

## *Local Co-Governance: An Exploratory Study on the Third Sector's Artificial Autonomy*

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Local governments are increasingly seen as key facilitators of co-governance processes, enabling collaborative local networks. It is claimed in this article that the necessarily synergistic relationship between local government and civil society in facilitating governance mechanisms requires further elaboration. The issue of who initiates grassroots governance and how autonomous from political power it really is, is seminal to the definition of governance itself. Literature on co-governance lacks the recognition of the impacts of institutional incentives to civic participation, which may not always have the desired effects. This article intends to weigh up the autonomy of grassroots governance and the extent to which it corresponds to a mechanism of shared responsibilities. Through the analysis of data from Portuguese municipalities, it contributes to a wider discussion on the nature and distinctiveness of grassroots governance,

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arguing that it may add new problems to the research agenda and asking for new approaches.

*Key words:* local government, local co-governance, third sector, civil society

## 1. Introduction

The term governance implies that the interest of the analysis goes beyond the functioning and strategies of formal institutions and elected authorities. It stands on a wider notion of politics, including the provision of public services at the level of civil society. In order to identify new ways of »achieving collective action in the realm of public affairs, in conditions where it is not possible to rest on recourse to the authority of the state« (Stoker, 2000), local governments are increasingly seen as key facilitators of these governance processes, enabling collaborative local networks. New agendas on urban politics and local administration reforms have implied an important expansion of the notion of inclusion in policy delivery through non state actors.

However, the necessarily synergistic relationship between local government and civil society in facilitating governance mechanisms requires further elaboration. People engage in collective action using several strategies as well as assorted means and capacities. The issue of who initiates grassroots governance and how autonomous it really is from political power and public institutions is seminal to the definition of governance itself. Most of the known local governance models derive from a normative approach and seek better urban governance arrangements – in general seen as incapable of accomplishing all local government's tasks, insufficient to answer all demands or relying on optimistic assessments of grassroots autonomous and spontaneous organisation.

Although the literature on governance emphasizes social actors' engagement, it lacks the recognition of institutionalized models of civic participation, which may not always have the desired effects. Reverse phenomena, such as adaptation to the desired goals determined by public administration, *etatization* of voluntary initiative, dependence on subsidies, rent-seeking strategies, new forms of power and group privileges and protection, can be easily identified as possible results of such policies. These bring new problems, particularly regarding the co-governance con-

cept and the research on local governance, since they stress the problem of institutionalized mechanisms of building policy networks.

This article is primarily concerned with local governance incentives and the relative autonomy of third sector organisations. The issue of co-governance figures prominently in academia, but it emphasises the mechanisms of partnerships between local authorities and local communities regardless of the impacts this relation can produce on the independence of grassroots associations. The article assesses the validity of this claim in the light of evidence resulting from exploratory case-studies conducted with the Portuguese local authorities and third sector organisations.

## 2. Outsourced Local Governance: The Role of Co-governance

In this article, the term governance is used as a way to capture a wide range of mechanisms through which power over policy-making and delivery at the local level is exercised. The multi-agent context of local government with the complex diversity of networks has produced a rich literature and shaped significant research on the plural mechanisms of delivery of public services. The aim is allegedly to improve public policy decision and delivery processes in a 'joined up' way, together with the community. Local public services restructuring, modernisation agendas, NPM-type reforms and, more recently, the consequences of economic downturns have attracted the attention of researchers, signalling an arrangement where public and non-public agencies are involved in the formulation of policy and/or delivery of services (Brandsen, Pestoff, 2006: 497).

State-Society Partnerships and co-governance are often used to describe the context within which public services are delivered at the local level. Co-governance has appeared in literature recently (Johnson, Osborne, 2003), and refers to the mutual formation of collectivities around governmental roles and addresses the capacity of government and communities to work together (Sommerville, Haines, 2008). This theoretical and conceptual underpinning has generated a volume of literature on how localities are currently governed, on the influence of informal networks (Rhodes, 1997), and on the analysis of the proliferation of non-state actors, their resource exchanges and interdependency (Stoker, 2004). Literature on interactions between various network actors (e.g. Rhodes, 1996; 2000) and on the new steering and monitoring roles expected from governments

(Stoker, 2000; John, 2001) has suggested a decline of state power (Jessop, 2003), and/or the existence of new complex power configurations through which state actors steer networks (see Lukes, 2004).

