

**The experience of *Participatory Budgets*  
in the city of Seville**  
**Methodology for planning communication patterns and  
constructing citizenship**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

One of the most notable qualities of the current globalisation process is the articulation of an institutional regulation model based on the intensive exploitation of space and a decentralised dispersion of economic activities, alongside the throng of high-income tertiary activities such as the leisure and culture industries (Borja/Castells, 1997). This mediation-based pattern restructures territorial development imposing urban distribution and the need to manage and organise the economy of communication and culture conceived in terms of the requirements for the estimation of capital (Sierra, 2006). Strategic planning for cities is therefore inscribed in a development model that, transcending classical territorial or sectorial planning, favours the upsurge of the city's competitiveness, reducing negative effects and social impact based on an idea of governance and trust that minimises the State's roles and prerogatives and decentralises economic activities via deference to the global capital.

*Planning, seen as a public intervention that promotes the city's competitive value, goes from being a mechanism used to reduce imbalances and inequalities to becoming a policy for the institutionalisation of inequalities between social territories and blocks, thus turning into an expression and driving force for the globalisation process. The need for planning is updated in opposition to the free market, but its redistributive purpose is replaced by goals based on productivity, business, revaluation and private appropriation of certain regions' economic capital. (Villasante/Garrido, 2002: 130).*

In order for this be a functional process, in parallel to the crisis of governance and trust in local administrations and municipalities, the launch of different initiatives for democratic regeneration and participation are being favoured in the general context of economic globalisation and the restructuring of autochthonous cultures and territories. Desde la década de los noventa, instituciones como la OCDE vienen

apuntando la necesidad de una mediación participada en el diseño y evaluación de las políticas públicas (OCDE, 1997). La propia Comisión Europea aborda desde principios de siglo el análisis y consideración de los métodos participativos en la regeneración e intervención urbana (Declève/Forray, 2004) que puede ser interpretada como una forma de reconstrucción de los espacios locales de ciudadanía:

*In terms of public management, and with a view to tending towards a re-legitimisation of their activities, local and national governments are implementing certain instances to institutionalise the intervention of the population judging, controlling and assessing the management (...) In an attempt to implement the notion of "accountability" (or the obligation to account for public actions undertaken and to take responsibility before the citizens), several of the public administration's areas of work assess the possibility of organising query conferences, public audits, participative planning processes with the community-object of the plan, constitution of inter-area committees, etc. . . . (Rossi, 2000: 12).*

In these experiences, communication should promote and define the institutional pattern of acquiescent local development, in accordance with a global conception of the city envisaged in terms of the economic needs for competitive integration in international markets. Hence, strategic planning focuses on advertising to attract investments and, consequently, on the disposition of the infrastructure and the cultural and cognitive capital, especially through actions based on access, mobility and the development of communications and telematic resources that enhance advertising and urban marketing plans (Sierra, 2006).

There are, nonetheless, other experiences involving local development and participation in which said participation is conceived as an attempt to modify the patterns for segregation and the intensive exploitation of space and social capital. One of the most outstanding experiences is the Participative Budget project commenced in Porto Alegre in 1989, which has now been implemented in different cities in the world. Nevertheless, in said initiatives, communication was only planned occasionally and was hardly systematised, mostly limited to social marketing strategies or advertising and political institutional information. The following text contains the methodological bases and the experience of the Participatory Budgets in the city of Seville that can act as a model for mediation that attempts to link public communication to citizen participation, conceived beyond its informative role and the traditionally established information channels. Contrary to other experiences, in this process, communication is planned with a view to transcending the technocratic pattern that neutralises the ideological and political debate on communication, re-legitimising the patterns that appraise cultural

industries, to debate and question the dialectics for the regulation and privatisation of public space, in virtue of a praxis envisaging communication for local development, based on informative power and the knowledge and social capital of citizen networks (Sierra, 2006) (Chaparro, 2002) (Ibarra/Martí/Gomá, 2002).

