



Swiss Confederation

Capital: Bern

Population: 7.6 Million
(2008 est.)

Boundaries and place names are representative only and do not imply any official endorsement.



Kilometers

Source: ESRI Ltd.; CIA World Factbook

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ANDREAS LADNER

Most municipalities in Switzerland are very small. Nevertheless, reflecting the bottom-up process of Swiss nation building, local governments play an important role in the Swiss federal system. Like the cantons, municipalities enjoy considerable autonomy. This leads to important differences between the municipalities of different cantons and sometimes even between municipalities within a canton. Municipalities differ not only in their political organization but also in their services, facilities, and financial capacities.

Recent reforms of local government – very much like the reform of Swiss federalism with regard to the role of the cantons – have tried to strengthen the municipalities in line with the principle of subsidiarity. At the same time, however, there are claims for more efficiency, economies of scale, and fiscal equivalence. The ongoing reforms point toward a disentanglement of tasks, increased intermunicipal cooperation, and even amalgamations of municipalities.

Special challenges have to be met by the cities. Although they are the motors of economic development, they lack an effective political structure. Vertically, they find it difficult to place their concerns directly on the agenda of national politics. There is no direct link between the national and municipal governments. Horizontally, their facilities and services are used by a significant number of citizens living in municipalities surrounding a city, and many problems, such as regional traffic, planning, and environmental issues, cannot be solved independently. Quite a few adjacent municipalities have considerably lower tax burdens. Because Swiss citizens are used to directly deciding many political issues, smaller municipalities are also reluctant to join a city where they face an overwhelming majority. With regional and tripartite conferences, new forms of horizontal and vertical cooperation should allow for more flexible solutions among the municipalities and across all three orders of government.

COUNTRY OVERVIEW¹

Switzerland is a small, heterogeneous country. It has about 7.6 million inhabitants (in 2007) in a territory of 41,000 square kilometres. The country has a very high population density,² and its culture is characterized by the diversity of its geography,³ four different languages, and two major religious denominations. The culture in the mountainous areas is not the same as that of the lowlands, and there are significant differences between the language areas, as well as between the Roman Catholic and the Protestant regions.

Agglomerations⁴ and metropolitan regions in Switzerland are small, too. The federal office of statistics counts fifty agglomerations. The largest is Zurich with 1.1 million inhabitants, followed by Basle (493,000 inhabitants on Swiss territory), and Geneva (486,000 inhabitants on Swiss territory). Among the smallest agglomerations are St Moritz and Interlaken with 14,000 and 22,000 inhabitants respectively. About 73% of the Swiss population live in agglomerations. The federal office of statistics additionally names five metropolitan regions: Zurich (1.7 million inhabitants), Geneva-Lausanne (1.2 million), Basle (731,000), Berne (660,000), and Ticino (510,000). Almost 50% of the inhabitants belonging to the metropolitan region of Ticino do not live on Swiss territory. For Geneva-Lausanne and Basle, it is 28% and 35% respectively, whereas the regions of Zurich and Berne are entirely on Swiss territory.

The most widespread language is Swiss German, spoken by 63.7% of the population. French is spoken in the western part of the country, the Suisse Romande, by 20.4% of the population. Some 6.5% speak Italian, mainly in Ticino and in the southern valleys of Graubünden. In the canton of Graubünden, some 0.5% of the total Swiss population also speak Rhaeto-Rumantsch.⁵ Language rights are enshrined in the Swiss Constitution. German, French, Italian, and Rhaeto-Rumantsch all have the status of national languages, but only the first three are official languages.⁶

Even though the churches are no longer relevant to many people's lives, both Roman Catholicism and Protestantism have played a key role in shaping modern Switzerland and the way the Swiss see themselves.⁷ The 2000 national census showed that Roman Catholics and mainstream Protestants had decreased in both absolute numbers and relative terms (i.e., their share of the total population). In 2000, 41.8% of the population were Roman Catholics, 35.3% Protestants, and 4.3% Muslims.

Switzerland can doubtlessly be considered a prosperous country offering its citizens a high standard of living. Although the growth of per capita income has been weak in past years and considerably below the average of the countries in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Switzerland still has one of the highest per capita rates of gross

domestic product (GDP) in the world. The International Monetary Fund estimated the GDP per capita for 2008 at US\$58,412. The tax burden is comparatively low despite the above-average increase of the country's ratio of government expenditures to the gross national product in recent years, and the rate of unemployment is usually lower than in the neighbouring countries. In the past few years, the rate varied between 3% and 4%.

Switzerland's economy is based on a well-qualified labour force performing highly skilled work. The main areas include microtechnology, hi-tech, biotechnology, and pharmaceuticals, as well as banking and insurance. Most businesses, however, are small or medium-sized. In 2001 more than 99% of enterprises had fewer than 250 full-time workers, employing about two-thirds of the total workforce. About 88% were microenterprises, with fewer than ten employees. They provided more than one-quarter of all jobs.⁸

Because taxation is relatively low, it is not astonishing that the Swiss spend a lot on insurance. More than 4% of their expenditure is on compulsory health insurance, which citizens must purchase from private companies to cover basic treatment. Another 5% is spent on voluntary (private) insurance for additional medical services. Housing is expensive, and most people live in rented accommodations. In 2000 only 34.6% of homes were owner occupied, which is by far the lowest rate in Europe. Food and clothing account for an ever smaller proportion of the household budget, dropping from 16% in 1992 to just less than 11% in 2004.

Switzerland's existence as a modern federal state dates back to 1848. The federal Constitution protects the rights of individuals as well as citizen participation in public affairs, divides powers between the confederation and the cantons, and defines federal jurisdictions. Under the federal Constitution, there are three main governing bodies: the Federal Assembly (or Parliament), the Federal Council (or government), and the Federal Court.

The power to legislate is delegated to the two chambers of Parliament. The Council of States (chamber of cantons) has forty-six canton representatives (two from each of the twenty cantons and one from each of the six half-cantons). The strongest parties in the Council of States after the 2007 elections were the Christian Democrats (CVP) with fifteen seats and the Radical Democrats (FDP) with twelve seats. The National Council (the People's Chamber) consists of 200 members who are elected under a system of proportional representation. The number of seats of the cantons varies according to their population: the canton of Zurich, for example, has thirty-four seats, whereas the cantons of Glarus and Uri as well as the half-cantons Appenzell Innerrhoden, Appenzell Ausserrhoden, Obwalden, and Nidwalden have only one. The strongest party in the National Council after the 2007 elections was the Swiss People's Party (SVP) with sixty-two seats (28.9%), followed by the Social Democrats (SP) with forty-three seats (19.5%). Both houses – the Council of States and the National Council – have equal powers

in all respects, including the right to introduce legislation. Members of both houses serve for four years.

The top executive body and collective head of state is the Federal Council, a body of seven members, each of whom is also responsible for a special ministry. Although the Constitution expects the Federal Assembly to elect and supervise the members of the Federal Council for a four-year mandate, the latter (and its administration) has gradually assumed a pre-eminent role both in directing the legislative process and in executing federal laws. The president of the confederation is elected from among the seven federal councillors and assumes special representative functions for a one-year term. From 1959 to December 2003, the four major parties were represented in the Federal Council according to a “magic formula” proportional to their representation in the federal Parliament: two Radical Democrats, two Christian Democrats, two Social Democrats, and one member of the Swiss People’s Party. This distribution of seats, however, is not backed up by law but is the result of an almost voluntary commitment to consociationalism and power sharing. In the 2003 elections for the Federal Council, the CVP lost its second seat to the SVP, which became the strongest party in the elections for the National Council in the same year. This new composition, however, did not prove to be a stable solution. In 2008 the SVP broke with its members in government and was no longer represented in the executive.⁹ It remains to be seen whether this marks the end of the Swiss formula of power sharing or whether it is only a matter of time until the new balance of power between the parties will be represented in government again. At least in principle, the idea of power sharing is basically not questioned.

In addition to the right to vote in elections, Swiss citizens have far-reaching direct-democracy rights that allow them to control governments and parliaments. Direct democracy, as it is viewed by most citizens, is more than merely an instrument that enables their participation in policymaking. It is a fundamental concept of the state, which is based on the sovereignty of its citizens, and a statement against extending more competences to the authorities. By means of referendums, citizens entitled to vote may challenge parliamentary decisions after they have been made. Federal laws, generally binding decisions of the confederation, and international treaties of indefinite duration are subject to an optional referendum. If 50,000 signatures are collected within 100 days, a ballot has to be organized. A majority of citizens can then turn down the proposal of the authorities. No minimal rate of participation is needed. If the proposal consists of an amendment to the Constitution, a referendum (and hence a ballot) is compulsory, and together with the majority of citizens, a majority of cantons also must accept the proposal. Additionally, citizens, parties, or interest groups can put forward an initiative to amend the Constitution. To do so, they have to collect 100,000 signatures

within eighteen months. For an initiative to be accepted, the double majority of the people and the cantons is again needed.

