



The Role of the Nonprofit Sector in the Local Development Framework in the Balkans: Several General Considerations

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Context of Civil Society in the Balkans

- emergence and rise of new civil society in the Balkans
- achievements (policy/services)
- downsides (public opinion/government/business)
- challenges (sustainability/legitimacy/accountability)



Sustainability Issues

- Foreign funding vs. lack of embedment

alternatives:

- local grants/transparent government funding/individual and corporate philanthropy
- taxes/proceeds/
- fees for services

transparency/consistency/ predictability of funding



Sustainability Issues

How sustainability is reached and through what process of social exchange will strongly define NGO relations with government, business and the general public.

Choosing a model that ensures stable nonprofit functioning under a commitment of performing and delivering locally - this is the priority.



Legitimacy issues

- who do they represent? who gives them the mandate to intervene in different social issues? not democratically elected as opposed to governments?
- legitimacy is critical to policy work of NGOs.
- legitimacy derives from the process of public acceptance/approval of the issues NGOs represent.

ownership = aspect of legitimacy

- the community owns their work/feel the work as relevant to its needs



Legitimacy issues

NGOs are often perceived as business oriented, closed, sometime subversive or corrupt, irrelevant (USAID, 2003).

Dealing with “soft” issues that mobilize broad social support vs. controversial, polarizing issues?

They need to be able to reconcile their agenda with local priorities.

The battle for legitimacy is yet to be won.



Accountability issues

Often perceived as pertaining to the issues of open and transparent financial accounts.

Essentially it is about results and responsibility. Related to legitimacy

Conclusion:

Sustainability/Legitimacy and Accountability are in the core of the debate on civil society in the Balkans.



NGOs as (CBOs), Providers of Linkages and Mandate Complements

CBOs = community based organizations

territorial vs. issue/group defined mandate

A CBO

- confines to communal boundaries, creates a different type of local cohesion, has its mandate completely defined by the local community
- tends to run most of the activity locally
- potentially has a different relationship with the locale/can enjoy greater acceptance



NGOs as (CBOs), Providers of Linkages and Mandate Complements

Today being an NGO is almost in itself a matter of eligibility, of a type of institutional legitimacy for involvement in developmental affairs.

NGOs as providers of linkages

- the Balkans locality is disconnected
- transfer of information/know how/funding



NGOs as (CBOs), Providers of Linkages and Mandate Complements

NGOs as complements of local government mandate

- extended arm
- cost-efficient contractor (social issues)
- brings in advantages of size and mode of operation



Thank You 😊

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