

Demokratiequalität: „Citizen Audit“ in Costa Rica – was kann für Österreich gelernt werden?

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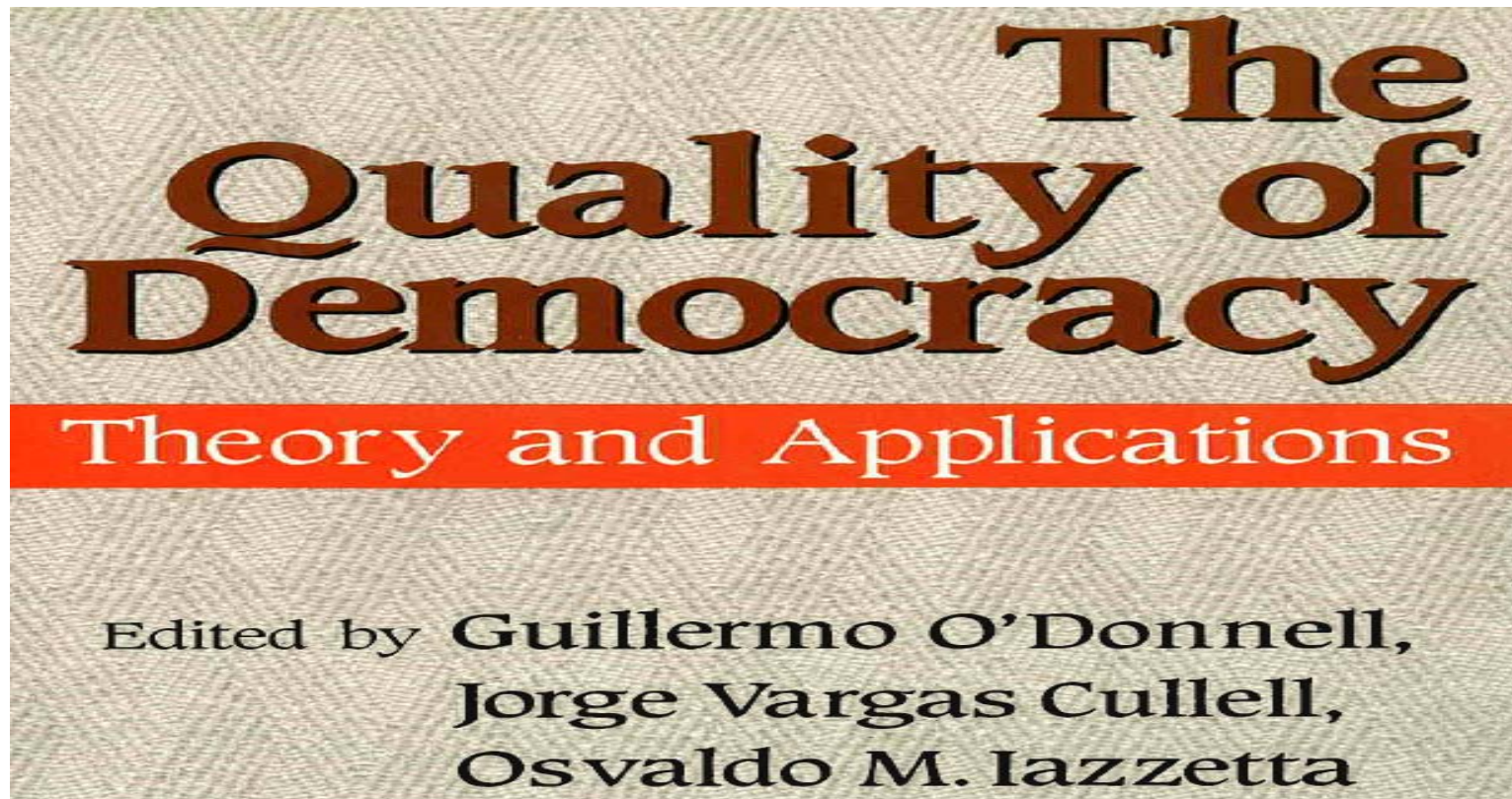