Conceived as a strategic dimension aspiring to reconstruct the city and stimulate the citizens and the local governance, the Participative Budgets programme for Seville banks on the spaces for coexistence the social networks construct in the districts or neighbourhoods of the city, to define a new framework for social relationships. Said relationships, from an ecological point of view, should allow for a local public space seen as a complex participation environment constituted pluralistically by reason of acknowledging the different voices and players that compose it. Therefore, we will be able to recuperate conversations, the communicative practices generated by the actual citizens, when defining a new method of development based on the citizens' assurance to demonstrate, make proposals and reach agreements. That is to say, to transform participation in political life into a commitment with the community and coexistence. In line with this philosophy, the Participative Budgets programme for Seville develops a networked work methodology based on Participative Research Action to programme decentralised neighbourhood projects in which communication is linked directly to local development in all its stages (Blanco/Gomá, 2002).

## **COMMUNICATION, PARTICIPATION AND SOCIAL CHANGE. A SOCIO-CRITICAL APPROACH**

Research on communication and planning social change have mainly focused on familiarising with the contribution of the media to local development. The notion of the campaign is, generally, the strategic concept linked to this or that problem from more or less diffusionist approaches (Rogers, 1973) or approaches that are, by and large, clearly market-based or technocratic (Fine, 1981) which share a common premise: social problems are not acknowledged, i.e. social conditions are not identified by the players involved (Rice/Paisley, 1981). Therefore, it is necessary to devise a process envisaging informative mobilisation for social change, to resort to the media to make it easier to overcome social obstacles and barriers that hinder training and increasing citizen's awareness regarding the community's pro-social challenges or goals from an asymmetrical planning of public information and resources established for said goal.

Considering the processes for local development and modernisation based on the intensive implementation of empirically-verified urban marketing strategies, scientific literature establishes the prevalence of a pattern depending on the deployment of different social control mechanisms in line with the goals for normative change whose positive and functional epistemological basis establishes the notion of an asymmetric and objectified mediation of social life (Salmon, 1989) (Rice/Paisley, 1981).

In this type of experiences, overseeing communication pursues the promotion of a positive self-image and media projection of the city and local development, by generating at will institutional agreements, programmes arranged with the private sector and economic players, significant structural reforms, shared political agendas and, in most cases, the citizens' delegated clientelistic participation.

Marketing-based images of consensus and urban transformation, and the actual role of the Public Administration, give notice of a hegemonic model that dilutes and cancels the conflicting potential of the secondary social sectors displaced by the capitalistic production method and a pattern based on instrumental governance:

*Advertising and marketing techniques can be used (according to this pattern) to increase communicative control, facilitate symbolical dominance through impacting messages regarding local development. Therefore, it is easy to understand that among the ideas transmitted in advertising campaigns, priority is given to the ideological discourse supporting the inevitability of globalisation and the resulting competition between territories, as well as to the unavoidable adhesion to productivist and market-based values. Thus, an ideological discourse serving a neo-liberal productive model, which exclusively benefits certain economic agents and precise territories, is transmitted as the only feasible and rationally irrefutable development model (Villasante/Garrido, 2002: 132).*

In this methodology for planning social change, communication has an auxiliary and supplementary role, conceived to reproduce the development model defined by the dominant sectors. This media-manufactured consensus also favours the synergy of public and private actors and rationalises and promotes economic development, removing uncertainty and the opposition of the disadvantaged ensembles. Consequently, as appears in the book by Villasante and Garrido (2002: 134):

*the city is still an organism whose structure, functioning and meaning escape the citizens' awareness and activity. The dim call to participation conceals the existence of differences and power hierarchies, and excludes groups that propose radical alternatives (meaning those that could affect the actual roots of the conception, goals and methods for development). Participation generally becomes a figuration, a way of combining efforts that produce private profits, in a subtle mechanism for legitimisation and social control.*

In our opinion, any campaign is determined by the relationship between the communication plan, social change and the ideological project. This requires a socio-critical interpretation, that is historically and socially contextualised and politically reflexive. We cannot merrily transfer models based on the communicative planning of local endogenous development without considering the dynamics of the way the citizenship will assimilate social change. This premise has taken its inspiration from Latin American and European conceptions that have developed programmes similar to the Porto Alegre Participative Budgets (Abers, 2000) (De Sousa, 2003) (Genro/Sousa, 2000) (Pont, 2003). In regions in Brazil, Argentina (Rosario, Córdoba), Uruguay (Montevideo), Portugal or Spain (Córdoba, Las Cabezas) where this type of public initiatives have been deployed, the main idea driving participative communication is the need to construct democracy from the local level, based on a socio-practical approach (Villasante/Montañés/Martín, 2001) (Allegretti/Herzberg, 2004).

