Renegotiating governance through civil society public partnerships? An example from reception of asylum seeking minors in Gothenburg city

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Abstract

The recent immigration crisis alongside other wicked issues have contributed to inventing new forms of local governance in Sweden – *collaborative partnerships between civil society and public actors (IOP)* as a third-way alternative to contracts and traditional state grants. The aim of the article is to illustrate how actors in this model of collaborative governance cope with a major challenge – balancing the different roles and principles ascribed to public and civil society realms – to sustain a partnership. The arguments are based on a case study of currently the largest local IOP in Sweden for reception of unaccompanied minors. The partnership is explored against a synthesised theoretical framework of balanced power and is found to live up to its major expectations. Thus a conclusion can be drawn that IOP may serve as a 'spaces of hope' for a renegotiated governance.

Key words: cross-sector partnerships, balancing, collaborative governance, governance innovations,

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Introduction: New Opportunities for More Equal Collaboration in Sweden

The Swedish welfare state has during the past few years been facing an interesting development in the relationships between state and civil society with an emergence of new sub-national governance model exclusively reserved for voluntary civil society organisations and the state – *idéburna offentliga partnerskap* or social value-based civil society public partnerships (hereafter IOPs). IOPs started evolving in 2010s as political bottom-up resistance by civil society and local political leaders to the limitations of the dominant welfare collaboration models IOP emergence and advancement has been prompted by increasing complexity of social risks and limitations set by major current collaboration schemes – market-based contracts and state grants – for civil engagement in collaborative public service design and implementation and for exploiting its knowledge, specificity and innovativeness. The increasing popularity of IOP, may have also been prompted by a pragmatic local and regional government move to enhance their social policy legitimacy (Salamon and Toepler, 2015) or relieve responsibilities of the hollowed out welfare state in wicked social issues (Bode and Brandsen, 2014; Benington, 2001).

IOPs are promoted by their proponents as a distinct "third way" (Forum, 2010; Interview 150909) in the relationship between the public and civil society sectors, an alternative that significantly differs from public procurement contracts and traditional state grant schemes. This collaboration model aims for greater civil society influence in public policies than in market-based contracts and greater responsibility sharing and continuity than what is possible through traditional grant schemes. IOPs are also distinct from marked-based public-private partnerships (Bode and Brandsen, 2014) in their strive for partner equality and long-term governance relations for achievement of important social or welfare policy goals. IOPs, differently from Swedish local partnerships in rural development (Aagard Thuesen, 2011), are forms of (urban) governance reserved for the two sectors and are voluntary, formalised and employ civil society in both service design and provision. We claim that against the marketization trend in state-civil society relations (Bode and Brandsen, 2014) IOPs offer a promising governance model in the

repertoire of state civil society partnerships for service provision and collaborative governance (Ansell and Gash, 2008) with regard to collaboration on more equal terms (Salamon and Toepler, 2015).

Overall, as practices of New Public Governance, state civil society partnerships for service delivery have been notoriously difficult to establish and sustain, one reason being their inability to achieve interest or power balance (Salamon and Toepler, 2015; Ansell and Gash, 2008; Brandsen, 2010; Dickinson and Glasby, 2010). Inability to balance different actor and sector interests risks to delegitimise collaborative partnerships and their action capacity (Ansel and Gash, 2008; Provan and Kenis, 2008; Provan *et al*, 2007). An important condition to deliver the promises of collaborative governance and broader partnership arrangements such as increased policy capacities, innovativeness and relevance is partnership ability to accommodate civil society interests (Salamon and Toepler, 2015; Vangen *et al* 2015).

The global marketization trend has diverted a balance in collaborative relations (Bode and Brandsen, 2014) and civil society has been treated as a pure service actor. For example, collaboration compacts of 1998 in England – from which Sweden has borrowed elements of its policy (Reuter, 2012) – did not necessarily result in increased civil society influence in policy designs (Hogg and Baines, 2011). On the contrary England, similarly to Sweden, is struggling with several negative developments such as steering over civil society organisations via a variety of shadow state instruments (Wolch, 1990) and mainstreaming them after private sector model and mind-sets. This effects civil society isomorphism, bureaucratisation, threatens its independence, distinctiveness, advocacy role and shrinks its innovativeness (Salamon and Toepler, 2015; Bode and Brandsen, 2014; Trädgård, 2012; Hogg & Baines, 2011).

Disregarding the variety of collaborative arrangements between state and civil society and the richness of its literature more research is called for regarding the need to conceptualise, assess and explain how they are organised and governed to sustain a balance between both sector interests (Bode and Brandsen, 2014; Provan and Kenis, 2008; Provan *et al*, 2007) and especially

secure civil society influence (Salamon and Toepler, 2015; Aagard Thuesen, 2011) to achieve effective relations and success in collaborative policy process. Establishing or facilitating such a power balance remains a puzzle in public management of state civil society partnerships and in collaborative governance research (Salamon and Toepler, 2015; Freise, 2010; Ansell and Gash, 2008; Klijn, 2008). Salamon and Toepler (2015) have suggested accommodating civil society influence, specificity and voice in service delivery and design as important strategies for balancing sector power in partnerships. However, they also pointed out to the lack of partnerships aware of and build on such principles to test their relevance.

