themselves, extracted from the newsletters of SMO ČR, and provided by specialized paid services (e.g. Agendio).

Locally, the most important outward connections are to the local action groups (only one town wasn’t a member), microregions, and other mayors. The role of the third degree towns (substituting for the no longer existing district towns) is reported as negligible; the regional government offices (krajské úřady) prove to be more important. The local action groups’ importance is mostly attributed to increased opportunities for receiving grants; past this project-based cooperation little other communication takes place. The role of micro regions generally declined and is kept at providing common promotion of the common area. Other regional associations are marginal in their significance. Cooperation with regional universities is nonexistent with but one exception.

In terms of communication with the state government (governmental departments), it only occurs in instances when regulation (and its implications) needs to be clarified. Such communication is therefore always initiated by the mayors (deputies), which might prove a challenge if the representatives don’t have personal connections to the department. Internationally, towns close to the national borders are more likely to cooperate with other towns across border, which is to be expected; all towns has at least one twin town abroad. This cooperation is almost exclusively cultural (cultural and study exchanges).

Most towns cooperate with at least one NGO, however these are solely focused on providing services for the citizens (such as the Czech Red Cross or People in Need). The towns also often provide help for the local clubs and associations, mostly financial or through co-organizing of events.

Union membership is almost universal. Dominantly it is Svaž měst a obcí ČR - SMO ČR, in two instances it is Sdružení místních samospráv (SMS ČR) instead (membership in both never happens). Specific criticism towards SMO ČR was voiced in one case with reference to the budgetary allocation of taxes (the problem reportedly laid in the disagreement between SMO and SMS (SMS were supposedly more siding with small towns). Another source of criticism was the reportedly unbalanced way the association represents towns of various sizes. The annual financial conference organized by SMO ČR is among the most popular benefits of the membership. Among others, there are the information services, legal advisory services, the opportunity to express opinions that could later be conveyed to the central government and taken into account in the legislative process, and the distribution of a manual for the municipal council members that summarizes all information relevant to the governing of a town (SMO ČR, 2012).

All towns remain skeptical of the new initiative of cooperation among towns that the association is currently working on (Obce sobě). Mostly they didn’t see many benefits in the initiative however it was
found "possibly quite useful for small towns" in the majority of cases. One specific concern was voiced in terms of the initiative's focus on waste management as it provides room for corruption.

Other national associations (e.g. Sdružení historických sidel) are complementary and considered "a one trick ponies".

Regional associations proved elusive to the towns' representatives. They were largely unfamiliar with the associations and if (in one instance) they were aware of its existence, the actual function and benefits escaped them. On the other hand, all representatives knew the regional development agencies. None of them, however, has ever engaged in a communication with them.

The relationships with neighboring towns (individually or through local action groups and microregions) top all other in their importance to the mayors. Second are usually the regional government offices, third SMO ČR. Potential for improvement is felt in all areas but generally without specific qualms in mind.

Most towns employ an eternal law firm, one relies on an in-house lawyer. All agree that legal services are indispensable. Accounting and tax services are outsourced in roughly half of all instances. Only one town is confident enough to enter grant programs and handle public requests for tenders by themselves. The main reason is:

- Convenience - in the case of grant programs - as the representatives are constantly addressed by grant agencies, which specialize in them\(^\text{29}\). The business relationships tend to be recurring as mutual trust is established.
- Fear of legal repercussions the towns could face as public tenders are extremely complicated\(^\text{30}\).

Strategic development documents (if a town has one) are always created in cooperation with an external specialized agency.

The mayors and deputies feel that the main impediment in their work is the excessive administrative demands required by the overly complicated regulations. In two cases a need for sharing of proven solutions was expressed so that to prevent "re-inventing the wheel" in the most common agendas. It is also the opinion of said mayors (deputies) that this it doubly true for the small town mayors and that along with the lack of financial resources and potential personal issues (problematic personality or political clashes), the administrative load coupled with sometimes limited grasp on "how some things really are done" represent the major source of problems for the small town mayors.

5. Services for Effective Rural Governance - Analysis and Prototyping

After the research phase, the next step in the design process is the definition, specifying the initial question of how to solve the issues of small towns through services for effective rural governance. Following the double diamond approach of the Design Council, it is now time to focus and present a "well defined problem" and provide a brief concept of its solution.

