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A reflection on the quality
of local Governments
in the Italian case***

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MARIA TULLIA GALANTI^(*)

PERFORMANCE AND PROCEDURES:

*A reflection on the quality of local governments in the Italian case*¹

Abstract:

In studying mature democracies, scholars have often turned their attention to the “policy-side” of democratic quality. In this view, public policies should be studied not only as outputs of the political system, but also as the concrete translation of some democratic attributes, such as equality, accountability, responsiveness and capacity. This paper will try to develop two main tasks. Firstly, taking on the framework of the quality of democracy (Morlino 2003), the concept of legitimacy will be discussed in connection to performance and procedures. Second, I will use these concepts to present the case of Florence, Italy. Despite the partisan retrenchment from local policy making and the representatives’ weakness in local governance, the case of Florence seems to suggest a plausible connection between procedures and policy performance.

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1.Introduction

This paper discusses the issue of legitimacy and proposes a study of democratic quality focused on institutional performance of local governments. The issue of legitimacy is discussed in connection to the ability of local institutions to produce outputs and outcomes as relevant policy decisions and impacts on local communities. Procedural aspects will also be considered: in a democracy, government is both oriented to liberty or equality and constrained by limits to the power of elected officials. The case study of municipal welfare policies in Florence (Italy) is described to suggest a plausible connection between the performance of local political and administrative institutions and procedural aspects of policy making.

As any other political regime², democracy is questioned by legitimacy. A bulk of literature in political science has been concerned with the relationship between legitimacy, support, and stability (Lipset 1959). In the perspective of behaviouralism, the stability of democracy derived from the positive attitude of citizens supporting and trusting their political institutions. When questioning the reasons for such a trust, part of the response lied in the opportunities for participation, especially if that participation could promote new political actors before excluded from representation.

With the passing of time, that same representative democracy came into question: nonetheless, also the participatory venue of the Seventies saw legitimacy in connection to access to the input side of the political process. Legitimacy came from wider and deeper participation in the aggregation of political demands. In other words, having a voice that was politically heard seemed more important than getting benefits from authoritative decisions.

The expansion of the intervention of the State in various policy domains was functional to legitimacy. This was particularly true in those Southern European countries - such as Italy, Greece, Portugal - where a fragile support for the new democratic institutions was compensated through the distribution of resources to the population, via partisans organizations, clientelism, and public sector recruitment (Morlino 1998).

More recently, Scharpf explicitly confronted two forms of legitimacy: legitimacy by input and legitimacy by output (Scharpf 1999). Legitimacy focused on public policies and on its outcomes

² Lipset in 1959 wrote: "Legitimacy, in and of itself, may be associated with many forms of political organization, including oppressive ones. Feudal societies, before the advent of industrialism, undoubtedly enjoyed the basic loyalty of most of their members. Crises of legitimacy are primarily a recent historical phenomenon, following the rise of sharp cleavages among groups which have been able, because of mass communication resources, to organize around different values than those previously considered to be the only legitimate ones for the total society" (1959, 87).

calls into questions the democratic theory and its visions of democracy. In fact, democracy can be seen at the same time as a set of procedures for the selection of governors (Schumpeter 1942), or as a typical decision-making process implying results in terms of political and social equality (Dahl 1989). Democratic theory clearly spells this out: democracy is not just a form of government committed to the achievement of results in terms of liberty and equality, but also a procedure to limit the power of the governors (Sartori 1987). Thus, what makes democracy different from other forms of government is not only its results, in terms of public policies, but also its procedures, in terms of politics and distribution of power.

The quality of democracy (Morlino 2003; Morlino 2004; Diamond and Morlino 2005) takes inspiration from democratic theory to build a set of dimensions to describe functioning (focusing on the procedural aspects) and goals (focusing on output and outcomes as substantive aspects) of a democracy. In doing this, the quality of democracy develops an analytical framework to measure and explain how legitimacy is obtained by the responsiveness of political institutions through accountability, the rule of law, political competition and participation.

Thus, a high quality of democracy should be reflected in its legitimation by the citizens, expressed through the support for political institutions that decide and implement citizens' demands in terms of policies. Indirectly, this suggests democratic legitimacy depends on public policies, and thus on the process that leads to decisions and impacts. The results of democracy in terms of public policies are as much important as the procedures are.

2. Defining local legitimacy in a democratic quality perspective.

2.1 The quality of democracy in cities.

In order to apply the quality of democracy framework to the context of local governments in consolidated democracies, some dimensions can be considered more relevant than others. In particular, if the scholar is interested in the issue of legitimacy, the results of local democracy in terms of public policies grow in their importance. Legitimacy comes then from public actions, through performance and not only through elections (Le Galès 2006, 227-228).

Italian cities after the reforms of the Nineties offer an interesting observation. While the direct election of the mayor aimed at re-building the relationship between politics and the society, the

reforms of public administration partly reflected the ideas of New Public Management doctrine and of Governance theory³: the attention is focused on quality of services, internal efficiency, value for money (on the NPM side⁴), access, participation and control by citizens (on the governance side⁵). Both approaches are concerned with evaluating and measuring the output and the outcomes of public policies (Gualmini 2008, 39). Both characterizations are relevant to the quality of democracy: if managerialism aimed at making senior civil servants more responsible and private sector-like (Gualmini 2001, 11, Gualmini 2003), the approach of governance applied to public administration leads to the consideration of the importance of democratic control over administrative procedures. Not only efficiency, but also even equity, accountability and citizens' participation are ideals to be pursued (Gualmini 2001, 17).

