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Contribution of evaluation to democratic policies

The presentation explores how evaluations can (and do) contribute to make policies more democratic. We aim at building a conceptual framework for research on evaluation practice. We start from Hirschman's work on development projects and from his reflections on reform mongering. We build on the work of Laboratorio di Valutazione Democratica on the elements of democratic evaluation: designs and methods which include underrepresented groups (democracy in evaluation), institutional arrangements which enhance the democratic responsiveness of policies (evaluation for democracy), or evaluation work on policies aiming at widening participation in the political, social, and economic life of a city, region, country (evaluation in democracy).

The issue of contributing to making policies more democratic requires that evaluators enter a dialogue with clients, commissioners, stakeholders, and policy makers on values, criteria, and goals, rather than accepting them. Under which conditions can this happen? It may also require that evaluation findings be disseminated beyond the group of intended users, through media not foreseen, or in new formats and languages. Which options do evaluator have? Which conflicts can dissemination ignite?