While collaborative governance focuses on relational aspects such as collective decision making, ownership of the process and its institutionalisation (Vangen *et al*, 2015; Klijn, 2008) it still lacks understanding of the micro-dynamics of power balancing and its importance for civil society commitment to a partnership with the state (Salamon and Toepler, 2015). The article makes a contribution to research on state-civil society partnerships and a subfield of collaborative governance research by exploring power balancing strategies and their importance for civil society commitment to the partnership and thus its survival in an IOP practice. Based on a synthesised analytical frame (Fig.1). borrowing mainly from by Salamon and Toepler (2015), the article considers what a strategically selected multi-actor IOP case can reveal about whether *such collaborative governance may achieve some success in power balancing, by what strategies, and how both sectors share roles in such partnership orchestration.*

The findings of this article are based on an in-depth qualitative case study in form of ongoing evaluation of the largest at the time in terms of partners and budget IOP in Sweden. Initiated in 2015 for the reception and integration of unaccompanied minors in Gothenburg city shortly before the political "immigration crisis" the partnership survived major contextual challenges and thus illuminates balancing work throughout different partnership stages – initiation, implementation and adjustment.

This article argues that at least some IOP practices score rather well on power balancing which

contributes in explaining a sustained civil society commitment to the partnership. What is more, civil society is allowed a more active role in collaborative governance than has been previously recognised in collaborative governance and partnership literatures. Thus, the findings **nuance** the discussion of prevalent governance tendencies in Sweden that seek to delimit civil society to service delivery or an "agent" role (Wijkström, 2012). Accordingly, in the context of marketization of state-civil society relations we may see IOP partnerships as "spaces of hope" (Williams, 2002) or renegotiated governance forms allowing significant influence for civil society and a retained voice.

State collaboration with civil society in form of IOP – what is new?

This section places IOP phenomenon in a historical Swedish context to illustrate new aspects in this model of collaboration.

In Sweden, the roots to collaboration between state and civil society may be found in civil society involvement in the Swedish welfare state building or corporatism since early XXth century. While such close relations between the two sectors was not only a Swedish or Nordic phenomenon, characteristic to the Nordic welfare model was the rather limited role civil society has played in public welfare service delivery at best as a complement to the state (Wijkström, 2012; Trädgård, 2012; Johansson 2001) who has served as major service provider. Its primary role has been that of voicing citizen or member concerns and policy critique such as in workers', feminist or environmental mass movements. However, while corporatism opened for civil society influence in public policy formulation in labour market issues or in many legislative acts (Larsson and Bäck, 2008) it also brought its near absorption into national and local state apparatuses (Wijkström, 2012).

Since 1980s state started acknowledging its greater dependency on civil society and market actors in service delivery in line with NPM ideology (Johansson, 2001). Legal acts of public procurement (SFS2007:1091) and personalisation of services (SFS2008:962) (re)diversified civil society roles by drawing attention to a service delivery as in the pre-welfare state times. In

Sweden, as elsewhere, civil society has increasingly been providing public services based on formalized market-based contracts, a collaboration model not necessarily able to exploit civil society potential and specificity (Trädgård, 2012; Henriksen *et al*, 2012; Kelly, 2007). This way state steers over civil society as service actor by structuring the conditions of its financing and service provision (Trädgård, 2012). Arguably this is one of the reasons, along the historical state dominance, why the role of civil society in service delivery in Sweden remains comparatively low[2] (Wijkström, 2012; Trädgård, 2012).

The circumscribed service provider role not only supresses the historical voice role of civil society but also pushes it towards a hybrid identity of "half-charity half-business" (Wijkström, 2012:114) especially in core welfare state policies (Johansson, 2001). The relations between the two sectors in Sweden however do not unilaterally fall under the marketization trend (Reuter, 2012) partly due to differences in local policies and historical context (Johansson, 2001). Still the major message of the Swedish national collaboration compacts on social and integration issues (Regeringskansliet, 2009; 2010) is that at least some civil society organisations want a more active role in welfare policies but under different conditions than allowed by the traditional collaboration schemes – grants and market-based contracts (Riksrevisionen, 2014:3; Gavelin et al 2010) acknowledging the need for greater varieties of collaboration forms. To avoid being entrapped in marked-based contracts as a single model of collaboration the compacts suggested several *guiding principles* for collaboration between the sectors: independence, dialogue, quality, long-term perspective, openness and transparency, and diversity. These principles were further confirmed and detailed in evolving regional and local collaboration compacts by June 2017 in totally three regions out of 21 and in at least 20 out of 290 municipalities.[3]

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[2] Only 29% of civil society financing in 1990s came from public sector (compared to 45% in Great Britain), and up to 60% from membership fees.

[3] The counties are: Scania, West Sweden and Örebro. Data from private correspondence with Överenskommelse kansliet, 20170608.

In this context IOPs have emerged as an attractive formal model of collaboration in terms of public-civil society relations and more sustainable financial service provision arrangements. As of June 2016 at least 51 IOPs were signed in 3 regions of 21 and 13 out of 290 municipalities, their number constantly increasing (Sandberg, 2016). IOPs are aimed especially for new or wicked social challenges of public interest with no established service market, such as newcomer immigrant integration or early school dropouts, and meant to create long-term commitment, collaboration and learning between the two sectors. In theory the IOP model restricts municipal authority in defining the needs and policy goals (Interview 20150909) and mistrust-based steering (Montin, 2016) and favours the compact principles. However, no defined steering model is advocated and the governance practice is yet under development. Besides a few legal reports (Forum, 2016) lack of clarity on its juridical status (SOU 2016:13; SOU 2016:78) signals partial government neglect to steer this collaboration form by rule making. In sum, while the civil society and government collaboration is not new for Sweden, IOPs offer a new twist in their relationships in terms of civil society roles towards more relational and less contractual development of local policies (Geddes and Le Gales, 2001).

