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	Collaborative Governance in Driving MSME Technology Adoption for Smart Economy Acceleration in Yogyakarta
194 - 215	Awang Darumurti <sup>1</sup> , Helen Dian Fridayani <sup>2</sup> , Muhammad Eko Atmojo <sup>3</sup> , Li-Chun Chiang <sup>4</sup>
	(1,2,3 Department of Government Studies, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, Indonesia) (4 Department of Political Science, National Cheng Kung University, Tainan, Taiwan)
	Civil Society, Accountability, and Anti-Corruption: A Critical Examination of CSOs in Uganda
216 - 231	Mesharch Walto Katusiimeh¹, Mary Baremirwe Bekoreire¹
	( <sup>1</sup> Department of Governance, Kabale University, Uganda)
	Ethical Mechanisms in Preventing Bureaucratic Corruption: A Comparative Study across Indonesian Government Institutions
232 - 250	Abdi1, Hafiz Elfiansyah <sup>1</sup> , Nursaleh Hartaman <sup>2</sup>
	( <sup>1</sup> Department of Public Administration, Universitas Muhammadiyah Makassar, Indonesia) ( <sup>2</sup> Department of Government Studies, Universitas Muhammadiyah Makassar, Indonesia)
	The Political Existence of Muslim Immigrants in The United Kingdom
	Jeni Minan¹, Hanim Ismail², Mohamad Basri Bin Jamal³, Dian Wahyu Danial¹
251 - 266	( <sup>1</sup> Department of Government Science, Banten Raya College of Social and Political Sciences (STISIP), Indonesia)
	( <sup>2</sup> Faculty of Administrative Sciences and Police Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia)
	( <sup>3</sup> Faculty of Human Sciences, Sultan Idris Education University (UPSI), Tanjung Malim, Perak, Malaysia)
	Gender Transformation and Social Mobility of The Malind Women: Tradition, Affirmative Action, and Meritocracy in Papua's Bureaucracy
267 - 288	Rosmayasinta Makasau <sup>1</sup> , Ulfa Sevia Azni <sup>2</sup> , Alfons No Embu <sup>3</sup> , Karolus B. Bala <sup>1</sup> , Luigi Pellizzoni <sup>4</sup> , Eko Wahyono <sup>2</sup>
	( <sup>1</sup> Saint James Catholic College of Merauke (Sekolah Tinggi Katolik Santo Yakobus) Merauke, South Papua, Indonesia) ( <sup>2</sup> Badan Riset dan Inovasi Nasional (BRIN), Indonesia)

(<sup>3</sup> Ministry of Religious Affairs Office, Merauke, South Papua, Indonesia) (4 Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa, Pisa, Italy) Collaborative Government in Poverty Reduction Through the Learning Forum and Its Impacts for NGOs in Surakarta, Indonesia Haryani Saptaningtyas<sup>1</sup>, Drajat Tri Kartono<sup>2</sup>, Akbarudin Arif<sup>3</sup>, Sapja Anantanju<sup>1</sup> 289 - 302(1 Doctoral Program in Community Development/Empowerment, Postgraduate School, Sebelas Maret University, Indonesia) (2 Department of Sociology of Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Sebelas Maret University, Indonesia) (3 Magister Program in Community Development/Empowerment, Postgraduate School, *Sebelas Maret University, Indonesia)* Deep Learning-Based Sentiment Analysis of Twitter Discourse on the Gaza and Ukraine Conflicts Using Bi-GRU Architecture Garcia Krisnando Nathanael<sup>1</sup>, Rizal Akbar Aldyan<sup>2</sup>, Tran Minh Hop<sup>3</sup>, Imelda Masni Juniaty Sianipar<sup>4</sup>, Dairatul Maarif<sup>5</sup>, Zayyin Abdul Quddus<sup>6</sup> (<sup>1</sup> Department of Communication Science, Universitas Pembangunan Nasional Veteran Jakarta, Jakarta, Indonesia) 303 - 321(2 National Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN), Jakarta, Indonesia) (3 Faculty of International Relations, Ho Chi Minh City University of Economics and Finances Binh Thanh District, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam) (4 Department of International Relations, Universitas Kristen Indonesia) (5 Ph.D Student of Asia-Pacific Regional Studies, College of Humanities and Social Sciences, National Dong Hwa University Hualien 974, Taiwan) (6 Department of Sains Information, Universitas Pembangunan Nasional Veteran Jakarta, Indonesia) Digital Innovations in Southeast Asian: Research-Driven Mapping Local Governance for Efficiency and Participation Sukwan Hanafi<sup>1</sup>, Achamad Nurmandi<sup>1</sup>, Herman Lawelai<sup>2</sup>, Elaine Baulete<sup>3</sup>, Imron Sohsan<sup>4</sup> 322 - 348(1 Department of Government Affairs and Administration, Jusuf Kalla School of Government, Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, Indonesia) (2 Department of Government Studies, Universitas Muhammadiyah Buton, Indonesia) (3 Department of Political Science, Mindanao State University-Iligan Institute of Technology, Philippines)

