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SUSTAINABLE TERRITORIAL PLANNING INVOLVING THE PARTICIPATION OF INHABITANTS IN ECUADOR AND QUITO¹

Abstract. This paper presents a research in the field focused on participation planning policies realized in Ecuador and specifically in the Metropolitan District of Quito. The aim is to evaluate and verify whether the realized planning has involved the participation of and has been developed with *inhabitants*, or if it is more or less a persuasive representation.

The attention is on the process and power relations to recognize and explicate the subtended political choices, especially to correlate problems to key elements of sustainable territorial planning (inequality, ecological disequilibrium, social tensions and conflicts). The case study shows that participation planning is basically produced and legitimated by institutional-politic initiatives, both at the national and urban scales, with contradictions between symbolic and material fields, and between form and substance. Finally, we think that participation planning assumes some characteristics of a propagandistic initiative and seems functional in regard to the consolidation of existent power's relations (historically determined by colonization, capitalism and neoliberalism).

1. *Introduction.* The participation experiences of citizens are extremely diverse and relevant to different spatial scales, yet remain far removed from a hierarchic-pyramidal logic. At the most they can be considered a democratic “variation” of top-down planning². In this context, South America presents several experiences among the most well known of those at the global scale. Some of these have become a model of the participation budget of Porto Alegre (Leubolt et al, 2007), which was developed in 1989 in the capital of Rio Grande do Sul in the Brazilian State and nowadays has more than 1.4 million inhabitants. It has inspired almost a hundred experiences in Brazil and a thousand in

¹ The analysis of the study case is based on research in the field in Ecuador in November and December 2007, with scientific sponsorship granted by the Società Geografica Italiana, economic sponsorship by the Province of Lecce and the support of “Popoli e culture” association in Lecce. This study is part of an academic research project (Department of Geographical and Commodity Science, Faculty of Economy, University of Bari) entitled: “Educazione alla pianificazione territoriale e partecipativa: comunicazione geografica nella formazione universitaria e post universitaria con le amministrazioni pubblica”.

² For precedents to this text, we refer you to Cervo (2014).

South America (1200 counted by Cabannes, 2006), and many others all over the world (including Italy³).

This research is focused on Ecuador because this topic has been less studied in this geographical region compared to Brazil, and it is very interesting from a geographical point of view for two reasons. We refer to the coexistence of four relevant cultural systems (indigenous, of European origin, afro-Ecuadorian and Montubio⁴) and the multiple spatial scale levels at which participatory territorial planning is developed. Referring to the first aspect, it is important to consider that participatory planning is integrated with the “occidental” modern government. The latter looks at the involvement and participation of “others” cultures⁵, despite having, in a non-remote past, been responsible for exclusion policies and then for assimilation policies. It realized dependence relationships and territorial transformation, which produced marginalization and/or disappearance of the autochthon forms of government of space, economy and social organization⁶. In regard to the second aspect, research in the field highlighted the institutional engagement of the United Nation Development Program (UNDP), the national government and the Metropolitan District of Quito⁷ (MDQ).

The aim of this paper is to “read” and evaluate the participation planning policies realized in Ecuador and specifically in MDQ. We focus on process and power relations (Raffestin, 1981; 1998) to recognize and explicate the subtended political choices (D’Aquino, 2002), especially to correlate problems to key elements of sustainable territorial planning (inequality, ecological disequilibrium, social tensions and conflicts, see table 1). The final purpose is to verify whether the realized planning has involved the participation of and has been developed with *inhabitants* (that is to say, the communities that live in the place), or if it is more or less a persuasive representation.

³ In Italy, since the end of 1990, the “Rete del Nuovo Municipio” was created and has involved local administrators, associations and researchers who promoted a participatory democracy (www.nuovomunicipio.org).

⁴ Montubio identity comes from a historic process of adjustment and modification, which involved indigenous, European descendents and Africans, of the coasts and especially the littoral zone in the sub-tropical areas. The Montubio culture born in XV century and affirmed its identity at the end of XVIII century (www.codepmoc.gob.ec). It was recognized by the Legislative Decree n. 1394/2001 (with the concomitant creation of the *Consejo de Desarrollo del Pueblo Montubio de la Costa Ecuatoriana y Zonas Subtropicales*, CODEPMOC) and like an integrant part of the Ecuador by the Constitution (Republica del Ecuador, 2008). About this issue, you can see: Roitman, 2008.

⁵ According to Mirafteb (2009) this interest as well as the policies and structures of inclusion and participation can be strategies to legitimate the hegemonic relations of power.