The balancing of powers challenge

Advantages and challenges of collaborative state-third sector partnerships are central to third party government (Salamon and Toepler, 2015), collaborative governance (Ansell and Gash, 2008) and network governance (Sørensson and Torfing, 2009) approach to name a few. The large literature on collaborative governance and cross-sectorial partnerships (see for example Dickinson and Glasby, 2010; Ansell and Gash, 2008) distinguishes as one of their challenges balancing of sector and individual organisation power and envisioned roles in the face of different sectorial interests (Salamon and Toepler, 2015, Mörth and Sahlin Andersson, 2006). Thus once civil society public partnerships are established remaining challenges for partnership (pubic) managers are balancing government need for efficiency, effectiveness and accountability

and civil society need for a degree of independence and advocacy possibilities remains a major challenge (Salamon and Toepler, 2015). The challenge of more equal influence seems common for a variety of governance arrangements including collaborative governance (Vangen et al, 2015). Balancing both sector needs is essential for partnership legitimacy, sustainability and functionality (Salamon and Toepler, 2015) as this "internal success" may increase partnership implementation capacity or "external success" (Peters, 2012).

Balanced civil society public partnership features such complementary strategies as, *firstly,* engaging civil society not only in implementation of government programmes but also in their design (Salamon and Toepler, 2015). In principle, this requires *collaborative style of management (ibid.)*. This argument echoes the strand of collaborative governance literature that emphases collective leadership (Lasker *et al*, 2001), collective decision making based on commonly agreed, transparent ground rules (Ansell and Gash, 2008) and opens for exploring civil society influence in partnership management. In similar vein, governance network literature distinguishes two dimensions in network governance that facilitates and steers interactions here labelled as (1) *institutional designs and (2) process management,* the former also known as hands-off and the later as hands-on meta-governance (Sørensen and Törfing, 2009). Interestingly, similarly to some collaborative governance research (Ansel and Gash, 2008), it ascribes the meta-governance primarily to public agencies mainly to safeguard important public interests and democratic norms. However, given normative aspirations in the Swedish compacts to combine civil society advocacy and policy influence with its 'service' role as well as aspiration towards collaboration on more equal terms in IOPs we propose to account for civil society and public agency roles in partnership governance regarding both its *institutional design* and *process management.*

Here *institutional design* may imply more indirect influence on institutional procedures, such as composition, scope and contents of the partnership or its ground rules (Sorensen and Torfing, 2009; Ansell and Gash, 2007; Klijin and Edelenbos, 2012). *Strategic process management*

facilitates partner collaboration on the operational level by a variety of hands-on steering strategies such as activation of resources, creation of organisational arrangements, joint knowledge production, mediation in conflicts or trust creation (Klijin and Edelenbos, 2012; Sorensen and Torfing, 2009). Balanced partnership requires careful selection of policy tools – such as financial mechanisms or rules – that structure partnership relations to alleviate civil society access and involvement.

Secondly, balanced partnership requires from public authorities making use of the civil society capabilities in a way that address its needs and specificity (Salamon and Toepler, 2015). This basically means *adjusting partnership steering mode* not to impose mainstream public sector management procedures/techniques such as authoritative or NPM inspired mistrust-based steering in principle-agent relations (Montin, 2016) but rather supplement those with trust creating strategies. By compromising traditional steering principles such new mode of public management should create a better balance between both sector needs (Salamon and Topler, 2015). Public actors nevertheless preserve a degree of control using proper steering tools such as regulations and financial mechanism (ibid).

Salamon and Toepler (2015) do not further specify what steering modes might be appropriate but the national compacts and Social Forum suggest adherence to the following guiding norms for more equal collaborative relations: i) mutual openness and access to information; ii) dialogue based decision-making; iii) long-sightedness in relationships avoiding detailed steering; iv) allowing civil society specificity and an independent critical voice. These norms indicate that trust creation is a mutual process. Social Forum specifies (Forum, 2010) avoiding detailed steering as indicative anti-hierarchic and anti-principle-agent relational patterns in IOP conceptualisation.

Thirdly, both Salamon and Toepler (2015) and Swedish compacts in particular distinguish the need to structure and steer collaborative partnerships in ways that allow *preserving a distinctive character* of the civil society, especially their ability to sustain independence to act as a critical

"voice" towards government on behalf of important segments of society. Voice might be also expressed by sustaining specificity in service delivery.

Based on Salamon and Toepler (2015), Klijn and Edelenbos (2012), the Compact (Regeringskansliet, 2009) and Forum (2010) the article proposes a synthesised framework of analysis (see Table I) adapted to explore and assess the *relational* norms of a balanced partnership (the "what") and the relevance of the theorised strategies (the "how") in collaborative civil society public partnerships. The framework is applied to the strategically selected Gothenburg partnership to test its relevance *and to explore what kind of network management is employed to balance sector powers* in this unique and ambitious IOP.