Gliederung des Vortrags

- Darstellung der Konzeption und Methode des „Citizen Audit“ von Costa Rica, basierend auf: **Jorge Vargas Cullell (2004). Democracy and the Quality of Democracy: Empirical Findings and Methodological and Theoretical Issues Drawn from the Citizen Audit of the Quality of Democracy in Costa Rica, 93-162,** in: Guillermo O'Donnell et al. (eds.): The Quality of Democracy. Theory and Applications. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Abschließend soll kurz zur Diskussion gestellt werden, was sich aufgrund des Beispiels von Costa Rica für Österreichs Demokratie und Demokratiequalität möglicherweise lernen lässt.



Cover of the book



Concept & Method of the "Citizen Audit" Costa Rica: Definition of an Audit (1)



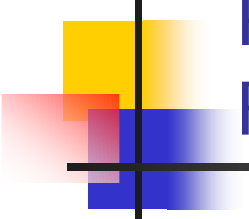
- Citizen audit = tool for: (1) assessing current state of affairs; (2) a system of observing/monitoring democracy; (3) generating a deliberation [= „Beratung“] process.
- Citizen audit = more a process or procedure (and not so much a theory?).
- Question: Is an audit more an expert-based process and/or a participative peer review (who are the "peers" = voters and/or residents) process?

Concept & Method of the "Citizen Audit" Costa Rica: Definition of an Audit (2) [Source: Cullell 2004, 101]

Table 1 Differences Between an Audit and Academic Research

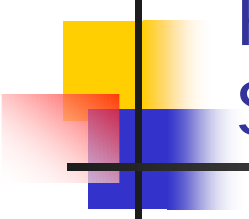
<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Audit</i>	<i>Research</i>
Purpose	Evaluate processes	Explain relations
Style	Comprehensive, nonselective	Selective
Participation by subject(s) of the inquiry	Required	Not required
Hypothesis	No	Yes
Expected outcome	Improvement of processes	Theory building
By-product(s)	Theory building?	Various

Source: Gutiérrez and Vargas Cullell 1998.



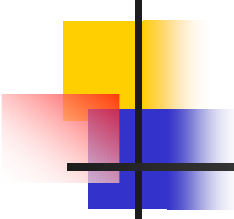
Concept & Method of the “Citizen Audit” Costa Rica: Basic Concept of the Citizen Audit (1) / First Pillar

- First pillar / the idea of the quality of democracy (QoD): (1) descriptive and/or normative and/or evaluative concept(s); (2) **QoD = “multidimensional concept”**; (a) “distance” between actual practice of democracy and its normative horizon; (b) “reflects the capacity of citizens to develop democratic practices for handling public affairs”.



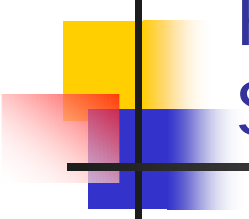
Concept & Method of the “Citizen Audit” Costa Rica: Basic Concept of the Citizen Audit (2) / Second Pillar

- Second pillar / the idea of a citizen audit: (1) “The idea of auditing democracy is new to the field of political science” (p. 98). (2) Pioneer groundwork was undertaken by David Beetham in the UK, with a later institutional focal point in the Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA).



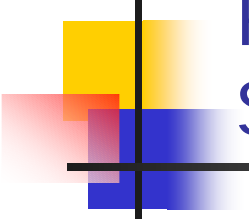
Concept & Method of the “Citizen Audit” Costa Rica: Basic Concept of the Citizen Audit (3) / Structure & Method

- (1) The time window for the citizen audit in Costa Rica: 1998-2001.
- (2) A **Civic Forum** was set up, reflecting political-societal diversity, and defining 33 “democracy standards” (dimensions of evaluation); (a) 42 members (“academic, social, and political leaders”); (b) Civic Forum should substitute for the ISO requirement of expert panels for “defining and validating the standards and assessing the results” (p. 99).