Thus, democratic quality at the local level is strongly oriented to policy, to the output and the outcome of the political system in an Eastonian view. Still, in a quality of democracy perspective, not only the results of policy-making are normatively relevant: the features of the process also are - and thus the role of the procedural aspects. In fact, democracy can be seen as a way of producing policies demanded by citizens through a set of procedures that limit the power of government and that assure the representation of citizens preferences.

Citizens' preferences over public policies can be constructed by the researcher, considering the institutional setting, political tradition and policy legacies in a specific context. Since procedural aspects of democracy, such as the electoral process and the rule of law, are consolidated in Italy - with some remarkable exceptions -, I assume democratic legitimacy to be influenced by institutional performance on certain public policies. Italian local governments are more and more

³In this paper, I welcome Elisabetta Gualmini's interpretation of these two tendencies. According to Gualmini, the two approaches differ for a number of respects, including their analytical scope. New Public Management is characterized by its prescriptive nature, while the many contributions to governance theory show a clearer descriptive attitude. Even though the promoters of the two tendencies often present them as opposite, Gualmini thinks that they can be considered complementary (Gualmini 2008, 39 e ss.).

⁴New Public Management has been interpreted as the necessary answer to the crisis of the big government in the Eighties: scholars and international organization like the OSCE proposed a number of principles inspired by organizational and managerial theory to overcome the financial breakdown in developed countries. In 1991, Christopher Hood listed his suggestions to reform public administration: a more professional management of resources, the empowerment of accountability for public managers, the adoption of common standards and indicators for comparative evaluation of efficiency, the attention at the output, the promotion of the competition with the private sector in the service provision, the introduction of Human Resources Management (Hood 1991). Public bureaucracy should evolve into the form of a "catalysing administration" that coordinates society rather than only executes the laws.

⁵Governance theory moved scholars attention back to the structure of public organization, analysing the effects of the changes from coordination through government to coordination through networks: the State is not anymore the dominant actor in the decision-making process; the closed hierarchy leaves place to mixed state and private participation in public affairs (Rhodes 1996).

involved in service provision. In the past, inefficiencies of Italian local governments were profound: this fact corroborates the expectation of a quest for increased efficiency and effectiveness in local services provision. Moreover, national policies towards local governments turn this task into a real challenge for the municipalities: as a matter of fact, the growth of local competences has not been sustained by a real fiscal autonomy any more compensated through the ever-reduced transfer from the centre.

Looking at political preferences, Florence has a distinguishable leftist tradition. Despite the confrontation between Catholics, socialists and communists, Florence is politically routed in the “red” Tuscany, thus governed by different partisan coalitions of left and centre-left, all oriented to empower welfare in the municipality.

Thus, it is quite plausible to assume that the satisfaction people tribute to their municipal institutions is affected by municipal performance on welfare service provision. Following Sartori: “a prolonged efficiency attributes legitimacy. (...) the effectiveness of a democracy decisively depends on the efficiency and the capabilities of its leadership; and it is even more the case if objective conditions are less favorable to the democratic government” (Sartori 1987, 47, my translation from the Italian text).

Nevertheless, what kind of answers is demanded to the political system? To put it differently: how to operationalize performance on welfare services?

Performance as process means the ability of government to successfully cope with problems, elaborating and implementing solutions to those problems (Weaver and Rockman 1993, 5-10). It thus coincides not only with the ability to recognize problems and elaborate solutions, but also with the effectiveness of government and with the ability to introduce innovation in the policy subsystem. The emphasis here is on what to do and how to do it, rather than what to obtain. The analytical description of the process allows the researcher to see how democratic values such as equality, accountability, competition and capabilities are concretely translated in the policy process. Nevertheless, legitimacy as collective acknowledgment spreads also from due process of law and from the expression of political demands. Thus, another important characterization of performance needs to be introduced: thinking about performance in terms of problem solving does not attribute a clear democratic connotation to it. Indeed, democracy lays also in the procedures of policy interventions. As stated before, the second component of legitimacy in a democratic quality perspective is legitimacy by procedure in the provision of welfare services.

Procedure in welfare provision originates legitimacy when the policy process is perceived as correct, transparent and open to citizens’ demands. As far as the correctness and the transparency

are concerned, assuming the existence of a Rule of Law in the country, the perception of the absence of corruption and of the transparency of the policy process gives legitimacy to institutions.

This perception will be qualitatively evaluated, through press release and interviews, also considering the set of rules and regulations in welfare municipal policies.

Rules and regulations will also be considered to evaluate to what extent citizens' demands are considered during the policy-making, assuming that the more citizens feel involved in the process, the more legitimate the process will be. Such an involvement can assume various forms and intensity, from audit to assemblear activity to direct involvement of citizens or associations in the policy-making. Interviews will also help to evaluate the openness of welfare services to citizens' demands.

Summing up, in a democratic quality perspective, performance and procedures are two necessary - though not sufficient - sources of democratic legitimacy at the local level.

Table 1 synthesizes the definition of performance-based and procedure-based legitimacy and proposes some independent variables affecting performance and procedures.