The delivery of public services and policy networking has resulted in unresolved problems related to the differentiation and integration of non-state actors. The generic terms of collaborative governance (actually just an add-on to the concept of governance) or of co-governance, depict, in essence, very complex systems. They are much more than shared rules of commitment between actors; they are not only the consequence of individual interests based on expected future profits, and they do not result just from the voluntary urge to engage in public policy decisions and delivery. Collaboration between state and non-state actors, particularly the one this article addresses, results from an intentional strategy to involve the latter in governance arrangements. This outsourcing of public policy providers coming from beyond the borders of public authorities result in an assemblage of processes to ensure coordination, power, resources and information. Such a system needs not be a replica of the way local governments work, and, in fact, in most cases it is a completely new way of connecting the public and the private/voluntary spheres. Governance arrangements, even in the cases where local authorities can claim to be their main initiators, present new challenges that confront the extant scholarship with profound changes in the actors involved in the network.

Kooiman (2005) distinguished three ways of governance: the hierarchical one, where top-down directives from public authorities shape public policy; the self-governance mode, a collective based approach to bottom-up policy building; and, co-governance, in which collectivities and public authorities cooperate in a mutual shaping process of partnerships. Co-governance presents greater potential to explain how state and non-state actors participate with legitimacy in policy building and service delivering. It tends to produce an equal arena for engagement, since hierarchical modes of governance tend to be dominated by state actors and self-government is usually non-state actors' homeland.

Over the last decades, the many different approaches to governance that have been put forward have provided a more or less fair map of governance arrangements, but have typically failed to fully develop practical implications for the engaged non-state actors and/or failed to provide sufficient guidance about how to create the appropriate conditions for collaborative practices. In particular, these approaches underestimate the central role of the autonomy of third sector organisations. Consequently, scant at-

tention has been paid to developing the necessary tools to assess the real extent of independence of each member of these polycentric systems.

Somerville and Haines (2008: 75) claim that co-governance occurs »when representatives of these popular organisations outside the state enter into discussion, debate, negotiation and joint decision-making with representatives of the state«. However, it is still a widely misunderstood concept and it requires further elaboration. It is particularly desirable to better understand the kind of relations and interdependencies that are developed between these actors and how his affects their autonomy.

## 2.1. Local Governance Context

Local governments are ultimately connected with the abovementioned challenges of networking in public policy. Keywords as complexity and interdependence are not new to the local government's jargon. Reform programmes, economic downturns and new social problems have been asking for the involvement of different organisations, apart from local government. They push political action much further than mere money spending, provision or service delivery, and require the capacity to foster collective action.

In fact, two major trends are reshaping the context of local governance. The first one puts an emphasis on partnership working and alliance building, recognizing that the government cannot work alone (Hambleton, 2005), and requires rethinking of the traditional models of policy delivery, since the top-down approach hardly works in partnership settings. The fundamental insight is that effective local governance is achieved through building cooperation in an everyday more complex network of power, institutions, boundaries, and private organizations (Mossberger, Stoker, 2001). To quote Stone (1989), »it is based on the question of how, in a world of limited and dispersed authority, actors work together across institutional lines to produce a capacity to govern and to bring about publicly significant results«.

In parallel, there has been a significant change in the way public services are organized and run. This second trend puts democratic renewal high on the governance agenda, demanding new competences from local authorities in order to move around the necessary networks of delivery and deliberation (Stoker, 2006). Not only has local government evolved, but this has also put pressure on new paradigms of public services. Public Value Management, for example, explores several new roles for public author-

ities in a context where »individual and public preferences are produced through a complex process of interaction, which involves deliberative reflection over inputs and opportunity costs« (Stoker, 2006).

Co-governance at the local level sees governance in the sense of steering partnerships, more than simple coalition-building. It is about intentionally created and oriented strategies. These complementarities of state-actors and community involvement put new emphasis on the capacity to blend resources, to bring communities together, to build networks and understand a more complex reality in which to move. The role of local governments could be explained through market relationships where local authorities hold the main responsibilities but co-production occurs through contracts with other actors or, as it is more common in governance studies, through network relationships where local government is seen as a co-producer with limited power to go beyond the mere steering of networks and works as a networked governance entrepreneur.

