THE CITIZEN'S SIDE OF GOVERNANCE

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Introduction

This paper aims to highlight a quite hidden dimension of governance. It could be defined as the citizens' side of governance: a topic that should be considered of the most importance in this field of research, but is strangely forgotten or underestimated by scholars, politicians and policy makers. It is a fact that governance studies concentrate on the state's side of governance rather than on the citizens' side. But in doing this they risk losing sight of what, in a sense, is most important.

In this paper, a few remarks will be devoted to some general issues linked to governance, especially from theoretical and methodological point of view. Then, the paradoxical lack of definition of the role of citizens' initiatives in governance will be addressed through the thematization of the shift from traditional to new citizenship and the introduction of the "active citizenship" approach, linked to that shift. Then the issue of the citizens' side of governance will be presented and discussed, both through a definition and some examples, and through some notes on the role of public administration in enabling active citizens to take their own responsibilities in the governance perspective.

The content of the paper comes both from the author's theoretical research in political sociology, and from the analysis of the concrete experience of Italian and European citizens' movements, especially the Italian organization Cittadinanzattiva (Active Citizenship – more information at www.cittadinanzattiva.it and www.activecitizenship.net).

Epistemological difficulties, some basic statements, two definitions

First of all, it must be remembered that governance is a quite diffused field of research and activity, neither well grounded nor fully clarified. Several scholars have highlighted this problem (see, e.g., International Social Science Council 1998; Pierre, Peters 2000). Governance can be understood as a form of government, as a model or pattern, as a social and institutional process, as an

analytical paradigm, as an institutional framework, as a project of public administration reform, and so on.

Moreover, the literature on governance is often mixed or overlapped with other approaches, such as that of "reinventing government" (Osborne, Gaebler 1992), with the approach of stakeholders' involvement in management of services (Dunn 1994), or that of partnership between private, public, and non-profit actors especially in social policy (e.g. Gribben *et al.* 2000).

Finally, the word "governance" is used in several different ways and with a plurality of meanings. Apart from the generic use of the term (how to manage public affairs), it is possible to find expressions such as "good governance", "local governance", "global governance", "democratic governance", "corporate governance", up to "aboriginal governance" with reference to native groups such as in Canada and Australia.

It is not the aim of this paper to address this problem. But it must be taken into account and requires a clear starting point.

Despite the complexity and uncertainty about governance issues, some statements can be taken as basic assumptions:

- National states and public administrations have lost their traditional monopoly in the exercise of government functions (but, naturally, they are not going to disappear!).
- This loss of power travels according to three different scenarios: *downward*, towards regional and local administrations; *upward*, towards global and supranational institutions; and *outward*, towards civil society private, non-profit, and civic organizations and networks.
- This transformation is ongoing in the field of public policies rather than in the constitutional framework, so that it can be said that the most important ongoing changes in democracy concern the management of everyday life.
- This transformation is not a mere matter of a different mix between state and non-state intervention in the public arena; it is rather a changing of the very status of agents of government and of their relations; in other words, it is not

a difference of degree, but a difference of nature. Perhaps we are witnessing a change of paradigm.

- Regarding the actors, the change in their role means that *public* actors tend to become the enabler, networker, catalyser rather than the "rower"; that *private* actors tend to become more socially responsible and engaged in public policies; that *social/collective* actors are called to exercise their own powers and responsibilities, and not only the consensus, voice or exit in respect of others' power.

- Waiting for a more precise and consistent conceptual and theoretical clarification, governance can be viewed from two different perspectives:

  - as a *frame*: that is, a general phenomenon that forms the background of political matters,

  - as an *approach:* that is, a way of dealing with public issues, or a set of operational rules for the arrangement of behaviours and relations of actors in facing public problems.

- As a general frame, governance can be defined as a process of transformation in the exercise of government functions from state-centred to multi-centred policy-making. In this first meaning, governance appears to be a dynamic phenomenon that forms the background to the present developments in managing societies.

- On the other hand, as an operational approach governance can be defined as a way of making policy in which:

  - the definition of a policy is the result of an interaction between different agents (public, private, and social) that share government responsibilities,

  - those that take decisions are those directly committed in their implementation,

  - the targets of policies are involved in the whole process of policy-making.

In this second meaning, governance can be rendered into the metaphors of the "shared government", or "enlarged government", or "partnership government" in the field of public policies.