Table 1 - Performance-based legitimacy and procedure-based legitimacy at the local level: definitions, and operationalization.

	Performance-based legitimacy	Procedure-based legitimacy
Definition	Problem solving in welfare service provision	Transparency and political representation in welfare service provision
Operationalization	Innovation and effectiveness	Control and involvement in the policy process
Variables affecting performance and procedures	Political capacity Administrative capacity Relationship politicians-bureaucrats	Forms of accountability Modes of public-private relationship
Data source	Data and official documents Interviews	Data and official documents Interviews Press release

Before developing hypothesis about the presence and the interaction of the two legitimacies, and to evaluate them in the case of Florence, a crucial methodological issue has to be solved. How to evaluate the two legitimacies without a survey.

2.2 A proposal for the analysis: evaluating legitimacy without surveys.

As a matter of fact, tracking citizens' opinions on their satisfaction towards local institutions will be the best strategy to research on legitimacy. But in this case, such a survey was not available⁶.

To evaluate what type of legitimacy is prevalent in the case of Florence, I propose a model⁷ that connects legitimacy to its effects on the electoral competition, and especially to its effects on the political offer and coalition politics.

⁶ Two experts' surveys conducted on performance of local governments (Catanzaro et alii 2002, Burrioni et alii 2009) can give some indications, but both are lacking in specific questions about sources of legitimacy.

Taking inspiration from organizational theory, legitimacy can be considered as a form of collective acknowledgment. If it is true that “groups will regard a political system as legitimate or illegitimate according to the way in which its values fit in with their primary values” (Lipset 1959, 86), legitimation is properly a set of different acts and behaviors to recognize the role and to attribute value to political institutions (Lippi 2003, 111).

The citizen can be seen as the principal-owner in a principal-agent perspective while the government is the agent-manager. In a simplified model of local government⁸, the mandate of the agent-manager is to provide welfare policies and to assure due process and citizens’ representation into it. If the government fulfills this mandate through problem solving, transparency and citizens’ representation, citizens will legitimate it directly through vote. Otherwise, citizens will contest local government indirectly, through various forms of pressure (involving members of political parties, interests groups, media), or directly, through vote.

According to Hirshmann (1970), legitimacy can be expressed through three different ways: exit, voice and loyalty. In analogy with economics, and also evoking organizational theory, the first option (exit) is the explicit choice for the political alternative to the existing government or coalition. By the exit option, citizens withdraw support to the incumbent government, orienting themselves towards other parties and coalitions. In this line of thinking, exit equals dissatisfaction. Contestation of the government without choosing the alternative corresponds to the voice option. In this case, citizens disagree with the government, but also propose how to remedy to this loss of legitimacy. By the voice option, citizens criticize government and push for it to respond to their demands, though not explicitly choosing for the alternative. Finally, loyalty is the confirmation of legitimacy to the government that was able to satisfy the demands of the citizens. Loyalty can be expressed through the re-election of the incumbent governing coalition.

Calling back the quality of democracy framework, a scarcely, partially or totally responsive government may face different consequences in terms of legitimacy: respectively, punishment through the exit option, contestation through the voice option, reward through the loyalty option.

How can this model help in understanding what source of legitimacy prevailed in the case of Florence? Theoretically, there are three possible configurations of this link between behaviors and legitimacy.

⁷ This reasoning on the plausible consequences of legitimacy has to be considered as an attempt to formulate hypothesis for future research, with no expectations about the ability to formulate generalization.

⁸ Depending on the country, other functions and competences can be considered as core duties of local governments. The selection of the case of Florence, for its leftist political history and institutional legacy, allows me to consider welfare service provision as the core function of that political sub-system and thus to assume that great part of legitimacy issues depend on effectiveness of government on those policies.

As legitimacy is composed of two elements, performance and procedures, the best scenario is when both sources of legitimacy are present. In this case, the expected behavior of citizens is loyalty, thus support and re-election of the same coalition to local government. In this case, it is quite hard to distinguish what kind of legitimacy prevailed.

Another scenario can be the presence of only one source of legitimacy: performance without procedure or procedure without performance. In this case, the expectation is towards the voice option. Citizens are not totally satisfied with the local government: their contestation can be of different extent and intensity, depending on the relevance attributed to the defective form of legitimacy. For example, if performance is more valued than procedure, a deficient performance could induce a diffused contestation to local government, aimed at forcing partisan actors not to re-candidate the same components of the executive. In other words, a strong contestation may produce a different balance of power in the governing coalition, giving more power to minority forces⁹. On the contrary, if the deficient source of legitimacy is the least valued, the voice could translate into internal conflict among party leaders, without open contestation of citizens, interest groups and media.

If the government is not able to provide nor performance nor procedure, the exit option is the more likely. Here political contestation translates into political alternation, thus into electoral defeat for the governing coalition. For this option to realize, a credible opposition is needed and, more importantly, citizens have to be available to vote for the opposition: issue voting should thus prevail on partisan identification¹⁰.

In the next paragraph, I will focus on the case of Florence, and I will model some hypothesis on legitimacy in order to understand what kind of legitimacy can be considered as prevalent in this case.