Cantons and municipalities form important pillars of the Swiss political system.¹⁰ Under the 1999 Constitution, cantons hold all powers not specifically delegated to the federation. There are similar rules concerning the relation between municipalities and cantons. Today, the country is divided into twenty-six cantons¹¹ and 2,715 municipalities.¹² Seventeen of the twenty-six cantons are monolingual German-speaking. Four cantons are French-speaking: Geneva, Jura, Neuchâtel, and Vaud. Three cantons are bilingual: in Berne, Fribourg, and Valais both French and German are spoken. The canton of Graubünden is trilingual, with German, Italian, and Rhaeto-Rumantsch speakers. There are also a few bilingual municipalities, mainly bigger cities in bilingual cantons like Berne and Fribourg. The size of the cantons and the number of municipalities within a canton, as well as the size of the municipalities within and between cantons, vary considerably. The smallest canton, Appenzell-Innerrhoden, has only about 15,000 inhabitants; the largest canton, Zurich, has 1.3 million inhabitants. The canton of Basle-Stadt consists of only three municipalities, whereas the canton of Berne has 398 municipalities. Cantons and municipalities have their own political institutions, and there are considerable differences between them. Each canton and each municipality has its executive, which is in general directly elected by the citizens. Like the federal government, almost all executive bodies combine members from different parties. Cantons and the bigger municipalities (see next section) have an elected legislature, and cantons as well as municipalities employ various forms of direct democracy. Finally, the cantons are almost totally free with regard to the organization of their municipalities. There are two city cantons (i.e., Basle-City and Geneva) with almost no autonomy of municipalities, and there are mountain cantons (e.g., Graubünden) with strong autonomy of municipalities.

Taking all the different elements of the Swiss political system together, the most important features are the bottom-up construction of the federal polity and the concept of power sharing, which is implied not only in the concepts of federalism and local autonomy but also in the existence of multiparty governments and direct democracy.

HISTORY, STRUCTURES, AND INSTITUTIONS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The term “local government”¹³ in Switzerland usually refers to the municipalities, the order of government closest to the people.¹⁴ The entire territory consists of municipalities. There is no area falling directly under federal rule, and there is no special constituent status attributed to cities. In addition to the so-called “political municipalities” (*Einwohnergemeinden*), which are –

despite significant differences as far as their tasks and competences are concerned – considered equal within a canton, the constitutional laws of some cantons also allow for single-purpose municipalities. Six cantons still have “school municipalities”¹⁵ that do not have to coincide with the political municipalities. There are still a few “municipalities for social security and care for the poor,” even though they lost their importance long ago, and the Catholic and Protestant churches are also organized as municipalities (*Kirchgemeinden*) in most parts of the country.¹⁶ Single-purpose municipalities usually have their own elected authorities, levy taxes according to their needs, and offer their “citizens” the possibility to influence their decisions. However, for quite a few years, the remaining single-purpose municipalities have been increasingly integrated into the political municipalities.¹⁷ An equal loss of influence has also happened to the traditional forms of municipalities (usually named *Burger-* or *Bürgergemeinden*), which unite citizens and families having ancestral roots in a locality (landed gentry or burghers) and/or people born in the municipality who are accepted into the *Bürgergemeinde*.¹⁸ Primarily, these citizens jointly govern common or public goods of the municipality (e.g., land, forests, and pastures).¹⁹ However, in some cantons (e.g., Zoug), it is still the members of these traditional forms of municipalities who decide whether Swiss citizenship is to be given to an immigrant from another country. The granting of citizenship involves all three orders of government. First, a naturalization permit must be obtained from the confederation; then it is necessary to apply for citizenship of a canton and a municipality, both of which have their own naturalization requirements. In some municipalities, it is the citizens who decide on the citizenship; in other municipalities, it is an elected body; but in some municipalities, it is still the members of the *Bürgergemeinde*.

For a better understanding of the importance of local government, a quick glance at the history of the country is instructive. Symmetric federalism and relatively autonomous municipalities offering far-reaching political rights to citizens did not characterize the country from the very beginning. These features had to be struggled for and were brought about with foreign help, but they helped to build a united nation-state in a heterogeneous and culturally divided society.

By the end of the eighteenth century, the thirteen “old” cantons, which emerged from the original pact of three mountain cantons under Habsburgian rule fighting for freedom and independence, had formed a feudalist regime of privileges, exploiting the resources and people of the newly acquired regions. In the new cantons and in the municipalities, political rights were reserved for a small elite of well-established long-time residents.²⁰ Hence, when troops of the French Revolution invaded Switzerland in 1798 with the promise of equality and democracy, they were at least partly welcome.

Although France failed to unite the cantons in a centralized Helvetic republic, which would have left very little autonomy to the cantons and the municipalities, the French eventually broke the privileges of the old cantons and instituted equal rights in local matters for all Swiss citizens living in a municipality. With the so-called “Mediation Act” of 1803, Napoleon restored the autonomy of the cantons, and in 1815 the Swiss returned to the old system, to a confederation of now twenty-five independent cantons that considered themselves to be sovereign states and were held together by a treaty guaranteeing collective security and mutual assistance.²¹ The municipalities regained their autonomy and were no longer considered to be only administrative units.

In the decades following 1815, however, there was not only an increasing demand for more democracy in some of the cantons but also an internal polarization between the Radicals from the Protestant and more industrialized areas, who advocated a more centralized nation-state, and the Conservatives, mainly from the Catholic and rural areas, who insisted that decisions of the Conference of Delegates (*Tagsatzung*) should be taken unanimously.²²

After a short civil war (*Sonderbundskrieg*) in 1847, which was lost by the Conservatives, the loose confederation of cantons became a federation of cantons, a federal nation-state.²³ In the following year, the cantons and their citizens accepted the new federal Constitution and agreed to a national executive authority and a parliament. The cantons hereby agreed to give up some of their rights. However, to ensure acceptance by the Conservatives as well as by the cultural minorities in the French- and Italian-speaking areas, federalism seemed to be the only solution, and the competences of the federal authorities remained rather limited. The privileges of the well-established long-time residents in the municipalities remained untouched until 1874, when the revised Constitution finally granted the right to vote on local affairs to every Swiss citizen (nationwide, women were not granted the right to vote until 1971), regardless of whether he had always lived in the municipality or moved into it from another part of Switzerland. In the 1874 revision of the Constitution, all male Swiss citizens with domicile in a municipality were granted the right to vote in all political matters after at least three months of residence. Only issues concerning the matters of the *Bürgergemeinde* were excluded from this constitutional right. An outstanding structural characteristic of local government is the small size of many municipalities. More than half of the 2,775 municipalities in 1998 had fewer than 1,000 inhabitants. However, very few people live in such small municipalities. About 90% of the population live in municipalities with more than 1,000 inhabitants.²⁴ Put differently, 56.6% of Swiss live in municipalities of 2,000 to 20,000 inhabitants, and only 12.5% live in cities of more than 100,000 inhabitants. The size of municipalities varies considerably; the largest municipality, the

City of Zurich, has about 360,000 inhabitants, whereas there are some very small municipalities with fewer than 100 inhabitants. Formally, all municipalities are regarded as equal. In reality, their resources, the range of their services, and the problems they face vary considerably. The number of people working for the City of Zurich outnumbers the population of some of the smallest cantons.

Due to the finely meshed political structure of the country, the agglomerations and metropolitan regions also have rather complex territorial and political subdivisions. The fifty agglomerations consist of almost 1,000 municipalities. Parts of an agglomeration or metropolitan region may be in different cantons or even in other countries. The agglomeration of Zurich extends into the cantons of Aargau and Schwyz, and the metropolitan area of Basle reaches into France and Germany. This, of course, does not make cooperation easy. Not only do the different countries insist on their sovereignty, but the cantons and the municipalities also claim self-determination.

Given the small size of so many municipalities, it is not surprising that demands for amalgamations of municipalities have entered the reform agenda. Creating large-scale amalgamations, however, is not as simple as that because it is not in the power of the federal government to force municipalities to amalgamate. Not even the cantons have the power to carry out territorial reforms without the consent of the citizens because cantons usually require the approval of the majority of citizens in each municipality to be amalgamated.²⁵ Initiatives for amalgamations have to come from the bottom, from the municipalities themselves.

After a long period during which hardly any amalgamations took place – apart from the incorporation of municipalities around big cities (e.g., Zurich in 1893 and 1934) – mergers of municipalities have become more frequent in recent times. Between 1848 and 1960 the number of municipalities declined from 3,202 to 3,095. Since 1990 more than 300 municipalities have disappeared, and the total number declined from 3,021 to 2,715 in 2008. It is not only the very smallest municipalities that try to grow by amalgamating with other small municipalities next door. Bigger municipalities and cities (like Luzern, Lugano, and Rapperswil), and whole valleys or regions, also try to raise their performance levels and become more competitive through amalgamations. Most uniquely, in Glaris the citizens decided in 2006 to reduce the number of municipalities from twenty-seven to three.

One of the big obstacles to amalgamations is the different tax levels in the municipalities. Citizens rarely accept amalgamation with another municipality if this means paying more tax. Here, the cantons often step in and help to keep the lower tax level by providing subsidies out of their own budget. Another quite rational argument against amalgamation is the loss of voting power. Because Swiss citizens decide on quite a lot of matters directly, it makes a difference whether you are asked to vote in a small municipality or

whether you are hugely outnumbered by the citizens living in another part of the newly created municipality.

For agglomerations, different tax rates for the different municipalities, and the unequal distribution of voting power between a city and the surrounding municipalities, are especially important. This renders amalgamations more difficult. Also, given the three orders of government and the large number of units for the small size of Switzerland, there has been great reluctance to add another political order by creating regional or metropolitan areas with elected representatives. At the same time, coordination and cooperation in such areas as urban public transport and planning become more and more of a necessity. In 2001 federal authorities, therefore, launched a strategy to focus federal politics on the problems of the agglomerations, to improve cooperation in both the vertical and horizontal dimensions, and to promote the integration of Swiss cities into the network of European cities.²⁶ The creation of the Tripartite Conference of Swiss Agglomerations (Tripartite Agglomerationskonferenz, or TAK) in the same year pointed in the same direction. First steps to address the new challenges have been put forward with the introduction of regional or agglomeration conferences – for example, in the canton of Berne. The municipalities are represented by their mayors, and there are ballots across all the municipalities belonging to the area. Depending on the size of the municipalities, different weightings are given to the mayors and their municipalities.

