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[Social Capital, Civic Engagement and Local Self- Government in Azerbaijan](#)

An article entitled “Social Capital, Civic Engagement and the Performance of Local Self-Government in Azerbaijan” by Rafail Hasanov, CRRC 2007 Research Fellowship recipient from Azerbaijan, was published in [Nationalities Papers](#).

The research addresses two questions: what is the role of social capital in civic engagement in the municipalities of three regions of Azerbaijan and how are the norms and networks of civic engagement linked to the quality of public life and performance of local government.

The major finding of the research is that while the legislation offers opportunities for the independence of institutions of local government at all levels, in reality, municipalities are subordinate to executive authority and operate on the basis of an uncertain system of laws and rules, resulting in their limited authority, influence and responsibilities.

Another interesting conclusion is that municipalities are more closely linked with citizens in rural areas, where smaller and less dense communities are typical. However, many citizens still mistrust this relatively new local institution. Moreover, the overall involvement of citizens in all sorts of associations and participation in joint NGO-municipality projects, which serve as the basis for functional local government, is low.

Fair and transparent elections, merit-based personnel selection and expanding municipalities' financial resources are the areas that would need the most improvement in Azerbaijan to ensure responsible and effective local self-government, according to the author.

As a way to increase the efficiency of municipalities, the study recommends regular reporting to the population about the work that has been completed by municipalities, frequent meetings with the population and responsiveness to people's needs, budgetary transparency and increased staff competence. It is also necessary to gradually replace the currently prevailing vertical networks of civil participation with the horizontal form of interaction in communities.

[Social Capital, Civic Engagement And The Performance](#)

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For more information, check out the [research paper](#) of Rafail Hasanov, or [the journal article](#).