Citizenship and governance: a controversial issue

In the light of these definitions it would be quite obvious that citizens affected by public problems would be relevant actors in the policy-making process. One of the main implications of governance is indeed that people are not only the target of public intervention (as, for example, in the traditional view of welfare policies), but are co-responsible for its definition and implementation.

Although on this point there is a general agreement, very few elements – theoretical as well as institutional – are offered to put this shared principle into practice. And, very often, this principle is questioned too.

Let us take the example of the ongoing European Commission White Paper on Governance. The idea of a White Paper on the reform of EC governance was proposed by the EC President Romano Prodi, at the beginning of 2000 (Prodi 2000). His purpose was to establish "a new division of labour" between the Commission, the other European institutions, the member States and civil society; the general aim was to bring citizens closer to institutions, enabling them to participate fully in European policies. Nevertheless, both during the preparatory discussion and in the recently published text, the issue of the involvement of citizens has remained in the background (European Commission 2000, 2001a, 2001b; Moro 2001b). Instead, the core issue of the Paper has been the redefinition of the relations between the European institutions and between them and the member States, on the grounds of a quite obsolete and reductive vision of the concept of subsidiarity.

Moreover, during the discussion a number of negative views on citizens' participation have been raised. For example:

- citizens' participation can only have a local dimension,
- there is no need for the NGOs because citizens are already represented by the local, regional, national and European institutions (the problem is, if anything, one of an excess of representation),
- there is a difficulty, apparently insurmountable, in knowing who to involve because of the excessive number of organizations,

- the highest level of citizens' involvement in policy-making is consultation.

From traditional to new citizenship

These statements are not astonishing. They express an ongoing controversy of visions and approaches to citizenship, which is parallel to the shifting from government to governance perspective. It can be described in terms of a gap between the traditional vision of citizenship and a new emerging form of it.

It can be said, in other words, that there is a sort of "Standard View", which often overlaps and blurs reality (Moro 2000). According to this view, citizen participation in public life:

- has no institutional or political definition,
- is achieved through the scheme "demand of citizens - supply by the state",
- implies an activity of pushing, protesting, claiming, without any constructive aim or capacity,
- is a trouble-making and not a problem-solving activity,
- implies no own power of citizens, but dependence on others' power (of the market, of the State),
- appears as a "temporary post" in front of the financial crisis of welfare systems.

Basically, according to the "Standard View", citizens' organizations do not have an autonomous identity or role in public life and are of minor importance in relation to other participants.

This Standard View refers to a traditional conception of citizenship. It can be defined as follows:

Citizenship is the belonging to a national identity, which is put in practice through a set of rights and duties that rule the relationship between the state and individuals or social groups (Moro 1998, 1999b).

Two main elements qualify this definition:

- Citizenship is a set of rights and duties: for instance fiscal duties or the right to be protected.

- Citizenship is the belonging to a nation-state identity, so that thanks to citizenship it is possible to say precisely "who is in" and "who is out" of a community.

A further two elements of this definition must be highlighted. The first is that, according to the traditional view, voting is the highest expression of citizenship. And the second is that in the traditional idea of citizenship there is an exclusive role of the state and public institutions in managing things and solving problems.

The point is that the traditional idea of citizenship is hardly questioned by worldwide relevant phenomena, such as migrations, the process of globalisation/localisation, the lack of effectiveness of public administration, the crisis of welfare systems and the crisis of consensus in political leaderships. It must be noted again that they are the same social, political and institutional phenomena that are in the background of the governance perspective.

At the same time, citizens' participation in public life is increasing. It justifies the idea of the emergence of a new feature of citizenship. This new kind of citizenship can be defined as follows:

Citizenship is the exercise of powers and responsibilities of citizens in the arena of public policies, in the context of governance (Moro 1999b)*.*

A comparison between the traditional and this new concept of citizenship is useful. The main differences are stressed below.

TRADITIONAL CITIZENSHIP includes:	NEW CITIZENSHIP includes:
▪ rights and duties,	▪ powers and responsibilities,
▪ in civil society-state relationship,	▪ in public policies,
▪ in electoral participation, and	▪ in civic participation, and
▪ is in the government context	▪ is in the governance context

With regards to these definitions, it would appear quite clear that there is a correlation between the shift from government to governance and the shift from traditional to new citizenship. It depends not only on the same framework of

social and institutional phenomena, but also on the fact that new citizenship cannot have any relevant space in the government approach, and that the shift from government to governance requires a new citizenship, active in the "politics of everyday life".