Instead of amalgamations, many municipalities have chosen various forms of intermunicipal cooperation. The classic form of cooperation is an administrative union (*Zweckverband*), an association under public law. In recent years, however, municipalities have increasingly cooperated on the basis of private law, which offers them more flexibility. In 1998 at least half of all municipalities worked together with at least one other municipality in areas such as schools, medical care, care for the elderly, refuse disposal, water supply, sewage treatment, and civil service. In areas such as support for the unemployed, civil service, fire brigades, and medical care, cooperation has intensified within recent years.²⁷ A nationwide survey in 2005 revealed a further increase in cooperation.²⁸ Civil service has become the area where four out of five municipalities cooperate, followed by medical care, schools, fire brigades, and sewage treatment. Sometimes cooperation even crosses borders, as in the region of the Lake of Constance, where cooperation includes municipalities from Austria and Germany.

CONSTITUTIONAL RECOGNITION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Only recently were Swiss municipalities explicitly mentioned in the federal Constitution. Before that, municipalities were merely creatures of statute

at the discretion of the cantons, which all have a constitution of their own. Some of the cantonal constitutions enumerate all the municipalities, whereas others guarantee their right of existence. Not all municipalities are treated equally with respect to their competences. This, however, is not due to unequal treatment by the confederation but rather to differences between cantons. The capital, the City of Berne, has no prominent position, and representatives of the municipalities are not guaranteed institutionalized access to federal authorities.

On 1 January 2000 the new Article 50 of the federal Constitution was introduced, stating as follows:

- 1 The autonomy of the Municipalities is guaranteed within the limits fixed by cantonal law.
- 2 In its activity, the Confederation shall take into account the possible consequences for the Municipalities.
- 3 In particular, it shall take into account the special situation of cities, agglomerations, and mountainous regions.

The effects of this article are still open to debate. The lobby organizations of the municipalities and cities, which are the driving forces behind the article, consider it a good basis for getting in touch with federal authorities directly, whereas the cantons fear they might be bypassed on important issues. Given the traditionally strong position of the municipalities within the cantons, it cannot be said that the new article changed much. Rather, it merely recorded the entrenched status of the municipalities, as the municipalities already had the possibility to express their position, especially through the association of Swiss municipalities, in the consultation process prior to the enactment of new federal laws. Nevertheless, in some policy fields, such as the integration of foreigners and asylum seekers, where regulation is within the competence of the confederation and execution within that of the cities, the article may shorten the communication distances.

The leading principles of constitutional recognition are subsidiarity and municipal autonomy. Both emphasize the importance of local government. Under the notion of subsidiarity (see, for example, the new Article 5a of the Constitution), all activities not explicitly assigned to higher political levels remain within the scope of cantonal or municipal authorities. Higher levels should thus take over powers of the lower level only when the lower level is not able to assume its responsibilities. Basic pillars of local autonomy are substantial freedom in determining the organization of political systems within terms set by cantonal legislation,²⁹ far-reaching competences to fulfil tasks and provide goods and services, and – especially salient – fiscal autonomy. Municipalities are largely autonomous in the administration and the control of their finances, and they have the competence to fix the rate of the local

tax on income and property, which amounts to more than one-third of the total tax paid by citizens. In fiscal terms, municipalities are thus equal players alongside the cantons and the confederation.

Fiscal autonomy, together with direct democracy, is also a strong argument for making local government accountable to the citizens. Not only can citizens decide on proposals and projects of their local authorities, but they also have to provide the necessary resources, knowing full well that expensive projects will lead to increased taxes. The other side of the coin is that it can be difficult to finance projects that serve minorities only.

On the one hand, the two guiding principles – subsidiarity and local autonomy – have become strengthened in recent years by their more explicitly statement in the course of constitutional revisions; on the other hand, the cantonal constitutions now also anticipate possible interventions by the cantons to increase cooperation between the municipalities and to coordinate, and ensure, comparable services. The solution to the problem of how to combine these two opposing intentions seems to be a conceptual differentiation between strategy and operation. The strategic responsibility for joint services is accorded to the canton, whereas an operative autonomy is granted to the municipalities. There are also attempts by the cantons to define minimal service standards that must be attained by the municipalities and that serve as a basis for allocating financial transfers.

GOVERNANCE ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

To describe the functions and the power of local government, a distinction has to be made between tasks that are allocated to the municipalities by legislation from the federal and cantonal governments and those that fall within the competences of the municipalities themselves. As regards the latter, at least they have a general residual competence, and the range of their activities depends largely on their resources and the demands of the citizens. All activities that are not explicitly federal or cantonal belong to the municipalities. For the former – the tasks allocated by the higher level, which have constantly increased in recent years – there are no distinctions drawn between the municipalities, but given their size differences, it is obvious that not all municipalities can fulfil the same mandate.

Characteristic of Swiss cooperative federalism is a relatively weak national state. The share of the federal government's contribution to expenditures amounts to a little more than 30% (31.7% in 2004), leaving about 68% to be met by the cantons and the municipalities. The bigger part, a little more than 40%, is spent by the cantons, and just over 25% is spent by the municipalities. These percentages have remained stable over the past twenty years, especially for the cantons. The federal government has increased its share by about 5% at the expense of the municipalities' spending power.³⁰

The public expenditures of each order of government (after intergovernmental transfers) reflect the responsibilities of the different orders quite well. Not surprisingly, the federal government is responsible for foreign relations, national defence, and the national economy. In 2006 these three functional areas together covered about 22% of the total spending of the federal government, with national defence amounting to 8.5%. More important in terms of expenditure for the federal government are social security (27%), interest payable and tax income belonging to third parties such as the cantons (22%), and traffic (15%), areas where the federal government is also responsible for the biggest part of the expenditures. Social security and finances covering that portion of federal tax income that goes to cantons, insurance, and interest on debt repayment are the areas with the largest increases in the past fifteen years, whereas the biggest decrease occurred in the area of national defence.

Unlike in unitary states, where quite important local expenditures fall within the competence of local government, in the Swiss Confederation these expenditures fall into the jurisdiction of the cantons. The cantons are responsible for more than half of the expenditures in the two important areas of health and education. The municipalities are the most important actors in environment and planning, culture and leisure, and together with the cantons, education, where they are responsible for primary schools. Regarding the expenditures of only the cantons, the most important services are education, social security, and public health, consuming 25%, 19%, and 18% respectively of cantonal expenditures (table 11.1). The most important municipal expenditures are very similar to those of the cantons: education, public health, and social security, which account for 22%, 21%, and 16% respectively of the municipal expenditures. In these areas, there is very often a clear division of competences; for example, the cantons are responsible for the universities and additional payments to health insurance, whereas the municipalities are responsible for the homes for the elderly. Sometimes there are overlapping services (e.g., hospitals run by the cantons and by the municipalities). Sometimes planning or instruction is the function of the cantons, and the municipalities have executive functions. For example, the organization of primary-school teaching and the setting of curricula are in the hands of the canton, but the schools are run by the municipalities.

The cantons have independent control over their education systems and social services, leading to different curricula and different services between cantons. Each canton has its own police force, and some laws differ from one canton to another. In some cantons, the police power is shared between the canton and the municipalities. The specific activities of the municipalities include administration and control of municipal finances, tax-rate assessment, administration of social security and public health (hospitals), care of the

Table 11.1
 Swiss Confederation: Percentage public expenditures of cantons
 and municipalities, 1990 and 2004*

	Cantons		Municipalities	
	2004	1990	2004	1990
Administration	4.9	5.4	8.5	9.5
Security	8.3	9.5	5.2	6.3
Education	25.1	26.8	21.6	22.1
Culture and leisure	2.1	2.3	5.6	6.6
Public health	18.2	17.6	20.7	16.0
Social security	19.0	11.7	15.8	11.1
Traffic	9.1	11.2	7.1	8.7
Environment	2.0	2.9	8.0	9.2
Economy (regulation, support)	5.9	6.2	1.5	3.4
Finances and tax (interest, transfers, duties)	5.4	6.2	5.9	7.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total (CHF/US\$ billions)	CHF68.9 (US\$55.0)	CHF41.1 (US\$28.6)	CHF44.3 (US\$35.4)	CHF30.2 (US\$21.0)

* Without transfers between cantons or between municipalities.

Source: Eidgenössische Finanzverwaltung, *Öffentliche Finanzen der Schweiz 2004* (Berne: Eidgenössische Finanzverwaltung, 2006), 48–9, 82–3, own calculations.

elderly (including construction of homes for the elderly), and provision of education, waste treatment, electricity, water, gas, and local roads. Municipalities are also in charge of local cultural affairs and of the appointment of municipal executive and administrative authorities. They also determine the requirements for citizenship in the municipality. Here again, there are differences between the cantons.

Joint involvement across different orders of government leads to interwoven policy structures that become difficult to manage due to the resulting political entanglement (*Politikverflechtung*).³¹ In areas like roads, energy, and social assistance, no order takes a strong lead; in areas like education, police, public health, and social assistance, cantons and municipalities are involved equally in financing. It is increasingly argued that, when regulation, financing, and implementation of a policy do not coincide, the system becomes suboptimal. Problems of spillovers and lack of fiscal equivalence are especially salient in city areas.