Table I. Balancing powers in civil society public partnerships

Criteria for balanced partnership **"WHAT"**	**Strategies** **"HOW"**
Civil society involved in policy design/ Collaborative governance	• Institutional design • Collaborative process management/leadership
Adjusted steering mode and tools (in service delivery)	• Dialogue • Transparency • Trust-based steering • Accountability
Abilities to sustain critical voice/advocacy	• Preserving internal and external voice • Preserving a level of independence in service delivery

Methods

The article traces power balancing in the partnership with the help of a process evaluation study between May 2015 and May 2017, closely following the partnership from February 2016. The evaluation examined and assessed IOP political context, institutional arrangements, norms and procedures in decision making and implementation as part in reconstructing theory of change.

The data collection was guided by power balancing (Salamon & Toepler, 2015) and integrated partnerships (Peters, 2012) frameworks. For this purpose, the researchers have conducted analysis of governmental bills, partnership documents such as agreements, partner organisation activity reports, meeting minutes, documented advocacy activities, and numerous semi-structured interviews and conversations with the participants (42) from its Steering group, Collaboration group, HVB directors and housing personnel and participant observations at partnership meetings in Steering and Collaboration group. Interviewees were chosen on the basis of their role in IOP structures and partnership common service implementation. To validate the researchers' findings, the analysis of relational aspects has been presented and discussed together at a common seminar at with partnership participants in September 2016 and May 2017. Such data triangulation has served to increase data reliability and relevance. The possibility to follow the partnership over a period of time has eased access and understanding of partnership internal dynamics. A methodological and analytical challenge was following change and continuity in the face of changing partnership conditions that affected its internal structures and processes.

In the following we will return to Gothenburg IOP to explore and illustrate whether and how the change towards new more balanced forms of governance is taking place by examining how partners live up to our constructed analytical framework (Table 1) and whether the selected relational aspects are sufficient to deem of balance in governance relations.

IOP in Gothenburg and its initiation

During the past years the numbers of unaccompanied immigrant children to Sweden have been increasing dramatically from 388 in 2004 to 35369 in 2015 while the total number of asylum seekers in 2015 was ca 160 000[4] making government call the situation a "refugee crisis". This

[4] CSB. http://www.scb.se/sv_/Hitta-statistik/Statistik-efter-amne/Befolkning/Befolkningens-sammansattning/Befolkningsstatistik/25788/25795/Behallare-for-Press/386883/.[Accessed 2017-020-2]

presented a major challenge for newcomer reception policies and resulted in a law change in 2014 that now granted government via The Swedish Migration Agency the right to allocate unaccompanied immigrant children to local municipalities of their choice regardless of the lack of agreements with individual municipalities.[5] This breach against local self-government principle had consequences also for Gothenburg municipality, a traditional reception municipality.

The unexpected rise of immigrant inflow forced Gothenburg municipality to rethink the future of municipal service monopoly in newcomer minors' reception and opened a window of opportunity for innovative solutions through IOP collaboration. In Gothenburg the initiative to collaborate has come from civil society organisations and municipality responded to it due to its pressing situation. Officially it all started in late 2014 with an open call by the municipality to a row of dialogue meetings to discuss possibilities to collaborate on a qualitative reception of unaccompanied minors. Concerned civil society organisations welcomed this and as a result a longer-term (minimum 5 years) collaboration agreement was signed in May 2015 between initially seven (currently nine) civil society organisations and Gothenburg City Social Resource Department, hereafter SRD. (IOP Göteborg, 2015).

Already prior to the immigration crisis the Gothenburg municipality has shown a distinct ambition to broaden its collaboration forms in a local collaboration compact in 2013, and its implementation plan (Göteborgs stad, 2014). Additionally, an IOP for helping Roma migrants was initiated between SRD and three civil society organisations. Nevertheless, migration crisis must have been a breaking point from which civil society partners (hereafter CSPs) have

[5]http://skl.se/integrationsocialomsorg/socialomsorg/barnochunga/placeradebarnochunga/ensamkommandebarnochunga/kommunensansvar.3425.html, [Accessed 2016-03-10]

experienced a radical change in the city municipality openness for new collaboration forms. IOP.[6]

While the dialogue was rather open only those that had relevant services on offer ended up signing a partnership agreement. In addition to the obligatory group housing and basic care services, for which state funding was available, both municipality and its CSPs were interested to include also those voluntary organisations that had experience and broader knowledge of refugee situation and asylum seeking processes and thus a variety of services to offer the minors. The aim was to develop an innovative and holistic policy approach to qualitative reception services for initially 150 and later ca 250 minors based on an innovative financial arrangement where public financing was complemented by additional civil society contributions securing partnership *added value* in terms of resources.

Such holistic and evolutionary policy action could not be offered by simply commissioning services to individual unrelated actors through public procurement as the aims with public policy and the tools had to be identified and agreed though an ongoing collective dialogue and knowledge exchange. Its implementation required partners willing to share resources and responsibilities. In its holistic perspective on reception services this IOP represented a policy innovation in unaccompanied minors' reception in the Swedish context. By choosing an IOP the municipality made a political statement on its ambitions for a new model of compact-based collaborative relations with the civil society or a systemic innovation (Windrum, 2008).

> "We are in a process of building a model that does not exist anywhere else." (Municipal representative, Municipality, protocol of IOP workshop 2015-02-03)

Also the concerned CSP were eager to explore the possibilities IOP offered to join their resources to develop new set of services related to accommodation and integration of unaccompanied

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[6] As of August 2016 Gothenburg city municipality has signed 12 varying IOP agreements standing out among 290 Swedish municipalities regarding IOP density.

minors and to enter new relations both with municipality and each other as for most CSP the IOP was a new experience.