Let us stress the need for a new theoretical and conceptual approach to citizenship in order to deal with the citizens' side of governance. Adopting a traditional view of citizenship is indeed almost impossible, not only to define what should happen, but also to define what is happening in reality. On the other hand, the aware or unaware acceptance of the traditional view of citizenship is one of the causes of the resistance to a full involvement of civic activism in governance.

The active citizenship approach

The main expression of this new way of being a citizen is what can be defined as active citizenship (Moro 1998, 1999b):

Active citizenship is the capacity of citizens to self-organise in a multiplicity of forms for the mobilisation of resources and the exercise of powers in public policies for the protection of rights to achieve the end of caring for and developing common goods.

Active citizenship has a complexity of forms and kinds. As for the *forms*, they go from little, informal, local or one-issue groups and committees to big, structured and differentiated associations, movements and networks.

As for the *kinds*, we can distinguish several categories of organization:

- voluntary organizations, engaged in assistance and rehabilitation, in self-help, etc.,

- associations, which stress the value of togetherness,

- movements aimed at representing citizens (as consumers, minorities, women, people affected by environmental risks, etc.),

- social enterprises (services, co-operatives, communities, etc.),

- professional reform movements (of medical doctors, journalists, lawyers, etc.),

- "second degree" structures (networks, coalitions, service centres, etc.).

Motivations too seem to be various and complex. Five clusters can be identified:

- providing services in favour of weak or disadvantaged people,
- modifying reality,
- promoting justice and protection of rights,
- enhancing solidarity,
- promoting a direct understanding of situations and problems, enhancing an open-mindedness in front of the world.

These motivations are often combined in reality.

Regarding the *fields of action*, civic participation organizations cover a wide area of issues. In Italy, for example, 16 policies in which citizens are engaged can be identified: Consumers' protection in the market of large scale consumption goods; Consumers' protection in public services; Struggle against social exclusion; Health services and policies; Equal opportunities; International co-operation for development; Environment; Local development; Civil defence; Public administration reform; Justice system; Safety; Information and media; Training; School, university and education; Human resources.

In brief, it can be said that the arena of citizens' participation is that of public policies: that is, programs promoted by authorities with the aim of facing problems of public interest. The use of a public policy perspective is worthwhile because of the opportunity to highlight the active and effective role of citizens' organizations in all the steps of the policy-making process. Thanks to the public policy approach, in other words, organized or active citizens appear less and less as mere targets of public programs, and more and more as actors participating in policy-making.

In the arena of public policies, the *role* of civic participation can be defined in terms of exercise of powers. Which powers? The Standard View suggests that citizens have very little actual power, mostly indirect (the ability to influence other genuinely powerful actors). The situation again is more complex. To

demonstrate it, we can consider the following five powers of citizens' organizations:

- the power to produce information and interpretations of concrete situations that affect people (from the violation of human rights to the quality of public services),
- the power to change the field of perception and the conscience of those involved in public policies by using symbols (e.g. the perception of public servants about strikes in public services),
- the power to promote the consistency of institutions with their mission (e.g., a service must serve users and not employers, a City Council must manage public problems and not private interests, etc.),
- the power to change material conditions (opening doors, destroying barriers, building services, etc.),
- the power to establish partnerships and collaborations between the stakeholders and to combine their different interests (for instance in the well-known case of the employment-environment conflict).

Looking for a *common operational modality* of the various experiences of civic participation, it can be argued that such a modality is the protection of rights (i.e. the use of appropriate "technologies" to promote the real implementation of the rights stated in laws or in the collective awareness) that public institutions cannot implement or that they are unable to implement alone. This commitment to the protection of rights has two main forms:

- representation of citizens' legitimate interests and points of view before policy stakeholders (for example, in consumer policy),
- creation and management of services (for instance, in front of the new needs of social protection as yet unsatisfied by traditional welfare systems).

As for the *results*, in a very partial and incomplete way (yet for theoretical reasons), we could say that the action of organized citizens has reached objectives such as:

- new laws,
- the mobilization of human, technical and financial resources,

- changes in the behaviour of social and collective actors,
- modification of mass culture and common wisdom,
- the definition of new patterns of social organization,
- changes in the paradigms of management of public or private services and public functions,
- the modification of political agendas, styles and languages,
- modifications of market rules and functioning.

Active citizenship and the "populist challenges" to governance

Let us make a brief digression aiming to highlight the differences between the active citizenship approach and other citizen-centred approaches to the management of public affairs. Three of them appear to be the most important. According to some scholars (Pierre, Peters, 2000), they can be understood in terms of "populist challenges" to governance. They are communitarianism, deliberative democracy, and direct democracy.