Given that the federal government is rather weak, the federal administration is small, too. No federal civil servants are active in cantonal or local governments; the same is true for cantonal civil servants in the local arena. The number of persons employed by the municipalities amounts to about 34% of the total public workforce, with 47% employed by the cantons. In the past few decades, the cantons have increased their share of public employment to the detriment of the federal government's role, whereas the share of the municipalities has remained relatively stable. In absolute terms, the number of public employees has decreased in terms of the total figure as well as federal and municipal employment, which is due not only to cuts but also to outsourcing (e.g., telecommunications, infrastructure, and supply services). The growing importance of the health and education sectors, which are cantonal competences, has led to an increase both in the share of the cantons and in their absolute numbers.

In accordance with the federalist division of power, municipalities enjoy remarkable freedom with regard to their political organization. The political organization of a municipality is governed by cantonal legislation. There are twenty-six different cantonal laws telling municipalities how to set up and organize their political institutions. This has led to a number of distinct political systems throughout the country,³² and quite a few cantonal laws impose very limited institutional requirements on their municipalities.

Basically, there are two different types of local political systems. Some municipalities reflect a division of power similar to that suggested by Montesquieu, at least in regard to executive and legislative bodies. They have a local parliament, which is also called a municipal or city council (*Grosser Gemeinderat*, *Einwohnergemeinde*, *Gemeindeparlament*). The local parliament is a body of between 10 and 120 representatives elected by the citizens entitled to vote in the municipality in a proportional representation (PR) system. Other municipalities have a municipal assembly, a gathering or meeting of all citizens entitled to vote, representing a form of direct democracy in the tradition of Rousseau and the ancient Greeks. The competences of the parliament and assembly are very similar. They have both a control and an input function with respect to the activities of the executive, and they decide on all important projects and proposals that are not within the competence of the executive or the citizens at the polls. Typical concerns of a parliament or assembly are municipal projects of particular importance, projects with financial consequences above a certain amount, minor changes of municipal decrees and regulations, and acceptance of the municipal account, the budget, and the tax rate.

Which form a municipality chooses depends on its size and cultural background. Bigger municipalities and almost all cities have a local parliament. But local parliaments are also more widespread in the French-speaking cantons, where – close to France – the tradition of representative democracy is much stronger.³³ Given the smallness of Switzerland's municipalities and the

larger number of municipalities in the German-speaking part, fewer than 20% of municipalities have a local parliament.³⁴ Nevertheless, some municipalities with well above 10,000 inhabitants still have a local assembly.³⁵ The division of power prohibits the mayor and the other members of the executive from being at the same time members of the local parliament.

The municipal assembly is a genuine form of direct democracy. It is a gathering of all citizens entitled to vote in the municipality, taking place two to four times per year. In these gatherings, binding decisions are made on changes to municipal rules and on public policies and spending. Everyone is entitled to have a say, and the decisions are made – unless a secret vote is requested – by a show of hands. Despite the decisional power of the municipal assembly, the rate of participation is low. In municipalities with fewer than 250 inhabitants, the rate is about 30% of citizens entitled to vote. This figure steadily falls as the size of the municipality increases. In municipalities of between 10,000 and 20,000 inhabitants, the average participation rate is below 5%.³⁶ The main reason for such a low turnout is the demanding character of this form of deliberation and decision making.

The local executive usually has between three and seven members from different parties. They are directly elected by the citizens in a majority system.³⁷ Most of the executive members do their job on a voluntary basis (*Milizsystem*). Only the biggest cities and a very few cantons have full-time executives. The mayor, too, is directly elected by the citizens. Reimbursements and expenses, as well as salaries for the full-time executives in the bigger municipalities, are paid by the municipality. Full-time executives tend to stay longer in office, whereas many of the volunteer members leave office after one or two electoral periods.

For the executive, it makes quite a difference whether it faces a local parliament or a municipal assembly because the local executive enjoys more freedom when it has to deal with a municipal assembly. But sometimes the decisions of the citizens may be unpredictable, depending, for example, on who turns up at the assembly. In municipalities with a parliament, the executive has to deal with parties and party politics. This means that there is a more open political debate, and the positions of the different actors are known in advance. Nevertheless, it would be wrong to believe that the parliament is effectively able to control and steer local politics. The gaps in political knowledge and understanding between the members of parliament and the members of the executive make such a task very difficult for parliamentarians.

Regardless of whether they have a parliament or an assembly, municipalities also have other forms of direct democracy, like referendums and initiatives, which affect the functioning of the executive and parliament.³⁸ In municipalities with a parliament, direct democracy addresses the decisions of the executive and the parliament; in municipalities with an assembly, direct democracy addresses the executive as well as decisions of the assembly.

Comparative studies show that Swiss citizens are quite satisfied not only with their local administrations and the services and facilities provided by local government but also with the possibilities to influence local politics.³⁹ Corruption is hardly an issue. Complaints, if there are any, are due much more to the small size of a municipality and the proximity between its citizens; everybody knows everybody, and personal interests and local politics are difficult to separate.

FINANCING LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Swiss municipalities enjoy far-reaching fiscal sovereignty. In line with the bottom-up construction of the Swiss nation-state, and backed by the principle of fiscal equivalence, they finance their activities themselves through taxes, fees, and charges. They are allowed to accumulate surpluses or debt, and they prepare a budget, which they have to submit to the local parliament, assembly, or sometimes directly to the citizens in a referendum. Financial control is exercised first by municipal committees and second by the cantonal administration, which supervises the financial administration. The cantonal supervision, however, is rather weak; only if the municipalities abuse their liberties does the canton step in, but this rarely happens.

The most important source to cover municipal expenses is taxes. Within quite a broad range usually fixed by the canton, municipalities set the tax rate on personal income and property. Swiss citizens pay taxes to all three orders of government. In 2004 local taxes amounted to a little more than 33% of total individual taxation, and they are paid directly to the municipality; a little more than 33% is paid directly to the canton, and a little less than 30% goes to the federal government. The exact amounts an individual has to pay to the three orders depend on his or her income because the progression of the federal tax rate differs from the progression of the rates in the municipalities and cantons. Municipal and cantonal tax rates are usually flatter.

Fiscal autonomy produces huge differences in individual tax burdens, depending on the municipality and the canton of residence. A father of three children earning CHF200,000 (US\$164,939) a year and living in the City of Zurich has to pay CHF12,000 (US\$9,896) to the municipality, whereas in the neighbouring municipality of Zollikon, he would have to pay only CHF7,200 (US\$5,938). Living in the canton of Zurich, he additionally has to pay CHF10,000 (US\$8,247) in income tax to the canton. If he were to move to Jura, he would have to pay CHF20,000 (US\$16,494), whereas in Schwyz it would be only CHF6,500 (US\$5,361).⁴⁰ These tax differences, of course, motivate high-income individuals to move to low-tax jurisdictions, and they also enhance intermunicipal competition.⁴¹ Occasionally, municipalities try to reduce their tax rate to make themselves

more attractive, and sometimes people move to such municipalities. In low-tax municipalities, however, higher land prices and rents and higher costs of living counterbalance an individual's tax gains.

In 2004 direct taxes on income and property provided the biggest part of the revenue not only of the municipalities but also of the cantons, at 38.4% and 35.1% respectively (table 11.2). On all levels taxation of income yielded about ten times as much as taxation of property. The second most important source of revenue for municipalities was fees and charges (28.6%), followed by transfers from the canton (12.2%) or from other municipalities (3.9%). Transfers from cantons without any specific purposes were relatively low (4.1%), with other sources making up 2.1%.

The municipalities can also issue bonds or borrow money from banks. The Emission Centre of the Swiss Municipalities is a cooperative of more than one-third of Swiss municipalities, which offers loans at advantageous rates. Municipalities taking up a loan agree on a joint guarantee. If one municipality cannot pay back the loan, the others are supposed to pay it.

The structural differences between the municipalities – and more specifically, the inability of some municipalities to generate sufficient tax income – make sophisticated systems to balance inequalities necessary. On the one hand, there are transfers from richer to poorer municipalities; on the other hand, the cantons allot more money to the less affluent municipalities. The functioning of these systems, which were often based on the financial situation of the municipalities and directly linked to special activities, has been heavily criticized in recent years, and most of the cantons are – as we shall see – about to reform them.

In general, however, the financial health of the municipalities is, apart from some exceptions, much better than that of the confederation or the majority of the cantons. In 2007 the estimated total debt of the public sector amounted to about CHF234 billion (US\$190 billion), which is about 48% of GDP. The municipalities' share is about 16% of the total public debt. The share of the cantons (28%) is higher, whereas the largest portion (56%) is that of the federal government.⁴² In light of these data, it is not surprising that the higher political levels tend to make the lower ones pay more for public services.

SUPERVISION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Local government is supervised by the canton. This supervision includes the decisions of the citizens at the assembly or in the course of referendums and initiatives as well as the activities of the local authorities. In areas that fall within the competence of the municipalities, supervision is restricted to the lawfulness of the municipalities' activities; in areas that do not fall within the autonomy of the municipalities, supervision also relates to the appropriateness of activities.

Table 11.2

Swiss Confederation: Percentage revenue structure of the confederation, the cantons, and the municipalities, 2004

Revenue	Confederation	Cantons	Municipalities
<i>A. Taxes</i>	92.1	49.4	48.2
Income and property tax, including:	35.4	35.1	38.4
• direct federal tax	24.3		
• income tax			34.4
• property tax			4.0
Excise duties, including :	51.6		
• value-added tax	36.4		
Other taxes	5.1		
<i>B. Fees and charges</i>	3.8	15.7	28.6
<i>C. Transfers without special purposes (untied)</i>	0.0	7.2	4.1
<i>D. Transfers and reimbursements, including:</i>	0.1	22.3	17.0
• confederation		13.6	0.0
• cantons		1.8	12.2
• municipalities		5.8	3.9
<i>E. Others</i>	4.1	5.4	2.1
Total (A + B + C + D + E)	100.1	100.0	100.0
Total (CHF/US\$ billions)	CHF48.6 (US\$38.8)	CHF64.8 (US\$51.8)	CHF43.4 (US\$34.7)

Source: Eidgenössische Finanzverwaltung, *Öffentliche Finanzen der Schweiz 2004* (Berne: Eidgenössische Finanzverwaltung, 2006), 24–5, 46–7, 80–1, own calculations.