Both the secondary and primary research provides pointers to which services are the most important in the everyday work of small town mayors. The importance of local connections seem to far outweigh the one of the relationships with national entities - with a notable exemption of the Svaz měst a obcí ČR association, which is considered somewhat useful and shows potential in terms of currently provided services as well as planned projects.

The proposed "ideal service" will therefore be based on the interplay of two main actors:

- Local entities (microregions and local action groups especially) and
- Svaz měst a obcí ČR.

To take full advantage of the service design process, the several of its tools are used in the proposal.

\(^{29}\) The grant system is to be simplified in the 2014-2020 program period as the number of operational programs decreases to 8 (Vláda ČR, 2012).

\(^{30}\) Improvements to the legislature are in progress, however (Surmanová, 2014).
5.1 The Small Town Mayor Persona

The persona of the small town mayor is created to gain a better understanding of the user of the service, to bring the notion of a specific person to mind. After consideration of the mayoral typology introduced and critiqued in chapter 1.4, two personas are created: one of a "strategically-oriented mayor", the other of a "reproduction-oriented mayor". The first one is focused on actively pushing for the development of his town; the other is more of a guardian of the status quo.

**Strategically-oriented mayor.**

![Jan Vetchý](image)

Jan Vetchý  
Age: 43  
(Unrelieved) mayor of Krnosy, population 1,234  
Profession: Employed at a computer company (networks) in nearest town with extended agency (that's around 6,000 people)  
Education: Vocational school  
Home life: Married, two children age 16 and 7

"I mean I come from here, that building over there used to be my elementary school. I've lived here all my life, well apart from those couple of years in Ostrava. So when my wife and I moved back to town, Ing. Marousek - the then mayor - asked me to run for the council. It was good, those four years, it didn't pay a nickel but people knew they could count on me so after the elections in 2006, I became the deputy mayor and now, since 2010 I am the mayor of Krnosy. It's been a good run, these couple of years, we managed to pay off some of the debt from the construction of the sewage treatment plant, have the field redone, repair some of the streets etc etc. I just wish there was more I could do, you know. Like with the school. But when the grants aren't coming, they aren't coming. I keep looking for opportunities but it's so easy to make a mistake - even with a stupid request for tenders. Well that one is actually really hard so we use an agency for that. Anyways, I don't really "know anyone" if you know what I mean so what other options do I have?"

How he works for the municipality:

- "Anytime something's up", usually about 15-20 hours a week.
- Tries to "stay on top of things" but sometimes it's just too much as the administrative staff of 2 isn't enough to manage everything.
- Is in touch with the local action groups, they've done several small projects in the town. And along with the microregion, they finally managed to build a lookout tower, which was in works for decades.
- The town is a member of the Svaz měst a obcí association but he isn't really sure how they benefit from it ("oh yes, we receive that newsletter every couple of weeks and I've been to the financial conference once. Oh yeah, good stuff, good stuff.")
- Would like to solve the problem with the school as it is only open for the first five grades of elementary but the town has grown in the recent years and there could now be a full 9 grades school.
- Subscribes to the "Moderní obec" magazine and "sometimes there are interesting things, yes". Otherwise he gathers most information from the colleagues in neighboring towns, who meet up about once a month either thorough the LAG or the microregion. Sometimes he phones to the people from the Department of interior if some clarification is needed.
"Well and who else would do it, really? The young are not really here anymore and after the years in the council, at least I know how the things work. It's all a little annoying, to be honest. I know that we now get more money but then we hardly ever get any grants and don't get me started about the people at the local action group. We were supposed to get some money for the new bell tower. We agreed on that so that they vote for it. And you know what we got? Nothing, that young Kamil from Lipůvka will be buying a new tractor instead. Well I'll tell them what I think of them next week when we have a meeting. I mean I try to go by the rules - and they're not easy rules, they just keep piling on and there really isn't no one to help me with that (you know deputy mayor, she's more about the cultural development of the town and all) - what was I saying, right, I go by the rules but it doesn't lead anywhere. We have little money, are still in debt, we don't have a kindergarten no one cares about us. And who will take this job after I retire, I really don't know."

How he works for the municipality:

- Works about 10 hours a week and when there's something urgent, like when it snows a lot and he needs to go out clear the streets with his tractor.
- Feels like some of the things are rather unnecessary - "why do they bother us with value added tax now too?"
- The microregion does some common promotion.
- He gathers most information from the people he knows at the town of the third degree nearby.
- Don't thinks the town is a member of the Svaz měst a obcí ČR association.

