

Participatory planning in Palermo for social innovation and technologic enhancement. A living Lab territorial game toward city plan

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The approach that is offered by Living Labs, particularly for their territorial perspective, can represent one of the ways in which to set the transition from the stage of a “free game”, about scenarios and visions, to the definition of the plan social demand, specifically within the framework of a real experience of the citizenship life. In this sense, such an approach may represent the guarantee of an effectiveness of the plan.

Despite the limits, which the previous failures represent, we can remark that through the dimension of openness, roles co-presence and competence of those stakeholders that are involved in Living Labs, the participation processes – from the perspective of a planning – does not end but continuously tend to a gradual improvement, both of the quality of the projects and of those cohesion factors, which lead to the constitution of spontaneous partnerships.

Introduction

In these last years, a stronger emphasis was globally put by governments on the participation in the practices and policies for the governance of urban transformations (Forester, 1989, 1999), which became one of the most frequent expression of policies for enhancing decision-making and assessment-related processes². Participation – meant as an operative field that is

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² Since the end of 1990's World Bank Publication engagement has been showing the high diffusion of participative approach all over the world and its presence within the government policies (World Bank, 1996).

strictly linked to the mobilisation of social capital – led to approaches, which are connected to social learning (Coleman, 1988, 1990; Friedmann, 1987). The social dimension of the participation in the policy design is related to the *arena* concept (Elster, 1998; Bobbio, 2002).

These approaches are not far from those radical ideas, although they differ somehow, as constantly implying the character of the conflict. In an organisational sense, OECD (Cote and Healey, 2001) has been interested in the theme of mobilisation and social capital; social capital can involve social networks and their frameworks, as well as the participation of local communities, civic participation, confidence, social institutions and reciprocity rules (Scull, 2001).

Starting from his analysis regarding Italy, Putnam (1993) popularized the concept of social capital, defining it as a whole of networks, rules and trust allowing the participants to act together, in a more effective way, to pursue common objectives.

The World Bank proposes the idea that social capital refers to institutions, relationships and rules, which set the quality and quantity of social interactions in a given society. In this sense, social capital is not to be understood as the sum of institutions supporting a society but as a binding agent³.

In Australia (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2000), social capital can be considered as the whole of social relationships, as well as of reciprocal advantages, which are characterised by rules of trust and reciprocity.

In New Zealand (Statistics New Zealand), social capital is meant as the relationships among actors, individuals, groups and/or organisations, which generate a capacity of achieving reciprocal advantage or a common goal. Furthermore, capital social is proposed as the social resources that embody relationships among people; another way of describing social capital refers to contact, communication, sharing, cooperation and trust, which are implied in the relations in progress, among the involved subjects, in a social process (Spellerberg, 2001).

From a territorial planning perspective, a reference to the hierarchy of participation levels (Arnstein, 1969) is mostly similar to phenomena that occur in different local contexts. Starting from the level of a basic involvement, up to the highest one of providing a full delegated power of stake-

³ «The World Bank Participation Sourcebook, however, follows the definition of participation adopted by the Bank's Learning Group on Participatory Development: Participation is a process through which stakeholders influence and share control over development initiatives and the decisions and resources which affect them» World Bank (1996, p. xi); see also <http://go.worldbank.org/C0QTRW4QF0>.

holders, a wide range of possibilities exists, as a matter of fact. Such possibilities could constitute a basis for taking into consideration a way towards the consciousness and awareness of decision-making hypothesis, by taking advantage of the opportunities both of extended communication and open access to information, which the worldwide web may offer.

Several essays have dealt with the theme of participation, highlighting the positive aspects (Isham, Deepa and Pritchett, 1995; Hentschel, 1994) and the empirical contributions, which draw up from direct experiences lessons such as the one referring to the early involvement of actors, as well as those related to the educational approaches and full access to information (OECD, 2001).

Lastly, territorial planning tackled with the evolution that is relevant to the participation theme performance (Ferraresi, 1994; Paba and Perrone, 2006; Fera, 2008).

Problem is to understand, if these transformations - which were already in process since 1960's in western countries - have been substituted, can be modified or if a change is still possible on the basis of telematics, whose diffusion is spread among the world populations (Wellman and Hogan, 2004; Eckardt *et al.*, 2008).

Starting from the Earth Summit held in Rio in 1992, it has been decided, at the world level to cooperate in order to implement approaches and methodologies for sustainable development by which, following the Bruntland Report contents (WCED, 1987), it is intended to restore or generate the interest of citizens, in the emerging environmental issues.

