

INNOVATION, WORK, SOCIETY

LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT AS AN INSTITUTIONAL FACTOR
IN THE RESILIENCE OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES IN WARTIMES**Serhij Kramarenko**

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Summary

The article examines local self-government as an institutional factor in the resilience of territorial communities under wartime conditions. The study emphasizes that, during the full-scale Russian-Ukrainian war, territorial communities have become a basic level for ensuring public safety, access to essential services, social support, and the continuity of everyday life. The role of local self-government bodies is considered through their practical capacity to maintain municipal infrastructure, support healthcare, education and social protection institutions, organize assistance for internally displaced persons, and interact with military administrations, civil protection services, volunteer organizations, businesses, and international partners.

The article identifies the main areas in which local self-government contributes to community resilience. These include ensuring the functioning of critical and municipal infrastructure, organizing basic services for the population, responding to security challenges and emergencies, restoring damaged facilities, mobilizing financial and humanitarian resources, developing international cooperation, and maintaining effective communication with residents. Particular attention is paid to the budgetary and financial dimension of local governance, the importance of humanitarian assistance, and the role of partnerships with the civil society sector and local businesses.

It is concluded that the resilience of territorial communities depends not only on material and financial resources, but also on the quality of local coordination, the level of trust in local authorities, the availability of reliable communication channels, and the ability to unite residents around common tasks. Local self-government is therefore presented not merely as an administrative mechanism, but as a practical governance system that supports community functionality, social cohesion, crisis adaptation, and the foundations for post-war recovery.

Key words: local self-government, territorial communities, community resilience, martial law, war, critical infrastructure, basic services, internally displaced persons, crisis management, post-war recovery.

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1. Introduction

In the context of the full-scale Russian-Ukrainian war, the issue of the resilience of territorial communities has acquired particular practical significance. It is at the local level that the consequences of hostilities, humanitarian crises, infrastructure destruction, internal displacement of the population, disruption of economic activity, and growing social tension are manifested most directly. Territorial communities have become not only spaces of residence for the population, but also the basic level for the daily provision of security, access to services, social support, and the organization of community life under conditions of persistent uncertainty.

Under these circumstances, local self-government bodies act as a key institutional actor capable of responding promptly to the needs of the population, coordinating the work of municipal services, supporting the functioning of educational, healthcare, and social protection institutions, organizing assistance for internally displaced persons, and interacting with military administrations, volunteer organizations, businesses, and international partners. Their effectiveness directly influences a community's capacity to maintain governability, social cohesion, and a basic quality of life even under the pressure of war.

2. Powers of Local Self-Government Bodies in Ensuring the Vital Activity of Territorial Communities under Martial Law

The powers of local self-government bodies in ensuring the vital activity of territorial communities under martial law are comprehensive in nature and cover a wide range of managerial, organizational, social, municipal, and security-related tasks. In wartime, local self-government effectively becomes one of the basic levels of public administration, ensuring the continuity of community functioning, maintaining the population's access to essential services, and creating conditions for preserving the governability of the territory. The practical significance of these powers lies in the fact that local self-government bodies are closest to the needs of residents and possess information about the state of infrastructure, social risk groups, local resources, and the community's current problems.

One of the key areas of local self-government activity is ensuring the functioning of critical and municipal infrastructure facilities. This includes water supply, heat supply, electricity supply within the scope of local competence, solid waste removal, maintenance of roads, public spaces, and urban improvement facilities, as well as prompt response to emergency situations (*Pyroha & Pyroha, 2023*).

During the war, these tasks are complicated by infrastructure destruction, disruptions in energy supply, shortages of financial and material resources, and the need for rapid restoration of facilities damaged by shelling. Therefore, local self-government bodies are forced to act not only within the standard administrative cycle but also in a mode of constant crisis management.

Powers in the field of social protection of the population occupy an important place. Local councils, their executive bodies, and municipal institutions identify the needs of vulnerable categories of the population and organize assistance for older people, persons with disabilities, families with children, internally displaced persons, veterans, and family members of military personnel.

In practice, this involves the provision of financial support, humanitarian aid, social services, temporary accommodation, psychological support, assistance in processing documents, and access to state programs. In communities hosting a significant number of internally

displaced persons, the burden on local social infrastructure increases substantially, requiring additional coordination by local self-government bodies with state institutions, international organizations, and the civil society sector.