(4 Department of Public Administration, Khon Kaen University, Thailand)

Analyzing the Dynamics of Double Movement in Water Resource Conflicts: A Critical Examination of Umbul Gemulo Spring in Batu City

#### Raihan Rakha Dhiya Achmadinata<sup>1</sup>, Adhi Cahya Fahadayana<sup>2</sup>, Aswin Ariyanto Azis<sup>3</sup>

349 - 367

(1 Department of Politics, Government, and International Relations, Universitas Brawijaya, Indonesia)

(2 Department of Politics, Government, and International Relations, Universitas Brawijaya, Indonesia & Department of Global Studies and Human Security, University of Massachusetts, Boston)

		( <sup>3</sup> Department of Politics, Government, and International Relations, Universitas Brawijaya, Indonesia)
36		Religious-Based Women's Movement Typology in Modern Indonesia as a Social Movement in West Java
	368 - 386	Antik Bintari <sup>1</sup> , Ida Widianingsih <sup>2</sup> , Mudiyati Rahmatunnisa <sup>3</sup>
		(¹ Department of Government, Universitas Padjadjaran, Indonesia) (² Department of Public Administration, Universitas Padjadjaran) (³ Department of Political Science, Universitas Padjadjaran)
3		Spatial Politics: Questioning Land Use in the IKN Region from a Spatial Production Perspective
	387 - 405	Muh Fichriyadi Hastira <sup>1</sup> , Armin Arsyad <sup>1</sup> , Gustiana Kambo <sup>1</sup> , Muhammad Muhammad <sup>1</sup> , Muhammad Saad <sup>1</sup> , Mimi Arifin <sup>2</sup>
		( <sup>1</sup> Departement of Political Science, Hasanudin University, Indonesia) ( <sup>1</sup> Departement of Urban and Regional Planning, Hasanuddin University, Indonesia)



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## Collaborative Government in Poverty Reduction Through the Learning Forum and Its Impacts for NGOs in Surakarta, Indonesia

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#### **Abstract**

Synergism between the government and Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) through a learning forum in order to apply the policy of Self-Management III is highly necessary for the alleviation of poverty in the City of Surakarta, Central Java, Indonesia. However, this policy has impacted the way NGOs operate in the field. The terminology of non-government organizations in Indonesia is analogized with the private sector and is also positioned as one of the third sector development by Helmut K. Anheier (2000). Under the terminology of CSOs, a non-government is recognized as one of the partner institutions of the government. Indonesia President Regulation (Perpres) number 16 of 2018, junto number 12 of 2021 concerning Government Procurement of Goods/Services provides a collaborative model. This paper discusses how policy is implemented at the local level by the Learning Forum. Data analysis was carried out in stages: selecting data, coding data, and compiling meta-descriptive analytics. This paper argues that collaborative government depends on the diverse actors of NGOs and their points of view on government policy. Some NGOs perceive this regulation as a prospectus solution regarding financial issues, while other NGOs think it would impact the independence of the institution. Therefore, regulation also presents a force factor in developing a collaboration between civil society and government in eradicating urban poverty, as well as a new challenge related to repositioning NGOs/CSOs itself.

