

The Italian program on Civic Evaluation

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Background

- 2006: Partnership agreement between the Ministry of Public Administration and Cittadinanzattiva movement to experiment new forms of “subsidiary governance”, on the base of Civic Audit experience carried out by the movement since 2001.
- 2001: Amendment to the Italian Constitution introducing the principle of “circular” subsidiarity: *public institutions favor the autonomous initiatives of citizens, as individuals and organizations, aimed at caring for general interests.* At the core of the amendment:
 - Recognition of the constitutional rank of citizens' autonomous initiative in the public realm
 - Cooperation between them and public institutions on an equal footing
 - Going beyond traditional, institution-centered, practices

The Civic Audit

- Set up and started in 2001 by Cittadinanzattiva.
- A methodology based on the ability of citizens to produce information on relevant issues (*civic information*)
- Groups of citizens, in agreement with public administrations, using a shared set of parameters and indicators to verify through direct observation and interviews with key-persons quality factors in public facilities. Corrective actions are the outputs of the process and their implementation is verified afterwards.
- Implemented in local health agencies and recognized as an official evaluation tool by the Ministry of Health and by several Regional Administrations.
- Some applications in water management and public transportation as well.
- Used to monitor the state of Patients' Rights in Europe (2004-2007) by Active Citizenship Network.

The experiment / 1

- Aim: using the experience of Civic Audit to set up and promote a methodology for Civic Evaluation, broader and of easier feasibility.
- In 2008: a first test in a sample of 5 schools and 7 local administrations' front office services.
- In 2009: establishment of a working group (Ministry of Public Administration and FORMEZ; Cittadinanzattiva and FONDACA) assessing the test and solving definition, methodological and operational problems.
- Outputs:
 - General definition of Civic Evaluation
 - Set up of the methodology
 - Designing the process
 - Planning and managing the experiment

The experiment / 2

- *Civic Evaluation*: a comparative action-research implemented by the citizens to assert their rights through motivated judgements on relevant general interest situations
- The essentials:
 - Citizens gather first- or second-degree data
 - Produce information from data
 - Issue a judgement on the situation
- Civic Evaluation can be:
 - An evaluation in a strict sense (against pre-defined standards)
 - An assessment (without pre-defined standards but with indicators)
- It can be implemented:
 - As autonomous citizens' initiative
 - In partnership with public administrations

The experiment / 3

- The process design:
 - Taking of the initiative by the public administration or citizens' organization
 - Agreed choice of the issue (place, situation, etc.)
 - Convening of the affected citizens by the citizens' organizations in order to define priorities and to gather the availability of volunteers to carry on the evaluation
 - Definition of indicators and standards by citizens' organization reflecting the citizens' priorities
 - Gathering of data and production of a first report by citizens' organization
 - Convening of the affected citizens to issue a judgement
 - Use of the judgement by the public administration on the base of a pre-defined public procedure

The experiment / 4

- It will be carried out from Nov 09 to Jan 10 in 16 local administrations of 4 Southern Regions
- Topic chosen: *urban quality* (public transportation, road maintenance, public spaces such as gardens and squares, safety etc.). The topic reflects citizens' point of view and not administrative competences
- A focus group (Oct 09) to identify a common set of indicators in order to assure the comparability of results (the indicators will be prioritized and enriched by the affected citizens at local level)
- Local branches of Cittadinanzattiva will manage and facilitate the process
- Ongoing: Selection of local administrations, definition of the set of common indicators

Innovative elements

- Beyond customer satisfaction (express opinions vs. produce information and judgements)
- Beyond ordinary consultation procedures (decision on local priorities; recruitment of volunteers for the auditing process)
- Strengthen the evaluation phase of policy making
- Leading role of citizens in the process
- Inclusion both of individuals and organizations with different but consistent roles