⁶ Among the main phenomena concerning territorial transformation, the urbanization of rural areas produced rapid changes by the incorporation of native settlements in the spatial organization conceived by the State. For example, the territorial organization plans established the transformation of common places in districts as a requisite to obtain public services. This produced changing on conditions of life, soil and resources’ use, ecosystem equilibrium. The ground’s trade weakened communitarian relations. The stress for land’s commodification produced new values and needs, beyond the dissolution of traditional forms of territorial government (Bustamante et al, 1992, pp. 9-39).

⁷ The MDQ has 2.239.191 inhabitants: 1.609.418 in urban areas, 620.658 in rural zones and 9.115 in “scattered” settlements (INEC, 2010). The MDQ is composed of 8 zonal administrations, 33 rural districts, 32 urban districts and several neighbourhoods.

Table 1 – The territorial planning according to ecological sustainability criterions.

		<i>Key elements</i>	<i>Object of analysis</i>
I PHASE	TERRITORIAL ANALYSIS	RESOURCES	Vertical and horizontal relationships.
		TERRITORY	Nature and dynamic of changes.
		COMMUNITY	Social groups' perception.
<i>Issues</i>			<i>Proposals</i>
II PHASE	PROPOSALS	INEQUALITY	Reinterpretation and elaboration of the <i>resources-population relationship</i> according to social equity models.
		ECOLOGICAL DISEQUILIBRIUM	Reinterpretation and elaboration of the <i>resources-population relationship</i> according to ecological models.
		SOCIAL TENSIONS AND CONFLICTS	Reinterpretation and elaboration of the <i>resources-population relationship</i> considering perceptions and needs of the different economic and socio-spatial classes.

Source: Ciervo, 2014, p. 567.

The methodology applied to the case study is essentially inductive, based on qualitative and quantitative analyses, on indirect (scientific literature, bibliography, web sites, laws and statistical data, institutional reports) and direct observation (research in the field). Specifically, some interviews with open ended questions were developed with the officials of the *Secretaría de Pueblos, Movimientos Sociales y Participación Ciudadana, Dirección de Gestión Ciudadana* (about policies on the national level) and of *Secretaría de Planificación e la Secretaría de Coordinación Territorial y Participación* (about policies on the urban level). These interviews have been completed with data and information derived from an investigation developed by MDQ and by UNDP (Novillo, 2005) to verify the results of the Participation Management System. The latter was developed by participation process promoters and, on account of this, it is considered remarkably interesting for this research.

2. *The participatory process frames in Ecuador and Quito.* Ecuador introduced participation as a characteristic and an aim of the State in the Constitution by 1998 (without, however, modifying corresponding institutional structures) and in 2007 constituted the *Secretaría de Pueblos, Movimientos Sociales y Participación Ciudadana*, SPPC (Decreto Ejecutivo n. 1332007) to implement it. Since this date, endeavours have been undertaken to include the following points in the Constitution: citizens'

right to participate in formulation, execution, evaluation and control of policies and public services (Republica del Ecuador, 2008, title III, chapter II); participatory modalities and power organizations⁸ (tit. IV, chap. I); institution of the Council of Citizens Participation and Social Control⁹ (tit. IV, chap. V) and of the National Planning Council for developmental policies involving different levels of government with citizen participation (tit. VI, chap. II). These principles and institutions were realized by the *Plan Nacional para Buen Vivir 2009-2013*¹⁰ (Republica del Ecuador, 2009) and the *Código Orgánico de Ordenamiento Territorial, Autonomía y Descentralización* (Presidencia Republica del Ecuador, 2010).

The *Plan para el Buen Vivir* is the first step to construct the National Decentralized System of Participation Planning. The plan identifies policies and strategies, as well as tools and permanent mechanisms of public participation (citizen inspection office, national and regional citizen consultation laboratories, places to permit dialoguing and planning among social and institutional actors). These are based on the following methodological principles: equal dignity and dialogue between the various kinds of knowledge (technical, academic, popular), valorisation of experiences, diversity as a wealth, passing from rhapsodic to complex thinking, transversal visions and flexibility¹¹. Thus empowering the voices of citizens so that they are not subordinate to the experts, and the resolutions are based on the consensus coming from discussions about different ideas to avoid forced agreements. This also means overcoming the sectorial logic to support the national objectives and territorial strategies, to integrate into public policies of gender, generational, territorial and intercultural points of view, and to adjust to various contexts wherein participation processes are developed. Territorial organization and development planning are conceived in a strictly linked way, as part of a purely continuous and cyclic process. The latter, founded on the identification of territorial needs, is composed of three important and consequential phases: planning (divided into different cycles), execution and monitoring (as a permanent process), evaluation of results and adjustments to improve people's quality of life (fig. 1).