The Gothenburg partnership stands on *two pillars* representing two different types of services and steering relationships: (1) youngster housings and basic care and (2) such complementary services as housing personnel training on asylum issues, crisis counselling for minors, friend family support, leisure time activities and on-job practice. In the first pillar initially four but currently six partner organisations (Bräcke Diakoni, Skyddsvärnet, Reningsborg, Göteorgs Räddningsmission, Karriärkraft, Stadsmissionen) run their housing services under the municipal supervision as municipality formally remains a service provider accountable for their quality to the National Health and Social Care Inspectorate in line with national regulations. The second integration service pillar consists of more horizontal collaborative relations between partner organisations on strategic and operational levels. Gothenburg partnership also hosts two types of civil society organisations – those more experienced as commissioned service providers and those associated with a traditional advocacy role (The Swedish Red Cross, Save the Children, Individuell Människohjälp (IM)) that contribute with complementary (often volunteer-based) services.

IOP initiation signals of non-mandatory, self-organised emergence of a collaborative partnership based on *self-selection* process – aspects distinguishing it from referred collaborative governance perception, but perhaps nuancing it. Similarly to collaborative governance Gothenburg IOP aimed at the achievement of its social goals through new relationship norms such as openness, dialogue, mutual responsibility and learning in a new type of organisational model (IOP Göteborg 2015). Here, the inherent power asymmetries between partners and especially between the sectors – based on differences in roles and resources – presented a challenge for partnership management and its institutional design.

Strategies for balancing sector power in Gothenburg partnership

This section explores the success of balancing partnership (see Table I.) in our selected IOP and most relevant strategies.

Collaborative governance in institutional design and process management

Collective decision making and CSP influence was enabled through a number of platforms – Partnership Board for strategic issues and standing Collaboration Group, Housing Services Group for operational issues, and temporal Working Groups for in depth exploration or Strategic Negotiation group for renegotiation on partnership conditions – all with representatives from all partners or partner delegates for negotiation.

An important aspect in IOP relations has been all allowing CSP influence not only in collaborative decision making on partnership aims or the contents of services to be implemented but also in its *management procedures* and in some overarching arrangements of partnership *institutional design.* For example, CSP highly influenced drafting partnership agreement and its stipulated principles to guide partner relations, such as dialogue, consensus, transparency, trust, long-term perspective, openness for critique (IOP Goteborg, 2015). A special focus was devoted to civil society and public actors being treated as equal in their importance. These are all safety aspects of partnership design (Klijn and Edelenbos, 2012).

Especially important for CSP incentives to join the partnership was their ability to at least partly influence the partnership *fiscal conditions* – one of partnership progress aspects (Klijn and Edelenbos, 2012)– i.e. the public financing allocated partners for housing services and especially innovative principles for pooling and sharing resources for partnership common services. The partnership has commonly agreed to set aside a fixed sum of public resources allocated for their housing services per allocated child and day (initially 50 SEK) to be available for all CSPs to develop complementary and commonly agreed services to the partnership children. This innovative arrangement allowed any partner, also voice actors not engaged in housing services, to use some of the pooled resources to develop services that Partnership Board deemed of

common importance. The scope of allocated resources has been commonly agreed for each service but varied for individual organisations and the services, something that challenged partner equality when external changes gradually forced downsizing of housing services.

Through their participation in both strategic and operative partnership structures and especially prevalent trust and collaboration spirit all partners felt they had a say on numerous aspects of institutional partnership design – the unaccompanied children and their housing personnel needs and thus partnership goals, the choice and the scope of the common services to realise those and the scope of their financing from the common pool, also the type of housing services (Partnership Board); the rationale for developing or sustaining these services (Collaboration group); the public compensation for the housing services; partnership resource reallocations or withdrawal due to changes in migration flows and political contexts (Partnership Board).

During the initial and implementation phase all CSPs have been able to develop the services of their choice as long as that was in line with partnership goals and anchored in partnership collaborative platforms. The shaping of housing and complementary partnership services for minors took place by sharing perceptions and knowledge on needed strategies and methods, and by learning form openly exposed service effects. Also regarding highly demanded and regulated housing services CSP partners felt they could influence the drafting of the initial agreement, its conditions and aims and to some extend the service contents.

> ”There were no specific goals or specification of services to be delivered, rather we worked out this agreement together based on the youngsters' needs” (Interview, CSP)

However especially diminishing housing needs and public funding in 2017 started to affect also the fate of the complementary services. Here housing providers had a more prominent role in negotiating adjustment with the municipality.

Literature often ascribes public actors the main role in state-third sector partnerships due to their authority in resource allocation or monitoring role in welfare services provided by third part. To balance against the municipal power advantage and to perform as an equal part the Gothenburg CSPs created an own steering group to coordinate their views and proposals before meetings with the municipal partner in the common Partnership Board. Such concerted voice increased CSPs' power in the collaborative leadership. What is more, it diminished the need for municipal mediation between partners taking over some of the process management role (Sørensen and Torfing, 2009; Klinjn and Edelenbos, 2012) especially regarding what services to deliver and how to deal with increasingly complex needs of the targeted children.