CHEMA INCORPORA AQUÍ UNA BREVE EXPLICACIÓN EN CINCO LÍNEAS DE LOS PRESUPUESTOS PARTICIPATIVOS DEL MANUAL DE ALLEGRETTI. . . QUE EDITÓ LA FIM. . . . . O POR EL CONTRARIO UN PÁRRAFO DE LOS CUADERNILLOS PEDAGÓGICOS QUE PRODUJO PARTICIPACION CIUDADANA PARA EXPLICAR QUE SON LOS PRESUPUESTOS PARTICIPATIVOS.

From this viewpoint, communication is conceived in terms of a project for social articulation, as a way of organising and structuring public life (Alfaro, 2002). Instead of being seen as a marginal choice or an opposition, herein, alternative communication is seen as a complex process for mobilisation and collective self-determination (Sierra, 2006). In this sense, it points towards a political approach, since all community communication goes through a specific citizen conception (Beltrán/Zeballos, 2001). Any alternative communication policy presupposes alternative communication in its content and organisation, just as any alternative communication demands a democratic mediation policy (Puig, 2003). This policy guarantees a totalising and holistic approach to the process envisaging modification in favour of autonomy (Marchioni, 1999).

Integral communication that considers radical needs is a free communication, a communication based on relationships and links for productive cooperation and a

culture based on solidarity (Corral, 1988). Radical needs mean the material forces that promote the overcoming of capitalism based on an emancipating praxis which, rooted in the Marxist idea of the determination of the historical subject, illuminates the generative utopia of “another” social order (Pont, 2000). Rodríguez Villasante sets out three epistemological lines or knowledge ethics as regards planning local development:

- The pattern of functional adaptation.
- The reformist or educational position.
- The critical approach to social transformation.

The latter strategy requires dialogic and collective consideration by means of the social construction of knowledge and the participated planning of the local promotion of development (Villasante, 2002b). Thereby, communication strategies are conceived from a transversal pattern based on negotiation and persuasion (Sierra, 2006). This methodology aims to combine planning mediums and institutional advertising with a transversal conception of participative communication, identified with the construction of citizenship and the local public space as a community definition of democracy and municipal development (Villasante, 1995) (Jacobson/Servaes, 1999). In this option, in opposition to the diffusionist model, communication is considered a celebration and a congregation, a commemoration rather than an announcement:

*Some of the characteristic elements are the construction of areas for popular participation in local management, in the exercise of active citizenship and in the control over the Public Administration, considering the construction of a new political and ecological culture. Thus, a concrete model of development and a specific system for public representation are not established. It is more a case of implementing methodologies that promote the citizens' active implication, the agreement between players that defend different interests and the collective construction of knowledge, planning and the implementation of what has been established. (Villasante/Garrido, 2002: 137).*

It is a case of opening and then closing the discursive positions supported by each group and social agent interchanging the participants' expository patterns, articulating spaces for discussion to negotiate between the different actors, mobilise those who are oblivious to the measures and confront conflicting positions in the process of local development (Sierra, 2006). “Participation means allowing people to speak, not hiding, covering opinions, but allowing them to emerge, always talking to citizens, not to individuals, who are able to distinguish politics from political concerns,

which means discussing social issues, differences, inequalities and institutional discrimination” (Ganuza, 2002:178). (CHEMA. . . AQUÍ PUEDES INCLUIR EL TEMA DEL PLAN DE COMUNICACIÓN Y LO METES EN LA BIBLIOGRAFÍA COMO FUENTE DE REFERENCIA). In all, participative communication, in this sense, attempts to define another type of citizenship, a public space for deliberating the priorities and requirements of the citizens that need to be taken into account in the budget. It is –according to Rodríguez Villasante– about constructing vaster actions between the different social sectors that compose the local community:

*The same field of action encompasses partisans and non-partisans, and they both contribute diversity to the problematic situation they face. Yet, something separates the us from the you, and that something will have to be eliminated by creating areas where encounter and dialogue are possible. Combining these actors and increasing areas for participation as much as possible leads to the isolation of those small divergent proposals: those which stem from a patriarchal culture, which strengthen power (financial, political, cultural or media-based, (. . .) supported by the social minority block which excludes most of the population (Villasante/Garrido, 2002: 39).*

For this change to become effective, the leadership of the social movements and the political commitment of the local administration must be coordinated. Participative planning is a process based on mobilisation and social organisation that attempts to unite conflicting interests and discourses voiced by all the social players in the community. Therefore, we are facing an institutionally and socially complex environment that requires intervention to be integrating and to supervise the relationship between the different levels of the administration, diverse social areas and extremely dissimilar collective players. In all, we have a space that needs NET-WORK/ING (Ibarra/Martí/Gomá, 2002).