**Keywords:** a collaborative government, learning forum, non-government organization, poverty reduction

#### Abstrak

Sinergisme antara pemerintah dan Lembaga Swadaya Masyarakat (LSM) melalui kebijakan Swakelola III telah diterapkan oleh pemerintah melalui Peraturan Presiden (Perpres) Indonesia nomor 16 tahun 2018, junto nomor 12 tahun 2021 tentang Pengadaan Barang/Jasa Pemerintah memberikan model kolaboratif yang berdampak pada internal LSM, meskipun tujuannya adalah untuk mempercepat penanggulangan kemiskinan. Terminologi lembaga swadaya masyarakat di Indonesia dianalogikan dengan sektor swasta dan juga diposisikan sebagai salah satu sektor ketiga pembangunan oleh Helmut K. Anheier (2000). Di bawah terminologi lembaga swadaya masyarakat (LSM) diakui sebagai mitra pemerintah. Tulisan ini membahas bagaimana kebijakan pemerintah diimplementasikan di tingkat lokal oleh Forum Belajar. Analisis

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data dilakukan secara bertahap: memilih data, mengkodekan data, dan menyusun analisis meta-deskriptif. Pelaksanaan peraturan ini bergantung pada cara pandang actor LSM. Sebagian actor menganggap peraturan ini menjadi solusi untuk masalah keuangan sebagian LSM, tetapi sebagian LSM yang lain menganggap peraturan ini berdampak pada independensi lembaga. Dengan demikian disatu sis perpres menjadi upaya pendorong kolaborasi pemerintah dan LSM, sekaligus mereposisi LSM itu sendiri.

Kata Kunci: Kolaborasi pemerintah, forum belajar, LSM, pengurangan kemiskinan

#### INTRODUCTION

Despite long-standing government interventions in poverty alleviation, including conditional cash transfers and health insurance programs, structural challenges persist—particularly in targeting accuracy and program complementarity. The most crucial debates are the inaccurate target of the poverty program and a lack of complementary programs aimed at zero poverty. These challenges are not only for the government but also for non-government organizations involved in humanitarian programs.

According A. Nugroho, H.Amir, I. Maududy et al (2021), the challenge of poverty reduction continues to increase as the pace of poverty eradication has slowed in recent years; . From 2008 to 2015, the poverty rate declined at an annual rate of 0.8%, while between 2015 and 2019, the declining rate was only 0.31% annually. One of the challenges is the structural characteristics within this poorest group (Cruz, M., Foster, J. E., Quillin, B., & Schellekens, P.,2015), the economic recession in over 20 years due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Suroyo & Diela, 2020). However, little is known about how Self-Management Type III operates at the city level to restructure CSO-government collaboration in urban poverty reduction. In 2022, the city of Surakarta is one of the cities in Central Java Province with 83,08 % of the Human Development Index (HDI), higher than the previous year (82.62). However, according to statistical data in 2021, the number of poverties in Surakarta is 9.40 %, and Index Severity Poverty is 0.54%. The poverty line resident is 511.216 rupiah/capita/month. It means some people in Surakarta are severely living in economic marginality.

Surakarta is marked as a base city of social movements with a growing and developing group organization society and potentially becomes an actor to tackle poverty. According to data from Bakesbangpol Surakarta in 2023, the City of Surakarta itself recorded 173 CSOs are consisting of varied backgrounds behind groups and social attentions. There are up to 20 CSOs compared to December 2022. With this potency, the government may collaborate with CSOs to overcome social problems, including poverty. Based on Constitution Number 2 of 2017, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) are organizations founded and formed by the community in a way volunteer based on similar aspirations, desires, needs, interests,

activities, and goals and may participate in development to achieve the goal of the Unitary State The Republic of Indonesia which is based on Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia.