- According to communitarianism, the state must be taken back to smaller government units, closer to the people and more directly involving them.
- According to deliberative democracy, it is necessary to establish mechanisms for a wider, more direct involvement of citizens in decision making.
- According to the direct democracy approach, people must take their own decisions directly, using tools such as referenda.

No doubt these programs grasp important critical points in the functioning of contemporary democracies: their remoteness from citizens, their lack of understanding of concrete problems in the local dimension, their self-reference, their underestimation of citizens' awareness of public problems and ability to cope with them. And it must be added that their proposals should be useful – and have been helpful – in several situations (in Italy, for example, a number of crucial issues have been addressed through referenda).

That having been said, three main differences between these approaches and the active citizenship approach can be noticed.

1. Communitarianism, deliberative democracy and direct democracy as general proposals seem to be projects rather than processes. In other words, these approaches seem to be aimed at showing the way to putting power closer to the people. The active citizenship approach, instead, is not a model or a program, but a tempting interpretation of an ongoing social, political and institutional process.

2. Communitarianism, deliberative democracy and direct democracy seem to be general criticisms of the defect of contemporary representative democracies rather than concrete approaches to citizens' participation in policy making. In other words, they point to the problems existing in the degree of democracy of representative institutions rather than a way to fill this gap in everyday life. The active citizenship approach, instead, is a public policy-centred and not an institution-centred approach.

3. Communitarianism, deliberative democracy and direct democracy tend to replace democratic institutions with citizens. The active citizenship approach, in contrast, considers various citizens' organizations only as one of the stakeholders of public policies and requires that they are considered as participants with equal dignity.

In brief, it can be said that, in comparison with the three "populist challenges" to governance, the active citizenship approach is less general, definitely policy-centred and more minimalistic; but perhaps useful in the frame and in the approach of governance.

More specifically, in comparison with the active citizenship perspective, some critical remarks can be made on each of the three challenges:

- communitarianism appears to be too linked to the local dimension and presupposes a social and cultural homogeneity that is lacking in contemporary societies;
- deliberative democracy seems to reduce citizens' participation in the decision making, that is only a phase of policy making;

- direct democracy aims at overlapping representative institutions with civic initiative, rather than at designing an autonomous and specific role of citizens in the management of public life.

The citizen's side of governance: a definition

How can the citizen's side of governance be defined? In discussing the active citizenship approach, we have just clarified that citizens' organizations are in any case operating in the realm of public policies. This means that, in a wide sense, the phenomenon of active citizenship is strictly linked to governance defined as a general frame.

We do not want to place this point under discussion, but rather a more specific one: when can participation in public policies be encompassed in governance as an operational approach?

It seems that the fulfilment of five conditions is needed:

- other actors of governance – especially the public bodies – must recognize citizens' role, for example through formal or informal agreements before or during the enactment of policy,
- citizens' organizations must actually take part in at least one phase of the public policy cycle (agenda, planning, decision, implementation, evaluation),
- citizens' organizations must play a role while being at the same time autonomous and coordinated with other actors,
- such a role must imply the exercise of powers and responsibilities of citizens' organizations,
- citizens' participation must add value to policy making (i.e., it must allow the fulfilment of goals that otherwise could not be reached).

It must be highlighted again that the citizens' participation in public policies is not always encompassed in the governance approach. Sometimes this participation takes the form of an unyielding conflict, or is developed against or in spite of other agents. The above conditions can thus help us to distinguish

between "governance-" and "non-governance-situations" in citizens' participation in policy making.

"Non-governance situations" occur, for example, when users' organizations make claims against trade unions' that exercise the right to strike in public services because of the violation of the citizens' rights to safety, freedom of movement, etc.; or when they replace the State in delivering services without any agreement with public authorities; or when they hold roundtables with other stakeholders without any public intervention (such as the Italian case of agreements between environmental organizations, trade unions and companies to reduce pollution in industrial production). None of these situations fulfils the above conditions, thus they cannot be defined in terms of "governance-situations".

Let us take some examples of "governance-situations", especially in order to avoid the possible misunderstanding that we are suggesting an ideal, not empirical grounded, approach. The examples are linked to Cittadinanzattiva activity.