## **FIELDWORK AND RETICULAR PROJECTION**

To network means to link the local and the global using a communicative transformation policy which, in opposition to an imagined, technocratic cultural globalisation, performs social creativity autonomously from radically decentralised, participative and plural platforms. This focus on totality requires a methodological strategy for reticular intervention that is open and flexible, concentrating on continuous

interaction and transversal relationships, alongside recreational and dynamic techniques for social creativity implemented whilst exploring the process for public participation based on popular knowledge and the subjective power of the social players committed with change (Sierra, 2006) (Villasante, 2002b). Thus, communication is a device for opening-up and for social criticism, for the recognition of the public space for self-esteem and assessment of secondary identities in terms of gender, ethnicity, class or age (Hemer/Tufte, 2005).

Methodologically, the Participative Budgets programme for Seville contemplates four fundamental stages:

1. Economic and social diagnosis of the environment and cultural mapping to stimulate local development and plan the intervention.
2. Creation of teams of volunteers or *steering groups* for each of the areas of the process, committed with the plan of actions and the Participative Budgets project for Seville.
3. Design of alliances with public and private entities and organisms to create networks for communication, cooperation and change.
4. Planning of projects, actions and public initiatives that engage all citizens in the construction of the network (women, social and cultural players, entrepreneurs, young people, immigrants, unemployed persons, neighbourhood associations, social movements, . . . ).

The initial stage of the Participative Budgets programme is based, once again, on the same conception: citizen networks for interaction, communication and social coexistence. Working on networks responds to the need for a methodology that attempts to activate and sustain open, fluid communication in the social arena, supervising cultural diversity and endowed with the power to change the context creating a database of people and social nodes with the sufficient social and cultural capital to achieve the autonomy of the community and sustainable development. In this sense, mapping contributes new, suitable sources of information, as well as agendas and approaches that differ from news items. Consequently, the mapping process mainly aims to:

1. Identify the citizens' preconceived stereotypes and ideas regarding local development.



2. Find which other persons could act as “catalysers” (social leaders) and “connectors” (institutional organisers).
3. Determine spaces for community identification and exchange.
4. Observe and record the citizens’ opinions via informal conversations to establish the topics they are interested in.
5. Compare the information with the preconceived ideas about the community.

Incidentally, this mediation strategy aims to eliminate resistance to change and clientelistic, corporate and dependant forms of local development without closing communicative design a priori, since any experience of this type is a living process, full of uncertainties, constructed on the go, gradually. Furthermore, in this experience, several interests overlap from the start, interests that are marked by the actions and pre-established relationships that appear between the three players at work in the project: politicians, technicians and citizens.

In this sense, more than setting out a detailed plan following experiences obtained from other campaigns, it was a case of attempting to ensure, at all times, that all activities were coherent with the integral planning, which was conceived in different senses:

- From the point of view of internal communication (of the actual work and the relationships with technicians and politicians).
- As regards the media (contact with the local media, assessment and analysis of the journalistic discourse, advertisement, etc.).
- Considering technical support actions (creation of an audiovisual team to prepare a report on the project and construct tools for dissemination: video-documentaries, photographs, websites) (Mody, 1991) (Rice/Paisley, 1981).

Thus, beyond the first informative meetings organised around the city, we wanted to integrate the initial task in the training the different steering groups (citizens who voluntarily offered to start-up and support the stimulation of the process from their neighbourhoods) would perform over the first months. Thus, one of the workshops they organised worked with the idea of upward communication, as well as the effective use of the channels at their disposal. After providing an explicative introduction, the following table was taken as the starting point:

<b>Who with?</b>	<b>Very valid</b>	<b>Valid</b>	<b>Not very/Not Valid</b>
<b>Private partners</b>			
<b>Other associations</b>			
<b>Non-members</b> (Individuals)			
<b>Population in general</b>			

(CHEMA, AQUÍ DEBERÍAS INCORPORAR LOS ACTORES . . . TÉCNICOS, ASOCIACIONES, SECTORES O GRUPOS ESPECÍFICOS, LA UNIVERSIDAD. . .). INCORPORA LA PARTE QUE NOS INDICAN. . . . .