This paper opted for the potential solution to reduce the number of poverty through collaborative poverty alleviation programs, which are seen as a new force to end poverty, especially in the era of fiscal decentralization. The Central Statistics Agency (BPS) data shows that the poor population in Surakarta City is 9.40 percent or 48,790 people. This city is positioned as one of the highest cities with the number of poor, or 11th-level ranking, poverty cities and districts in Central Java. As noted, the definition of poverty threshold according to BPS is the minimum expenditure required to meet basic living needs for a month, including food and non-food needs. The poverty line consists of two components: the food poverty line and the non-food poverty line. Specifically, poverty data per sub-district in the urbanized city of Surakarta is seen in the following table.

Table 1. Total Population Prone to Risk Social Priority 6 and Priority 1, Respectively on the Subdistricts in Surakarta in 2022

District	Amount Resident Prone to Priority Social Risk 6 According to District (Person)	Amount Priority 1 Poor Population According to District (Person)	
	K.K	K.K	
	2021	2021	
Laweyan	-	176	
Serengan	2	121	
Kliwon Market	2	174	
Jebres	1	356	
Banjarsari	2	473	
Surakarta City	7	1300	

Source: https://data.surakarta.go.id/dataset/data-oms-active-kota-surakarta

According to Siburian (2022), the era of fiscal decentralization gives a significant authorization of the local government to assign its resources and perform its functions in providing pro-poor local public goods is the appropriate approach to alleviate poverty. This paper explores how synergistic governments and parties such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or organizations of public civil service (CSO) handle case poverty and see common interests between parties. In the field, several NGOs are concerned about the issues of humanity, such as HIV/AIDS and violence against women and children, in which poverty is one of the triggering factors, while the government has the responsibility to eradicate poverty. Banks, Nicola, and Hulme, David (2012) state that NGOs provide alternative development, offering innovative and people-centered approaches to service delivery, advocacy, and empowerment. NGOs have played an increasingly prominent role in the

development sector, and in filling gaps left by the failure of states. Ardian (2016) indicated the role of non-government organizations in the politics of environmental issues.

One of the successful collaborative governments between CSOs and the Government of this city was in 2022 concerning religious moderation, indicated by the fourth position of the Tolerance City Index (Setara Institute). Another award has been received concerning the Best Open Information Index in the year 2022 at the Provincial level (Central Java KIP Version) with figure 99.95. Higher than the previous year, in 2021 it was 98.17 (statistic data), which implies the openness of the city government. Thus, the necessity to synergize between the government and CSOs to eradicate poverty in the city became important as we see the number of poor still present. Scheme self-management III is possible to enable environmental collaboration between the government and CSOs in poverty reduction.

Widoyoko,(2022) defined Self-Management Type III as a mechanism to open up opportunities for the government to collaborate with organizations incorporated as foundations and associations with specific expertise required by the government. Self-Management Type III provides an alternative for the government to cooperate more broadly, not only with private legal entities but also with non-profit legal entities, even though may impact internally the position of the CSO's itself.

This paper argues that Self Management Type III opens the possibility for CSOs to take part in managing funds to eradicate poverty and design the People Center Development program as well. The government, through various poverty reduction programs, may provide funding that has pushed pro-poor programs, while CSOs can provide accurate and contextual data related to poverty alleviation. So the state is no longer the main player. Specific behavioral elements identified by practitioners and scholars alike, including face-to-face dialogue, engaging in single forums, joint fact finding, knowledge sharing, aligning of interests and values, joint problem solving, and focusing on immediate and/or strategic tangible outcomes (Ansell & Gash, 2008).