⁹ For example, in Florence there was a centre-left coalition composed by Democratici di Sinistra-DS (left wing party), Democrazia è Libertà-DL (centre-left party) and Partito dei Comunisti Italiani-Pdci (radical left party), where DS was the dominant party - the mayor of the city belonged to DS. In the case of hard contestation of the incumbent government, the coalition could be forced to propose as mayor a DL candidate or a radical left candidate.

¹⁰ In Italy, Tuscany belongs to a subcultural area (Trigilia 1981). One of the indicators of political sub-culture is the stability of vote for the dominant party: the PCI and his several heirs in this case (Baccetti and Messina 2009). This feature still holds today, but electoral figures are slightly changing through time. In other words, even though alternance is quite difficult in Florence, elections are more competitive than in the past (Seddone and Valbruzzi 2010).

3. Legitimacy in Florence through welfare service provision: procedure again, despite performance.

3.1 The context politics an society in Florence, 2004-2009.

In 2004, Leonardo Domenici (DS) was elected for the second time as mayor of Florence. The election of the mayor automatically attributed the majority of seats in the council for the coalition supporting the elected mayor. In 2004, several political forces composed the center-left coalition: a share of votes and a comparison with the previous municipal elections in 1999 in provided in Table 2 and 3.

In the resulting municipal executive, the influence of DS representatives was high. In particular, the deputy mayor (Cioni), the assessor to education (Lastri) and the assessor to budget (Albini) - three out of the most important competences in the local executives - were well-known exponents of the partisan local élite of DS. Catholics and radicals were also present in the executive, but with less power of influence.

Tab. 2 - Direct election of the mayor of Florence, share of votes. Source: ufficio elettorale, Comune di Firenze

Candidate in 1999	Number and share of votes in 1999	Candidate in 2004	Number and share of votes in 2004
Domenici - supported by the center-left coalition	108.424	Domenici - supported by the center-left coalition	109.043
	51,7%		49,1%
Scaramuzzi - supported by the center-right coalition	74.836	Valentino - supported by the center-right coalition	66.005
	35,7%		29,7%
Falqui - supported by a radical left party	11.237	De Zordo - supported by the radical left coalition	27.302
	5,4%		12,3%
Others	15.442	Others	19.486
	7,2%		8,9%

**Tab. 3 - Election of the municipal assembly, share of votes for parties. Source: ufficio elettorale,
Comune di Firenze**

Coalition	Party	Number and share of votes for parties in 1999	Coalition	Party	Number and share of votes for parties in 2004
CENTER-LEFT COALITION	Democratici Sinistra (DS)	61.274	CENTER-LEFT COALITION	Democratici Sinistra (DS)	62.576
		31,5%			30,6%
	Partito Popolare Italiano (PPI)	7.133		Democrazia è Libertà (DL)	16.775
		3,6%			8,2%
	Democrazia Eu. Prodi	8.819		Italia dei Valori (IDV)	2.979
		5,7%			1,5%
	Comunisti Italiani	11.166		Comunisti Italiani	11.093
		4,5%			5,4%
	Others	12.493		Others	12.447
		6,3%			6%
CENTER-RIGHT COALITION	Forza Italia	29.954	CENTER-RIGHT COALITION	Forza Italia	33.344
		15,4%			16,4%
	All. Nazionale	25.320		All. Nazionale	21.238
		13%			10,4%
	CCD	5.323		UDC	7.945
		2,7%			3,9%
	Others	7.709		Others	887
5%		0,4%			

RADICALS	Rif. Comunista	10.945 5,6%	RADICAL LEFT COALITION	Rif. Comunista	14.318 7%
Other coalitions	Others	14.492 6,7%		Others	7.126 3,5%
			Other coalitions	Others	14.098 6,7%

Before moving to the analysis, these really synthetic informations may be used to develop some assumptions and hypothesis about legitimacy in the municipal setting.

The main assumption is that performance in welfare service provision is a relevant component of legitimacy. In other words, the new institutional setting of Italian local government emphasizes the role of local institutions in service provision. In the past, the representative and integrative role of municipality was more valued than service provision.

Thus, assuming that performance in service provision is relevant to local legitimacy, my hypothesis is that a good performance in welfare services will lead to an acknowledgement of local government, to loyalty (calling back Hirshmann theory) and to a substantial reproduction of the governing coalition at the subsequent 2009 elections. Such a reproduction will be evident in the candidacy of former executive's personnel. The second hypothesis is that good performance is not a sufficient condition for full legitimacy: also procedural aspects will play a role in the reproduction of the governing coalition. In other words, my second hypothesis is that also due process and citizens' involvement will be relevant in the local public debate. Thus, the loyalty option will be present only if procedural and performance legitimacy are both present.

In the next paragraph, I will discuss the case focusing on welfare policies, and on social assistance to old people in particular.

2.2 Welfare policies and social assistance in Florence, 2004-2009.

In Italy, the welfare system has been ruled at different governmental tiers through time. For long time, the system was ruled at national level, with a discrete and incomplete legislation (Fargion 1997). After the Seventies, and in particular after the last decentralization and regionalization in the early 2000, Regions gained legislative and substantial autonomy in important sectors of social security, such as assistance, whereas social insurance remained at the national level. Through time, each Region developed its model of social assistance. According to its liberal and leftist political tradition, from the Seventies on Tuscany established a typical model of progressive social assistance, built on proper assistance rather than charity, on assistance as a right distributed according to equity rather than according to discretionality, on universal access rather than selectivity, on wellbeing rather than survival, on social integration rather than marginalization (Fargion 1997, 25).