5.2 The Prototype

In this place, the concept of the "ideal service" that should serve the small town mayors is presented, the BIG IDEA. The consequent two chapters will elaborate on the actors involved or affected and the way the service works and fits within the current framework of existing organizations.

The prototype concept is loosely modeled after a service/project that is currently in development - the "Podpora meziobecní spolupráce (Obce sobě)" initiative by Svaz měst a obcí ČR. What is this project about?

Its premise is based on the assumption (justified by theory as in Trhlínová, 2014 or Jetmar, 2004) that towns, especially small towns, could solve some of their problems through cooperation with others, in this instance within the domain of their respective town of the third degree (with extended agency). This geographical base is introduced for two reasons:

- The town of the third degree arguably serves as a natural development center of the region and
- Unlike the domains of local action groups or microregions, this geographical dimension makes sense within the public administration structures of Czech public administration and covers the whole area of the Czech republic.
The project is financed by the European Social Fund’s Human Resources and Employment Operational Program started in May 2013 and is currently in its second - analytical - phase during which the needs of the towns are assessed on the sample almost identical with the whole population - the research is being conducted in over 5,000 towns (Obce sobě, 2014). The aim of the project is to create structures based in the towns of the third degree, that would serve as a platform for cooperation in these areas:

- Education,
- Social services,
- Waste management,
- + other voluntary areas.

In practice, such cooperation within the frame of the town of the third degree’s domain would coordinate the needs and capacities of individual towns so that they can provide the public services to all of their citizens in the most effective way (SMO, 2013). The scope of the cooperation covers the individual towns' autonomous agency (self-government). The cooperation within the domain would be twofold - through the newly established or transformed legal entity of the voluntary cooperation (in effect a microregion covering the area of the town of the third degree's domain) and an informal Assembly of mayors of the region.31

The project is conceived as open, meaning an interested town doesn't need to be a member of SMO to participate. This along with the openness towards “other voluntary areas” of cooperation opens the door to quite a fair number of opportunities, should it be in terms of coordinated promotion, tourism, crisis management, prevention, culture etc.

As was mentioned, the project aims to create the conditions for cooperation among towns in the districts of the towns of the third degree and is in its analytical phase. This is crucial because this provides space for tweaking the project in significant way, especially when it comes to the fourth - voluntary - area of cooperation.

The idea for the prototype concept therefore utilizes this opportunity and proposes the creation of a Local Center of Excellence as a part of the newly established entity in charge of the cooperation within the district.

Despite its glamorous name, the Local Center of Excellence (LCE) is meant to complement the other three areas of cooperation among the member towns in significant ways. There are two crucial roles this center should perform.

Firstly, it is the role of local cooperation coordinator. With microregions and local action groups already in place, it is somewhat counterintuitive to introduce another level of cooperation. This is a fair concern and one that needs to be addressed. It is the intention of the project that some of the microregions could be transformed to this new cooperation entity but due to the geographical distribution, this might not always be possible. It is therefore conceivable that there could be several microregions active within the domain of a single town of the third degree. The role of the newly established one will therefore be to coordinate not only the cooperation of individual towns but also of existing microregions (and indeed local action groups).

The second role is the one of a servicing and information hub. Throughout this thesis deficiencies in the effectiveness of the rural governance were identified. The Local Center of Excellence could address these in a systemic manner, providing services to the municipalities that would contribute to the ease of the governance. It could provide consulting on public procurement and grants, legal services, and other administrative support. All of this locally through contact with a trusted advisor rather than a remote entity accessible online or through telephone.

31 As some note (Michálek, 2014), this is a in fact a return to the “Regional assembly” model that was abandoned with the abolition of district towns (okresní města).
It could also be the one-stop place to gather information and best practices from around the Czech republic and from abroad - again, in person. The appeal of this function is that the local mayors would no longer have to keep track of all the sources of information on their own. They would be able to turn to one specific person in the Local Center of Excellence that would provide them with the relevant information - either periodically or in a case-by-case manner.

As the SMO ČR now distributes the information manuals to the town council members ("Příručka pro člena zastupitelstva obce po volbách v roce 2010", SMO, 2010), the LCE would bring the same (and more relevant) service directly to the town officials.