The context

«If once in Brancaccio lived kings, queens, princes and princesses, why today should the inhabitants be content with living in a dismal and degraded periphery like many others somewhere else?». This sentence is quoted from an introduction to a book written by students of Liceo Basile (High School), about the history of Castle of Mareddolce (Trapani, 2011), which received a positive feedback from the neighbourhood cultural associations. These local forces have been strongly protecting and promoting the castle, as well as the architectural, archaeological and environmental complex of the palace/castle and of the former Mareddolce's lake. Today, many studies were written on this case study in social sense (De Spuches, 2007; Cavaleri, Giambalvo and Lucido, 2008); several cultural and social forces believe that taking action in favour of Castle of Mareddolce means to aim at the improvement of the quality of life of the whole neighbourhood, as well.

The University of Palermo promoted the launch of an urban initiative for the mobilization of social capital, in the Second Constituency of Palermo.

Such an initiative constitutes an integrated program-plan to be considered valuable from architectonic, urban, social, environmental and economic points of view, for both promotion and tourism purposes, of the Castle of Mareddolce and of the surrounding future park, as well as of the nearby gardens.

Such a plan is meant within the framework of the infrastructural changes, which presently occur in the Second Constituency of Palermo, and in accordance with the new urban role of the metropolitan city and new economies, in the Mediterranean countries.

Plan-oriented game/didactic activities

Since November 2011, an urban planning and an urban and territorial planning academic laboratories have been using the neighbourhood walk and Planning for Real, by involving students and teachers from others institutes. By means of such an activity, the university and the schools tested the possibilities of using didactic actions, by mixing up skills, enthusiasm, and hopes of young students, in the purpose of improving knowledge, which concerns the quality of housing, in the Second municipal Constituency. The aim is an integrated action with those efforts that public authorities are undertaking, in order to ensure the well-functioning of urban life, and which are constantly facing phenomena of social dumping and congestion in the urban area, which also act against the desertion of rural areas that escaped from Palermo's "sack", in the 1970s.

Whereas abundance and complexity of the several operative and thematic possibilities of approach were provided from the urban context, it was possible to include the initiative within EU projects by means of the Territorial Living Lab Sicily contribution, as a pilot-project⁴.

The related EU projects are: Medlab⁵, Parterre⁶, Periphéria⁷.

⁴ For Living Lab issue see: Bergvall-Kåreborn, Holst and Ståhlbröst (2009), Directorate-General for the Information Society and Media Unit F4 New Infrastructure Paradigms and Experimental Facilities (2009). For living lab activity in Sicily see: <http://tll-sicily.ning.com/>. Blog of Parterre Palermo Pilot: <http://etmpalermo.wordpress.com/>.

⁵ "MEDLAB Mediterranean Living Lab for Territorial Innovation" project (ref. 1G-MED08-280), admitted to funding with the Decision of MED Programme Selection Com-

Specifically, project Parterre is an initiative that promotes the usage of innovative public participation and technological tools, both for spatial planning and for territorial development.

Project Parterre, by the means of a mobilization of the university's didactic activity and of an interaction with Atelier, ARCA consortium, enterprise incubator of Palermo and with NEXT, realized a website, which contains all the participatory experiences that were implemented by the Living Labs' protocol.

Results of participatory experiences

In relation to the long-term sustainability of the above path, an extremely valuable lesson was learnt during the performance of preparatory actions of e-participation: a permanent adoption of electronic tools for citizenship participation by public sector organisations is likely to occur, when a convincing economic model exists, *i.e.* when it is possible to demonstrate that, on the one hand, financial savings or advantages can be obtained and on the other a raft of clear policies can originate.

A necessary condition to achieve such a social interaction model is the creation of a "square", as we know it.

On-line participation has to be formally integrated, within the legal and regulatory frame. This is the case, for instance, of the strategic environmental assessment that is combined with the regulatory territorial planning, which contributed, firstly, to set an EU frame for the definition of the ESDP, European Spatial Development Perspective and subsequently, to affirm the concept of Territorial Cohesion.

EU Directives and/or national legislations established that participation is a mandatory requirement for many process policies and administrative procedures concerning several European regions and cities.

Keeping in mind this lesson, the Parterre consortium intends to test the

mittee on February 5, 2009, in the frame of Axis 1 – Objective 1: Strengthening innovation capacities – Dissemination of innovative technologies and know-how.

⁶ Parterre (electronic participation tools for spatial planning and territorial development, competitiveness and innovation framework programme – Ict Policy Support Programme – ICT PSP-theme 3: Ict for Government and Governance, Objective 3.5: eParticipation, empower and involve citizens in transparent decision-making in the EU.