As far as local governments are concerned, social assistance and nurseries can be considered among the most important services on charge of municipalities. From the Seventies on, Florence and its

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municipal institutions put a great emphasis over these services: as a matter of fact, participation through municipal decentralization and welfare through social assistance and education were two distinctive features of the administrations.

A period of great expansion after the mid Seventies - in terms of services offered and resources spender - was followed by a strong retrenchment between the end of the Eighties and the end of the Nineties. One of the main objective of local administration in the Nineties was to adapt the municipal welfare system to a changed environment. The Nineties were also the period of legislative uncertainty, with the inability of the national legislator to redefine the general welfare legislation, in social assistance in particular.

According to programmatic documents, formal resolution, internal documents and publications, politicians were aware of these problems.

In particular, the aging of the population was seen as one of the major problems since the half of the Nineties. Assistance should be re-organized in order to respond to the needs of this part of population, in the safeguarding of the value of the personal experience and dignity (Agnoletto 2005, 126).

At the beginning of the Noughties, maintaining the level of assistance was the main goal, (Piano di Zone 2000). At the same time, there is a great emphasis on the role of the Municipality in

assistance, with a clear characterization of its role vis à vis the USL (Unità Sanitaria Locale, poi Hacienda Sanitaria Locale, the local health authority, a direct branch of Region to govern the health system). In particular, the planning of services should be kept at communal level (thus at centralized at the top, and identified in the figures of the assessor and the head of the “Social security sector”) while the management and the provision of services should be decentralized to the 5 town districts. Each town district had a representative assembly and a bureaucratic structure, endowed with employees and resources to manage assistance at the district level (Agnoletto 2005, 109-110).

From 2003 on, the administrators recognized the economic and financial constrains and adapt the proposed solutions. The issue of the costs of the system came into the political agenda: forms of fair contribution by beneficiaries of the service were proposed along with a rationalization of the whole system, in order to avoid waste of resources. At the same time, a new emphasis was put on the role of the private acting in the assistance, with special reference to volunteering (political program 2004; official governmental platform 2004-2009).

According to the political documents, the re-organization of social assistance is perceived as a challenge, not only for the municipal, but also for the Regional government. Since the Nineties, the solution proposed is the integration of sanitary service, on behalf of the USL/ASL, and of social service, on behalf of the Municipality. This integration was challenged by the aforementioned tensions in assistance provisions. The Region proposed the institutional innovation of the “Società della Salute” or SDS (to be translated as “Society of Wealth”). The SDS is formally a consortium between the Region, the ASL and the Municipality, aimed at programming and managing sanitary and social assistance in the municipal territory. The background idea is that a better coordination of proposals and resources between the ASL and the municipality will translate in a more effective and efficient management of welfare services. To promote this coordination, a formal institution is created: the SDS is intended to be an autonomous actor in the managing of programs and resources. SDS is intended also to be the institutional interface for cooperatives and private firms, as far as outsourcing in the concrete managing of the services is concerned. As a matter of fact, the Municipalities can choose to delegate - obviously paying - cooperatives or privates to deliver single services. These formal agreements should be discussed and formally decided by the SDS. In other words, the SDS is the institution that formally establishes and controls the outsourcing and that at the same time should represent the public interest.

SDS is also seen as the institutional place for the participation of associations to the government of the local assistance. In fact, specific councils are created as part of SDS to plan and organize the

welfare programming with volunteering, the so called “third sector” and the civic associations involved on assistance issues (Molino, Danita, Lippi, Madama, Sacchi 2010).

The Region of Tuscany proposed the SDS as an experiment. The administration welcomed this initiative with enthusiasm, and put itself as leader among the other municipalities involved (Agnoletto 2005). SDS was one of the priorities in the political program of 2004-2009, and the assessor and the mayor politically supported it. It is important to emphasize that the Region was strongly committed to this project, but that Municipality of Florence was also actively involved in the process.

4. Performance and procedure in municipal welfare: a qualitative evaluation.

4.1 Performance evaluation: was government effective?

According to interviews and to budget data, welfare policies had been a real priority for the municipal executive. There was a strong political will to maintain as much resources as possible on the welfare services, from social assistance to education. Moreover, the efforts to differentiate the offer of services pushed the administration to encourage domiciliar services rather than residential solutions.

Tab. 4 - Social expenses (only current expenses), in euro, 2004-2008. Source: official balance sheet

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Expenses for nurseries	33.238.702	29.915.581	28.947.038	33.634.444	36.420.196
Expenses for residentiality - old people	16.460.570	12.987.827	12.322.617	11.612.657	11.587.070
Expenses for other forms of social assistance	32.652.018	29.543.334	31.027.864	33.273.766	33.207.152

Tab. 5 – Number of users of social assistance in Florence, 2005-2007. Source: SISA – Sistema informativo socio assistenziale, Comune di Firenze.

Class of users:	2005	2006	2007
Old people (>65 years)	5.975	5.213	5.574
Adult people (65 and >18 years)	4.555	4.509	4.516
Young people (<18 years)	2.315	2.330	2.581
TOTAL	12.845	12.052	12.671

Tab. 6 - Number of users of social assistance, old people, in Florence, divided per zones, 2004. Source: SISA-Sistema Informativo socio assistenziale, Comune di Firenze.