In January and February 1997 the Citizens' Advocates of Cittadinanzattiva promoted the monitoring of post offices. A checklist was used to gather information on the functioning of about 1,400 counters in about 190 post offices. Special attention was paid to the number of counters actually open to the public, to queues and waiting time, to the availability of seats and dispensing of waiting-order numbers, to the adoption of ID badges by employees, and the presence of architectural barriers. From the information collected a scenario of low quality and of difficult accessibility of the post offices emerged. A report was prepared and presented to the press and to the postal service stakeholders. As an outcome, the postal service company organized a roundtable with the stakeholders, including citizens' organizations, to plan a new organizational model for the post office. A prototype of the new post office was tested by citizens' organizations and modified on the basis of their feedback. The new post office model was then introduced with remarkable improvements in

efficiency and quality of service and increased satisfaction of its users, as result of direct control by citizens.

At the beginning of the '90s, the Italian Premier Carlo Azeglio Ciampi introduced the Charters of services as a tool for quality and efficiency improvement of public interest services. A process of consultation on the government directive involved all stakeholders, and, thanks to the contribution of citizens' organizations, a close link between quality and users' rights was established. Moreover, in the legislation introducing the Charters of services, a procedure of consultation and co-decision with citizens' organizations on the quality standard was established. In the implementation of the regulation, citizens' organizations played a crucial role, both in defining standards of quality in several fields (health, local administrative services, energy services, etc.), and in evaluating the results. Thanks to this activity, developed particularly in health care services by the Tribunal for patients' rights, an improvement in quality was achieved, a set of good practices in the management of services was gathered and shared, and several local health agency managers were dismissed. This activity, moreover, has been almost the only counterbalance against the trend of cost cutting through the closure of services or the limitation of their availability.

In view of the introduction of the European single currency, several citizens' organizations in different countries have been involved in a European Commission program called "Easy Euro". The program aims to facilitate access to the new currency for those people in need of assistance (about 30% of the European population according to the EC) preventing the risk of social exclusion. Focus groups of target people were organized in several European countries by citizens' organizations, to identify operational and cognitive problems and to adjust appropriate tools. Then, the EC entrusted citizens' organizations to create networks of "proximity informers": that is, people working closer to citizens (doctors, pharmacists, teachers, front-liners of public services, etc.) and able to provide information and allay fears. In Italy, Portugal and Greece about 6,000 Euro informers have been trained and are operating to

contact directly millions of citizens through various initiatives (meetings, festivals, lessons in schools, daily advice and assistance, etc.). Through all the phases of the program, a European roundtable covering all the subjects involved has been active in coordinating the work, evaluating the situation and planning further developments.

Citizens as partners in governance:
a memo for public administration

Though governance, both as a framework and as an approach, implies a growing role of non-public actors, the role of public administration remains of the highest importance and can bring about success or failure of policies.

In particular for the citizens' organizations engagement in public policies, the role of public administration can be of crucial importance, in the sense that it can be definitely positive or negative. That is the reason why a focus on public administration-citizen partnership in the frame of governance is appropriate. Here it can take the shape of a brief memo for public administration engaged in building stronger operational relations with their citizens.

To this end, the cycle of public policies can be used as a point of reference. Thus each step of the cycle (setting the agenda, planning and taking the decision, implementing and evaluating) could be considered with regards to problems and opportunities that are tabled and to strategies that could be adopted.

1. In the *agenda* setting phase, there are problems such as the inaccessibility of people who are able to decide which issue is of public interest, and the lack of attention paid by the establishment for citizens' points of view. Nevertheless, citizens can be of crucial importance in this phase, especially in order to identify hidden or unrecognized problems through the production of "civic information": that is, information on relevant situations linked to their concrete conditions. A crucial strategy to collect and give value to the contribution of citizens'

organizations to the building of the agenda is, without doubt, the creation of a bilateral communication process.

2. In the policy *planning* phase, one of the major obstacles that hinder a full contribution of citizens is the lack of recognition of citizens' competence in dealing with public matters. The underlying vision is that citizens do not have the knowledge, time or ability to overcome self-interest, so they can only elect other people, who are able to manage public affairs. But now citizens are often the most competent actors in many public issues. Their role in the planning phase can consist above all in taking into account obstacles that stand in the way of implementation and that are not visible by other agents. In the planning phase, moreover, citizens can also "test" tools and components of policies: for example, a new public bus model, a new home health service, a new program of preventing street crime, and so on. In this phase, the implementation of a citizens consultation strategy appears to be the most important. Obviously, on the condition that providing feedback to citizens' organizations proposals and ideas is always incorporated into the consultation process. A consultation without feedback is indeed the best way to lose citizens' commitment in policy making.