Both CSP and the municipal partner were also actively engaged in and largely in consensus regarding most of the institutional design aspects, during partnership initiation and implementation and before major legislative changes in 2017 (REF). However, as might be expected municipal partner did make attempts to some power overtake on several occasions. After some year in partnership municipality was approached by several additional civil society organisations aiming to join in. Here indeed SRD used its authority to open the partnership to two new partners thus unilaterally influencing partnership institutional design[7] without anchoring it in advance at the Partnership Board. The official rational was safeguarding the principle of inclusion and service diversion while a real rational was rather increasing housing capacity rather than the need for complementary services. CRPs counteracted such municipal move by basically limiting the access of new partners to the common resource pool as no more partnership financed common services were initiated.

To counterbalance the heavy CSP influence in complementary partnership services the municipality is allowed a say by its presence also in the operative Collaboration Group. Here

[7] One such agreement reached in the Steering group was about financing the more expensive package training targeting all partnerhip housings during a longer period rather than with shorter but more broadly accessible TMO courses. (Conversation RB 2016-09-07)

occasionally municipality used its authority to influence some *process management* aspects such as prioritising partners' access to popular housing personnel training services in trauma aware care financed from the pooled resources. Such municipal influence was tolerated, although sometimes questioned, due to mutual trust and at the time insufficient civil society partner preparedness to undertake the training. Another example of municipal power in process management was attempts to influence convergence in operative rules in housing and care services or compensation modules for minors free-time and sports expenses, but here it has met resistance.

Our study exemplifies partnership struggle for balance in a cyclical development process (Ansell and Gash, 2008). When the Swedish government in 2016 announced changes in its immigration and reception policies and significantly lowered compensation tariffs for newcomer minors' housing and care while sustaining municipal responsibilities (Regeringskansliet, 2016) this forced the partnership into an adaptation phase presenting a test to especially to the municipal partner ability to hold to the partnership aims and relational principles. SRD was forced to rethink its ability to undertake greater financial responsibilities to fulfil the initial partnership agreements and especially its commitment to the partnership principles of dialogue and in looking for solutions. Contrary to commissioned services municipality could not simply unitary cancel the agreement. CSPs though were eager to keep to initial partnership ambitions of qualitative housing and care and influence necessary adjustments in service provision tariffs and forms of housings provided within partnership agreement, aspects of partnership institutional design.

Here, CSP leaders in dialogue with the municipality have set up a temporal structure with equal number of municipal and CSP representatives to renegotiate the agreement. Even if municipality drafted the new proposals CSPs retained important influence on their contents in the negotiations; they rejected initial municipal proposals that where later amended to balance both parties' increased financial responsibility sharing. It was of major importance for the

partnership survival that SRD guaranteed CSP influence in adjusting partnership conditions when the financial restrictions forced the municipal partner to depart from original partnership aims and re-define its direction.

In sum, our study evidences *that civil society is by no means a passivized actor* regarding partnership management strategies or its institutional design. Can we see any evidence of additional balanced partnership dimension – steering adjusted to CSP and their specificity in Gothenburg partnership and how was this expressed?

Adjusting steering mode: trust-based steering and other partnership norms

In a balanced partnership municipal relations with CSP providing housing and care services have to be distinct from its principle role in marked-based contracts, also a major requirement for an IOP. SRD needed to balance municipal service quality monitoring role with its role as a partner and a "fellow" housing service provider and implementation support. SRD steering strategy of individual CSPs was based on two major principles: (i) less formalisation and a softer way of steering than in commissioned or even directly outsourced services while sustaining the major legally stipulated quality requirements; and (ii) facilitative leadership.

It was the national inspectorate that primarily conducted housing quality controls and SRD had a monitoring role for outsourced service providers under municipal permits. However, housing services had to adjust to new and changing newcomers needs and massive immigration, and were new for all the CSPs. Under such novel circumstances and respecting the agreed partnership principles in supervising of partnership housing services municipality initially played an advisory role in defining service contents and quality in dialogue with the partners. In a later implementation phase partnership context and trust in CSRs contributed to a softer trust and dialogue-based relations when SRD communicated its national and complementary municipal quality norms for housing services to CSPs in contrast to other outsourced providers:

> "We have communicated those [requirements] within the partnership, but here it is kind of another way of working. (…)We do not send them [CSPs] the documents really even if

> same conditions apply here too. We communicate those requirements in a different way, via ongoing dialogue and via the partnership agreement." (Interview, Municipal SRD)

Thus, alongside trust-based steering SRD acted as a facilitating leader in service design and implementation phase offering advice and competence development measures. Municipality also showed considerable flexibility in adjusting quality demands to the prevalent context as during the first partnership months in the face of immigration crisis many requirements were unrealistic to live up given the fast service development, lack of personnel and premises (such as own room for all minors or night personnel).

Also the accountability practices differed from pure contractual relations**.** Knowing the CSPs service quality aspirations based on true commitment to the social group the municipality indicated high trust in the quality of IOP services even without regular examination. CSP felt that partner dialogue in common decision platforms provided municipality with a good perhaps even better insight into the CSPs services as compared to other service providers (Interview 2, 2017-05-23).