A separate block of powers is related to supporting the operation of educational, health-care, cultural, and other municipal institutions. Local self-government bodies ensure their financing, material and technical maintenance, adaptation to martial law conditions, arrangement of shelters, organization of remote or blended formats of work, and support for employees and service users.

In the field of education, this means creating conditions for a safe educational process. In the field of healthcare, it involves supporting municipal medical institutions, ensuring access to primary healthcare, and participating in rehabilitation and psychological support programs. Such actions have a direct impact on the social stability of the community, as they make it possible to preserve the basic institutions of everyday life even under wartime conditions.

Under martial law, the role of local self-government in interaction with military administrations, law enforcement agencies, civil protection units, and volunteer structures also increases. Although some administrative functions may be transferred to military administrations during this period, local self-government bodies retain an important role in ensuring local coordination, informing the population, organizing evacuation measures, preparing resilience points, supporting territorial defense, and responding to the consequences of emergencies. Their participation in these processes makes it possible to align state security decisions with the real needs of a specific community.

The budgetary and financial aspect of local self-government powers is no less important. Local authorities make decisions on the redistribution of funds, financing of priority needs, support for municipal enterprises, restoration of damaged facilities, assistance to military formations within the limits established by law, and implementation of local social protection and security programs. The war changes the structure of local priorities; therefore, a significant share of expenditures is directed toward supporting critical infrastructure, defense capability, humanitarian response, and meeting the population's basic needs (*Lehkostup, 2025*).

Thus, under martial law, the powers of local self-government bodies acquire not only administrative but also stabilizing significance. Their practical implementation determines the capacity of a territorial community to maintain vital activity, support the population, adapt to crisis circumstances, and ensure a minimum necessary level of security and social cohesion. Therefore, local self-government should be regarded as one of the key institutional factors of community resilience during wartime.

3. Organization of Basic Services for the Population during the War: Municipal Infrastructure, Social Support, Healthcare, and Education

The organization of basic services for the population during the war is one of the most important practical areas of activity of local self-government bodies, since these services ensure the everyday functioning of territorial communities. Under martial law, community stability largely depends on the uninterrupted operation of water supply, heat supply, waste removal, transport connectivity, social protection, healthcare, and education systems. Even partial disruption in these areas quickly affects the population's quality of life, the level of social tension, and trust in local authorities.

Maintaining municipal infrastructure is of primary importance. Local self-government bodies ensure the operation of municipal enterprises, organize emergency repairs, and monitor the condition of utility networks, roads, improvement facilities, shelters, heating points, and resilience points. During periods of massive shelling and damage to energy infrastructure, the ability of communities to rapidly restore water, heat, and electricity supply to critical facilities, as well as to provide the population with alternative energy sources, generators, drinking water, and temporary accommodation, becomes particularly important. Thus, under wartime conditions, the municipal sector performs not only a service function but also a security function (Nesterov, 2024).

Social support for the population is no less important. The war has significantly increased the number of people in need of assistance, including internally displaced persons, older people, persons with disabilities, families of fallen servicemen, veterans, low-income families, and children affected by the consequences of hostilities.

Through social services, administrative service centers, municipal institutions, and partner organizations, local self-government bodies ensure the registration of needs, the provision of humanitarian aid, temporary accommodation, social support, psychological assistance, and help with applying for state payments. The effectiveness of this work depends on the ability of local authorities to promptly identify vulnerable groups and direct resources to where they are most needed.

In the field of healthcare, the role of local self-government consists in supporting municipal medical institutions, ensuring access to primary and emergency medical care, and organizing the work of outpatient clinics, hospitals, mobile medical teams, rehabilitation programs, and psychosocial support. During the war, community healthcare systems face increased pressure due to injuries, chronic diseases, psychological trauma, population displacement, and staff shortages. Therefore, the practical task of local authorities is not only to maintain medical institutions, but also to provide them with equipment, medicines, backup power supply, transport, and proper working conditions for personnel (Chekhovska, 2025).

The educational sphere is also an important element of community resilience. Local self-government bodies are responsible for organizing a safe educational process, arranging shelters, supporting distance and blended learning, and providing educational institutions with technical equipment, internet access, meals, and psychological support for students. Preserving the functioning of schools and kindergartens is important not only for the realization of the right to education, but also for maintaining social normality, supporting parents' employment, integrating internally displaced children, and reducing the long-term consequences of the war for the younger generation.

The organization of basic services during the war is a practical indicator of the institutional capacity of local self-government. It is through the continuous operation of municipal infrastructure, social support, healthcare, and education that a community preserves its functionality, adaptive capacity, and internal cohesion. In this context, local authorities act not only as service administrators but also as coordinators of survival, recovery, and everyday stability within the territorial community.