A canton usually has an office within its department of justice or internal affairs that is responsible for the municipalities. This office organizes the control of the municipalities' public finances and determines whether the decrees of the municipalities conform to cantonal laws. The canton also provides municipalities with further information necessary for their activities and supports them in their reform endeavours, such as amalgamation with another municipality or the implementation of New Public Management. This support is welcomed by smaller municipalities, whereas the cities either do not need or do not want support from the canton.

The extent of supervision by the canton depends on the legal framework that is given to the municipalities, the size of the municipalities, and the strength of the canton itself. The bigger the municipalities, the less detailed

the cantonal law; and the weaker a canton, the greater the autonomy of its municipalities. In general, the municipalities are less autonomous in the French-speaking part of Switzerland, whereas they are more autonomous in the Northeast and in the central mountainous regions – the German-speaking part of Switzerland.

It is within the principles of municipal autonomy and subsidiarity that the cantons keep a tight rein on the municipalities. There are no ways to dismiss an elected council (except for disciplinary matters) or to override local laws and decisions on political grounds without legal or constitutional backing. But cantonal authorities have to step in if a municipality goes bankrupt or is no longer able to elect municipal authorities. Such cases, however, happen very rarely. In the case of bankruptcy, all financially relevant decisions have to be accepted by the cantonal authorities; in the case of an inability to elect municipal authorities, a cantonal commission agent assumes the administration of the municipality until a new council is elected.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

Given that the confederation has no direct implementing capacity in its areas of competence, implementation of federal policies is left to cantons and municipalities, with the cantons acting as intermediaries between the confederation and the municipalities. There is no federal ministry responsible for local government or local affairs. Such ministries exist only in the cantons. Top-down planning and policymaking are thus cumbersome and time-consuming exercises, which sometimes cannot prevent diverging results, as in the case of land-use practices.

Financial transfers between the orders of government are quite common as a means of political steering and equalization. The confederation uses only one-third of its total expenditures for its own purposes, whereas two-thirds are transfer payments, most of them in favour of the cantons and some of them in favour of the municipalities. About two-thirds of the transfers to the cantons have been transfers for special purposes. Since 2000 there has, for the first time, been a shift toward untied transfers. Transfers from the cantons to the municipalities are less than transfers from the confederation to the cantons; nevertheless, one-fourth of the expenditures of the cantons are transfers to the municipalities.⁴³

As a direct consequence of the delegation of implementation to the cantons and localities, the higher levels often depend on the know-how of the lower levels, which are closer to the problems to be solved. Representatives of the cantons and the municipalities, for example, are frequently members of the different groups of experts consulted by the federal administration. Similarly, they are also represented in many of the extraparliamentary commissions.⁴⁴

Policymaking is thus highly dependent on cooperation between the three orders of government. Swiss federalism is often described as a typical form of cooperative federalism. Over time, this has led to a high degree of *Politikverflechtung*, which is felt as an increasing loss of autonomy by the municipalities. Not only have more and more government activities been delegated to the municipalities, but legal restrictions stemming from the federal and cantonal governments have also intensified and become more complex. Although this has led to an increased dependence on higher orders of government and infringed upon local autonomy,⁴⁵ some observers claim that in certain areas local executive authorities still retain far-reaching competences.⁴⁶

Not surprisingly for a federal polity, the cantons have a strong influence on national politics. They play an important role in policy formulation, decision making, and implementation.⁴⁷ The cantons – together with parties and interest groups – take part in the pre-parliamentary consultation procedure (*Vernehmlassungsverfahren*).⁴⁸ However, their role here is less important than is implied by their strong position in the implementation process.⁴⁹ During the parliamentary decision-making process, it is the Council of States, where the smaller cantons are overrepresented, that can be seen as the core element of cantonal influence. For constitutional amendments, a majority of the cantons is needed, and their responsibility for implementation allows them to put forward their own program priorities.⁵⁰

An increasingly important means of influencing federal decisions is the intercantonal conferences of directors (*Interkantonale Direktorenkonferenzen*), which bring together the task-specific members of the cantonal governments – for example, the Conference of the Cantonal Ministers of Finance and the Conference of the Cantonal Ministers of Education.⁵¹ In 1993, in the aftermath of the rejected European Economic Area Agreement, the Conference of the Cantonal Governments was established to coordinate the formulation of the political demands of the cantons and to increase their influence in foreign and European policy. Finally, there are intercantonal conferences of experts, which are organized at various levels of the administration and bring together a considerable amount of knowledge missing in the federal government.

The direct access of the municipalities and the cities to federal decisions is less formalized, and direct intervention of the confederation in local affairs, and even simple contacts between municipalities and the confederation, are rather exceptional. The Association of Swiss Municipalities and the Association of Swiss Cities take part in the pre-parliamentary consultation procedure and generally operate as lobby organizations. Especially the cities – with the backing of the new constitutional Article 50 – have tried to get more influence in recent times by claiming that their problems (e.g., traffic in the metropolitan areas, drug abuse, integration of foreigners, and asylum seekers) are not duly taken up in federal politics. In

general, however, it is still accepted that the municipalities are supposed to address the canton, whereas the cantons address the federal government.

In light of the growing importance of the agglomerations and the lack of policy coordination between the federal, cantonal, and municipal governments, the need for improvement has been widely recognized.⁵² As a first step, in 2001 the three orders of government created the Tripartite Conference of Swiss Agglomerations (Tripartite Agglomerationskonferenz, or TAK) to promote cooperation in policy fields relevant to metropolitan areas. This conference involves the confederation, the Conference of the Cantonal Governments, the Association of Swiss Cities, and the Association of Swiss Municipalities. Given the many shared responsibilities – such as transport, spatial planning, environment, social welfare, and healthcare – and the strong impact federal policies have on metropolitan areas, such a permanent forum appears to be very promising. For the first time, the division of competences has given way to a partnership among all three orders of government. Some observers describe this rather informal manner of cooperation, in the case of the agglomerations, as being a first step away from the traditional cooperative federalism between the confederation and the cantons and toward multilevel governance. Nevertheless, this new development has not affected the traditional strong position of the cantons. The situation is better described as coexistence between strong cantons and relatively strong cities, whose relations are mediated by the federal government.⁵³

Access of the municipalities to cantonal decisions may vary from one canton to another. In some cantons, there are direct democratic means available to the municipalities (initiatives or referendums in a certain number of municipalities), but the most important way to influence cantonal politics in favour of the municipalities is through elected members in the cantonal parliaments and through interest associations like the cantonal associations of municipalities (although they do not exist in all cantons) or the cantonal associations of mayors or higher municipal administrators. In a very like manner, the national Association of Swiss Municipalities and the national Association of Swiss Cities try to strengthen the impact of the municipalities on federal politics.

An important linkage function between the different orders of government is also played by politicians. The typical career of a Swiss politician involves moving up the ladder from the municipal to the federal government. A considerable number of politicians represent not only their political party in that arena but also their municipality or their canton. Having a member of a municipal executive who is at the same time a member of a cantonal parliament, or having a member of a cantonal government who is also a member in the federal Parliament (*cumul des mandats*), is one way to ensure the influence of the canton or municipality. This, however, is not accepted

equally in all cantons. Whereas some cities and cantons gladly accept a member of their executive having a mandate at a higher level, as this member can keep them informed or even increase their influence, others do not allow it, claiming that the workload becomes too heavy or the single politician too powerful. Another way is offered by the constituencies and the electorate. Constituencies for the federal Parliament are the cantons, and for cantonal elections most politicians depend on the support of the voters from their municipalities. If politicians want to be sure to get re-elected, they have to be careful not to upset the citizens in their municipality or canton.

POLITICAL CULTURE OF LOCAL GOVERNANCE

Swiss political parties are rather weak, at least in organizational terms. Federalism splits the party system into twenty-six different cantonal party systems, and the smallness of many of the municipalities prevents the parties from being organized in all localities. The strength of the different parties varies among the orders of government. In the national arena, the two most important parties are the Swiss People's Party (SVP) and the Social Democrats (SP). In the cantonal parliaments (and more especially in the cantonal governments), the Christian Democrats (CVP) and the Radical Party (FDP) are still considerably stronger. This is due largely to the smaller cantons in the mountainous areas, where especially the Christian Democrats and, to a minor extent, the Radical Party play a more important role.

Although local politics is often considered to be more pragmatic – that is, more oriented toward problem solving and less concerned about ideologies – a large number of political parties can be found locally, especially when we consider the small size of most municipalities. More than 60% of the municipalities have political parties that are subsections of the national parties. In general, these local parties do not depend strongly on their cantonal or national parties. The party at a higher level, for example, is not supposed to interfere in the local party's recruitment process.

The percentage of municipalities with political parties was even higher twenty years ago. Since then, due to the weakening party ties of the citizens, political parties have been losing their influence, at least in the smaller municipalities.⁵⁴ In these municipalities, there has also been an increase of no-party members elected to the local executive. Increasingly, citizens also elect candidates from local citizens' organizations. Today, about 30% of the members of the local executives have no party affiliation.