The outcome of this validation of communication channels would become the foundations of the task that would stimulate and disseminate the process via the actual members of the steering groups and their way of communicating, summoning or disseminating information. More than discovering an ideal dynamics, it was a case of highlighting the difference between the medium or channel in terms of the addressee, in order to raise awareness regarding the fact that so as to distribute information on the subject of the Participative Budget to a whole area of the city, the pre-established channels (sometimes scarcely efficient, others short-ranged...) would have to be bettered. Efficient, wider-ranged tools were needed to motivate the population.

The results of that workshop defined the main channels the work groups considered most valid to reach the general population, both in mass and individually. We used these ideas, alongside the initial design, to start generating the first actions and materials for Seville's Participatory Budget. Some of the most trusted channels were posters and leaflets, assemblies, word to mouth, meetings with entities, PA systems, banners and/or slogans, and citizen information points. The local media (radios, televisions), mainly free newspapers and neighbourhood newspapers, also obtained a favourable upshot. El papel de los medios comerciales es, de hecho, uno de los principales problemas en el desarrollo de los Presupuestos Participativos, tanto en la experiencia original de Porto Alegre, como en otros estudios de casos documentados, en parte a la función reproductora que distingue al periodismo de proximidad (Camponez, 2002).

Nonetheless, many underscored the scarce effectiveness of some of these channels, such as posters or informative flyers, if not used appropriately, i.e. avoiding them being mixed up in the thousands of similar messages we receive every day. In order to prevent this, some groups pointed out the relevance of reaching the most common citizen networks directly, placing these resources in busy places or meeting points, like civic centres, hospitals, schools, etc. Moreover, this information should be handed out or mailed directly to apartment blocks. Thus, evidently, dissemination campaigns should not merely envisage communicating the information at a general level in the city; they should consider citizens' habits and consider them the main protagonists of the process (Villasante, 2002b).

Therefore, we faced the need to respond to this level of proximity, but we also knew the general population was unaware to the issue. Therefore it was very difficult to start our work based on contents that had only been minimally contrasted or which could respond to just a few expectations. Considering these determining factors, a team of advertising agents organised a campaign based essentially on introducing the notion of Participative Budgets in Seville (which was completely foreign to all citizens), summoning people to *a rendezvous: with your city, your neighbours and with democracy*. The first information was sent out using a horizontal triptych, designed so that the recipients had to open it to learn more things. It presented the information points one could visit and appeared as something that was being carried out all over the city. As well as on a massive edition of leaflets, the message was also advertised on public transport and municipal MUPIS (large advertising areas the Council has all over the city), informing that the campaign was up and running, and occupied common areas such as busses and sidewalks.

Furthermore, albeit using these municipal resources, we realised we needed our own materials. Materials the steering groups could use and which would support the stimulation and dissemination they were expected to carry out. Therefore, as well as the triptychs, window posters and pamphlets were also created, designed so that the information appeared around the framework of the object, whilst the citizens could use the interior area for whatever they thought best. That is to say, to create their own slogans, grasping people's attention directly and, most importantly, taking this idea to strategic places or locations established previously as the most relevant areas in order to multiply information effectively. This strategy combines two necessary discourses in an

experience such as the Participative Budget: on the one hand, the Council supports the idea and offers materials and infrastructure, and on the other, the actual citizens themselves use them as they see best, creating a non-institutionalised system of messages assimilated by the citizens and transmitted from neighbour to neighbour. Along these lines, the approach each Steering Group is implementing at its meetings or regarding the information in the Participative Budgets programme stands for the beginning of a pattern that will generate local communication.

This campaign and the first materials (we printed out folders, so that documents were always handed out in the same manner) had already allowed us to achieve a unity in the messages that were communicated, but the process still did not have an image that would identify it, since this initial campaign used the silhouette of a matchstick person (seen as a neutral sign). We needed a symbol that would automatically be linked to the Participative Budgets in order to create our own identity, an attractive identity that any citizen could easily recognise. Furthermore, we could use it to gradually give the process more autonomy, disconnecting it from the myriad of programmes devised by the Council which, obviously, come with the seal and prejudice this body generates.