As a consequence of applying the Self Management Type III, repositioning NGOs may occur (Qurota'ayyun and Saptaningtyas,2023). Non-Governmental Organizations and Non-Profit Organizations are often called the 'third sector,' with government and business entities constituting the first and second sectors, respectively (Anheir, 2005). NGOs are no longer in opposition to the government, but they collaborate and are in the same position as the state. In practice, some NGOs (Non Government Organisation) call themselves as CSOs (Civil Society Organisations). Helmut K. Anheier's (2000) entitled Managing Non-profit Organizations; toward a New Approach shows the complexity of positioning the civil society organization as a form of a third sector development where some CSOs are still do reluctant to cooperate with government. However, some other CSOs have shown a willingness to collaborate with the government. Bustam (2021) revealed the impactful role of the Tanah Merdeka Foundation, an NGO advocating for the interests of the Katu people. The foundation positioned itself as

an intellectual catalyst, mobilizing the Katu people into activism through the formation of collective action. While in the poverty alleviation program, critics of some NGOs to the government are that the government prioritizes infrastructure development over the alleviation of poverty.

In this paper, we assume that no matter the position of any civil service (CSO), their position is still vital and becomes one of the essential pillars in realizing development and change in the social, government, and business world, in which the vulnerable group i.e., the poor, will get priority to get poverty program and other social security programs. It is recorded that the government, through various social programs, such as Family Hope Program Social Assistance (PKH), the National Social Security System (SJSN), the Health Insurance Program (KIS) and environmental issues, opened collaboration with other parties. In applying those programs, sometimes the interchangeability and interconnection between the government and CSOs are unavoidable. We see that Regulation President No. 16 of 2018, related to Self Manage III, becomes an opportunity for budgeting for CSOs and puts CSOs to directly participate in the alleviation program of poverty.

#### **METHODS**

This study used qualitative paradigms, which are grounded in process theory, which deals with events and the processes that connect them, and how events influence each other (Maxwell & Loomis, 2003). Using a participatory approach, we developed a reinterpretation of multiple realities of urban poverty and how collaboration between governments and CSOs is put into practice.

Interviews and focus group discussions (FGD) were conducted together with group researchers who are also involved in the organization of civil cooperation and academia in Surakarta, Central Java, in the middle of 2021- 2022. Started with FGDS for problem mapping of the forum, followed by interviewing some actors. FGD was done with a hybrid format on 26 September 2020. In-depth interviews were done in the mid of 2021. There were 13 informants, including the representative of the local CSO in Solo, three of the state officers, and two academics. Secondary data, such as the report documents and meeting notes, are analyzed manually with narrative analysis. Thematic analysis was carried out on primary data with stages of selecting data, coding data, and compiling meta-descriptive analytics.

Source informants were obtained from the government actors and non-government, especially activists involved in the learning forum Madani called "Mandiri" Study Group (KOMBES) in Surakarta City. Since the CSO activist is also part of the research team, the interpretative process may impact the emic and etic issues. Therefore, there is no single reality because knowledge is subjective and culture-bound. Kamberelis & Dimitriadis (2005) show that individuals perceive, understand, experience, and make sense of reality in different ways depending on an individual's unique backgrounds and experiences. In this study, the

researcher interpreted qualitative, non-quantifiable data, including rich accounts of social phenomena, contextualized narratives, and rhetorical techniques.

#### **RESULTS**

#### Role of KOMBES in Facilitating Collaboration in Kota Surakarta

Kombes or komunitas belajar (learning forum) is a CSOs forum that leads multistakeholders to collaborate with a diverse array of actors to improve frontline service delivery, enhance citizen participation in government consultations with their communities, and combat the spread of disinformation and hate speech. Through financial support and technical assistance from USAID Program called Madani, the leader of Kombes said that MADANI has been interpreted as an imaginary concept of the social order and serves as a unification of the collective vision among actors.