3. In the *decision* making phase, the main problem seems to be the one of restrictive and bureaucratic-centred criteria for the recognition of citizens' organizations qualified to intervene in decision-making. These criteria are generally linked to a kind of "fear of citizens" by public officials. But a citizens' organization must not necessarily be "representative" in traditional terms (those applied to political parties and trade unions). It can be important and useful because of its knowledge of situations, ability to find solutions, to gather people, etc. Active citizenship can play a very important role in the decision making phase: convincing people, channelling consensus, revealing the nature of general interest in an issue, and so on. To obtain these benefits, other stakeholders must adopt a strategy of co-decision, fully embodying citizens' organizations in the realm of policy makers, in the sense that the decision must

be shared, not necessarily agreed on, by citizens; and in the sense that the decision must embody citizens' responsibilities, too.

4. In the *implementation* phase, the main problems that citizens' organizations must face are linked to the lack of coordination with other actors, often due to the competitive spirit of public administration or to its inability to be a real catalyser. Consequently, the energy and resources that citizens can mobilize in the implementation phase risk being wasted. Citizens can support implementation through many actions and programs: for example, creating new services, monitoring situations, collecting and sharing good practice, and so on. The strategy that public administration should adopt in the implementation phase can be defined as a partnership, this being a concept characterized by the equality and full responsibility of actors. This implies an investment in trust on citizens by public administration, on the basis of the principle that only those who trust can be trusted.

5. In the *evaluation* phase, the main problem seems to be that the outcomes of citizens' activity are not taken into account as evaluation tools, needed to assess and redesign policies on the basis of their successes and failures. Citizens can indeed carry out social audits on public policies, or participate in stakeholder conferences aimed at confronting information, needs, problems, at deciding new objectives and at taking on precise, timetabled, responsibilities (such as in the case of the Italian local health agencies' "Conferences of service"). In this phase, the adoption of a strategy of shared re-engineering of policies is highly recommended.

Despite these public administration problems in respect of citizens' organizations, it must be stressed that in active citizenship there are also many ways of thinking, behaviours, and operational patterns that hinder the development of a governance approach. Among them, one can distinguish between cognitive and operational obstacles (Moro 1998).

Among cognitive obstacles, there is a political inferiority complex, often combined with a moral superiority complex; the idea that citizens' activity in public policies is only a temporary post related to the financial crisis of the state;

or the erroneous self-comparison between active citizenship organizations and actors such as political parties or trade unions against which they always appear unavoidably weak and powerless.

With regard to operational obstacles, a number of behaviours and patterns can be noted. Among them, the practice of the pattern "demand of citizens-supply by the State"; disorganization and isolationism; and lack of financial resources, of know-how and of information.

All the elements summarized above conspire to reduce the role of active citizenship in the frame of governance. And they are to be overcome.

Conclusion: the need for a constitutional framework

In this paper it has been argued that the emerging governance framework and approach is operating more in public policies rather than in constitutional schemes. And this is a matter of fact: despite the lack of recognition in constitutions of the new form of "shared government" that characterize the governance perspective, it is an ongoing issue.

In conclusion, nevertheless, it must be added that a constitutional framework for governance is necessary: both in general, to avoid any gap between public problem solving and democracy, and with reference to citizens' need to be finally considered as actors of an enriched idea of democracy.

In this regard, the recent constitutional reform in Italy can be recalled. This reform, besides giving regions and municipalities new powers and responsibilities, thereby decreasing those of the state, has recognized a fundamental role of citizens in caring for common goods. The text of the amended Article 118 of Italian Constitution is as follows:

> *State, Regions and Municipalities favour the free exercise of general interest activities by citizens, as individuals and as organizations, on the basis of the principle of subsidiarity.*

This norm refers to an enlarged concept of subsidiarity, which is quite similar to the concept of governance as a frame: subsidiarity not only in the relations of the state with upper and lower institutions, but also in the relations with non-

public actors of social life (cfr. Cotturri, 2001). Without any resignation from its own responsibilities, the state recognizes that these responsibilities can be, and often are, better exercised with the contribution of citizens.

It must be noted that this amendment comes from a specific proposal of Italian citizens' organizations, which the government chaired by Giuliano Amato and parliament adopted and which was ratified by referendum. From this point of view it is, at the same time, a cornerstone for the development of citizens' role in governance, and a result of the exercise of this role. It is, in any case, good news.

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