In essence the Center would serve as a local go-to hub, resource center for all issues relating to the towns' governance. In terms of the usability of such a service for the two types of mayors outlined by the use of personas, the LCE would serve as:

- A valuable source of development possibilities for the strategically-oriented mayor who is already looking for them but is either not aware of them or can't assess them properly due to time constraints or simply their great number and variability on relevance.
- A servicing hub for the reproduction-oriented mayor who would be able to effectively outsource some of his daily activities that would be carried out by specialists.

In this fashion, the LCE would serve as a major aggregate agent of the local development.

5.3 Stakeholder Map

The following graphic representation shows all the relevant involved parties in the service.

![Stakeholder Map](image)

**National level**
- Svaz měst a obcí ČR
- Sdružení místních samospráv ČR
- Spolek pro obnovu venkova
- NGOs
- Research institutions

**Regional level**
- Regional development agencies
- Regional administration offices (krajské úřady)

**District & Local level**
- Towns of the third degree
- Member towns
- Microregions
- Local Center of Excellence & the newly established microregions
- Local action groups

*Figure 13 The map of stakeholders involved in the project (own devise)*

5.4 Service Blueprint

A concept prototype as describes would undisputedly place enormous pressure on the smoothness of the backoffice operations (backoffice with regards to the end user's - towns' representatives - perspective) of the provider, the operator of the Local Centers of Excellence. As proposed, nationally this would be Svaz měst a obcí ČR.

The amount of information processed in order to provide the service is not only great in quantity but also tremendously varied. The association would also have to employ new strategies to cope with the bandwidth of communications it would actively take part in. The stakeholder map provides a basic overview of the service in terms of involved parties. This is how it would further be divided by the line of visibility:
**The Zone of Visible Interaction / Frontstage**

In the zone of visible interaction, the town representatives would be dealing with the Local Center of Excellence directly. In this way it would be possible to guarantee a consistent quality and simplicity of interactions. Thanks to the aggregator role of the LCE, the town's mayor would be able to access various kinds of information and create new cooperation and contract-out some of his duties through one point of interaction.

In the zone of visible interaction, therefore, the main principle is simplicity for the user.

**The Internal Line of Interaction / Backstage**

The backstage of such a created service would consist of 2 levels:

- Local processing and
- National processing.

On the local processing level, the direct requests of the mayors would be taken in and information about their needs analyzed. There are 205 towns of the third degree in the Czech republic, therefore there would be the same number of LCEs that would be further coordinated on the national level. Locally, however, there is a need for coordination with the existing microregions, local action groups, and towns of the third degree themselves. All of these would serve to provide the LCE with necessary information.

On the national level - to gain the insights ad information to distribute to the LCEs - the coordinating SMO ČR would need to be periodically monitoring the legislative, the national associations and NGOs, the research institutions etc. The processing power needed would be assumingly quite great, however justifiable by the number of towns it would benefit.

In essence, the backstage processing would mean acquiring of the service design capability on both the local and national levels. This is accented by the need for simple frontstage interactions built on the basis of complex backstage processing. The possible way to develop such a system is illustrated in the following chapter.

**6. Implementation, Execution, Limitations**

The proposed service prototype outlined in the previous chapters is quite unique in its complexity and therefore implies considerable changes in the way the Svaz města a obcí ČR association currently operates. If implemented, it would mean large systemic changes not only on part of the association but in effect in the whole the whole of regional public administration currently works.

Imagined in such an idealistic way, however, this doesn't reflect the inherent issues of ownership and cooperation with the other national associations. Sure enough, the "Obce sobě" project is already subject to serious criticism (Šulák, 2013, Šuláková, 2013, Filipová, 2014) by these organizations and should it be further expanded in the proposed way - so that the Local Centers of Excellence effectively become major actors that monopolize some aspects of the local development - gracious consent of Svěři místních samospráv, Spolek pro obnovu venkova and Národní síť místních akčních skupin is quite unthinkable. That is: unthinkable without their close involvement in the whole process of establishing such a system.

This is why the prototype can't be executively implemented in a top-down decisive way and the findings of the traditional strategy execution and change management scholars (Dent & Goldberg, 1999, Evans & Wolf, 2005, Kaplan & Norton, 2006, Nielson, Martin, Powers, 2008) are helpful but not sufficient. The key is not to forget that the process of implementing is as well a part of the design process (the Develop and Deliver stages of the double diamond), therefore the prototype needs to be tested as meanwhile the capability for service design is slowly built not only into the organization of Svaz města obcí ČR but also of the others (SMS ČR, SPOV ČR, NS MAS).