4. The Role of Local Self-Government in Responding to Security Challenges, Emergencies, and the Consequences of Shelling

The role of local self-government in responding to security challenges, emergencies, and the consequences of shelling acquires particular practical significance in wartime, since it is at the level of territorial communities that problems are first identified, assistance to the population is organized, and recovery measures are coordinated. Local self-government bodies do not replace military command, law enforcement agencies, or civil protection services; however, they provide the local governance framework without which effective crisis response becomes significantly more difficult. Their activity consists in combining administrative, municipal, social, and informational instruments to preserve the governability of the community.

One of the key areas is the organization of interaction with military administrations, the State Emergency Service of Ukraine, the police, medical institutions, municipal enterprises, volunteer organizations, and humanitarian headquarters. After shelling or other emergency events, local authorities participate in coordinating emergency and rescue operations, inspecting damaged facilities, identifying the priority needs of the population, organizing temporary accommodation, and providing affected people with food, water, warm clothing, medicines, and psychological support. Such coordination helps avoid duplication of efforts, direct resources more rapidly, and maintain a minimum level of community functioning.

An important function of local self-government bodies is to ensure the operation of the public warning and information system. Under conditions of missile strikes, drone attacks, artillery shelling, mine danger, and accidents at infrastructure facilities, prompt and reliable communication has a direct impact on people's safety (*Hrabovets & Chernous, 2025*).

Through official websites, social media, mobile applications, loudspeakers, local media, and municipal services, local authorities inform residents about air raid alerts, rules of conduct, the location of shelters, assistance points, and temporary changes in the operation of transport, educational institutions, healthcare facilities, and municipal services. Preventing panic, the spread of rumors, and disinformation is of particular importance, as these factors may deepen crisis situations during wartime.

A separate area of response is the elimination of the consequences of shelling and the restoration of damaged infrastructure. Local self-government bodies organize the work of municipal enterprises in clearing territories, repairing roads, water, heat, and electricity supply networks, and restoring damaged residential buildings, educational institutions, healthcare facilities, and social infrastructure. In many communities, an important practical mechanism has been the creation of material reserves, the procurement of generators, construction materials, fuel, special equipment, communication devices, and equipment for emergency services. This makes it possible to reduce the time between the occurrence of an emergency and the beginning of recovery works.

Local self-government also pays considerable attention to supporting the population affected by shelling. This includes assistance in preparing inspection reports on damaged property, consultations on compensation mechanisms, organization of temporary housing, provision of financial assistance, and involvement of charitable foundations and international partners. The practical effectiveness of this work depends on how quickly local authorities can move from recording destruction to providing concrete assistance to people (*Oharenko & Kolomiets, 2025*).

Thus, response to security challenges, emergencies, and the consequences of shelling is one of the main dimensions of the institutional capacity of local self-government under wartime

conditions. It is at the local level that crisis management acquires concrete substance, as it combines population protection, infrastructure recovery, social support, and communication with the community. The effectiveness of these actions directly affects the resilience of the territorial community, the level of trust in authorities, and the population's ability to withstand prolonged wartime pressure.

5. Mobilizing Resources to Support Community Resilience: Local Budgets, Humanitarian Assistance, International Cooperation, and Partnerships

Mobilizing resources to support community resilience in wartime is one of the key practical tasks of local self-government bodies. Martial law substantially changes the structure of territorial communities' needs, since, alongside traditional expenditures on the municipal sector, education, social protection, and urban improvement, there arises a need to finance security measures, restore damaged infrastructure, support internally displaced persons, assist military formations within the limits established by law, and ensure the stable operation of critical facilities.

Local budgets remain the primary source of support for resilience. It is through budgetary decisions that local self-government bodies determine priorities for responding to current challenges, redistribute funds for urgent needs, support municipal enterprises, finance emergency and recovery works, implement local social protection programs, and procure generators, fuel, construction materials, and equipment for shelters and resilience points (*Voznyak & Koval, 2022*).

At the same time, the war creates additional constraints for local finances due to reduced economic activity, a shrinking tax base, rising expenditures, and uneven pressure across communities. Therefore, effective budget planning requires the concentration of resources on critical areas, the rejection of secondary expenditures, and greater transparency in the use of funds.

