How to organise a citizens' consultation?

Theory, practice... and strategy

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Vision & Mission of Citizen Participation

Vision
The Administration keeps a constant dialogue with citizens.

Mission
To transform the Administration by means of citizen participation, and to transform the Administration to enable citizen participation.
Theory of change (most abridged)

Electoral processes
Direct democracy
Deliberative processes

Transformation of the Administration

New actors & new spaces
Infrastructures

Improve efficacy and efficiency of public policies
Understanding the complexity of public decision-making
Reduce populism (fascism)
Foster a shift towards a technopolitical paradigm of collective action
Value chain

Knowledge management → Transformation of the Administration

Instruments of citizen participation

Diagnosis → Design → Implementation → Evaluation

Infrastructures → New actors
New spaces
A citizens’ consultation in a nutshell

- Framework
  - Rules, limits
- Task Force
- Target Instruments
- Outputs

- Diagnosis
- Design
- Implementation
- Evaluation

- Political Commitment
- Map of Actors
- Information Communication
- Outcomes
Shifts in meaning (i)

- Legitimization of (1) participation (2) at any level/commitment.
- Participation means not direct democracy (substitution), but dialogue (complementation).
Shifts in meaning (ii)

- “Horizontalization” of government-citizen in decision-making.
- Sovereignty over (1) agenda setting (2) institutions (3) the system.
- ICTs not as substitutes, but as enablers and boosters and to increase efficacy and efficiency.
Shifts in norms (i)

- Institutions as neutral enablers, as rich nodes, as hubs.
- All contributions matter: the power of granularity in participation.
- Deep change of culture within the Administration.
- (Digital) infrastructures are public, including its governance.
Shifts in norms (ii)

- Participation is **binding** and has an impact.
- **Transparency** as a PRE-requisite for policy-making.
- Against disenchantment and disaffection: no “listening” but “engaging”.
Shifts in power (i)

- Small in size, significant in qualitative terms.
- Agenda setting is now public/open/participated.
- Decrease of the layers of intermediation (openness of the rest).
- Total disclosure of the full process and outputs.
Shifts in power (ii)

- Real devolution of sovereignty:
  - From institutions to citizens.
  - From civil organizations to individual citizens.
  - From media to participants.

- An ecosystem of open participatory governments and citizenries
Conclusions (i)

- **Deliberation** becomes the new democracy standard.
- **Openness** as the pre-requisite for deliberation.
- **Accountability** and legislative footprint to achieve legitimacy.
- **Participation** for more pluralism and stronger social capital (& GOTO 1)
Conclusions (ii)

- Lesser role of intermediation and traditional institutions.
- Major role of informed deliberation.
- Balance between institutions, experts/leaders and individual citizens in a new ecosystem of actors, roles and relationships: networks and communities with liquid and reconfiguring affiliation.
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