Apart from the biggest cities, a majority of the municipalities are dominated by the political right. At the beginning of 2005, the Radical Party, the Christian Democrats, the Liberal Party, and the Swiss People's Party together held just above 60% of the seats in the executives.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, this share has decreased by about 5% over the past twenty years,⁵⁶ which goes hand in

hand with the turn to the left of the biggest cities. Nowadays, they diverge politically not only from most of the cantons but also from many of their surrounding municipalities. At the beginning of 2008, the five biggest cities (Zurich, Berne, Basle, Geneva, and Lausanne) had a left-wing mayor as well as executive and a legislative body with left-green majorities, whereas the more affluent municipalities around the cities were dominated by right-wing parties. Not surprisingly, local politics in cities differs quite considerably from local politics in smaller municipalities due to higher media coverage and different prerequisites for citizens to take part.⁵⁷

Because the representation of women is higher in left-wing parties, there is also a higher representation of women in the biggest cities, compared to smaller towns and municipalities. In 2006 women occupied 34% of the seats in the executives of the eight cities with more than 50,000 inhabitants and 37% of the seats in the parliaments.⁵⁸ Across all municipalities, a little more than 20% of the seats in the executives were held by women.

The principle of power sharing⁵⁹ applies not only to the federal government, in which the four biggest parties are represented, but also to the cantonal and local executives. There are hardly any single-party executives, and the most important parties are usually represented in the local executive. This might at first be surprising given that the majority system for electing the executive is the rule in most cantons and municipalities. In accordance with the principles of consociational democracy (*Konkordanzdemokratie*), however, a “voluntary proportionality” (*freiwilliger Proporz*) is practised. The leading party abstains from presenting a full slate of candidates to make room for opposition-party candidates. In smaller communities, of course, abstaining from running for all seats is not always voluntary, as it can be difficult to find suitable candidates for each available seat. Running for all seats also carries the danger that candidates of the same party may take votes away from each other and fall behind the candidates of the other parties. Sometimes the parties present fewer candidates to avoid the risk of possible defeat, especially when running against current officeholders. One common strategy for the leading party is to abstain from running for all seats under certain conditions. The smaller parties are offered a number of seats in accordance with their strength. In return, they have to nominate candidates who suit the stronger parties.

Local politics in Switzerland is based on voluntary engagement and high citizen involvement. The *Milizsystem* (the firmly established tradition that Swiss citizens hold a public office alongside their normal jobs) and the smallness of the political units lead to a high degree of citizens' involvement in holding public office. With the seats in the local executive and parliament as well as the various commissions in the different policy fields, an average of about fifty different political posts per municipality have to be filled by citizens. In small municipalities, one out of eight or ten citizens holds public

office. This can be seen as a form of social capital. In recent years, however, this high demand to fill public offices has encountered problems on the supply side. The municipalities, and more particularly the local political parties, which are the most important recruitment agents for public officeholders, find it increasingly difficult to recruit enough qualified candidates. That a municipality has a parliament can, on the one hand, make it easier for the parties to recruit candidates from among the members of the parliament to run for election to the local executive. On the other hand, the parties have to find enough candidates for their seats in the parliament in the first place. According to survey results, it is most difficult to find enough candidates in the medium-sized municipalities.⁶⁰ In the big cities, public office is sufficiently prestigious and, in the case of a seat in the executive, well remunerated. In the very small municipalities, these offices are less time-consuming, and it is probably more difficult to refuse an invitation if it becomes obvious that there is nobody else to do the job.

Local elections are by no means second-order elections. Voter turnout in 2004 for local elections was even higher than the turnout for cantonal and national elections, at least in smaller municipalities with up to 5,000 inhabitants. The decline in the turnout for local affairs in bigger municipalities becomes particularly important when we look at the percentage of people attending a local assembly. In 2004, in the smallest municipalities (with fewer than 250 citizens), about one-quarter of the citizens appeared at these meetings, whereas in the biggest municipalities, it was only a small percentage (2.7% or less in municipalities with 5,000 or more citizens). There has also been a decline in participation in all municipalities over the past two decades; however, the larger the municipality, the more pronounced the decline.

Cultural differences between the language areas with respect to local government are rather small, apart from the institutional differences that bring the French-speaking municipalities closer to representative democracy but afford them a somewhat lesser degree of autonomy than the German-speaking municipalities.

EMERGING ISSUES AND TRENDS

Since the 1990s there have been serious attempts to reform local government.⁶¹ The entanglement of tasks and the flow of financial resources between the municipalities and the cantons have been considered to be nontransparent, ineffective, and inefficient and thus to violate the principle of fiscal equivalence. In almost all cantons, therefore, there have been more or less serious attempts to allocate tasks and resources between the cantons and the municipalities more appropriately.⁶² Most of these reforms have also pursued the idea that transfers to the localities should be

made on the basis of the municipalities' capacity for raising their own resources and should be given in the form of block grants rather than being tied to the provision of specific tasks.

In some instances (e.g., in the canton of Berne), the reallocation of tasks led – quite unexpectedly – to a shift of tax money to the cantons, which certainly was not desired by the municipalities. However, this shift cannot be seen as a general loss of municipal autonomy because the decisional power of the municipalities in the fields that have been transferred to the canton (i.e., primary schools, social security, and public health) was already very weak. In comparative terms, the fiscal autonomy of the Bernese municipalities still remains high.

In general, the principles of subsidiarity and local autonomy have not been questioned in the course of these reforms and have been upheld in most of the recent revisions of cantonal constitutions. In some task areas, however, local autonomy is restricted to an “operative autonomy,” whereas strategic responsibilities increasingly move to the cantons and the federal government. Cantonal authorities will tell the municipalities what to do, and the municipalities will decide how they want to do it.

The cantons have also enforced their legal competences to make municipalities cooperate more intensively. However, the new possibilities to force municipalities to cooperate have hardly been applied yet. The idea that municipalities should work together to provide certain services more efficiently is by no means new, and such cooperation sometimes even crosses cantonal and, as in the case of Basle and the Bodensee region, national borders. In the history of Swiss municipalities, there have always been some forms of cooperation, which is not surprising given the smallness of many municipalities. For intermunicipal cooperation in general, it seems obvious that in larger territorial units, many services (e.g., waste removal and the fire brigade) profit from economies of scale. But cooperation also raises questions of democratic decision making and control. How can decisions be made within a union of municipalities of different sizes if the principle of “one person, one vote” puts smaller municipalities at a disadvantage? How can delegates on the board of a union of municipalities be controlled democratically, and how, in the case of cooperation on the basis of private law, are contracts to be formulated and property rights to be regulated?

Given the problems of intermunicipal cooperation in terms of democratic decision making and the increasingly complex structure of cooperation sometimes encompassing varying perimeters, it is not surprising that amalgamations and the creation of simpler structures have become part of the reform agenda. Contributing further to this trend are not only the smallness of so many Swiss municipalities but also their difficulties in finding enough candidates for the various public offices and their

problems in fulfilling the increasingly demanding tasks of local government. The amalgamations achieved up to now have shown that the municipalities have improved the quality of their services. Considerable savings, however, occur rather seldom. In any case, amalgamations are seen as a means to strengthen local governments, not as a fundamental change of the territorial organization.

Hardly any canton can force municipalities to amalgamate. The only thing cantons can do is to set up incentives and stop financial equalization efforts that support costly and inefficient structures. An amalgamation of two municipalities needs the support of the majority of the citizens in each municipality in a ballot. More recently, however, amalgamation projects no longer concern only the small municipalities. There have been several projects (e.g., in Lugano, Luzern-Littau, and Rapperswil-Jona) where cities have tried to become stronger and more competitive through amalgamation with surrounding municipalities. Regional traffic, environmental and spatial planning, and economic development are easier to coordinate within only one municipality than across a huge number of municipalities.

Institutionally, no special legal status for cities is in sight. But there are, as we have seen, first steps in this direction: the rather informal cooperation within the Tripartite Conference of Swiss Agglomerations and a commitment of the national authorities to improve the situation. In 2001 federal authorities launched a strategy to focus federal politics on the problems of the agglomerations, improve vertical and horizontal cooperation, and promote the integration of Swiss cities into the network of European cities. The incentives provided by the federal agglomeration policy have proved to be quite successful up to now. A large number of agglomerations have submitted concrete projects for funding.

Additional complexity arises from the geographic situation. Cities like Geneva and Basle, but also Lugano, Schaffhausen, and Kreuzlingen, form metropolitan areas, or at least agglomerations, that reach into other countries.⁶³ Up to now, various forms of cooperation and coordination have been discussed, and quite a few projects have been launched,⁶⁴ but solutions that would produce joint policies that can be controlled democratically are not easy to find. Furthermore, because international developments do not leave cities untouched, there are also attempts to be more involved internationally by having a say in foreign and European policies and by promoting the city as an attractive location for investors.

The small size of municipalities is an important challenge to metropolitan governance in Switzerland. If it is true – as is frequently stated by the cities themselves – that a country needs cities that are global players and that global players have to achieve a size comparable to other metropolitan regions, it seems difficult to see how Switzerland will play an important part in the future. This at least is the fear, backed by corresponding predictions, of

the authorities. The most important cities, like Zurich (banks, insurance), Geneva (international organizations, banks), and Basle (chemical industry), undoubtedly have their strong domains, but they remain very small. If each had to become an internationally comparable agglomeration or metropolitan region, its territory would cover most of the country and considerably disturb the internal equilibrium.

The “Greater Zurich Area” is a first, and till now not unsuccessful, attempt to promote an area across cantonal and national borders – based on a network-like structure, a public-private partnership, and a common strategy – but without any idea of amalgamating. Zurich regularly manages to appear among the world’s highest-ranked cities for living standards. It successfully attracts international companies (e.g., the Google European Engineering Center and Microsoft) and offers a comparatively low tax burden. The area around the City of Zurich also benefits from this development.

