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**WG8: Non-Governmental Organizations in CEE**

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Title **Partners or Figureheads? Non-public Actors in Deliberative Decision-making in Polish Cities**

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**Abstract** The aim of the proposed paper is to discuss the nature and capabilities of non-public actors involved in local decision-making. Under the term of "non-public actors" (NPA), the authors understand social councils and committees created by the municipal authorities. NPAs have a hybrid character. Although, formally, their members are appointed by local authorities, some of them represent public institutions, but others represent either NGOs, individuals or private enterprises. They can also include experts. The NPA are opinion-giving and advisory bodies to local authorities, however their engagement in local decision-making can be of multi-dimensional nature: legal, axiological and praxeological. results from the fact that the participation of social entities (of opinion-giving and advisory character) in the decision-making process has axiological, praxeological and legal dimension. Furthermore, NPA are anchored both in theory and in practice of local governance. Although the legal regulations give a ground for creating NPA, and particular social groups, their organizations and even local authorities are interested in their creation, NPA seem insignificant in local decision-making. On the basis of the literature analysis, as well as previous authors' research on NPA's engagement in local action groups, the authors formulate the following hypothesis: NPA play formal, or at best minor role in local decision-making – they give opinions only on the request of local authorities, and only when it is required by legal regulations. Their overall potential of influencing local decisions is low. The hypothesis will be verified on the basis of the results of quantitative research carried out in 65 Polish cities. The authors will particularly refer to the following issues: membership composition of NPA, their mode of opinion-giving, relations of NPA with local authorities, perception of the role of the NPA among their members. The results of the research were generated in the proceedings of the project "From dialogue to deliberation. The non-public actors as (non) present participant in the local decision-making" (project no.

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