⁸ These modalities also include: the right to resist face to actions or omissions by public powers, physic or legal persons, which can affect the constitutional rights (art. 98), the practice of citizen action face to a threat or a right's violation (art. 99), the participation in the different government's levels (section III).

⁹ Art. 207 "[...] *La estructura del Consejo será desconcentrada y responderá al cumplimiento de sus funciones. [...] La selección de las consejeras y los consejeros se realizará de entre los postulantes que propongan las organizaciones sociales y la ciudadanía. El proceso de selección será organizado por el Consejo Nacional Electoral, que conducirá el concurso público de oposición y méritos correspondiente, con postulación, veeduría y derecho, a impugnación ciudadana de acuerdo con la ley*" (Republica del Ecuador, 2008).

¹⁰ According to the Constitution (art. 280), the *Plan Nacional para el Buen Vivir* is the national development plan. It is the reference point for public projects, programs and policies, investments and resources' assignments. Its observance is mandatory for public sector.

¹¹ These tools and methodological principles primarily concerned the Plan elaboration's process.



Fig. 1: The continuous and cyclic planning process.

Source: Republica del Ecuador, 2009, p. 400.

The *Código Orgánico de Ordenamiento Territorial, Autonomía y Descentralización* integrates citizen participation and social control among autonomous decentralized government functions (at regional, provincial, zonal and district levels). It recognizes also a special government regime of indigenous, afroequatoriane and montubio communities, in their ancestral territories. It defines and institutes means of individual and collective citizen participation to partake in the decision making, planning and management of public interest issues through mechanisms of representative, direct and communitarian democracy¹² (referring specifically to the ancestral territorial organization where there is the collective propriety of ground¹³).

Citizen participation process started in the MDQ (fig. 2) during the 1990s, but it has since grown out of the above-mentioned legislative, politic and cultural frames. The development of this process will mature after a decade, due to a strict collaboration with the UNDP according to its civic participation program. In this regard, in November 2000, the UNDP organized in Quito the Latin-American and Caribbean Meeting “*Construyendo las Ciudades Democráticas del Siglo XXI*”, finalised to spread new models of local government in towns across South America and further the relationship between them and citizens, while fostering inclusion of regular and permanent forms of citizen participation inside the institutional system. The aim is to democratize the state-citizen relationship through means and mechanisms influencing citizens’ participation, planning and control. The intention was to *intercept* with a vision and political practice according to citizens’ limitations of their

¹² Art. 304: “Los gobiernos autónomos descentralizados conformarán un sistema de participación ciudadana, que se regulará por acto normativo del correspondiente nivel de gobierno, tendrá una estructura y denominación propias [...] El sistema de participación estará integrado por autoridades electas, representantes del regime dependiente y representantes de la sociedad de su ámbito territorial. La máxima instancia de decisión del sistema de participación será convocada a asamblea al menos dos veces por año a través del ejecutivo del respectivo gobierno autónomo descentralizado. El sistema de participación ciudadana designará a los representantes de la ciudadanía a los consejos de planificación del desarrollo correspondientes” (Presidencia Republica del Ecuador, 2010).

¹³ Art. 308: “Constituirán una forma de organización territorial ancestral las comunas, comunidades y recintos en donde exista propiedad colectiva sobre la tierra. Estas serán consideradas como unidades básicas para la participación ciudadana al interior de los gobiernos autónomos descentralizados y en el sistema nacional descentralizado de planificación en el nivel de gobierno respectivo” (Presidencia Republica del Ecuador, 2010).

own connection with the political world during the election, while governments act arbitrarily on public policies by technocratic, populist or corruptive ways_(Guarderas, Gallegos, 2001, pp. 50-52).



Fig. 2 – Panoramic view of Quito (2007).

Source: own photo.

Thus, the participation system has been institutionalized by the *Sistema de Gestión Participativa*, SGP (Ordinanza 046/2000), which assumes the *Plan Quito Siglo XXI* proposal (Moncayo, 2000). Then the SGP was improved and rephrased in the *Sistema de Gestión Participativa, y Rendición de Cuentas y Control Social*, SGP– RC¹⁴ (Ordinanza 0187/2006), which assumes contents of the *Plan Quito Siglo XXI-2 Estrategia de Desarrollo del DMQ al 2025*¹⁵ (MDMQ, 2004, p. 25). The latter has established citizens' rights to participate in the formulation, planning, execution, monitoring, control and evaluation of programs and projects, as well as in the management of public resources (by means of inspections, social audiences, and access to acts). It also established the right to receive and evaluate

¹⁴ The *Rendición de Cuentas* is an audit of bills and costs and makes reference to the obligation of authorities and municipal functionaries to systematically inform citizens and submit for valuation their actions and/or omissions in exercising their functions and administering public resources (art. 59G, *Ordinanza* 0187/2006). The social control is citizens' power to control the administration of public resources and to evaluate the realization of plans, programs and projects (art. 59O), by inspections, social hearings, public access to the information through municipal web sites and other tools.