While preserving distinctiveness has been more natural in complementary services were entrepreneurial spirit and thinking "out of the box" not least among front-line personnel is a natural thing, we expect it as more challenging in HVB services. However, our interviews disclose a *significant freedom of action to preserve their distinct character*:

> "Here we are used to act based on the needs and not routines or regulations". (Interview group housing director 1)
>
> "Sometimes I perceive that SRD treats as one of their own [service providers]. You get an insight in how municipal units organise the service but you are allowed to be more flexible, have more possibilities to adjust the housing." (Interview group housing director 2)

> "I do not experience that the municipality is steering us so much. Surely there is the Act of Social Service that governs, but there is space to operate a little bit our own way." (Interview group housing director 3)

Also the fact that that each partner applied their own care and quality assurance and development methods signals of softer steering that allows civil society specificity. Partnership presents several examples of preserved CSR independence such as in rejecting some suggested municipal procedures for new group housing openings to avoid neighbours' resistance. Even when adjusting partnership housings to new government regulations presenting decreased quality standards CSPs have chosen to go their own way and retain more generous support payments to youngsters than their public sector counterparts. Overall the steering principles of partnership housing services was repeatedly expressed by CSPs as more advantageous than in marked-based contracts.

However, it is evident that the civil society organisations were also delimited in their actions also as partners to municipality such as regarding allocation of minors also without permanent residence permits or specific quality requirements, especially forcing CSPs to gradually transfer their group housings to ones with decreased personnel and care. CSPs indeed were doubtful about making such concessions and self-imposing greater limitations in line with a service agent role, but this tactics has been chosen– perhaps paradoxically – as a strategy to sustain partnership relations.

Preserving Independence and Critical Voice

One of the promises of an IOP model for CSP is possibilities to influence policy by exercising their voice and retaining a level of independence in designing and implementing public services. Nevertheless, voicing critique may be a challenge in an IOP with a municipal part that builds on a dialogue and aims for consensus. Here we look into two – internal and external – voice dimensions and some major strategies CSP used to safeguard and exercise their voice and independence.

One CSP strategy among typical voice organisations has been to avoid organising housing services for minors in which municipal and national government could steer their action to retain their independence to influence government policy.

> ”... We arrived at a conclusion that this was not our thing, we would like to work differently. If you provide housing you become very much an agent.”(Interview, SCP)

However, by accessing evidence-based knowledge from a broad range of partnership services, including their own complementary services, all CSP and especially traditional voice organisations were strengthened as impact actors:

> “...We do not start any support activities for youngsters and children that would not lead to increased knowledge and possibilities to make an impact. ” (Interview, CSP)

Another strategy adopted by all CSP was to continue with specific services and their individual development models, including housing services. Their human-centric and need-based approach that frequently required thinking out-of-the-box in service designs and delivery was CSPs way of exercising voice. When the municipality adapting to new government policies pressured CSPs to cut payments for youngsters' leisure activities for the sake of equalizing municipal and IOP care levels they resisted it pointing to the freedoms of the IOP agreement.

> ”We should not do exactly as municipality but instead see what is best fit for our aims. Active children feel better.” (Notes Collaboration group, 2016 03 09).

In Gothenburg case the CPS have not yet exploited so many opportunities to exercise their critical voice within the partnership context as there were not many major disagreements and partners were careful not to step on each other's toes in a trust building process (Collaboration meeting 20160923). However, resent government policy changes cancelling initial housing agreements for unaccompanied minors with municipalities have forced renegotiations of the partnership agreement and CPR role. This has temporarily erupted the partnership consensus making CPR fight for their view of service quality and access clearly expressing their critique to

some SRD suggested solutions but eventually settling for an agreement early in 2017. CSPs were also increasingly critical of some municipal departments the actions of which towards the youngsters, especially after 2016 national asylum policy changes, were colliding with the partnership agreement and eager to express a collective critique. An example is sending out youngsters aged 18 to state housings so depriving them of all partnership services. However, partnership with a municipal department obstructed CPS in openly critiquing the other municipal units outside the IOP agreement.

Frustrated by the political and legal changes in asylum procedures and their effects on the unaccompanied minors some organisations have chosen to individually critique the government policies in a national newspaper (SVD May 2016) or via social media[8]. Some CSPs had expectations of deploying partnership collaboration to exercise a critical collective voice towards local and national authorities. One such step has been initiating and advocating other CSPs to join a social movement ”#Viståringeut” [we cannot bear it] to affect national asylum policies, an action for which IOP seems too narrow as an arena. However, while partnership with municipality obliterate using the whole IOP as a platform to express a collective external critique it also strengthens individual CSPs and their members in their voice role.

IOP as a systemic innovation in collaborative governance and service delivery in Sweden

Partnership literature, as a subset of a broad literature on collaboration in governance and service delivery, identifies a variety of partnership forms based on their formalisation, organisation and other factors such as duration, legal basis or forms for achieving consensus (Bode and Brandsen, 2014; Freise, 2010; Sack, 2009). One advanced form of partnership is *collaborative governance* understood as “a governing arrangement where one or more public agencies directly engage non-state stakeholders in a collective decision-making process that is

[8] See for example https://www.facebook.com/skyddsvarnet/

formal, consensus-oriented, and deliberative and that aims to make or implement public policy or manage public programs or assets." (Ansell and Gash, 2008, p.544). The above definition builds on so essential for IOP attempts to balance power and influence by acknowledging the need of shared ownership of the policy process through collective decision making, formal rule creation and responsibility sharing and for stronger long-term commitments (ibid.) As IOPs are meant to be distinct from adversarial practices or "the winner takes it all" and managerial control, but rather engage both parties in collective decision making and its institutionalization (Ansell and Gash, 2008) we suggest they fall under collaborative governance. Other similarities lie in aspiration towards *governance based on normative relational principles* (Vangen et al, 2015) such as openness, dialogue, independence (Regeringskansliet, 2009).