The following process should therefore continue in the service design ways. In practical terms, it is quite apparent that the proposed prototype is by no means a detailed description of how the service would
operate on a day-to-day basis in terms of processes, financing, and personnel. It is a strategy-powered description of the prototype concept. Therefore before further development and prototyping perhaps in one or two locations, it needs to be tested by the informed and involved parties - those that are the intended readers of this thesis. Only after this prototyping phase (consisting of a thorough criticism, I assume) the prototyping may continue with the actual testing.

Conclusion

Several partial objectives were presented in the introduction of this thesis. As the work on the thesis expanded and developed, some of these were solved in a way different from what I assumed they would be when laying those objectives out. The thesis as a text-based representation of the relevant work however does sees all of them in its own way.

The theoretical overview of the design thinking concept, its practices and applications in the public sector were presented along with a comprehensive introduction into the actual issues facing the mayors of the small towns. This took place in the first part called "Theoretical Background".

Mapping out the support service needs of the Czech small towns officials was done through a proxy research among the mayors, deputy mayors, and heads of administration of the towns of the second degree. Rather than solely focusing of the needs that need to be addressed by an external force, it took a deeper look into the ways these towns operate on a functional basis and what role external relations play. Consequently, this (along with extensive secondary research) led to the classification and an audited overview of these external relations - services for effective rural governance.

In its final stage, the thesis presented a prototype of a concept of "an ideal service". Furthest from the original idea, the ideal service turned out to be a complex solution yet manageable within the current status quo. The use of the service design lens and presentation of the solution in such a prototypal way may lead to a realization that the design process of this thesis is somewhat unfinished. Exactly. Should the bulk of this work yield any practical value, it needs to be continued beyond the boundaries of these pages.
References

Books


Articles


Zpravodaj venkova


Other


Appendices

Appendix 1: Interviews Schedule

2/12/2014, 2pm: **Napajedla (Zlínský kraj)**
- Mayor Ing. Irena Brabcová, deputy mayor Zbyněk Ohnoutek

2/17/2014, 10am: **Hrádek nad Nisou (Liberecký kraj)**
- Mayor Josef Horinka

2/18/2014, 8:30am: **Klášterec nad Ohří (Ústecký kraj)**
- Mayor Ing. Kateřina Mazánková

2/19/2014, 9:30am: **Kdyně (Plzeňský kraj)**
- Head of administration Mgr. Dagmar Bauerová

2/19/2014, 3pm: **Roztoky u Prahy (Středočeský kraj)**
- Mayor Jan Jakob

2/20/1024, 9:30am: **Nejdek (Karlovarský kraj)**
- Deputy mayor Dana Schwarzová

2/24/2014, 10am: **Třešť (Kraj Vysočina)**
- Mayor Ing. Vladislav Hynk, deputy mayor Ing. Eva Požárová

2/24/2014, 1pm: **Sezimovo Ústí (Jihočeský kraj)**
- Mayor Mgr. Ing. Martin Doležal

2/25/2014, 10am: **Letovice (Jihomoravský kraj)**
- Mayor Vladimír Stejskal

2/26/2014, 10am: **Hlučín (Olomoucký kraj)**
- Mayor PhDr. Ivo Černík

2/26/2014, 1:30pm: **Studénka (Moravskoslezský kraj)**
- Mayor Ladislav Honusek, deputy mayor Ing. Miroslav Fabian

3/19/2014, 8am: **Choceň (Pardubický kraj)**
- Deputy mayor Ing. Ladislav Valtír, MBA

3/19/2014, 1:30pm: **Červený Kostelec (Královéhradecký kraj)**
- Deputy mayor Richard Bergmann
Appendix 2: Interview Outline

Hello,

Thank you for taking time to meet with me today. My name is Vladimír Zejda and I am currently finishing my master studies at the University of Economics, Prague. I have been long interested in the governance of the towns of the second degree (and smaller) and therefore decided to focus my thesis on ways to help their representatives in their work. In my preliminary research, I came across various non-financial tools the elected representatives can use to make their work more effective. These include cooperation with various entities, consulting, information and education services, financial and legal advising etc. Today, I would like to find out what role such tools (services) play in your day-to-day work.