Zone:	Number of elderly users:
City center - Q1	1014
Campo di Marte - Q2	1046
Gavinana/Galluzzo - Q3	529
Isolotto - Q4	827
Rifredi - Q5	1280
TOTAL	4773

Tab. 7 - Number of old people (>65 yrs) receiving at least one grant by the social assistance system, divided per zones, 2004-2007. Source: SISA- Sistema informativo socio assistenziale, Comune di Firenze.

Zone:	2004	2005	2006	2007
City center - Q1	179	171	179	214
Campo di Marte - Q2	186	176	173	210
Gavinana/Galluzzo - Q3	105	104	105	131
Isolotto - Q4	269	253	251	242
Rifredi - Q5	291	267	289	375
TOTAL	1030	971	997	1172

Tab. 8 - Number of users of nursing homes (daily stay), adult and old people (>65 years) in Florence, 2005-2007. Source: SISA-Sistema informativo socio assistenziale, Comune di Firenze.

Class of users:	2005	2006	2007
Old people (>65 years)	277	257	272
Adult people (65 and >18 years)	23	19	28
TOTAL	300	302	302

Tab. 9 - Number of users of nursing homes (residential stay) in Florence, 2005-2007. Source SISA-Sistema informativo socio assistenziale, Comune di Firenze.

Type of nursing home:	2005	2006	2007
Nursing home for non-auto elderly and disabled	2.251	2.197	2.179
Nursing home for auto elderly and disabled	408	381	365
Home for children and pregnant women	344	317	359
Home for poors	1.152	1.105	1.062

To cope with the scarcity financial resources, access criteria were modified. The example is for elderly nursing homes and daycare centers: the cost of the service was redefined several times, reshaping the revenue categories to make people contribute to the cost of the service. The preference for the use of direct or indirect economic contribution was intended to substitute the more costly direct provision of structures and services. The problem of costs was also tackled through the outsourcing of services for elderly and children. The unions, especially of public employees, opposed hard resistance whereas the political executive was supporting this address.

“The outsourcing option was already present at the beginning of the Noughties. Through years, many structures formerly managed by the Commune were turned to management by cooperatives through formal agreement and conventions. This political will was steady through time” (INT FI 4, transcription).

“It is clear now as it was in the past administration (2004-2009) that the welfare system has to be innovated: so as it is now, it is not sustainable from an economic and organizational point of view. (...) There are resistance to this change, obviously. Political parties are too weak to protest on this issue. The real resistance are trade unions. (...) It is also a problem of cultural legacies. For example: we (the executive and the public administration) are openly saying we cannot afford anymore the direct management of kindergarten. We are compelled to outsource. And this is not any right for the Unions, even though it is just a matter of concrete managing, not of planning; even though we guarantee for the control of that management, forcing privates to pay their employees in a certain way and to give high quality services - for example privates will be compelled to demonstrate the number of educators is appropriate to the number of children. Our priority is to spend less for management and to shorten waiting lists. Building a new communal kindergarten is a real cost, in terms of time and of money” (INT FI 1, transcription).

Also the address regarding the decentralization of assistance services to town councils was respected. Nonetheless, this solution created huge problems: fragmentation of services, block of decisions and a lack of homogenous distribution of services in the five zones of the cities were signaled by most of the interviewed, component of past and present administration (INT FI 1; INT FI 4). Considering again the case of social assistance, the head of the competent division was compelled to report to many political delegates, ranging from assessors to the elected president of each town council:

“Since the decentralization, inside Florence there were 5 autonomous little Communes, that means there were 5 different procedures for doing the same things. Each town councils had its rules” (INT FI 5, transcription).

“It was not only a matter of multiplying the number of decisions and formal steps needed for doing things. It was also the real problem of having different services according to the territory: each town hall acted totally freely, so in the end there was also a problem of territorial homogeneity in service provision” (INT FI 1, transcription).

Thus, according to the experts interviewed, the municipal model of welfare provision is changing: the political will is clear in maintaining the widest access to service provision, but also in making it more selective and less expensive for the municipal budget, through a deeper coordination with the private world.

Such coordination is the crucial point in the most ineffective solution proposed by the Municipality: the integration of sanitary and social assistance in the SDS.

After the end of the experimental period, the SDS officially born as a proper institution. The municipal executive was present in the organizational chart with the Assessor and with his fiduciary director. The new institution was installed, but it was not autonomous in its decisions and, at the same time, it was perceived as a “useless duplicate of function” (INT FI 3; INT FI 6). This was the result of an incomplete integration of structures and functions, due to the resistance of both ASL *Maria Tullia Galanti, C.WP n° 2/2011*

and Municipal bureaucracies. In other words, the political will (regional and municipal) was not able to overthrow the bureaucratic and organizational divisions. Moreover, a recent sentence pronounced by the Constitutional Court has sentenced illegitimate the form of consortium for the SDS, thus forcing the Region to find a technical solution, not yet found.

“A clear weakness was that the SDS yet does not exist as a management unit. At first, it was not clear inside the structure ‘who does what’. The definition of roles in the structure was lacking, common tables, formal rules and common procedures to actually integrate ASL and Municipalities were not activated: each subject inside the SDS continued with its operatives. The two world were separated yet.” (INT FI 7, transcription).

