Regime transition, democratization and citizenship:
The role of the people in local government and the Agrarian Reform, Portugal, 1974-1976.

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Abstract: The Portuguese 1974 revolution was initiated by the military, with huge popular support. During the transition period, there was almost total elite replacement. Mostly it was a top to bottom revolution. But in local government, the people assumed control. Administrative commissions were put in place to manage the municipalities until the first elections took place in December 1976. At the same time, the Alentejo region was the stage of an Agrarian Reform, a political and social movement quite new and bold from a legal perspective. This research analyses a critical issue for its time. How did society react in face of such changes in politics, economy and social structure? What made people take to the streets and obtain control of local government and economic resources? Who were the local elites before the revolution and who took their place? And were these new elites validated in the elections? For this research there was a consistent study of local sources, as well as an important gathering of local memories through interviews. In order to compare local elites in Portugal during Salazar’s dictatorship and then in the Democratic regime, a database was built with entries regarding mayors, councilors and civil governors. In sum, the analysis of local elites provides the big picture of the carnation revolution and the real changes in the Portuguese transition to Democracy.