This time, we wanted the sign to be distinct and, at the same time, allow the actual neighbours to choose it, as a way of assimilating the process from its symbols. We consequently devised a public tender to find the most suitable logo to symbolise the experience. The rules for submitting works were simplified tremendously and put up all over the city, so that any person interested in design or drawing could present their proposals. Three finalist logos were selected from among almost one hundred works by a Jury composed by professional experts (a citizen participation technician, a Design teacher, a designer from the company in charge of the first advertising campaign and a painter). Nonetheless, the winner was selected by the citizens themselves who voted for their favourite design during the assemblies in which the first draft for self-government was presented. In the event, the logo that became the symbol for the whole process and appears on any of the campaign materials was designed to ensure it could be used in a very versatile manner, as stated by the team in charge of the winning logo:

*Although we wanted a clear and communicative image, we also considered the fact that it could easily be assimilated by other persons and groups. This made it quite difficult to make the actual device effective, but made it compatible, in the long-term, with being assimilated by the citizens and their implication in the process. We created a symbol with soft borders which could be painted, drawn and graffitied manually on the*

*places where the Participative Budget was going to intervene: squares, sidewalks, lampposts, streets, etc...*(Marta Pelegrin and her team)

Yet, the initiative went beyond the tender and generated another activity that was carried out around the whole city, since all the designs were displayed at an itinerant exhibition that was staged at different Civic Centres in Seville, allowing both participants and regular citizens to see and comment on the proposals sent in to the competition.

This type of activities, given the novelty this kind of experience means for a European city as big as Seville, has appeared continually in the press. (PODEMOS INCLUIR ALGUNA REFERENCIA DE LA COBERTURA PERO NO NOS DARIA TIEMPO. . : TENGO TRABAJOS DE LOS ALUMNOS DEL MASTER SOBRE EL TEMA). Although the aspects linked to the actual dynamics of the municipal policy (debates between the different political parties, monetary aspects, debate issues, etc.) were widely covered in the media, we needed to dissociate what appeared in the media from the sphere of the political parties, in order to generate a different type of news item. News not limited to the sections the media designate for political events, which only acknowledge Council representatives as being able to make statements, thus determining the agenda of issues that were of public interest. We needed news in which the citizens were wielding their capacity to speak, choose, be part of the community in a decision-making process like the Participative Budget, which exceeds the limits of the merely political. The goal is to stop public issues from being “the private issues of those who legitimate and representatively are involved in the public plot, where political issues are exercised. Public issues are now a common space, a space for coexistence, deliberation and *debatability*” (Ganuza, 2002a: 78) in which, we could add, we are all invited to participate as main actors who generate their own actions beyond institutionalised terms.

In this sense, staging an exhibition, organising debates at the University, organising an award ceremony and setting up street performances, make news that takes the spotlight away from the politicians towards the actual process itself, which goes beyond the elements proposed by the Council.

Nonetheless, we also attempt to, inserted in a pleasant atmosphere, generate credibility from the political scene. A lot of citizens need to have proof that their municipal government is one hundred percent behind the Participative Budget as a sign

of change in the municipal administration. Therefore, after the heavy debate process that gave way to the citizen self-government plan, we organised conferences in which the city's two universities showed their interest in supporting, debating on and constructing an assessment group that would supervise the development of the plan. These conferences were chaired by the Town Mayor who voiced his trust in the project in a speech that was broadcast on all the media. In this sense, we need to make actions conceived by the institution compatible with others generated by the citizens themselves. Furthermore, we must use alternative methods of communication without forgetting the media networks that the citizens are configuring via the participative process the city is experiencing.

Considering this main idea, we tackled the second stage of the project based on two essential goals. On the one hand, to transmit the meaning and goals of an experience like the Participative Budgets. On the other, to summon all interested parties to partake in the assemblies that would establish the priority of proposals with a view to making them as plural as possible, without forgetting their formative aspects.

For the first issue, we considered the idea of handing out pedagogical material that would support our work with different groups in specific areas such as Adult Centres, Secondary Education Centres, district workshops, etc. Therefore, we conceived and published a very visual booklet that fell in line with the new symbolic image and explained, in a very straightforward manner, the change from a conventional municipal policy to a participative municipal policy, including information on the items to be debated and the specific organisation of the process.