⁷ The project titled "Peripheria, networked smart peripheral cities for sustainable lifestyles", is co-financed from the programme "The information and communication technologies policy support programme", Alfamicro (Portugal) as leadpartner.

possibilities in the market offer, at an European level, of a service based on two electronic tools, which was successfully experimented in previous preparatory actions: the first, called Electronic Town Meeting (e-TM)⁸ for the involvement of citizens in the definition of the local agenda and the second, Demon Plan⁹ for on-line direct consultation by citizenships interested in territorial planning. Six pilot projects are to be implemented in five EU countries. These tools are needed to enhance the direct participation of citizenship and civil society components, which are interested in the decision-making process that applies both at local-regional level (where specific decisions are taken) and at national-EU level (where EU framework for territorial development policies is defined).

The objective of the involved companies is to provide a complete solution “key in hands” (technologically and methodologically tested and assessed) for the Public Administration in Europe.

The outcome of the performance of the event Electronic Town Meeting, held last February, will produce a programmatic document, which could constitute a valuable help to focus on those topics that are relevant to the urban changes in Second Constituency, in order to accompany General Directives Document of City General Master Plan, which they are drawing up, and that represent a contribution to the drafting of General Directive by the Municipal Council and a contribution to the participatory activities that were provided by SEA, which will accompany the General Master Plan.

Moreover, it will be necessary to involve in the activities parishes and social centres extending up to companies and business (which will continue beyond Parterre).

That ought to be done, in the assumption that Planning For Real and feedback of such activities through spontaneous blogs, synergy with EU planning may allow highlighting topics, issues and information, as well as to help extending the perspective vision of stakeholders’ expectations, etc..

Besides, the improvement, both of basic analytic conditions and participatory activities, pushes the involved expertise, firstly of university professors and consequently of the relevant Public Administration’s members, to produce outlines and project visions that may be tested and achieved in the didactic field, and which could be developed, in terms of real projects to be offered from the city to the city.

⁸ On ETM issue see:

- <http://www.e.toscana.it/etoscana/resources/cms/documents/townmeetingStoria.pdf>;
- http://www.parterre-project.eu/?electronic_town_meeting=1;
- Aicardi and Garramone, 2011.

⁹ Demos Plan: <http://www.demos-plan.eu/en/>.

We consider the followings:

- a new solution system, concerning transports accessibility;
- urban scenarios centred on building rights compensation;
- knowledge and protection of the cultural heritage;
- security protocols for tourism and disadvantaged people;
- architectural definition of spaces;
- setting restoration topics in the area;
- harmonization of social service system for the weaker people;
- social solidarity toward emarginated people;
- environmental topics and recovery of traditional agricultural systems;
- agriculture km 0;
- waters and its responsible use.

Many of the above mentioned activities concern the promotion of an integrated program of interventions for urban regeneration in the Second constituency, which started during a meeting held in January 2011, at the Department of Architecture, University of Palermo.

Comparison with other EU projects

Other participated urban transformation processes have been implemented; among many tests carried out, at least two are emerging both to the public and scientists' attention: the case of the "granted occupation" of *Cantieri Culturali della Zisa* (CQZ) and the New Uditore Park (NPU). As far as CQZ is concerned, the movement has spontaneously established itself, by following to the notification of a municipal administrative act, which induced anger in cultural operators. Since the Primavera's Municipal Council left the new City Administration, CQZ has been stifling slowly.

For this reason, painters, sculptors, art directors, stage actors, etc., are waiting for the re-opening of what is the only municipal space that currently open to palermitan artists, as well as to anybody who wants to work in the art field, in Palermo. The text of the motion to be signed by citizens is the following: «After more than ten years of silence on culture, the Municipal Administration, at the end of its mandate is compromising the future of "*Cantieri Culturali*" through a call for expressions of interest which, without a project agreed with the city and in absence of policy orientations, wants to sell off the "*Cantieri*", in favour of private economic speculations». Such a top-down method, excludes those several subjects who, for many years have been working and seeking to enhance the culture and civic development, in Palermo. The municipal notice by concerning an opening to the private sector and not taking into consideration the public guarantee,

which is represented by the cultural sector, gave life to a movement that, peacefully and symbolically, occupied spaces, which were partly or totally abandoned. A regular authorisation – or a notice that the Municipal Administration released – allowed the access of the movements, within the municipal spaces.