However, one must not exclude a simpler and unadulterated hierarchical perspective, where local authorities are the main decision-makers and producers of local public goods. Even though policy delivery mechanisms can change and evolve, local authorities might be still in command of the most relevant and powerful policy instruments. In addition, democratic accountability is still performed through the lenses of elected political actors, and this can result in strong incentives to maintain power over a network of non-state actors engaged in the governance arrangement.

## 2.2. Autonomy of the Third Sector

Civil society can play complementary and often competitive roles in a governance arrangement. The argument used by Putnam (1993) is that governance, particularly democratic governance, depends on the appropriate development of civil society, more than government action. Research (Maloney et al, 2000; Lowndes, Wilson, 2001) has also stressed that if people engage in governance processes, they will develop strong relations with public institutions. However, this relationship between communities and those who carry out formal and hierarchical public roles is not enough to explain what gets communities to develop the needed competences to increase collective action.

Assuming the importance of political institutions in nurturing co-governance has one major risk: to consider that public authorities are neutral in the way they establish these relations. Acting as network entrepreneurs

will give local authorities the opportunity to create incentives for undermining the autonomy of the third sector and increase dependence mechanisms of grassroots associations on political actors. To a certain extent, the picture of political authorities guiding networks through neutral steering tools in order to allow collective action to provide for public goods has always been an illusory mechanism.

The exercise of power outside the central locus of the democratic system requires third sector organisations to have tangible and effective autonomy. The notion of a third domain between the state and the market is seen under a variety of labels such as civil society, voluntary and non-profit sector, and so forth. In this article, the vaguest term – the third sector – is used, since it seems to embrace all the others. This concept is based on ideal and simplified classical notions of the state, market, and community, as independent and not overlapping systems.

However, in order to better understand co-governance and to clarify what constitutes the essence of the third sector, it may be helpful to assess its level of autonomy vis-à-vis public authorities. The aim is not to develop new concepts on the third sector or co-governance, but to work towards the clarification of the roles that different actors perform in a governance arrangement.

### 3. Research Question and Methodology

Research has shown that collaboration cannot give results on the basis of network members who are perceived as simple, independent and neutral rational actors. In complex environments, such as the local governance context, collective interaction depends on multiple incentives and interests that have been developed through time rather than on compliance with rules. Collaboration in such a context will not only be the result of negotiation and shared interests, but the product of all sorts of incentives and motivations. This amounts to a significant reframing of the notion of local governance and of the way in which public policy delivery through networks is usually appraised: away from benevolent and instrumental cooperation of objective-focused actors sharing common goals, toward a rationality of a more complex process rooted in multiple incentives, power relations, and significant interdependences.

Given the previous considerations, the following question guided our research: How independent is grassroots public services provision? In or-

der to assess the autonomy of third sector organisations implicated in local governance and the extent to which it illustrates a mechanism of shared responsibilities, this article analyses data from six Portuguese municipalities regarding the activity of forty seven third sector organisations, particularly their income reliance on local government's subsidies. This data analysis is complemented with focus groups interviews – one per municipality – with a random sample of people in charge of these organisations. It allowed for in depth information, concentrating on individual beliefs, motivations and interests. They provided relevant information on attitudes, preferences, feelings, and respondents' understandings of their personal and institutional relations with local authorities

Data from the years 2009, 2010 and 2011 were collected, both from municipal authorities' reports on budget implementation and third sector financial assistance mechanisms, and from budgetary reports of those organisations. Given the fact that a relevant number of institutions which would be referred to in this article explicitly asked for anonymity, it was chosen to keep the references to the names of all public institutions and associations undisclosed, as well as to the municipalities analysed, since it would provide relevant data to expose some unwanted identification.<sup>1</sup>

These six municipalities presented no relevant variations on the total amount of funds and subsidies transferred to local associations over the three years that were analysed. Regarding the process of selecting the grassroots organisations for the research, three main objectives were considered: how much these organizations represent their locality's third sector, how significant they are to the general population, and how politically independent they are from local authorities.

Therefore these organizations were selected according to three main conditions: (1) seeking representation, those with the total annual budget that fits within a normal distribution curve of 50% around municipal average were selected, avoiding irrelevant and too small neighbourhood associations and huge national ones with only local representation, but often with no relevant links with local authorities; regarding (2) relevance, only those with – at least – one appearance in the local newspaper in the past month were selected; and, finally, concerning (3) political independence – in order to avoid those organisations established with rent-seeking incentives or that eventually have been privileged in financial support from

<sup>1</sup> The data can be provided on request sent directly to the author.



local authorities – all those that were created after the beginning of the last mandate were excluded.

