| Title | "Citizen Empowerment" |
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| Name workshop: | **Quality of Life in Neighbourhoods** |
| Projects presented: | 1. The Italian Case of Civic Evaluation (of the urban quality). 2. SarSan: participatory processes for Roma people inclusion at Rome, Italy |
| Workshop director(s): | Marianella Sclavi, Adriana Goni Mazzitelli, Laura Massoli |
| Name rapporteur(s): | Eva Lekkerkerker |
| Date and time of workshop: | 09.30 |

How can initiatives utilize and foster residents' self-empowerment? How can the administrative benefit from local initiatives and enhance their effectiveness? Two Italian examples illustrating these questions: their successes, hurdles and points of improvement

- Emphasis on citizen point of view on issues, instead of the point of view of the (local) government. Listening to the locals, creating room for their wishes.
- Tackling concrete problems in neighborhoods
- Creating networks that stimulate mutual understanding, cooperation and trust → growing social capital
- Experts who recognize individual capacities and facilitate means for residents to use these capacities for their own benefit and the benefit of the neighborhood
- Trying to create permanent channels top-down/bottom-up so residents can always address their issues and make their recommendations to the local administration

First project:
The Italian Case of Civic Evaluation (of the urban quality)

The initiative's goal was to get citizens, government representatives and other stakeholders together to design and evaluate concrete public services such as road maintenance and garbage collection. Citizens wrote reports on their evaluations of public services with recommendations. For the local administration this often proofed beneficial, because residents are able to give non-convential input. These recommendations formed new policies, which the residents then evaluated. Keeping citizens and local administrations in a dialogue with each other created mutual understanding and trust. This initiative tried to generalize their method to make it applicable on different municipalities within Italy's southern regions, and to share findings and experiences with one another. They found that between municipalities this was difficult, because there was a hierarchical structure perceived between them that restrained open communication.

Sarsàn: participatory processes for Roma people inclusion at Rome, Italy

Especially their workshops with 2d generation residents (children) were successful. Children interacted casually with each other and came up with suggestions themselves for the neighborhood. Community grounds were turned into vegetable gardens, garbage was removed, curbs were decorated with paintings etcetera. Community festivals, dance, music and cooking activities were made to connect people of different ethnic background together and create mutual respect and understanding. This was especially important and difficult, because there are many prejudices about Roma people amongst Italians. Often enough they would participate in the workshop together but not engage in conversation. People with other ethnical backgrounds did not often intermingle before either, but within these initiatives they found common ground to meet each other. Experts of organisations such as SarSan tried to recognize particular skills within individuals and foster them. Local leaders were recognized which played a centre role in keeping these individual creative projects running. The SarSan project also provided courses to politicians to enhance their understanding of these societies. Roma did not have political representation. Their goal was to combine organizations to address these issues to the municipality. This initiative lacked political recognition and seemed to stay at grassroots level because of this.

**Lessons learned:**
Improvements made in neighborhoods must be sustainable
Citizen participation should be increased → unwilling or unable citizens also motivated to participate to really get a group of residents together who could represent the social geography of the neighborhood and provide a wide variation of input
Transparency must be fostered → this is crucial for creating trust
Transferability ought to be promoted → findings and successes within one neighborhood ought to be able to share with other communities. Currently there has been resistance to share or accept tips from other communities.
Getting through to the local administration → politicians were often sceptical about local initiatives and their usefulness
System change needed → from a hierarchical, mostly top-down system to a system of dialogue between actors

Reflection, possibly linking up to the leading questions and threads: 5-10 lines:
- responsiveness and recognition from the administration are needed for grassroots initiatives to take the form of democratic innovations.
- Both initiatives were quite local, without connections being made explicit with actors in other European countries. An attempt on regionalizing a new method of governance was opposed by the municipalities by their unwillingness to cooperate amongst each other.
- Focusing on capacities instead of problems seemed particularly valuable to myself. Experts evaluating the assets of individuals within these communities and facilitating residents to take action themselves