Questions:

1. The mayor (deputy mayor) is: unrelieved / a full time employee of the municipality
2. The mayor (deputy mayor) is currently serving: ( ) electoral term.
   • Further questions follow should the mayor (deputy mayor) be appointed mid-term.

Areas of enquiry:

• The beginnings in the office:
  o Did you work at the municipality before you became a mayor (deputy mayor)?
  o If not, how did you become familiar with the ins and outs of the job? (Any external support provided? From where, what form it took, and how would you rate its usefulness?)

• External cooperation:
  o What entities outside the municipality do you cooperate or communicate with?
    ▪ Locally. (Hints: micro-regions, local action groups, informal advisory associations, local public associations and clubs,
    ▪ Regionally. (Hints: regional associations, the regional government (kraj), the nearest town with extended agency, universities, etc.)
    ▪ Nationally. (Hints: unions (Svaz měst a obcí ČR, Sdružení místních samospráv, Spolek pro obnovu venkova, Sdružení historických sídel Čech, Moravy a Slezska,...), NGOs, foundations and charities, churches, government departments (of regional development, of interior, of agriculture, of environment), ombudsman,...)
    ▪ Internationally. (Hints: twin towns, Euroregions,...)
  o What form does this cooperation take?
  o What are the benefits of such cooperation?
  o Do you think the cooperation could be improved? How?
  o Which of these cooperations do you find most valuable?
  o + Further branching-out and follow-up questions.

• Functional analysis:
  o How do you gather information on the development in regional development policies/legislature/grants and subsidies?
    ▪ What is the main methodical support you receive?
    ▪ Who do you most often turn to when lacking information or uncertain?
  o How do you procure your financial/legal/other expert services?
  o Does the town have a strategic development plan? How was it created?
  o How do you enter grant programs? Is the process handled from within the municipality or using outside sources (agencies)?
  o How do you handle public tenders?
- How do you procure public utilities?

  - Issues:
    - What issues do you come across in your work, what bothers you? (A very general question inspiring a lot of follow-up questions.)
    - What activities can you imagine outsourcing or what activities would you welcome help with?

  - Small towns:
    - Being in touch with the representatives of small towns, what can you tell me about the way they manage their job?
    - What do you think they most struggle with?

All right, this should be all. Once again, thank you for your time.
Appendix 3: Selection of NGOs and Other Relevant Tools Related to Services for Effective Governance (Nationally)

The NGOs and tools are not presented in any particular order. An official English name is used when provided, if not it remains in Czech. The parentheses indicate what kind of entity the organization is, what it focuses on, or what kind of a purpose it serves. The list also includes several international methodologies applicable (and applied) in municipalities in order to enhance the governance (for its own merit or as a part of another agenda) and other tools relevant for effective rural governance.


- Information portals about all public procurement, concessions, and requests for tenders.

**Elektronické tržiště veřejných zakázek** (Tool) / https://www.gemin.cz/

- A tool that enables municipalities (and other public entities) to advertise their open contract calls available to the private sector. Operated by the Department of regional development (MMR).

**Systém k podpoře rozhodování na úrovni regionálních a místních správ** (Tool) / http://mmrapp.kapos.cz/

- An online tool providing information and pre-made solutions to mayors and regional governments in the areas of the municipalities position within the public administration, project management and marketing, economy and financing, development, administration, community management and law offences, and the environment.

**Elektronická metodická podpora tvorby rozvojových dokumentů obcí** (Tool) / https://www.obcepro.cz/

- Through a web application, e-learning, and consulting, this tool is meant to provide support to towns creating their strategic development plans. Currently under development (not open to all towns at this stage).


- Action plan for sustainable development developed by the United Nations and a methodology to implement it. In practice, it serves to improve public governance, strategic management, public involvement, and help to develop local cooperation in order to support sustainable development in a systematic way.

**CAF - Common Assessment Framework** (Methodology) / http://www.kvalitavs.cz/metody/caf/

- A methodology developed by the European Institute of Public Administration (EIPA) to improve the quality of public governance.


- A tool for benchmarking of various measurable metrics among participating towns. Mostly used by large towns and cities.


- A tool/public document for presenting services available to citizens, as well as ways to voice criticism and suggestions. Currently discontinued (project took place in 2006).