In order to enhance the »relevance« condition of admissibility a simple version of the reputational method was conducted. Mayors and a sample of grassroots associations per municipality were asked to identify which organizations are potentially more influential and more engaged in community activities that provide relevant public services (generally understood). It resulted in an inventory of »non-referenced« institutions that were immediately excluded from the analysis. This selection process identified eighty-four admissible organisations, only forty-seven of which had available data for research (Table 1).

Table 1. *Selected organisations*

Municipality	Third sector organisations	
	Admissable	Data used
A	14	10
B	25	13
C	19	11
D	7	3
E	11	5
F	8	5
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	84	47

Source: Author's research

In the following section, data will be analysed to allow for a more rounded discussion on the autonomy debate that has been identified as lacking from the theoretical perspectives on governance. In order to do this, the analysis is focused on the sources of income for each organisation, considered in four categories: municipal funding, other public funding, profit from own activity and other sources (i.e. membership fees, donations, etc.). Since the main objective is to assess the level of independence of third sector organisations, this exploratory study was designed to identify relevant clues as to whether or not non-state actors engaged in governance arrangements can be considered autonomous *per se*, particularly resulting from their financial autonomy.

This article also identifies the activity sectors (youth, cultural, sports, etc.) most dependent on direct public funding, and analyses its changing patterns over the last three years.

## 4. Data Analysis and Main Findings

The first step of the analysis, which aimed at the descriptive features of local governance, was to consider which sector of activity is more dependent on public funding. In order to assess this, both municipal funding and other public funds were aggregated as »subsidies«, and profits and other sources were considered as »activity« resources (see Table 2). Different types of municipal financial support were considered, since the data used in this research included both typical subsidies to the activities of third sector organisations and municipal contributions to the local public services provided by civil organisations on contractual basis. In order to avoid a biased analysis, where mutual deals between civil and municipal actors in contractual relations would be inappropriate to measure the dependency of the third sector, there was an effort to purge this kind of relations from the data, and consider them as »activity« resources. As some of the financial reports assessed did not differentiate these mechanisms, it is impossible to consider that all data was correctly categorized.

All sectors, except for healthcare services, are highly dependent on subsidies, with youth, sports, social welfare and cultural activities with a public funding income above 60% of their total budget (see Figure 1).

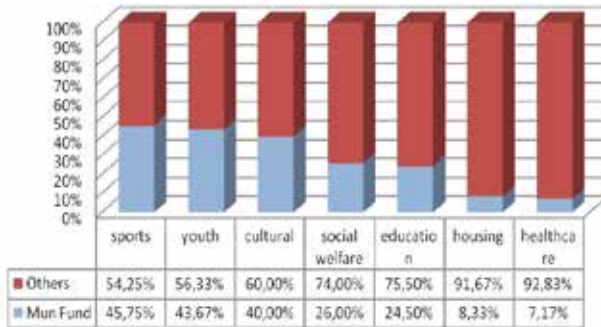
Table 2. *Subsidy – areas of activity*

	Subsidy	Activity
Youth	60,33%	39,67%
Sports	67,50%	32,50%
Cultural	78,83%	21,17%
Social welfare	60,33%	39,67%
Housing	51,17%	48,83%
Healthcare	22,50%	77,50%
Education	55,83%	46,17%

Source: Author's research

The second step of this descriptive analysis showed how municipal funding performs a relevant role in third sector activities, particularly in the sports, youth and cultural sectors, where it represents more than a third of their budget.

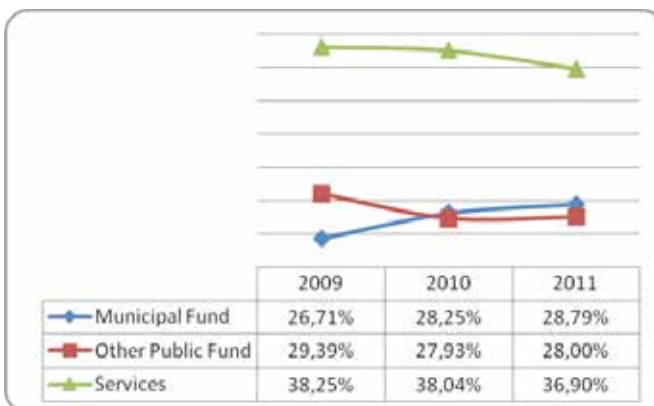
Table 3. *Municipal funding – areas of activity*