On the other hand, so as to encourage participation, we mailed letters to all the houses in the city (260,000) in which the Citizen Participation Delegation informed of the date and place where the corresponding Assembly would be held, considering where each addressee lived, alongside a leaflet explaining the investments and activities that could be requested during this first year, attempting to make a notion as unknown as a (Participative) Budget as easy as possible, stating that *You go, you propose and you vote. It's that simple.* A new motto that will centre the second stage of the communicative task.

This second campaign will focus on specific aspects, real stories the Participative Budget could solve, visualised via identifying images (no longer matchstick sketches, we are now using real people, flesh and bones). These new images

will once again appear on posters and buses, but also –as required by the actual steering groups– on television and radios, both local and regional. Thus 20-second adverts and slots were broadcast over the ten days prior to the Assemblies. The fact that the process appeared on the local television seemed to make it more credible for the participants, who felt proud to be involved in an experience that was becoming ever-more relevant and was actually shown on television.

This communication was also backed at a much more local level by a group who carried out street performances organised, as stipulated by the population from each neighbourhood, along an itinerary that passed different meeting points (squares, markets, etc.) encouraging people, announcing the dates for the assemblies, and handing out printed material. In parallel, the technical team, via the non-governmental organisation *Instituto Europeo de Comunicación y Desarrollo*, commenced the process to articulate steering groups for alternative communication, establishing commitment networks for the development of the Participative Budgets via theme-based round tables, neighbourhood committees, meetings and workshops, and work teams in line with the conclusions of the I Jornadas Internacionales de Participación, Comunicación y Desarrollo Comunitario (1<sup>st</sup> International Conference on Participation, Communication and Community Development) which accommodated the Local Communication and Development workshop aimed at designing communication strategies to support the change, encourage public issues and visions for citizen communication and unite the determination of the different local social and technical movements of the municipal administration involved in the Participative Budgets.

At this stage, communication is conceived as a resource for information, promotion and social mobilisation of citizens and social groups committed with changing local development in order to unite their determinations researching, planning and supervising the process. “As occurs with strategic planning, participative planning requires that the initiative for development be stressed publicly, whilst at the same time, it is necessary to eliminate the feeling that the population are only addressees. Said communication cannot be limited to a public event in which an agreement is signed or something is presented to the local media” (Villasante/Garrido, 2002: 146).

In summary, advertising and marketing play a secondary role in the project: encouraging people by means of triggering affective, recreational and co-existential mechanisms. Yet, access and collective participation are essential in the recognition and

cultural identification of Seville not as the result of a technocratic planning imposed by advertising, but as the result of the community's public re-articulation.

In this sense, the pattern of participative communication and the democratic planning of local development requires a coherent and integral approach. The mediation strategy must consider the process transversely, incorporating public areas and informal networks based on solidarity and coexistence as well as the conventional information media and the Public Administration's institutional channels. Además, "aligned with this is the need for deliberate knowledge-building as we continue to learn, refine, and evolve our participatory development communication approaches while their environment and the context of development continuously change" (Cadiz, 2005: 158).

## **CRITIQUE OF THE MEDIATION AND FUTURE ALTERNATIVES**

The two main challenges of the Participative Budgets experience in Seville are, on the one hand, to devise and articulate the vast networks for participation and the conflicts over competences, whilst coordinating representative forms and the quality of local participation more precisely. To so do, we must define the role of the mediators and local communication companies in view of the process envisaging citizen mobilisation and participation. In this respect, we could consider if a methodological strategy entailing the implication and complicity of the local media and informers is feasible – as regards a complex mediation to constitute the process. On the other hand, the impact of the media coverage on the citizens and social movements could strengthen or limit the process. Therefore, we will have to assess the role they play in the process for mobilisation and social change, and explore possible methodological strategies for commitment with the process implemented by local information companies. In this role, we should seek alliances with the media, involving journalists working on the radio, press and television to promote a public dialogue campaign at a local level. Furthermore, we also need to change the cultural grammar, "aesthetic codes and behavioural rules that determine the representation of objects and the normal development of situations in a sense that is perceived as being socially suitable" (Villasante/Garrido, 2002: 220).