For several months, groups of artists, not only composed by citizens of Palermo, were active. After three days long debates, a crowded open meeting, supported by several committees was carried out. Currently, the objective to be achieved is formulating a hypothesis that is relevant to the use of spaces, which represents an alternative to the simple sale of those to individuals¹⁰.

Tab. 1 – A comparison between three participated urban transformation processes.

Participative experimentation sites.	CQZ	NPU	2aC
Urban space mobilisation and transformation factors.			
Use of ad hoc electronic technologies leading to the process (in absence of which, process implementation could not occur).	-	XXX	X
Presence of a quali-quantitative balance between Public Administration and Associations.	-	XX	XXX
Presence of a Living Lab (direct or indirect effort).	X	-	XX
Living Lab action for the achievement of a process action.	-	-	XXX
Short-terms results.	XXX	XX	X
Medium terms results.	X	XX	XXX
Long terms results.	-	X	XXX
Forecast of possible financial sources.	-	X	XX
Possibility for the process to continue without the promoters' direct participation, while maintaining the same trajectory of sense, which was established during start-up stage of the process.	-	X	XX
Mobilisation of radical movements.	XXX	X	-
Possibility to be inserted into the ordinary programming, planning lines.	-	XX	XXX

The second case regards an initiative, which originated from a web site and is developing within this context, as well as strongly involving the Municipal and Regional Administration aiming at transforming a space which constituted a Mafia's objective. The attempt showed the proper and deter-

¹⁰ Blog project for CQZ is: <http://www.cantierizisa.it/>.

mined participation of several institutions. As such, it was simple to allocate a minimum quantity of resources for implementing the recovery site of the residual green spaces, which intertwined with the city of the 1980s and the new cooperatives' and public building expansions. Moreover, it is to be pointed out the presence of the adjacent link of the ring road¹¹.

The operative models of these three approaches are not identical, particularly when taking into consideration the performance of programmed and carried out social actions.

Tab. 1 usefully presents the characteristics of the three different approaches, and aims at highlighting the different characteristics of these three projects and the most correct instrumentation or approach to be implemented, which accords to the process ranges, rather than pointing out a best possible approach. We have the possibility to consider a single process, which may allow the implementation of more than one approach, in relation to the steps or needs that may occur along the plan-program-integrated project settlement.

Discussion

Working hypothesis, preceding any consequent action, was that in order to start a processes of e-participation, it is necessary to pay attention to the social capital within every living condition, in order to fit policies for an improvement of living and housing conditions of the beneficiaries, and therefore to use innovative technological tools for enhancing efficiency and efficacy of the policies, which aim at an active participation of not-experienced stakeholders, in the institutional making-decision process; therefore, these tools are necessary in order to harmonize and drive the role of business, financial and voluntaristic initiatives of individual citizens, as well as their leading-role ambition.

The concept of the matter of Territorial Living Lab Sicily (TLLS) is that, in paradigms, substantially a broad agreement on a protocol between parties, which recognize themselves in a relational environment that is technologically supported, in a frame of trans-disciplinary and innovation-oriented cooperation.

So far, the predominant field of action of TLLS is represented by participation of some of its members to EU projects partnerships. It is important to stress that this type of cooperation preceded the actually process of con-

¹¹ Web site of the citizen's initiative NPU is: <http://www.uparco.org/>.

struction of TLLS, hence allowing its launch.

It is necessary to change the point of view: not the social issue's analysis but the co-existence of phenomenon and subjects. In this sense, TLLS share the condition of a single "environment", in which it is not possible to separate data and social issues from its protagonists, as well as from those who could address it and cooperate to its interpretation and solution.

It is impossible to think about LL as a process model, which may allow the solution of problems, and particularly, if the issues are social. Thus, TLL solves the logical impasse between analysis and solution, through an approach of spontaneous self-arrangement, in a median environment, which is connoted by relational interactions. LL and particularly TLL can be considered as an environment, where the dimension of individual desires, as well as the needs both of community and of social groups (taking into account both processes and tools that are considered as eligible or accountable, in relation to their definition and expression), move toward dynamics of formal arrangement, break-off and re-establishment, which are necessary to the institutional, lawful and shared decision-making.

Actors and rules of change cannot be separated, unless at the beginning of the social process and in the last step of the decision-making process. However, immediately after the social requirements are expressed and before the formal public decision-making process occurs, a relational environment exists. In such a space, different game components compare and face up each other.

TLLS is the point of arrival of a consideration that observes the lack of a neutral space, in which it may only be possible to hope for a change but not to induce such a change. Although it is possible to investigate such a problem further and further, this issue may not be necessarily solved without becoming aware of the interested protagonists' different points of view.

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