Source: Author's research

In order to show the evolution of this dependence on municipal funding over the last three years, even though the municipalities considered for this study did not show relevant variations on the total amount of funding to third sector organisations, there is a slight increase on the percentage of dependence on these financial supports. A second step of this descriptive analysis showed how municipal funding has a relevant role in third sector activities, particularly in the sports, youth and cultural sectors, where it represents more than a third of its total budget (Figure 1).

Figure 1. *Three years' evolution*

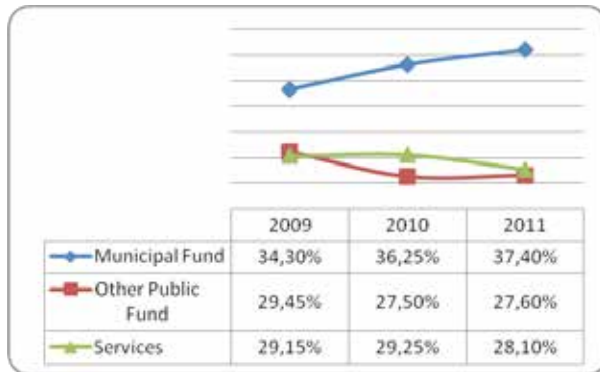


Source: Author's research

However, if third sector organisations that deal primarily with healthcare services and housing are excluded from the analysis, the increase of this dependence is much more evident (Figure 2). Both the cuts in national

endowment programmes to the third sector and the already expected decline in profits resulting from the activity of these organisations (possibly as a consequence of households' income shortage due to the Portuguese economic recession) had a significant impact on the share of budget that is directly provided for by local authorities.

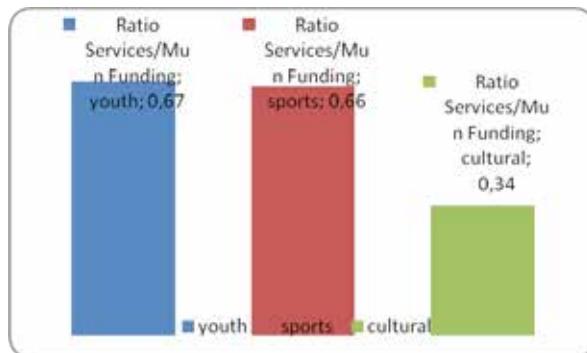
Figure 2. *Three years' evolution (excluding healthcare and housing)*



Source: Author's research

In order to explore in depth the level of autonomy of third sector organizations in public services provision, a simple ratio was calculated in order to depict how much of activity profits are independent from municipal funding. The ratio Services/Municipal Funding (Figure 3) can give us an immediate picture of the level of activity turnout delivered by the local third sector, and to what extent the provision of services »compensates« the level of funding provided by municipalities.

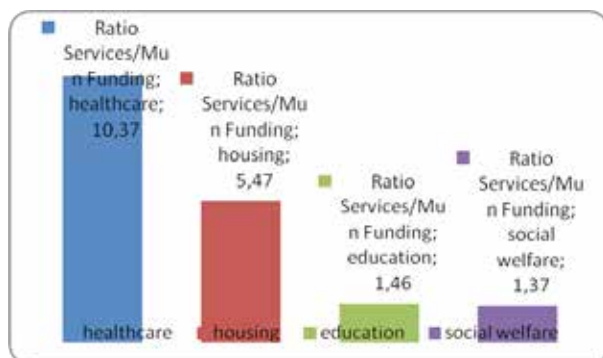
Figure 3. *Ratio Services/Municipal funding (highly dependent)*



Source: Author's research

Again in the case of Youth, Sports and Cultural organisations, the services total amount is lower than the total value of municipal funding. For instance, in the case of Youth activities' organisations, the services provided generate an income that is only 67% of the municipal funding they receive each year.

Figure 4. *Ratio Services/Municipal funding (less dependent)*



Source: Author's research

On the other hand, although the percentage of municipal funding is less relevant to the total budget of the other kind of organisations, the less dependent ones (Figure 4) still present rather low levels of independence.