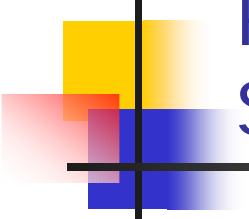
Concept & Method of the “Citizen Audit” Costa Rica: Basic Concept of the Citizen Audit (4) / Structure & Method

- (3) For the “research phase” a “participatory strategy” with a “wide network of researchers and academic centers” was implemented, utilizing “different research tasks”. About 4,800 people were “consulted” (approximately 2 per thousand of the citizens of Costa Rica).



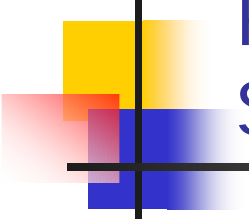
Concept & Method of the “Citizen Audit” Costa Rica: Basic Concept of the Citizen Audit (5) / Structure & Method

- (4) For the coordination of the “research phase” or “fieldwork of the citizen audit” the **Audit Coordinating Team (ACT)** was established. One key responsibility of ACT focused on designing a “research strategy open to different methods and perspectives” (p. 100).



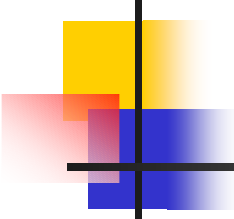
Concept & Method of the “Citizen Audit” Costa Rica: Basic Concept of the Citizen Audit (6) / Structure & Method

- (5) For the “evaluation process” 10 **Panels of Evaluators** were created, consisting in total of 35 individuals. Those panels were clustered around different “thematic” areas and “assessed the results of the audit’s fieldwork”.



Concept & Method of the "Citizen Audit" Costa Rica: Basic Concept of the Citizen Audit (7) / Structure & Method

- (6) The structure of the dimensions displayed the following multilevel architecture: 33 "democracy standards" = "evaluation standards" => 138 "variables" => 210 "indicators" => 450 "conditions or evaluation criteria" (pp. 101-102).



Concept & Method of the “Citizen Audit” Costa Rica: Basic Concept of the Citizen Audit (8) / Structure & Method [Source: Cullell 2004, 101]

Table 2 Research Methods Used in Costa Rica’s Citizen Audit, 1998–2001

<i>Type of Research</i>	<i>Methods Used</i>
Consultation	Surveys Focus groups Sentinel sites surveillance <i>Juicio grupal ponderado</i>
Anthropological Interpretative	Ethnographic experiments (observations) Specialized memos Theme research Legal analyses
Data compilation	Compilation of administrative records Literature review

Source: PEN 2001a. •

Note: Detailed explanations of each method can be found in the appendix of chapter 1 in the audit’s *Final Report* (available online at www.estadonacion.or.cr).



Concept & Method of the “Citizen Audit” Costa Rica: Comments & Conceptual Figures (1)

- Feasibility of the initiative: e.g., “a climate of political legitimacy” (p. 105).
- Scope of citizen participation: citizen participation cannot compete with democratic mechanisms such as referenda (**voters <=> residents**).



Concept & Method of the “Citizen Audit” Costa Rica: Comments & Conceptual Figures (2)

- Evaluation difficulties: the evaluation model was not established before implementing the citizen audit.
- Exploration of “democratic performance in new dimensions”: “shed light” on “nonregime dimensions” (p. 110); **polyarchy (regime)** \Leftrightarrow **non-polyarchy**; citizen audit is important for mobilizing the non-regime dimension (pp. 141-144) (**civil society?**).



Concept & Method of the “Citizen Audit” Costa Rica: Comments & Conceptual Figures (3)

- *Estado democrático de derecho*: the importance of a “democratic rule of law” (p. 130, 140).
- Identification of issues beyond the political regime: e.g., “citizen maltreatment” by institutions (p. 110) and differences of the “democratic quality of local governments” (p. 112).