Informative and/or aesthetic methods of representing popular culture and the formal keys to planning communication for social change have hardly been explored in



the theory and practice of alternative communication. Although in popular education and theatre there is a vast amount of literature on the matter, participative communication analyses on cultural aesthetics and forms have almost always been left behind, as has the economic dimension of this type of public experiences and initiatives.

In our opinion, the future of participative communication for local development requires a sustainable instituting policy, a popular urban economy capable of reconstructing the public arena, linking communication to the municipality's public and social economies. In this sense, the success factor for the Participative Budgets programme in the city of Seville involves the creation of a hotbed of community measures that support and promote both an alternative civic culture and a sustainable social information economy which, via networks like tele-centres, will replenish local culture.

Finally, this type of processes should create an evaluative framework to be compared to other initiatives planning Communication and Participative Budgets in India, France, Brazil or Argentina. Developing the methodology and tasks for this local experience and others can end up, as Boaventura Santos warns, dying of success without the appropriate self-criticism. To avoid this, we must create a permanent assessment and empirical comparison process, currently inexistent.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The methodology for planning communication for the Participative Budgets programme for the city of Seville is based on two fundamental principles: the radical democratisation of public decision-making and informative democratisation. In order to complete both principles methodologically, the communication plan has attempted to devise different strategies for social creativity:

- Organisation of a public tender in which citizens proposed a logo for the programme. Building the image of the Participative Budgets campaign has been open to citizens from the very start, allowing the people of Seville to assess and examine the process, in order for them to assimilate the resources and make themselves heard, strengthening their political determination to decide.

- Organisation of participative meetings and workshops presenting proposals and innovations for the participative management of the public media. This policy does not merely attempt to define a series of roles, but to place citizens in a situation where they are the transmitters: first, to decide the informative policy for the Participative Budgets and, then, to build the local space and culture. After confronting established discourses and practises, citizens create devices and statements to be communicated to the community. To do so, neighbours are interviewed, their voices and images recorded during assemblies; they appear as the narrators of the experience, and at the same time they are pulled into the research-action process. This process commences with a citizen training workshop organised by the steering groups in which citizens start out by thinking, reflexively, on the networks and media they have, how they can take part and communicate participative democracy through dialogue, and also which discourses and representations govern their informative action to research and transform the city. In all, the first training workshop on Citizen Communication and Participation established the networks and alternatives for communication available for the steering groups to articulate the Participative Budgets project. Furthermore, during the workshops, the citizens of Seville recuperate and feedback information, learn how to prepare a public speech and develop their creativity and communicative ability.

Thus, the project's goal is not exclusively the municipal public budget, but more precisely participation, the symbolical and practical assimilation of what is public, access and cultural democracy, autonomy and the development of sound identities that pursue self-determination reactivating the networks for trust and citizen involvement in the process that establishes the new rules for democratic representation and participation. Consequently, the project is built on the emergence of a new local power going from protest culture to a political culture which relies on conflict and negotiation. Therefore, transparent and visible democratic political struggles regarding the distribution of public resources require informative mediation based on mobilisation, not merely on reproduction or diffusion:

*The Participative Budget allows progress towards a new formulation of commonplace democracy which, without questioning the historical achievement of democratic representation, furthers new decision-making arenas and provides creative*

*wealth in the democratisation of the relationship between the local powers and society. This relationship produces a new public sphere, which is not state-based, that develops many mechanisms for social control over institutional elements (Genro/De Souza, 2000: 9).*

Thus the project's final goal is the co-management of a public sphere that is neither state nor media-based. It is a case of conceiving a high-intensity democracy, that is productive and creative from a social point of view, as a process for popular learning and self-education that goes much beyond the simple idea of getting citizens involved exceptionally in the preparation of part of the municipal budgets.

*Popular participation is not only restricted to immediate, local claims and demands, furthermore, when encouraged, it becomes a powerful instrument for planning and assimilating the vast, different problems regarding urban and environmental management, as well as the control over the State, traditionally removed from and reluctant to popular control and participation. (Pont, 2003: 27 )*

The construction of citizenship considering the Participative Budgets communication-based project also envisages the productive articulation of local development aiming to, as in Porto Alegre, promote urban economy, the community's cultural system, local transport and infrastructures, i.e. public life in general. In this sense, the programme's political scope is determined by the capacity to transform the relationships between the State, the local power and the citizens, as well as the capacity to reformulate mediations (symbolical, political and economic).

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