**Nadace Via** (Foundation) / http://www.nadacevia.cz/

- A foundation offering several grant programs for the purposes of community-led development of small towns: Era Mayor of the Year, Local Initiatives' Fund, Place Where We Live, Local
Community Grants, Cultural Heritage Grants, Regional Development Fund, etc. The foundation also offers consulting and education services.

**Czech Environmental Partnership Foundation** (Foundation) / [http://www.nadacepartnerstvi.cz/](http://www.nadacepartnerstvi.cz/)

- A foundation and NGO supporting sustainable development solutions from public spaces & transport to education and providing professional services.


- Promotes the involvement of public in the public administration and the development of the non-governmental sector.


- A foundation supporting the improvement in the quality of the urban environment through transformation of neglected and abandoned areas, development of public green spaces, or promoting the importance of community planning, landscape design, or architecture.

**Dobrá praxe - Databáze osvědčených postupů, inspirace pro obce a regiony** (Information) / [http://dobrapraxe.cz/](http://dobrapraxe.cz/)

- A database of good practice that aims at providing inspiration for towns and regions in several domains.

**Institute of Public Administration Development** (Research/Consulting) / [http://www.rozvoj-vs.cz/](http://www.rozvoj-vs.cz/)

- A research and consulting institution that aims at furthering quality of public administration.

**Institute for Public Administration** (Education) / [http://www.institutpraha.cz/](http://www.institutpraha.cz/)

- A state allowance organization providing education and training for the officials in self-governing units and state government bodies.

**Center for Community** (NGO) [http://www.cpkp.cz/](http://www.cpkp.cz/)

- A non-governmental organization focused on the development of communities through cooperation with the public administration.

**Spiralis** (Communication platform) / [http://www.spiralis-os.cz/](http://www.spiralis-os.cz/)

- (Among other services) Organizes round tables for the public and non-profit sector.


- An information website developed by the Center for Regional Development. Provides various information - from EU projects to specialized information maps of regions.

**Center for Regional Development** (Information) / [http://www.crr.cz/](http://www.crr.cz/)

- Established by the Department of regional development, the center's main focus is administering and control of EU grant programs.

**Frank Bold** (formerly known as Ekologický právní servis) (NGO) / [http://frankbold.org/](http://frankbold.org/)

- An NGO specializing in providing legal services for public good, the champion of the "Rekonsktukce státu" project, also encouraging citizens to take part in the public affairs through their "Občan 2.0" initiative.


- Provides a better access to legal aid for individuals as well as organizations and promotes education, all with the aim of making the legal instruments in the Czech republic more effective.

• Promotes transparent public administration and sustainable development. Provides consulting services, anti-corruption audits, education, and seminars.

**Společnosti pro trvale udržitelý život (NGO) / http://www.stuz.cz/**

• A discussion platform striving to promote sustainable development on the national and global basis.

**Independent Social Ecological Movement (Nesehnuti) (NGO) / http://nesehnuti.cz/**

• An NGO working towards the resolution of social and environmental issues, which are found to be intrinsically interconnected.

**Chci pomoci (Information) / http://www.chcipomoci.info/**

• One of several platforms (others being umsemumtam.cz or dobrovolnik.cz) that serve as a marketplace of/for volunteers in the non-profit sector.

**Governance Institute (NGO) / http://www.govin.org/**

• (Among other services) Provides education for the public administration workers, primarily in matters of law.

**Consulte (NGO) / http://www.consulte.cz/**

• Supports all-round education and information of citizens as well as the public administration.

**Gl Projekt (NGO) / http://www.g-i.cz/**

• A consultancy for community planning and public services.

**Nová Ekonomika (NGO) / http://www.nova-ekonomika.cz/**

• Supports the proliferation of innovative economic tools for solving social and economic issues. Also specialize in providing support for municipalities in the processes of requests for tenders.

**Architektura mimo centra (Information) / http://www.ex-centric.eu/**

• A project providing examples of good practice in architectural projects in settlements smaller than 20,000 inhabitants in the Czech republic and abroad.

**Centre for Central European Architecture (NGO) / http://www.ccea.cz/**

• A discussion platform aimed at joining contemporary architecture with the public interest.

**Ulicnik.cz (NGO) / http://ulicnik.cz/**

• An ideas sharing platform that aims at bringing change and innovation into the public space.

**Anthropictures: Studium antropologického výzkumu (NGO) / http://www.anthropictures.cz/**

• A research institution providing anthropological insights for the purposes of public administration.