Table 4. *Budget autonomy index*

Budget Autonomy »index«	
Sports	0,09
Youth	0,13
Cultural	0,20
Social welfare	0,48
Education	0,51
Housing	0,83
Healthcare	0,86

Source: Author's research

Finally, a »budget autonomy index« was calculated as the percentage difference between other sources of revenue and municipal funding (Table 4). It is particularly evident that, though sources of revenue from local

authorities are always smaller in amount to the total of other sources of income (there are no negative figures in this index), the level of autonomy is rather low in most areas of activity. Two immediate considerations are evident. First, if local authorities engage in budgetary cuts with repercussions for third sector subsidies, these organisations will hardly survive without other sources of income. Secondly, these data corroborate the relevance of the question of how independent from the political decisions of local authorities these organisations really are.

Other empirical evidence is needed in order to demonstrate that the autonomy of the third sector is crucial for measuring co-governance efficiency. However, this analysis can constitute a first step in better understanding its role. Therefore, this exploratory study can contribute to illustrate the fragility of the three important arguments on local co-governance and the possible political strategy to outsource policy delivery:

*Argument 1:* Local Co-Governance involves public and third sector actors in a network justified by a need to share resources. In the cases analysed in this research there is no evidence of co-governance as a preceding strategic policy prior to the decision to provide funding for local grassroots associations. In fact, data from almost all of these organisations have shown that this mechanism of income is a lasting and culturally embedded local practice. These subsidies, independent from any governance arrangement strategy, do not contribute to shedding light on the motives for engagement in co-production of public services. At least it is impossible to assume that it results from a need to share resources. Where co-production did take place, it was limited to specific areas of joint delivery.

*Argument 2:* Local Co-Governance develops new ways of interdependence between public and third sector organisations. A major issue is the nature and extent of the relationships established in governance arrangements. Research has suggested that networks are self-organising and the partnerships develop from the local needs and resources, between actors committed to improve the local area. This research reveals that in most areas of activity local authorities play a dominant role in shaping the policy agenda through funding mechanisms and support asymmetrical relations rather than an 'interdependence' argument;

*Argument 3:* Local Co-Governance moderates local governments' top-down approach to policy delivery. This expected policy *horizontalisation* – a consequence of the networked governance concept – would occur if, and only, local authorities had a neutral or equal role in performing in networked policy arrangements. However, it can in fact contribute to the

development of new ways of political control over third sector organisations threatening their autonomy.

Should then the co-governance argument be rejected? Is policy outsourcing and networked governance just an ambitious (or ambiguous) picture of reality? The issue perhaps is not whether to reject these concepts, but whether they are the most useful to explain the relationships between state and non-state actors in these local networks. One should include a possible distinction between *unplanned* and *designed* networks. An unplanned one would rely on shared resources and information to engage in collective action. It would be governed by commonly accepted rules and not by legally enforceable ones or by other mechanisms of dependency that allow local authorities to exercise disproportionate power over the network. However, the incentives to comply and / or to engage in rent-seeking are stronger in *designed* co-governance environments, but these might also provide a clearer picture of how things really work. These networks include tacit or explicit agreements on the resource contributions made by each local actor engaged in the policy network (a finding consistent with literature in the field – see Agranoff, 2001).

It can also be argued that this *designed* form of co-governance fits within a broader definition of governance as a multi-faceted way of government through ‘steering’ networks. The use of various policy instruments is an acceptable argument and assumes that hierarchical and contractual approaches to local networks can coexist with horizontal and bottom-up policy mechanisms delivered through independent third sector organisations.

## 4. Conclusion

It seems obvious that the argument in favour of a co-governance picture of local governance is deeply connected with a neutral perspective on the role of local authorities and on the independence of third sector organisations. However, the challenge is to understand this new role of local government, not as different from before, but immersed in a new and more complex context. New demands of local governance set the necessary background to generate the incentives to promote changes in the way localities are governed. Nevertheless, local authorities and local politics still seem to be working on the basis of the same democratic, electoral and accountability incentives.

However, there are some significant consequences for policy-making. Firstly, every governance arrangement, besides strong and impartial institutions, needs public authorities that perform their essential functions, and do it well: reinforcing the conditions for efficiency and efficacy. Most common theoretical views on governance are based on the notion of steering, looking at the formal and informal forms of coordination and interaction between public and private institutions. Identification of the essential functions of local authorities, particularly those that facilitate such governance arrangements, freeing both the market and third sector organisations to perform the tasks usually seen as public monopoly, can be one of the steps.

