Interview with Enrico Alletto, co-founder of Open Genova

Submitted on 03 Mar 2014 by Matteo Brunati

In Italy there are a lot of bottom-up initiatives related to Open Data and re-use practices: one of these is Open Genova. Enrico Alletto is one of the co-founders of the project.

I think we, as Italians, need to invest in participation as a vector and a backbone of the overall Open Government vision. We have forgotten the meaning of participation. It is really useful to start initiatives like this one from local communities.

Q: What is the Open Genova project? How did it start?

A: Open Genova really began in 2012 after a group of citizens with technical skills got together. The goal of the initiative was to create an informal citizens' community where sharing ideas and suggesting modernisation at a local level were encouraged and enhanced, forming a community that is a valuable mouthpiece for local administration.

This informal community included both online and offline elements: enabling online participation it is essential to reduce the digital divide between participants. So we created an association that deals with Open Data, free wifi, IT bases and broadband connection.

Open Genova connects bottom-up projects. Citizens are free to join them voluntarily, indicating the hours that they can dedicate to work on these projects.

Q: What do you think Open Genova can do for PSI and re-using?

A: We can for example encourage Open Data releases through projects that use public datasets and common resources such as OpenStreetMap.

Open Genova proposes a mapping project for unused public properties, which can be used by citizens or associations.

We are currently running another project about collective memory. We are analysing a city district, working closely with local authorities, a school and other associations.

Q: What did you do in 2013?

A: 2013 was centred on two areas: community and local municipalities.

Last year we put a lot of effort into creating partnerships with local municipalities, businesses and the public sector. Most of these efforts will develop into actual 2014 projects.

We improved transparency in community participation. This is a long-term concern and we are still working on it. We are particularly inspired by the nature of the Linux-Ubuntu community.

Q: What about 2014?

A: We are local partner of Talent Garden Genova, a network of digital innovators, a physical space for digital ecosystem enthusiasts to meet, work, learn and collaborate; offering loads of great events, advice sessions and more.

We will organise an event about Open Data and geographical datasets, especially integration between public data and Open StreetMap.

Open Genova Camp will take place in the spring. As part of this event we will run a competition challenging participants to suggest how website projects can be better publicised. Public administration will be part of this event too.

Q: Do you think that Italy is adding value to PSI?

A: My personal opinion is that we have many local initiatives about re-use and culture, but sometimes municipalities and regions aren't engaged enough. As citizens, we are trying to make our efforts more valuable for administrations. We want to make every person in the public sector aware of Open Data's potential, not only citizens but also administrations.