Humanitarian assistance is an important additional resource, provided by charitable organizations, volunteer initiatives, businesses, religious communities, international foundations, and citizens. Local self-government bodies perform a coordinating function, as they must identify the real needs of the population, formulate requests, and organize the receipt, accounting, storage, and distribution of aid. Special attention should be given to internally displaced persons, older people, persons with disabilities, large families, veterans, families of servicemen, and citizens who have lost housing or property as a result of hostilities. Proper organization of humanitarian assistance makes it possible to address critical needs quickly; however, it requires transparent procedures, prevention of duplication, and systematic communication with donors.

International cooperation between territorial communities is of particular importance. In wartime, partnerships with foreign municipalities, international organizations, technical assistance funds, and development programs have become an important instrument for attracting financial, material, expert, and technological resources. Such partnerships may include the transfer of special equipment, medical equipment, generators, vehicles, communication devices, support for educational and social projects, preparation of recovery plans, energy-efficient solutions, and training for local specialists. For communities, this is not only a source of additional assistance, but also a way of integrating into broader networks of solidarity, exchange of experience, and long-term recovery (*Lyndyuk et al., 2023*).

Partnership with the civil society sector and local businesses is also an important resource for resilience. Civil society organizations and volunteer initiatives often respond rapidly to the needs of the population, while businesses can provide transport, logistics, food, equipment,

repair works, or financial support. The task of local self-government is to create conditions for coordinating these efforts, defining priorities, and combining different sources of resources into a unified system of community support (Sova, 2025).

Thus, mobilizing resources to support community resilience is not a one-time anti-crisis action, but a continuous governance process. The effectiveness of local self-government in this area is determined by its ability to combine budgetary capacities, humanitarian assistance, international support, and partnerships with business and civil society. Such multi-channel resource mobilization enables territorial communities to preserve functionality, support the population, and form a basis for post-war recovery.

6. Communication with the Population, Support for Internally Displaced Persons, and Community Cohesion in Wartime

Communication with the population in wartime is one of the practical instruments for maintaining the resilience of a territorial community. In crisis circumstances, citizens need not only material assistance, but also timely, reliable, and clear information about the security situation, the operation of municipal services, the availability of medical, social, and administrative services, the procedure for receiving assistance, and the location of shelters, resilience points, humanitarian headquarters, and temporary accommodation facilities. In this process, local self-government bodies perform the function of an official source of information capable of reducing uncertainty, counteracting panic, and limiting the influence of rumors and disinformation.

The practical effectiveness of communication depends on the regularity of messages, the consistency of the positions of different services, the accessibility of information channels, and the ability of local authorities to explain their decisions. It is important that information be disseminated through various channels, including official websites, social media, local media, mobile applications, hotlines, administrative service centers, starosta districts, and the direct work of social workers (Steshenko et al., 2024).

A separate area of local self-government activity is support for internally displaced persons. Communities that host IDPs ensure their registration, inform them about available services, provide temporary housing, humanitarian assistance, social support, integration of children into the educational process, access to medical care, psychological support, and local employment programs. At the same time, it is important to avoid opposition between local residents and displaced persons, since social tension may weaken the internal unity of the community.

Community cohesion in wartime is formed through the involvement of residents in volunteer initiatives, mutual assistance, public discussions, and local programs supporting the military, affected families, children, veterans, and people in difficult life circumstances. Local self-government bodies should act as coordinators of these processes by combining the resources of municipal institutions, civil society organizations, businesses, and active residents. It is trust, regular communication, and a sense of shared responsibility that enable the community to preserve social stability, adapt to prolonged wartime challenges, and maintain its internal capacity for recovery.

7. Conclusions

Under wartime conditions, local self-government bodies act as one of the key institutional factors of the resilience of territorial communities. Their role consists not only in performing current administrative powers, but also in ensuring the continuity of community life, maintaining basic services, responding to emergencies, coordinating assistance to the population, and preserving governability at the local level.

The practical capacity of local self-government is manifested in its ability to rapidly mobilize resources, maintain municipal infrastructure, organize social, medical, and educational support, and interact with military administrations, civil protection services, the civil society sector, businesses, and international partners. It is this multilevel coordination that enables communities to adapt to wartime risks and reduce the negative consequences of crisis situations.

At the same time, the resilience of a territorial community depends not only on material resources, but also on the quality of communication, the level of trust in local authorities, and the ability to unite residents around common tasks. Further research should focus on assessing the effectiveness of specific practices of local crisis management, models of support for internally displaced persons, mechanisms of international cooperation between communities, and instruments of post-war recovery at the local level.

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