A second challenge to Swiss metropolitan governance is how to bring together municipalities with different standards of living and with different tax burdens without infringing on their autonomy and the democratic rights of their citizens. If an amalgamation also means a higher tax burden, no majority will approve it. Because Swiss citizens are used to deciding directly on many political issues and believe to an important extent in the effectiveness of small government, smaller municipalities are always reluctant to join a bigger one in which they face an overwhelming majority. Cooperation within an agglomeration cannot take place without the citizens retaining their direct democratic rights, but “one person, one vote” hardly seems attractive to smaller units.

The first steps to address these challenges have been taken with the idea of regional conventions (*Regionalkonferenzen*) – for example, in the canton of Berne. The municipalities are represented in these conventions by their mayors, and for important issues there are ballots of the citizens in all the municipalities belonging to the region. Depending on the size of the municipalities, different weightings are given to the mayors and the municipalities.

The model that will be successful in addressing the challenges to cities and their surrounding municipalities is difficult to foresee. However, because federal countries are less likely to have dominant cities and are generally more inclined to find solutions when it comes to integrating culturally, economically, and socially different areas on democratic grounds and for mutual benefit, who other than federal countries will be able to show the way not only to good local governance but also to good metropolitan governance?

NOTES

- 1 For easily accessible and/or more detailed information about Switzerland, see <http://www.ch.ch/index.html?lang=en><http://www.ch.ch/schweiz/index>.

- html?lang=en (9 January 2009). For more about Swiss municipalities and local government, see Wolf Linder, "Local Government: The Case of Switzerland," in *Local Government and Urban Affairs in International Perspective*, ed. Jens Joachim Hesse, 409–28 (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 1990); Hans Geser, "The Communes in Switzerland," in *Handbook of Swiss Politics*, 1st ed., ed. Ulrich Klöti et al., 349–92 (Zürich: Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 2004); Katia Horber-Papazian, "The Municipalities," in *Handbook of Swiss Politics*, 2nd ed., ed. Ulrich Klöti et al., 227–52 (Zürich: Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 2007); and Daniel Kübler, "Agglomerations," in *Handbook of Swiss Politics*, 2nd ed., ed. Ulrich Klöti et al., 253–78 (Zürich: Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 2007).
- 2 Population density amounts to about 240 people per square kilometre of the productive area (in 2000). In the agglomerations, which cover about 20% of the total surface area, the density is 590 per square kilometre.
 - 3 The most important parts are the large mountainous areas called the Alps, the Jura, and the Plateau, where most of the population live.
 - 4 In Switzerland the term "agglomeration" is more frequently used than "metropolitan area." An agglomeration is a town or a city with surrounding municipalities having an urban character. A metropolitan region is an extended agglomeration or conurbation that also includes peripheral areas, not themselves necessarily urban in character but closely bound to the urban area by flows linked to employment or commerce. Agglomerations are much smaller than metropolitan areas.
 - 5 The foreigners resident in Switzerland (about 20% of the population) have brought with them their own languages, which taken as a whole now outnumber both Rhaeto-Rumantsch and Italian. The 2000 census showed that speakers of Serbian/Croatian were the largest foreign language group, with 1.4% of the population. English was the main language for 1% of the population.
 - 6 Nevertheless, Rhaeto-Rumantsch is used in official communications with Rhaeto-Rumantsch speakers, who in turn have the right to use their native language in addressing federal authorities.
 - 7 Membership of Christian churches has shrunk in recent years. In 2000 only 16% of Swiss said religion was "very important" to them, ranking far below their families, their jobs, sports, or culture. Another survey published the same year showed that the number of regular churchgoers had dropped by 10% in ten years.
 - 8 The largest company is Nestlé, the biggest food company in the world. It has around 250,000 employees, more than 97% of them outside Switzerland. Banks like Union Bank of Switzerland (UBS) and Credit Suisse are among the world's biggest banks.
 - 9 In 2007 the Parliament did not re-elect one of the two members in government of the Swiss People's Party – the very prominent informal party leader Mr Blocher – and elected another, more moderate representative of the Swiss People's Party instead. The two elected members of the Swiss People's Party were asked by their own party to withdraw from government. They decided to remain in government and

lost confidence and support of their party and eventually became members of a newly founded splinter group.

- 10 For a description of the Swiss federal system, see also Nicolas Schmitt, "Swiss Confederation," in *Constitutional Origins, Structure, and Change in Federal Countries*, ed. John Kincaid and G. Alan Tarr, 347–81 (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005); Thomas Fleiner, "Swiss Confederation," in *Distribution of Powers and Responsibilities in Federal Countries*, ed. Akhtar Majeed, Ronald L. Watts, and Douglas M. Brown, 265–94 (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006); and Wolf Linder and Isabelle Steffen, "Swiss Confederation," in *Legislative, Executive, and Judicial Governance in Federal Countries*, ed. Katy le Roy and Cheryl Saunders, 289–315 (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006).
- 11 In 1978 Jura, which formerly belonged to the canton of Berne, became the twenty-sixth canton.
- 12 The municipalities are called *Gemeinden* in German, *communes* in French, and *comuni* in Italian.
- 13 The term "government" is sometimes misleading for observers of Switzerland. Government (*Regierung*) is – following the principle of separation of power – used for the executive.
- 14 In an attempt to define local government more broadly, one could also refer to all territorially linked structures beyond the cantons. Some of the bigger cantons (like Zurich or Berne) are divided into counties (*Kreise*), and some cities (like Zurich) into districts (*Bezirke*). These subdivisions, however, are of lesser importance compared to the municipalities and are not considered here.
- 15 Namely, the cantons of Zürich, Nidwalden, Glarus, Appenzell-Innerrhoden, St Gallen, and Thurgau. See Andreas Ladner, *Politische Gemeinden, kommunale Parteien und lokale Politik: Eine empirische Untersuchung in den Gemeinden der Schweiz* (Zürich: Seismo, 1991), 29.
- 16 In the French-speaking cantons of Vaud, Neuchâtel, Genève, and Jura, as well as in the German-speaking Basle-Land, there are no "church municipalities." See *ibid.*
- 17 This trend away from single-purpose authorities occurs despite the contradictory claims of some economists. See, for example, Reiner Eichenberger, "Zweckgemeinden statt Zweckverbände! – Effiziente und demokratische kommunale Leistungserbringung dank ROCJ," in *Der politische Raum – Beiträge zu Politik, Wirtschaft, Kultur und Gesellschaft*, ed. Bruno Meier, 39–51 (Baden: Baden-Verlag, 1998); and Reiner Eichenberger, "Starker Föderalismus – Drei Reformvorschläge für fruchtbareren politischen Wettbewerb," in *Der Preis des Föderalismus*, ed. Uwe Wagschal and Hans Rentsch, 177–99 (Zürich: Orell Füssli, 2002).
- 18 The members of the *Bürgergemeinde* do not necessarily have to live in the municipality.
- 19 With the revision of the Constitution in 1874, all Swiss citizens entitled to vote received their political rights locally in their municipality of residence (*Einwohnergemeinde*). These municipalities, however, no longer included the common goods of the old established families who had lived there for a long time. These goods became part of the *Bürger- or Bürgergemeinde*.

- 20 Wolf Linder, *Swiss Democracy: Possible Solutions to Conflict in Multicultural Societies* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1994), 5.
- 21 Common decisions were reached in the conference of canton delegates (*Tagsatzung*), a periodic gathering of representatives of each canton, bound by the instructions of the cantonal governments.
- 22 Linder, *Swiss Democracy*, 6.
- 23 The official name "Swiss Confederation" is misleading because in 1848 Switzerland became a federal nation-state and can no longer be considered a confederation (of cantons).
- 24 Swiss Federal Statistical Office (SFSO), *Permanent Resident Population by Municipality in 1998* (Neuchâtel: SFSO, 2000).
- 25 Note, however, that there have been occasions when the federal authorities eventually backed cantonal attempts to merge municipalities – for example, Ausserbinn in the canton of Valais; and Bignasco, Aquila, Sala Capriasca, and Dongio in the canton of Ticino.
- 26 See <http://www.are.admin.ch/themen/agglomeration/00561/index.html?lang=de> (viewed 2 February 2008).
- 27 Andreas Ladner, Daniel Arn, Ueli Friederich, Reto Steiner, and Jürg Wichtermann, *Gemeindereformen zwischen Handlungsfähigkeit und Legitimation* (Berne: Institut für Politikwissenschaft und Institut für Organisation und Personal, 2000).
- 28 Reto Steiner and Andreas Ladner, "Die Schweizer Gemeinden im Fokus – Ergebnisse der Gemeindebefragung 2005," in *Perspektiven für Gemeindefinanzen*, ed. Glatthard Alexander and Ulrich Isch, 8–34 (Berne: Emissionszentrale der Schweizer Gemeinden, 2006).
- 29 Ladner, *Politische Gemeinden*.
- 30 See Daniel Bochsler, Christophe Koller, Pascal Sciarini, Sylvie Traimond, and Ivar Trippolini, *Les Cantons Suisses sous la Loupe* (Berne: Haupt, 2004), 140.
- 31 For more about *Politikverflechtung*, see Fritz Scharpf, "Die Theorie der Politikverflechtung: Ein kurzgefasster Leitfaden," in *Politikverflechtung im föderativen Staat: Studien zum Planungs- und Finanzierungsverbund zwischen Bund, Ländern und Gemeinden*, ed. Joachim Jens Hesse, 21–31 (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1978).
- 32 Ladner, *Politische Gemeinden*; Andreas Ladner, "Laymen and Executives in Swiss Local Government," in *Transforming Political Leadership in Local Government*, ed. Rikke Berg and Nirmala Rao, 101–15 (London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).
- 33 In the German-speaking part of Switzerland, municipalities with 8,000 to 10,000 inhabitants or more have a parliament, whereas in the French- and Italian-speaking municipalities, this might also be the case in much smaller municipalities. In the cantons of Geneva and Neuchâtel, all municipalities have a parliament, even those with fewer than 1,000 inhabitants.
- 34 Ladner, *Politische Gemeinden*, 81ff.
- 35 This is especially true for Zurich, where about half the municipalities with between 10,000 and 20,000 inhabitants have a municipal assembly.