The MADANI Program, as well as a learning forum, aims to build the capacity and support the sustainability of local CSOs, empowering them to become leaders in their districts, as well as build partnerships with local governments and the private sector to address key development challenges. MADANI facilitates effective relationships between CSOs, local governments, and other partners by promoting the benefits of collaboration, as well as cultivating the connections, networks, and systems necessary to make partnerships possible, empower Lead Partner CSOs, improve operational systems, expand stakeholder reach and relevance, and building sustainable means of resource mobilization.

In Surakarta City, the Madani Learning Forum defines itself as a group of individuals coming from various backgrounds, such as academics, activists, entrepreneurs, and representatives of an inclusive society, to formulate a common vision. Based on the official report of Kombes, it was established on Tuesday, September 22, 2020, in Surakarta City. There are 19 people from the element CSO representatives in Surakarta, together with three people from the element government, that is officially called Community Learn Madani Solo. Currently, Kombes encourages the government and CSO to build cooperation through the scheme Self-Management III.

At the national level, similar learning forums are also facilitated by USAID to build effective relationships between CSOs, local governments, and other partners by promoting the benefits of collaboration, as well as cultivating the connections, networks, and systems necessary to make partnerships possible. The schemas were based on Presidential Regulation (Perpres) Number 16 of 2018 concerning Public Procurement of Goods/Services, which was later updated in Presidential Regulation Number 12 of 2021. Based on the reporting document on self-management III policy, we see there were different concerns between CSOs and the government related to Self-Management Type III, although both of them see the opportunity for synergism, as seen in table 1. Below:

Table. 2. Different Concerns between CSOs and Government Related to the Application of Self-Management Type III

CSO's Concern	Government's Concern
1. CSOs provides various capabilities to	1. Legal authority of the OMS
support the government program,	2. OMS will support the government
particularly pro poor paradigm	and increase government capacity
2. Opportunity for Grant	<ol><li>Bridging the gap between the private sector and the government</li></ol>
	<ol> <li>Participation on development process</li> </ol>

Source: Data analysis

From the table above, we see that various roles between the government and NGOs may improve a collaborative government, and NGOs activists hope to modify the government programs and push the quality and achievements of the alleviation program.

#### CSO's Perception of the Schema Self-Management III

According to Das (2015) the term Non government organization or NGO is commonly used to refer to civil society organizations (CSOs) defined as organizations which opposite or against the government and aim to control it. Until 1993, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) classified all non-state and non-business organizations as CSOs, which encompass academic institutions, journalist associations, faith-based organizations, and trade unions, and were supposed to be working with the government under Clean and Good Government. This term was introduced around 1999 by the United Nations, and now the concept is sharpened through a definition of collaborative governance (UNDP, 2006, p. 3). Policy Self-Management Type III becomes meaningful from the confession government to the role public in the development process. Under this regulation, acceleration and strengthening of democratization is also recognized by involving the strong CSOs. Self-Management consists of four types, but concerning CSO is under Self-management type III. The purpose of self-managed is to increase public participation in procurement goods/ services.

In the context of sustainable CSOs, Presidential Decree No.16 of 2018 becomes a source of alternative funding to support strengthening CSOs and empower the public in general. So far, community empowerment and strengthening CSOs have been done with international donors' support. Along with Indonesia's position as a country with middle-income country, several international donors no longer support Indonesia. Therefore, the policy becomes one of the exit strategies for CSO sustainability. Several international donors are seriously stimulating these policies for the sustainability of CSOs in Indonesia, such as the Knowledge

Sector Initiative (KSI)-DFAT, the MADANI Program - USAID, and the Social Contracting Program - Global Fund (GF).

Knowledge Sector Initiative (KSI), since beginning research push involvement with Mass organizations with Presidential Decree No.16 of 2018 brings together Policy Institutions Government Procurement of Goods/Services (LKPP) with organization researchers and advocates, such as AKATIGA, the Center for Law and Policy Studies (PSHK), and the Community Research and Advocacy Institute (ELSAM) in formulation involvement of CSOs. However, this intention received some criticism from internal CSOs, for example, one activist said, "In the past, it was NGOs that gave a critique for government policy; if we (CSO) access (funds) from the government, then we (CSO) become subordinate (of the government)". This statement shows the dilemmatic position of CSO. Several group CSO activists regularly criticize and demand transparency. Therefore, the activists request a clear concept of self-management. Thus, Self-Management Type III also allows the public to be actively involved in the development. The public presents as an actor, not an object of development, even becoming part involved in the procurement process that supports development.