A local authority's adaptation to governance arrangement and its institutional design – a second consequence – can result from a basic principle: the centrality of individuals in the governance process recognizing that a strong and independent civil society will contribute significantly to community development. This permanent reinvention and adaptation of local governance does not rely only on institutional and state actors' solutions, it also requires a vibrant civil society. Therefore, local government's capacity to build social capital, to promote the third sector initiative, and to encourage formal and informal networks, must not be disregarded.

Finally, local political and administrative leaders, given their wide spectre of opportunities to influence and their high level of autonomy in decision-making, concentrate an exceptional power on the exercise of their roles. Thus, along with the definition of the role of local formal institutions, the independence and character of relationships within the network, it is also important to acknowledge and discuss the role of local leaders (from public, private and third sector organisations).

If there was indeed a typical ideal independence of third-sector organisations, which could be fostered under certain governance conditions, then one could conjecture that it would be more successful within some policy areas than within others. Indeed, this adaptable approach to the relationships between local authorities and the third sector would obey the logic of policy efficacy. Choosing an approach that makes effective grassroots governance possible is not only a political or ideological perspective, it is also an efficacy-related one. Governance mechanisms like these will also permit the acquisition of better information for decision-making, up to date feedback of community's perceptions and timely identification of needs. Naturally, it will facilitate generalized support to political decision-making, enlarged collective responsibility and public interest, and



strengthened legitimacy of elected bodies. The main idea is that grass-roots governance will help develop new policy delivery mechanisms and enhance the quality and efficiency of public services provision.

In this case, it might be more appropriate to consider the relationship between state and non-state actors as changeable and context dependent. Therefore, local co-governance concept would also need to be further explored and expanded in order to accept other formulations beyond horizontal networked relationships. Such a message might not receive a warm welcome among co-governance advocates, but there is no empirical basis to prove otherwise.

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LOCAL CO-GOVERNANCE:  
AN EXPLORATORY STUDY ON THE THIRD SECTOR'S  
ARTIFICIAL AUTONOMY

*Summary*

*Local governments are increasingly seen as key facilitators of co-governance processes, enabling collaborative local networks. It is claimed in this article that the necessarily synergistic relationship between local government and civil society in facilitating governance mechanisms requires further elaboration. The issue of who initiates grassroots governance and how autonomous from political power it really is, is seminal to the definition of governance itself. Literature on co-governance lacks the recognition of the impacts of institutional incentives to civic participation, which may not always have the desired effects. This article intends to weigh up the autonomy of grassroots governance and the extent to which it corresponds to a mechanism of shared responsibilities. Through the analysis of data from Portuguese municipalities, it contributes to a wider discussion on the nature and distinctiveness of grassroots governance, arguing that it may add new problems to the research agenda and asking for new approaches.*

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LOKALNO SUUPRAVLJANJE:  
ISTRAŽIVAČKA STUDIJA O UMJETNOJ AUTONOMIJI  
TREĆEG SEKTORA

Sažetak

Lokalne vlasti sve se češće smatraju ključnim faktorima olakšavanja procesa suupravljanja, budući da omogućavaju postojanje lokalnih mreža suradnje. U radu se tvrdi da nužno sinergijska povezanost lokalnih vlasti i civilnoga društva u olakšavanju primjene mehanizama vlasti traži dodatna pojašnjenja. Pitanje tko inicira upravljanje građana i koliko je ono uistinu neovisno od političke vlasti, najvažnije je za definiciju samoga termina upravljanja. Literaturi o suupravljanju nedostaje prepoznavanje učinaka institucionalnih poticaja participaciji građana u vlasti, što nema uvijek najpoželjnije posljedice. Cilj rada je odrediti samostalnost upravljanja građana kao i granicu do koje ono korespondira mehanizmu razdijeljenih odgovornosti. Kroz analizu podataka iz portugalskih lokalnih jedinica, rad pridonosi široj raspravi o prirodi i posebnosti upravljanja građana, tvrdeći da ono može otvoriti nova istraživačka pitanja te tražeći nove istraživačke pristupe.

Ključne riječi: lokalna vlast, lokalno suupravljanje, treći sektor, civilno društvo