- 36 Andreas Ladner, "Size and Direct Democracy at the Local Level: The Case of Switzerland," *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy* 20, no. 6 (2002): 813–28, at 823.
- 37 Only about 28% of the municipalities use PR to elect the executive, and a few municipalities have bigger executives. See Ladner, *Politische Gemeinden*.
- 38 Andreas Ladner, "Local Parties in Switzerland: An Active Pillar of the Swiss Political System," in *Local Parties in Political and Organizational Perspective*, ed. Martin Saiz and Hans Geser, 213–41 (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999); Ladner, "Size and Direct Democracy."
- 39 Andreas Ladner and Marc Bühlmann, *Demokratie in den Gemeinden: Der Einfluss der Gemeindegröße und anderer Faktoren auf die Qualität der Demokratie in den Gemeinden* (Zürich and Chur: Rüegger, 2007).
- 40 For calculations, see <http://www.estv.admin.ch/data/sd/d/index.htm?berechnungen/inhalt.htm> (viewed 2 February 2008).
- 41 Gebhard Kirchgässner, "Swiss Confederation," in *The Practice of Fiscal Federalism: Comparative Perspectives*, ed. Anwar Shah, 318–43 (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007).
- 42 See http://www.efv.admin.ch/d/dokumentation/downloads/themen/oeff_haushalte/oeHH_Verschuldungsquote.pdf (viewed 2 February 2008).
- 43 For more information on transfers, see Ernst Buschor, Hans Mäder, and Kuno Schedler, "Entwicklungen im Finanzausgleich – eine Einleitung," in *Perspektiven des Finanzausgleichs in der Schweiz*, ed. Hans Mäder and Kuno Schedler, 3–22 (Berne: Haupt, 1996); and Uwe Serdült and Walter Schenkel, "Bundesstaatliche Beziehungen und Governance im Mehrebenensystem," in *Handbuch der Schweizer Politik*, 4th ed., ed. Ulrich Klöti et al., 553–74 (Zürich: Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 2006).
- 44 Raimund E. Germann, *Ausserparlamentarische Kommissionen: Die Milizverwaltung des Bundes* (Berne and Stuttgart: Verlag Paul Haupt, 1981), 62ff.
- 45 Hans Geser, "Die Gemeinden in der Schweiz," in *Handbuch der Schweizer Politik*, 1st ed., ed. Ulrich Klöti et al., 421–68 (Zürich: Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 1999), 429ff.
- 46 Ulrich Klöti, Theo Haldemann, and Walter Schenkel, *Die Stadt im Bundesstaat – Alleingang oder Zusammenarbeit?* (Zürich and Chur: Rüegger, 1993).
- 47 Adrian Vatter, "Federalism," in *Handbook of Swiss Politics*, 2nd ed., ed. Ulrich Klöti et al., 78–99 (Zürich: Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 2007), 78.
- 48 Consultation takes place prior to the formulation of a project for a new law (legislative Act and related message). The aim of this process is not only to ensure at an early stage of policy formulation that federal bills are sensibly drafted and easy to implement but also to prevent a possible "optional referendum" (*freiwilliges Referendum*).
- 49 Fritz Sager and Isabelle Steffen, "Die Kantone im Vernehmlassungsverfahren des Bundes," in *Föderalismusreform: Wirkungsweise und Reformmodelle föderativer Institutionen in der Schweiz*, ed. Adrian Vatter, 152–73 (Zürich: Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 2006).
- 50 Control and supervision of the implementation are in the hands of the federal authorities but are limited in scope and difficult to execute. The federal order therefore prefers cooperation to conflicts and rarely makes use of its powers. See Ingrid

- Kissling and Peter Knoepfel, "Politikflexibilität dank zentralstaatlichem Immobilismus? Handlungsspielräume kantonaler Vollzugspolitiken im schweizerischen politisch-administrativen System," in *Staatstätigkeit in der Schweiz*, ed. Heidrun Abromeit and Werner W. Pommerehne, 43–61 (Berne: Haupt, 1992).
- 51 Vatter, "Federalism," 94.
- 52 Fritz Sager, "Metropolitan Institutions and Policy Coordination: The Integration of Land Use and Transport Policies in Swiss Urban Areas," *Governance: An International Journal of Policy, Administration, and Institutions* 18, no. 2 (2005): 227–56; Daniel Kübler, Fritz Sager, and Brigitte Schwab, "Governing without Government: Metropolitan Governance in Switzerland," in *Metropolitan Governance in the 21st Century: Capacity, Democracy and the Dynamics of Place*, ed. Hubert Heinelt and Daniel Kübler, 169–87 (London, UK: Routledge, 2005).
- 53 Compared to tendencies elsewhere in Europe, the structure of the state, whether federalist or not, seems to be a crucial explanatory factor. The assertion of cities against regional, or even national, institutions seems to be confined to unitary states (e.g., France and the United Kingdom), whereas in federal systems (e.g., Germany and Belgium) a balance between regions and cities can be found. See Daniel Kübler, Walter Schenkel, and Jean-Philippe Leresche, "Bright Lights, Big Cities? Metropolisation, Intergovernmental Relations, and the New Federal Urban Policy in Switzerland," *Swiss Political Science Review* 9, no. 1 (2003): 261–82, at 276; Daniel Kübler, "Agglomerationen," in *Handbuch der Schweizer Politik*, 4th ed., ed. Ulrich Klöti et al., 259–86 (Zürich: Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 2006); and Daniel Kübler, "The Lost Dimension of Swiss Federalism: Democracy Problems of New Regionalism in Metropolitan Areas," in *Contemporary Switzerland: Revisiting the Special Case*, ed. Hanspeter Kriesi, Peter Farago, Martin Kohli, and Milad Zarin-Nejadan, 256–80 (Houndmills, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).
- 54 Ladner, "Local Parties in Switzerland."
- 55 Andreas Ladner, *Die Schweizer Gemeinden im Wandel: Politische Institutionen und lokale Politik* (Chavannes-près-Remens: Cahier de l'IDHEAP, no. 237, 2008).
- 56 Bundesamt für Statistik (BFS), *Die Exekutiven und Legislativen der Schweizer Städte* (Neuchâtel: BFS, 2006).
- 57 Ladner and Bühlmann, *Demokratie in den Gemeinden*.
- 58 *Statistik der Schweizer Städte 2007*, http://www.stadt-zuerich.ch/internet/stat/home/publikationen/staedtestatistik/STST_2007.html (viewed 2 February 2008).
- 59 See Linder, *Swiss Democracy*; and Arend Lijphart, *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries* (New Haven, CT, and London, UK: Yale University Press, 1999).
- 60 Ladner, *Politische Gemeinden*; Hans Geser, François Höpflinger, Andreas Ladner, Urs Meuli, und Roland Schaller, *Die Schweizer Gemeinden im Kräftefeld des gesellschaftlichen und politisch-administrativen Wandel*, Schlussbericht NF-Project No. 12-32586-92 (Zürich: Soziologisches Institut der Universität Zürich, 1996); Ladner et al., *Gemeindereformen zwischen*.
- 61 For a comprehensive coverage of the problems and the reform activities of the Swiss municipalities, see Geser et al., *Die Schweizer Gemeinden im Kräftefeld*; Ladner et

- al., *Gemeindereformen zwischen*; Daniel Kübler and Andreas Ladner, "Local Government Reform in Switzerland: More 'for' than 'by' – but what about 'of'?" in *Reforming Local Government in Europe*, ed. Norbert Kersting and Angelika Vetter, 137–56 (Opladen: Leske and Budrich, 2003); Andreas Ladner and Reto Steiner, "Reforming the Swiss Municipalities – Efficiency or Democracy?" in *Contemporary Switzerland: Revisiting the Special Case*, ed. Hanspeter Kriesi, Peter Farago, Martin Kohli, and Milad Zarin-Nejadan, 239–55 (Houndmills, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); and Andreas Ladner, "Switzerland: Reforming Small Autonomous Municipalities," in *Comparing Local Governance: Trends and Developments*, ed. Lawrence E. Rose and Bas Denters, 139–54 (Houndmills, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).
- 62 Andreas Ladner and Reto Steiner, *Gemeindereformen in den Schweizer Kantonen: Konzeptuelle Grundlagen und empirische Ergebnisse einer Kantonsbefragung*, Arbeitsbericht No. 28 (Berne: Institut für Organisation und Personal, Universität Berne, 1998), 24ff.
- 63 Alain Thierstein, Christian Kruse, Lars Glanzmann, Simone Gabi, and Nathalie Grillon, *Raumentwicklung im Verborgenen: Die Entwicklung der Metropolregion Nordschweiz* (Zürich: Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 2006).
- 64 Jean-Philippe Leresche, "Enclavement et Désenclavement: La Suisse et la Coopération Régionale Transfrontalière," *Revue Internationale de Politique Comparée* 2, no. 3 (1995): 485–504.