To sum up, the performance of local institutions on these welfare issues may be considered effective globally speaking, though lacking in the implementation of the innovative solution of the SDS. The ability to maintain welfare services through the crisis period can be connected to both political and administrative capacity.

4.2 Procedure: what was wrong with SDS?

The “SDS affair” is relevant also as far as procedural aspects are concerned. According to the press release and the interviews, different political actors contested the whole process of installation of the new institution, for different reasons. In the perception of citizens, SDS is a new institution with no clear meaning and functions (INT FI 3). The political representative interviewed showed concerns about the accountability of SDS to the Municipality, in particular to the Council.

As a matter of fact, the Council cannot avoid implementing SDS, since SDS was part of the regional legislative act on social assistance in Tuscany. Nevertheless, despite the presence of communal representatives in SDS, there are no mechanisms of formal accountability for SDS acts (INT FI 2; INT FI 6). For example, the formal agreement for the outsourcing of welfare services - except for nurseries - can be approved directly by the SDS, without formal intervention or supervision of neither the executive or the council (INT FI 2). This strongly influenced accountability, since the definition of roles and procedures inside SDS was not institutionalized at that time. This scarce political accountability was accompanied by concerns about due process. Despite clear regulatory efforts to strengthen the transparency in the municipal regulation as far as access and modes of contribution to services are concerned, the perception of flaws in due process was strengthened by the judicial activity: two SDS directors were fined for administrative irregularities in February 2011.

As far as public-private relationship is concerned, the SDS affair showed a quite unstable asset of the public-private relationship. The first relevant point is a typical feature of the municipal welfare system: only few social cooperatives are collaborating with the municipality. The other private-like actors in service provision are not properly private firms, but the multifaceted world of the volunteering (catholic, socialist, religious and laical). Moreover, in Florence there are a number of associations often active in promote instances to the municipal institutions. So, a very active civil society.

In the SDS affair, only the relationship with social cooperatives will be considered. The political address to actively include them in the policy-making on assistance was translated proper institutional place, the “Consult Anionic” and the “Consult del Terzo Settore”. These “Consults” were intended to be the formal place to discuss policy interventions with the third sector during the policy-making. According to the interviews, the third sector was disappointed by the Consult’s experience: the main problem was the inability to find a common vision of problems in welfare provision. Moreover, the third sector felt their contribution to the whole process was only for

consultation, thus not incisive or binding for public institutions (INT FI 4). Despite the well-known critical and assertive attitude of private world, bureaucratic insiders felt that the participatory devices were monopolized by the assessor. Thus, the relationship private-public was shaped into a quite unstable governance setting, with private aiming at governing together with the public, and the public experimenting different formal solutions, but basically deciding relevant policy intervention - such as the distribution of financial resources - in a close circle of few assessors inside the municipal executive (INT FI 2).

These critiques to administrative behavior and to the assessor's attitude may have contributed to the actual de-legitimacy of the components of the executives, and of the assessor of welfare policies in particular. Table 10 synthesizes the qualitative evaluation of performance.

Table 10. Policy problems, process and overall evaluation of legitimacy in the case of Florence (2004-2009).

Policy problem	Feature of the process	Affecting legitimacy
Scarcity of financial resources	Policy leadership Administrative capacity and relationship with politicians	Good performance and defective procedures: the least performing process was also the less transparent (the SDS affair)
Integration of policy domains	Fragmentation of political will Resistance of municipal managers	
Participation in the policy process	Flaws in due process Lack of institutionalization of public-private relationship	

4.3 After procedure and performance: the de-legitimation of the partisan élite in 2009.

As a matter of fact, between 2004 and 2009, the political relevance of few exponents in the executive grew: the sign of this is not only media attention, but also the distribution of formal competence among the components of the executives.

The protagonist of the welfare policies, the assessor, was in charge of old and disabled people and of public security, one of the main themes in the 2004 electoral campaigns. He was also deputy mayor, and actually considered the real mayor of Florence. For long time, media presented him as the next candidate-mayor at the following municipal elections in 2009; he also had the support from the main political party, the PD. Remarkably, the local PD is strongly featured by the prevalence of the former communists (DS) over the former Catholics' (DL), since PCI-PDS-DS was territorially eradicated in the city.

All at a sudden, at the end of the mandate, a local political scandal involved the administration: in particular, the assessor of city planning, various components of the administration among politicians and bureaucrats. The scandal emerged from different judicial inquiries on town planning, and involved also the powerful assessor to welfare, at the time promoting himself as candidate for the center-left coalition primary elections scheduled for February 2009. These primary elections are particularly important: as a matter of fact, the real competition is among candidates in the center-left coalition, because of the scarce likely for center-right candidates to win in municipal elections. The consequence of the scandals was a de-legitimation of the incumbent governing class, reflected in the result of those primary elections (Sedona e Abruzzi 2010). During a very competitive and crucial campaign, most of the candidates tried to present themselves in opposition towards "the past", represented by the partisan local élite and the former administration, including the mayor. The challenge was opposing candidates of communist tradition, promoted by PD local organization, and two Catholics candidates: one out of the two was openly opposed by the party. This candidate, Matteo Renzi, curiously considered as an outsider of the political scene¹¹, won the primary elections, with great surprise of the local party oligarchies: "The political and electoral determinants of primary elections are disconnected from people's territorial partisan identification. (...) The party

¹¹ He was president of the Province of Florence between 2004 and 2009: candidate by the centre-left coalition, he was the main exponent of the catholics (DL) in the local scene.

was seen by the candidates as the real rival to oppose. (...) the campaign was built on the continuous and constant de-legitimation of the party in central office” (Seddone and Valbruzzi 2010 , 39).