Conceptually however IOP diverges from collaborative governance at least on one important point – initiatives to IOP are to come from civil society organizations in a dialogue with public agencies rather than being initiated or mandated by the public agencies as required by Ansell and Gash (2008). Collaborative governance literature also tends to see public agencies as distinct leaders (Ansel and Gash, 2008) of the governance and thus power balancing process who individually or collectively promote specific normative principles such as broad and active participation, weaker stakeholder influence and act as facilitating process managers (Lasker and Weiss, 2001). This distinct leadership role of public organisations in addressing such major collaborative challenges as balancing power however, as argued by Vangen et al (2015), may not adequately reflect the complex reality of governance in inter-sectorial arrangements. While IOP concept assumes public authorities have a given role in partnership, and in partnership leadership, it does not delimit this role to public authorities. In fact, it does not even articulate particular leadership aspect.

Conclusions: IOPs as Spaces of Hope for Renegotiated Governance

In this article we explored whether and how a new form of civil society public partnerships in Sweden, IOP, may live up to the promise of more equal collaborative relations in local policy

making by accommodating some major civil society interests. Gothenburg IOP being numerically the largest partnership and ranging over several policy areas including a highly regulated one puts on test the ability of IOP collaborations to achieve more balanced partnership. Especially so under changes in its context. We have employed a synthesised analytical frame (Table I.) that both presents a normative model for balancing sector power in civil society public partnerships and allows scrutinizing a number of anticipated strategies to achieve it in collaborative state-third sector governance settings.

Can an IOP live up to the normative ideal of balanced partnerships? Our analysis shows that Gothenburg partnership so far scores rather well on all the four major principles: (i) collaborative governance allowing CSP influence in policy designs, (ii) advantageous for CSPs steering arrangements; (iii) preserving distinctive CSP service design and delivery features, and (iv) abilities to exercise independent voice. Even if the studied case does not represent an optimal balance in all identified aspects of collaborative governance arguably it showcases that IOP arrangements may allow civil society an active role in collaborative local policy governance. A notable initial consensus regarding the partnership contents and progress did not prevent CSPs from voicing some external critique towards national policies or internal towards municipal partner, even if partnership with a public actor somewhat delimited its full voice potential. Additionally, the municipal partner showed respect for civil society' distinctiveness in service delivery by balancing between trust, supportive leadership and control in policy areas the implementation of which fall under the government regulations. Overall the partnership employed structural arrangements that counterbalanced the lesser discretion of CSPs in the highly regulated housing and care services by allowing them a significant freedom of decision-making in the related counselling and integration services.

A distinctive feature of the Gothenburg partnership was allowing civil society significant influence not only in *partnership process management* but also to substantial extend in the *partnership institutional design* – the collaboration goals and means, such as its major

collaboration principles, innovative financial arrangements and collaboration structures. In other words, civil society organisations were allowed a say in both hands-off and hands-on partnership meta-governance including sharing some discretionary power with municipality in designing and implementing new housing and care services. Especially accommodating CSP influence on partnership arrangements and collective process management in partnership initiation and adjustment phases has justified partnership and its survival. During the implementation phase partners' major power balancing strategy was to adjust municipal steering of housing providers to allow their influence on service design and delivery and employ collaborative partnership management. The sustainment of this collaborative governance model was dependent on particular enabling and obstructing political conditions which in the face of decreasing national government clearly relied on local political will for new relations.

These findings confirm basic Salamon and Topler (2015) tenets but arguably contrast the picture promoted by collaborative governance and governance network researchers where both meta-governance functions are ascribed primarily to public actors as a way to retain control over governance (Sørensen and Torfing, 2009). The findings confirm the importance of collaborative leadership in collaborative governance (see Ansell and Gash, 2008) and organisational research (see Capano and Galanti, 2015). Thus in their aims to improve ways of interacting between public agencies and CSP in *both* policy design and delivery, while borrowing some elements from the historical corporatist arrangements (Wijkström, 2012), IOPs may offer *a systemic innovation* according to Windrum's taxonomy (2008) in the Swedish collaboration context and possibly beyond in the contexts of collaborative partnerships between the two sectors.

In sum, the success in achieving and sustaining a balance in cross-sectorial partnership relations in Gothenburg owes much to partner willingness and abilities to employ three major *strategies* identified in our framework: (i)collaboration in partnership institutional design; (2) collaborative management and (3) adjusted steering mode to allow civil society specificity and

critical voice while sustaining accountability. A lesson from Gothenburg case is that our framework of balanced partnership needs to be complemented with a fourth dimension: (4) balancing between actor independence and collective responsibility. Also, if taken as example of balanced collaborative governance, IOP might require collaborative efforts in both institutional design and process management.

Balancing of a civil society and the public partnership may be a demanding work as the collaboration is not isolated from its socioeconomic and political environment presenting new challenges and it demands both sector awareness. Nevertheless, Gothenburg model of collaborative governance is a proof that IOP may serve as a renegotiated contract between civil society and public sector and, if sustained and developed further, as true "spaces of hope" that offer a sustainable, more legitimate and fruitful (Narbutaite-Aflaki, 2016) collective response to wicked social problems than individual organisational action or commissioned services.

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