#### Closing the Gap with Government's Concerns

As MADANI program has an ideal concept for collaboration, we have seen that there are different concerns between the CSOs and the Governments in the operationalization of Self-Management III, as seen in table 3. Below.

Table 3. The Schema of Collaboration between the Government and CSOs

#### The Role of CSOs The Role of Government As an explorer Identify, discover The government provides an and define problem contemporary in enabling environment for public services with more effective innovation through regulation 2. The government Provides a 2. As an explorer, CSO Identifies, discovers, and defines problems in platform for innovation, such as contemporary public services more a Knowledge hub effectively 3. As a designer, CSO design implementation of the right solution 4. As a diffuser, CSO pushes diffusion and adoption to broader society

Source: Model of Collaboration on Self Management III (Efendi, et al, 2019)

Based on the table above, the role of CSO is the creator of ideas, designer of the project, explorer, and diffuser. At the same time, the government is an enabler environment for regulation and any platform. Self-Management Type III, becomes an enabling environment for CSOs to openly work with various experts from various backgrounds, including the government itself. For CSOs, the policy gives legitimacy and open direct involvement in formulation and implementation development (Widoyoko, 2022). According to one of the CSO activists from Semeru, one of the non-governmental research institutions, this procurement method allows the government to access the unique expertise of CSOs to meet the needs of public goods/services with financing from the national budget, APBN, or the regional government, which is different from the previous procurement regulations. No mechanism would allow the involvement of non-governmental research institutions and non-profit community organizations in such processes.

#### DISCUSSION

#### Urban Poverty is a common Concern in a Collaborative Government

Despite the poverty program becoming a priority for the government, poverty still exists as an abjection for the marginal people who do not have any choices. Urban poverty is seen as increasing the income disparity between the rich and the poor. There is a significant difference in the way poor people fulfill their basic needs, especially food, clothing, and shelter, compared to the rich. To overcome this disparity, the role of the government becomes essential to ensure the alleviation program targets the most vulnerable. Thus, accurate data is highly required.

From the Table 1, it is seen that all sub-districts in the city that have poor-prone are 6 except the Laweyan subdistrict. According to the Head of Bappeda in Surakarta, at least two influencing factors of poverty: 1). inappropriate target programs and 2). needs verified data and the existence of a mental being, 'poor'. This statement shows that in addition to the alleviation program, community empowerment carried out in poor communities is highly needed, not just a charitable program. In the empowerment program, the term "giving a hook to vulnerable groups and not only expecting fish" is a popular metaphor for empowering the community. This empowerment program becomes a characteristic approach by CSOs related to multidimensional poverty, which is more participative and considers a bottom-up approach.

One of the key dimensions of development is the distinction between top-down development and bottom-up development (Ife, 2002). The former is development that is directed by the 'experts': those with superior wisdom, knowledge, and expertise who have clear ideas about how development ought to proceed and who seek to implement development programs accordingly (Ife, 2009;17)

As Ansell and Gash (2008) argue, effective collaborative governance requires shared motivation, institutional design, and iterative trust-building. The Surakarta case illustrates that while trust is emerging, institutional mechanisms remain weak. In our opinion, Self-Management III is a momentum for CSOs to establish a learning forum and to reflect a social change concerning a collaborative government. Learning forums become the core of the community development process. According to Ife, (2009) the process of social change needs collective consciousness, collective understandings, collective experiences, and collective action.