Concept & Method of the “Citizen Audit” Costa Rica: Comments & Conceptual Figures (4)

- Identification of **two types of “maltreatment”** (pp. 122-124): (1) **“soft”**; are more frequent than “hard”, and implies that “citizens endure inconveniences”; (2) **“hard”**; “violation of citizens’ rights and/or dignity that are considered crimes”.

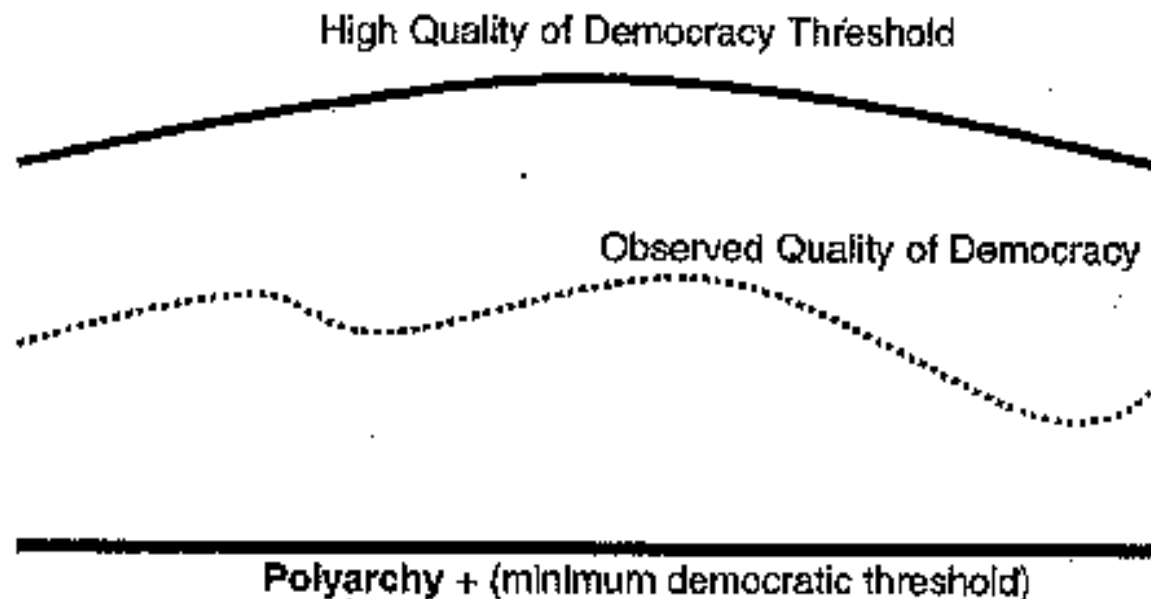


Concept & Method of the “Citizen Audit” Costa Rica: Comments & Conceptual Figures (5)

- **“Original proposal”** of the quality of democracy (QoD): QoD as a **“normative horizon beyond polyarchy”** (polyarchy = “minimum core of regime institutions”) (p. 116).
- **“New understanding”** in *Final Report*: “polyarchy is one of the components of a broader notion of democracy”; **QoD = polyarchical + nonpolyarchical dimensions** (pp. 116-117).