The victory of Renzi, the outsider, came along with the political marginalization of the deputy-mayor and assessor to welfare. So to say, he was considered the emblem of the de-legitimation of a whole political administration, the dominant coalition that ruled the main party and the government of Florence in the previous ten years. As a matter of fact, in few weeks Coin, the designed candidate and future mayor, turned to be the butt of resentment against the local political class. The de-legitimation of the formal political class was reflected in the new balance of power in the center-left coalition, which won the municipal elections in June 2009. Along with Renzi’s address, the political power in the actual coalition is more equally distributed among former DS and DL.

4 Conclusion: reasoning on structural factors an sources of legitimacy.

Calling back Hirshmann’s theory, the case of Florence seems an example of voice. In fact, voters continued to attribute legitimacy to the center-left coalition in June’s 2009 municipal elections, but strongly and openly protested against the incumbent governing coalition, voting for the outsider candidate in February’s 2009 primary elections. Through their unexpected participation to primary elections, citizens gave a clear signal to the local political class, and to the dominant party itself: the consequence was the victory of the “least-liked” candidate by the party, Matteo Renzi.

Can we relate these facts to performance and procedures in local welfare provision during the 2004-2009 mandate? The actual link could be more casual than causal. But still some reasoning can be developed.

There are no quantitative inquiries to investigate the sources of the de-legitimation of the Domenici administration. It is quite clear, anyhow, that the scandals strongly contributed to this de-legitimation. Since Assessor Cioni was involved in the scandals, it is plausible to think that his personal support was influenced by this, and that the strong identification between Cioni and the local partisan élite didn’t help.

Even though the scandals did not involve welfare policies, it is plausible to hypothesize that the procedural flaws and deficiencies in welfare provision - in the SDS affair in particular - have contributed to augment Cioni’s and the executive’s de-legitimation. Despite the quite good performance, as I have been discussing in this paper.

Thus, this is a possible interpretation of the de-legitimacy of the local executive: despite the not bad performance in service provision, procedural aspects may have had a clear role in influencing political legitimacy. In other words, transparency and participation may have been more valued by citizens than performance in welfare provision.

A sign of that could be the fact that the outsider candidate Renzi - directly opposing the former administration, and thus its assessors - scored better in those zones (Rifredi, Campo di Marte and the city center) where the welfare needs are more present, for the prevalence of fragile population such as old people and immigrants. To support this hypothesis, a similar evaluation of performance and procedures in other policy areas may be helpful - especially in the town planning area.

Tab. 11 - Primary elections, center-left coalition: vote for candidate-mayor, divided by zones. Source: Seddone and Valbruzzi 2010, 31.

	City center	Campo di Marte	Gavinana Galluzzo	Isolotto	Rifredi	Florence (TOTAL)
Renzi	40,7%	41,7%	37,4%	36,8%	42%	40,1%
Ventura	12,4%	13%	12,9%	11,5%	12,6%	12,5%
Lastri	14,9%	13,2%	13,4%	13,7%	16,6%	14,6%
Pistelli	26,6%	28,1%	33%	27%	24,8%	27,3%
Cruccolini	5,4%	4,0%	3,3%	10,9%	3,9%	5,5%
Total %	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
N.	6.521	7.968	4.807	7.165	10.237	36.698

Summing up, this analysis suggests some hypothesis:

Performance-based legitimacy and procedure-based legitimacy seem connected. The SDS affair shows that the least transparent process was also the least effective one. It is plausible that if procedures are more stable and binding, the resulting accountability and transparency will induce not only politicians but also bureaucrats to be more attentive and responsive to citizens' demands. At the same time, procedures are important as far as political and administrative capability are concerned: procedural aspect should be shaped in order to avoid the multiplication of political veto

point. In this sense, the issue of decentralization of assistance services to town councils is a negative example of fragmentation of the political will between the municipality and its periphery.

In the case of Florence, procedural-based legitimacy seems to have played an important role in the following political competition. Thus, procedure seems more valued than performance. Since procedure is connected not only to the rule of law and due process, but also to citizens involvement in policy making, the prevalence of procedural aspects in shaping legitimacy can be reconnected to a more general national political legacy. In Tuscany - a civic region according to Putnam, Leonardi and Nanetti (1993)- political integration seems more valued than policy performance. The prevalence of the issue of political integration may be linked to the scarce autonomy local government experienced in service provision through time. In other words, municipal representatives may not be blamed by citizens for public policies, since people attributes policy responsibility to other tier of government, such as the region or the national governments. Thus, not only political but also policy legacies may contribute to explain the issue of legitimacy of local governments.

This case showed the crucial importance of public-private relationship in shaping legitimacy: the stability and the transparency - thus the institutionalization and openness - of local governance seem to influence citizens' perceptions as much as problem solving capacity does.

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C.C., director, management Società della Salute, 22-02-11: INT FI 7.

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