#### Challenges of a Collaborative Government

John Wanna (2008) defines collaboration as a joint-working action involving various actors, individuals, groups, or organizations striving to achieve certain goals. A successful collaboration cannot be separated from the role of stakeholders or actors in it. On the pentahelix concept, five actors are involved; those are the first in academics, the business sector, the community, the government, and the media (Karunia et al., 2018). In general, there is a perception that CSO actors represent the community. Therefore, the government installed a regulation to build strong collaboration with CSOs, as one of the successful indicators of development, namely Self Management Type III.

The regulation of Self-Management Type III is closely associated with the role of policy research institutions and related stakeholders supported by the Knowledge Sector Initiative (KSI), encouraging the government, through the National Public Procurement Agency (LKPP) to open opportunities for non-governmental research institutions to be involved in the procurement of government goods and services (Widoyoko, 2022).

The government realizes that many CSOs in the City of Surakarta with diverse expertise and experience have the potential for the success of development programs. Working with the community, advocating, and having research-based experience, CSOs can implement pro-poor and inclusivity. For the CSOs, there is a particular image if they are working with the government. Collaboration brings less stigma of being an opponent of the government, compounded by the potential for gaining financial support for each applied project. Our informant said, "For the 2021 budget, our APBN is around Rp. 2,000 trillion. Of this amount, half of it (or around Rp 1,000 trillion) is processed through procuring goods and services. If dissected again, about 60 percent is carried out with the provider (private sectors including CSOs) and 40 percent through Self-Management. We can see how important Self-Management is as part of the public procurement process". On this basis, trustfulness is the main point of this regulation, within the different perspectives of the government and CSOs related to the implementation and operationalization of the policy.

The implementation of Self-Management III is still hampered because mechanisms and knowledge of how to implement the regulation are lacking (www.tempo.co). In our case study, the weak implementation is due to doubtful about the City government's ability to carry out Presidential Decree No. 16, Year 2018. The findings of Table 1 confirm this challenge. Even though the government said that it is highly necessary to carry out activities /programs with CSOs, they are questioning the competence of the CSOs. Thus, shared motivation, institutional design, and iterative trust-building is highly necessary to build along the collaborative process (Ansell and Gash,2008).

To overcome the dynamic process of collaboration, MADANI Program, at the national level, encourages CSOs in the district to capitalize on their capacity under specific indicators, namely the Organizational Performance Index (IKO). This IKO becomes a tool to measure the internal capacity of each organization and connect principal tasks and functions.

IKO measures organizational effectiveness through 1. legal documents, namely AD/ART, strategic planning, and standard operational procedures, which are organizational; 2. Track record of the efficient running of the program, and 3. Relevance of the program to management issues, specifically strong engagement with beneficiaries. 4. Sustainability program, which includes cadre, utilization network, finance institutions, and estimates institutional in the future. Based on the IKO, we see that the function of CSO is no longer only controlling the government, but also applying as a development actor and agency. Thus, the learning forum becomes a learning process for encouraging the government and CSO to work under the same tone, namely, the document of the development plan of the local government.

#### CONCLUSION

From the data and analysis above, one can conclude that poverty can become a common interest in developing collaborative relationships between the Government and CSOs. This study advances collaborative governance theory in which mechanism self-management III is already clearly arranged in Presidential Decree 16/2018 jo.12/2021, and provincial Regulation 12/2021.

The findings advance collaborative governance theory by demonstrating how regulatory frameworks like Self-Management Type III reshape the accountability and autonomy of CSOs. However, there is still an obstacle related to different perceptions between CSO and the Government to utilize the self-managed type III for poverty eradication.

In carrying out collaboration in poverty alleviation, the government and CSOs need to develop a mechanism to operationalize and focus on program strategies that include how to fund, who will be the target or recipient of the program based on field data, and how effort empowerment will be executed.

The findings suggest that dimensions for a new partnership between the Government and civil society need to be developed further. Therefore, local governments must institutionalize learning forums like KOMBES to operationalize co-governance mechanisms.

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