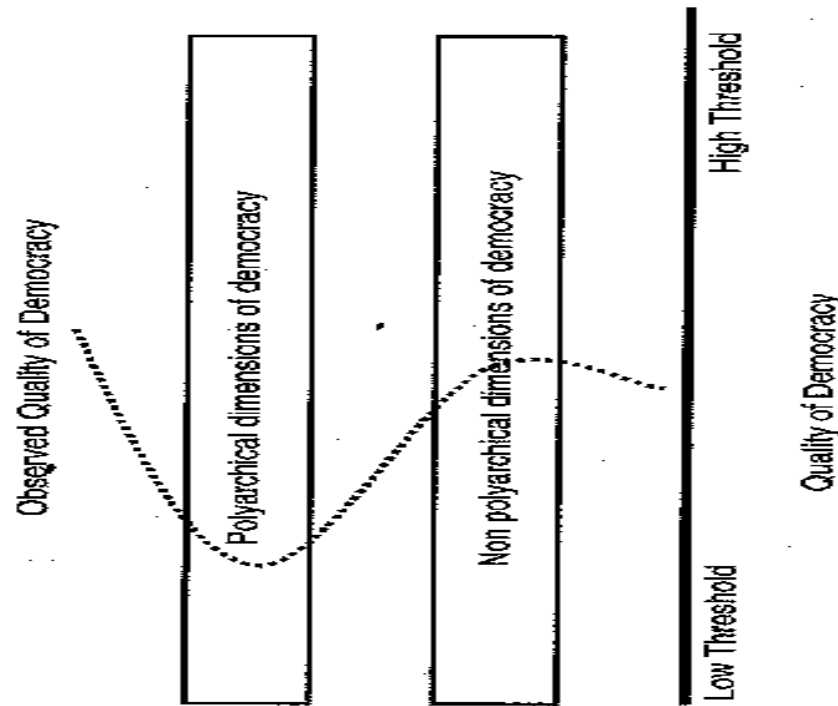
Concept & Method of the "Citizen Audit" Costa Rica: Comments & Conceptual Figures (6) [Source: Cullell 2004, 116]

Figure 1 Citizen Audit Original Methodological Framework Polyarchy/
Quality of Democracy



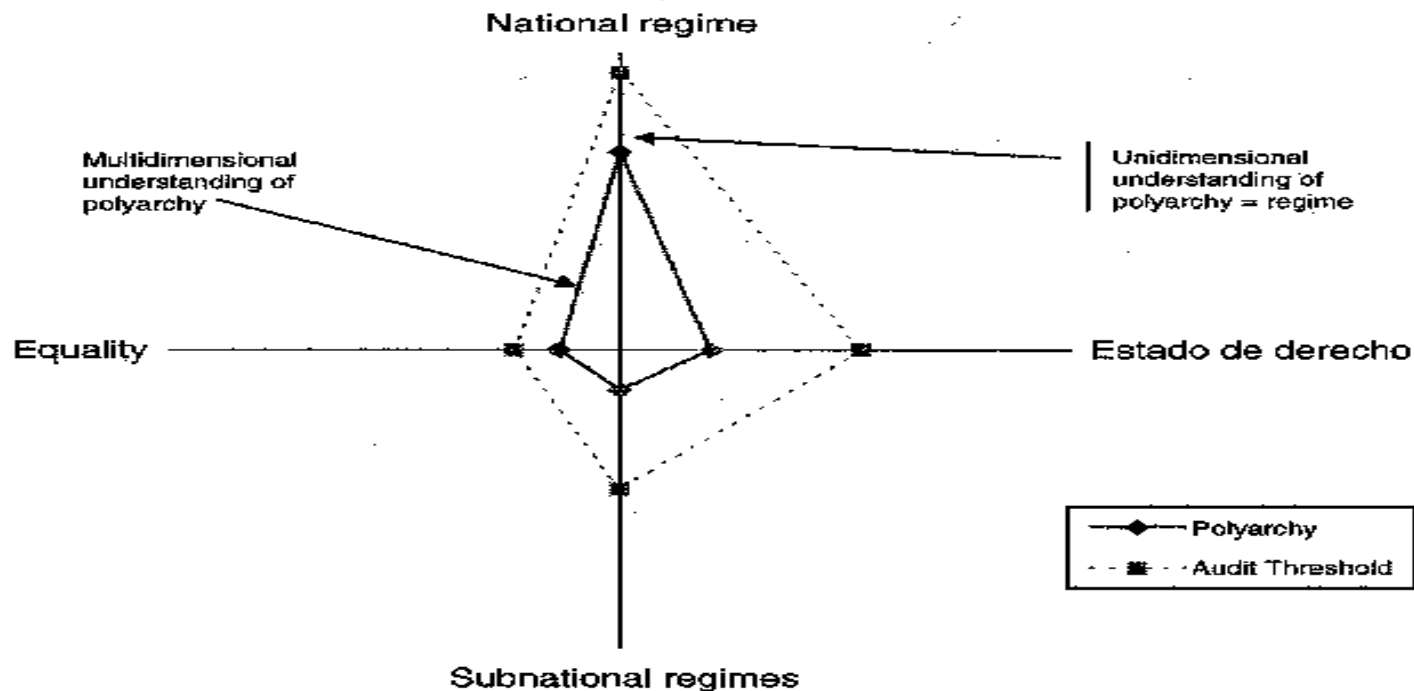
Concept & Method of the “Citizen Audit” Costa Rica: Comments & Conceptual Figures (7) [Source: Cullell 2004, 117]

