



In collaborazione con



International Conference

*Participatory local welfare, citizenship and third sector organizations. What is at stake?*

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## Call for Papers

STREAM 3

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**The role of evaluation in the implementation of participatory institutional processes**

*Stream Coordinators*

**Nicoletta Stame**, University of Roma - Sapienza, [nstame@gmail.com](mailto:nstame@gmail.com)

**Veronica Lo Presti**, University of Roma - Sapienza, [veronica.lopresti@gmail.com](mailto:veronica.lopresti@gmail.com)

As the name itself declares, participatory institutional processes blend together top-down initiatives and bottom-up citizens engagement. They constitute therefore a privileged ground for testing theories about the feasibility of a participatory evaluation, and in particular of the approach called deliberative democratic evaluation (House).

This approach is based on three principles, strictly linked. First, the evaluation should include all relevant stakeholders: not only those who run the program (public, private, third sector) from managers to street-level bureaucrats, but also the decision-makers, the beneficiaries, those who are affected in any way by the process. Second, evaluation should be dialogical: the respective views and interests are better discovered through a dialogical interaction by which people make up their mind. Third, the evaluation should be deliberative: it should help the deliberation process by examining fact and value claims through a rational process. These principles are not easily fulfilled, nor well understood.

Too often participation is seen as an unaffordable luxury, values and interests are seen as given, and deliberation is seen as a technical device for policy-makers. An evaluation that held on to similar ideas would as a consequence be unable to play a positive role in helping a learning process by which stakeholders improve their capacity to master the processes they are involved in.

This stream intends to explore ways through which evaluation can help improve people's autonomy in the running of participatory institutional processes and in the implementation of social programs. It is usually recognized that one learns more from success than failure but, owing to the innovative character of these programs, important hints could also come from analyzing the difficulties met, and possible ways of overcoming them.

Questions arise about:

- What methodologies are better fitted to include all stakeholders views?
- What is the role of the evaluator in the dialogical process: facilitator, arbiter, neutral observer?
- How to balance different values and facts interpretations about issues of effectiveness, equity, improvement?

This stream invites contributions of a theoretical and practical significance, and it encourages narratives of evaluators' choices of approaches and methodologies.