



# ANDREW ON WEDNESDAY

## Local governments: a failed experiment?

The headline dedicated to this opinion piece might not go down well with the genuine candidates who invest so much in their campaigns and are so dedicated to their communities.

However, there are questions and reflections we need to make on this segment of our public administration that by design comes to light a couple of months before every election, the first being: Do we really want Local Governments? and, are we really interested in 'subsidiarity', defined as "the principle that a central authority should have a subsidiary function, performing only those tasks which cannot be performed at a more local level" (Oxford English Dictionary).

These are by no stretch of the imagination questions directed at the main political parties who see Local Governments simply as being an opportunity to test-out potential general election candidates, a pseudo-nursery in other words. Neither is it directed to the party duopoly which is usurped with turning our Local Government into a new form of 'street leaders', *id est* those who would know all about the voting preferences of each and every member of the household! Neither are Local Governments simply a hock in the nanny state that this country seems so much affianced with, a post-colonial syndrome that still runs in our DNA.

Should Local Governments exist in the first place? Are they worth the time, effort and resources?

Our Local Governments, if they have to exist, need a complete overhaul, and no I am not just speaking about the perpetual reforms, another senseless mannerism of this Country.

Neither am I talking about a set of proposals that one Party throws at the other - what this is doing is simply negotiating the mechanics when we are not even convinced if the principles are in place! If you had to ask people for example, what is it that they want from their Local Governments, most probably very little will come 'your' way. Our citizens have always been myopic looking at Local Government just as another way of by-passing the system. Most candidates are probably voted in 'ghax jaqini' and the opposite happens if 'ma jaqininix'. I believe that as things stand Local Governments are not serving the purpose I understand they should have and are by and large fruitless. Once again, not that there aren't a lot of well-intentioned people who are trying their utmost to make this enterprise work. From where I stand they are simply outnumbered and consequently incapacitated.

I believe in subsidiarity and there is no better way to show it than through the relocation of power to the citizens and their communities. Local Governments should be there to help 'on the ground'. The privilege of serving is second to none. Not only that, Local Governments are perfectly placed to leave an (instant) positive impact on the community, if permitted. However, there are issues that I feel need to be addressed to make these structures function effectively.

As a starter, the process of citizen participation in decision making should be central so that

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faith is rekindled in these structures.

Secondly, we need to guarantee that civil society is rich and abundant in our communities. It should be a priority and at the forefront of the work of Local Governments to make sure that they create the environment for civil society to flourish, not by interfering in their operations but by providing funds, resources, offering opportunities for networking, supporting them in applying for programs and giving the much needed psychological support.

Thirdly, Local Governments should be less about being an extension of the favouritism culture dominant in our political parties and more about creating proficient structures to ensure that the citizens are well accommodated according to law.

Fourthly, waste management is

a task that could easily be taken up by the Central Government. It is not only a terrible waste of time but also drains resources from the Local Governments.

Fifth, Local Governments should be about empowering young people and giving more authority beyond that of just slipping a vote in the ballot box once every five years or so. Young people are the only hope I have left for this Country. Young people are our critical mass and they need to be allowed to express themselves.

Sixth, Local Governments should make better use of the digital evolution we have seen unfold in our nation. Local Governments should be focused on finding ways how AI and technology are used for improved communities.

Seventh, political parties and the narratives they carry with them should hit the road. Let me just give one example of the polarization they are encouraging; it is weird that you hear one Leader speak highly of those localities his Party has a majority of seats in and the other leader saying the direct opposite.

Finally, Local Governments should be investing in having a social worker, community worker and youth worker in their midst not only to respond to crises but to help communities progress. If we want to have Local Governments at all, at least we need to be more proactive, have better leadership improved administration, more funding and a willingness to grow as a community together.

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27 February 1975

## PC murder linked to IRA bomb factory

Scotland Yard has said the man who shot dead a police officer in London yesterday had been staying in a flat used as a "bomb factory" by the Provisional IRA.

PC Stephen Tibble, aged 22, had been in the force for just six months.

He was shot three times at point blank range by a gunman on the run from detectives in Baron's Court, West London.

Within two hours of the killing, a large Victorian house was searched after routine enquiries.

The basement was found to contain enough bomb-making equipment to make half a dozen high explosive bombs as well as a box of ammunition and an automatic pistol.

It is the first IRA bomb factory to be found in London.

Deputy Assistant Commissioner Ernest Bond said: "Evidence shows that the equipment can be definitely connected with other bomb incidents and outrages recently in London and the provinces."

Four men are registered as tenants.

### Shot in the chest

No one has been arrested at the flat but police have rounded up 18 Irish men and have applied to detain further at least six of those under the provisions of the anti-terrorism act passed last year.

Yesterday, a plain clothes detective patrolling Charleville Rd and Fairholme Rd, where the "bomb factory" was later found, saw a man acting suspiciously and questioned him.

He ran off and the detective and two other officers gave chase.

PC Tibble was passing by on his motorbike and although he was off duty he rode after the suspect and overtook him.

He then got off his bike and stood in front of

the fugitive with arms stretched out, at which point the man shot him three times in the chest.

The Royal Ulster Constabulary is helping Scotland Yard in the hunt for the killer.

There has been an overwhelming response from the public and donations offered for PC Tibble's widow, Liam Quinn, Stephen Tibble's killer, escaped to San Francisco.

He lost a 13 year battle against extradition from the United States and returned to Britain to face trial.

He was jailed for life in 1988 with a recommended minimum sentence of 30 years.

As part of a deal with Sinn Fein under the Good Friday Agreement, he was freed from the high security Portlaoise Prison 11 years later in April 1999, much to the horror of police officers in England and Northern Ireland.