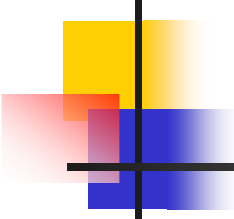
Figure 2 Citizen Audit Final Report Methodological Framework Quality of Democracy as a cross section perspective



Concept & Method of the "Citizen Audit" Costa Rica: Comments & Conceptual Figures (8) [Source: Cullell 2004, 142]

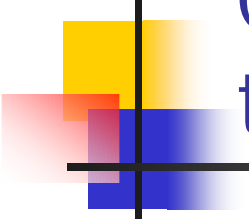
Figure 3 Multidimensionality and Thresholds of Polyarchy and Democracy:
An Illustration





Concept & Method of the “Citizen Audit” Costa Rica: General Recommendations of the “Final Report” (1)

- “Improve mechanisms of political representation and citizen participation” (p. 128).
- “Include a democratic perspective in reform policies for public institutions”; in addition to the “importance of economic issues”, there is a “need of a political perspective” (p. 128).



Concept & Method of the “Citizen Audit” Costa Rica: General Recommendations of the “Final Report” (2)

- “Implement a gradual and selective decentralization of public institutions”; a need for “fulfillment of minimum standards of local democratic management by municipal governments” (pp. 128-129).
- Eradicate “extreme social inequalities” (p. 129).



Was kann für Österreich gelernt werden? (1)

- Für Österreich und Costa Rica lassen sich durchaus gewisse Parallelen als Ausgangspunkte diskutieren: Kleinstaaten, stabiles politisches System, eine Demokratiekultur mit Betonung von Ausgleich und Konsens.
- **Fakt: In Costa Rica gab es bereits einen Citizen Audit, in Österreich (noch) nicht.**



Was kann für Österreich gelernt werden? (2)

- Sollte in Österreich in Zukunft ein Citizen/Democratic Audit geplant werden, so sind eine Analyse von Struktur und Methode des Citizen Audit in Costa Rica eine interessante Referenz („lessons to be learned“).



Was kann für Österreich gelernt werden? (3)

- Es gibt gute Gründe für einen (regelmäßigen) Citizen/Democratic Audit in Österreich:
 1. Qualitätsmerkmal von Demokratie („Evaluation“, „Akkreditierung“ von Demokratie und Demokratiequalität – Prozedere und Prozesse des „Qualitätsmanagements“ von Demokratie?);
 2. Selbstreflexionsprozess und nachhaltige Reformmöglichkeiten („kommunikative Demokratie“) von Demokratie und Demokratiequalität;
 3. Weiterentwicklungspotenziale von Zivilgesellschaft;
 4. Wandel einer „nationalen“ in eine „Mehrebenen“-Demokratie (können da Citizen/Democratic Audits helfen?);
 5. Citizen/Democratic Audits eröffnen zusätzliche Handlungsreferenzen für Demokratie und Politik jenseits „populistischer Wahlwettbewerbslogiken“.