¹⁵ The *Plan Quito Siglo XXI-2* established that all citizens have the right to participate in the formulation, planning, execution, monitoring and control process concerning programs and projects, as well as in the valuation and reception of bills and costs by MDQ. The plan also settles the dialogue spaces between people and governmental actors, organized at the district, zonal and metropolitan levels (by thematic tables and social boards). Citizen participation in territorial planning was introduced by the municipal Law (*Ordinanza* 0095/2003) but without to be mandatory.

budget reports presented by municipal officers¹⁶, who are responsible for their actions and/or omissions concerning their functions. Moreover, the SGP-RC defines the dialogue spaces between people and government actors on four territorial levels: metropolitan (with thematic tables and social councils), zonal, district and communitarian¹⁷.

3. *The Participation Governance System (PGS) of Quito.* The PGS¹⁸ is conceived as two subsystems with some bijection relationships that are supported by four basic functions: participation formulation of policies, territorial participation planning, participation management and projects, and social control (fig. 3). These functions are developed according to a participation cycle that is composed of six phases: informative, deliberative, decisional, decisive, executive and evaluative (fig. 4). The PGS is based on three participation modalities that are territorial, thematic and social (fig. 5) and are institutionalized at different levels by the creation of councils and assemblies (fig. 6).

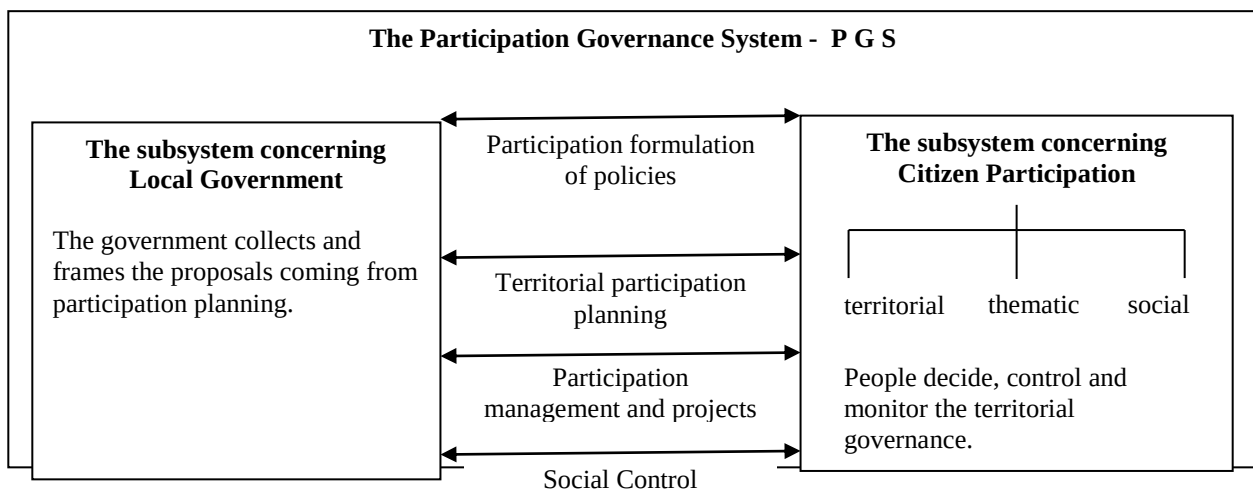


Fig. 3 – The Participation Governance System to territorial planning and policies.

Source: own figure based on data by Novillo, 2005.

¹⁶ This system is supported by a further three forms of participation (art. 58); communitarian volunteers (participating specifically in activities concerning cultural, sportive, social and environmental fields, promoted by MQMD), citizen vigilante (vigilance on acting of municipal laws), social volunteers (with social aims).

¹⁷ Citizen participation in territorial planning was also included in the municipal Charter (Ordinanza 0095/2003).

¹⁸ In this paragraph, the analysis basically focuses on the SGP, because the RC is a marginal aspect in regard to the participation process that we studied.

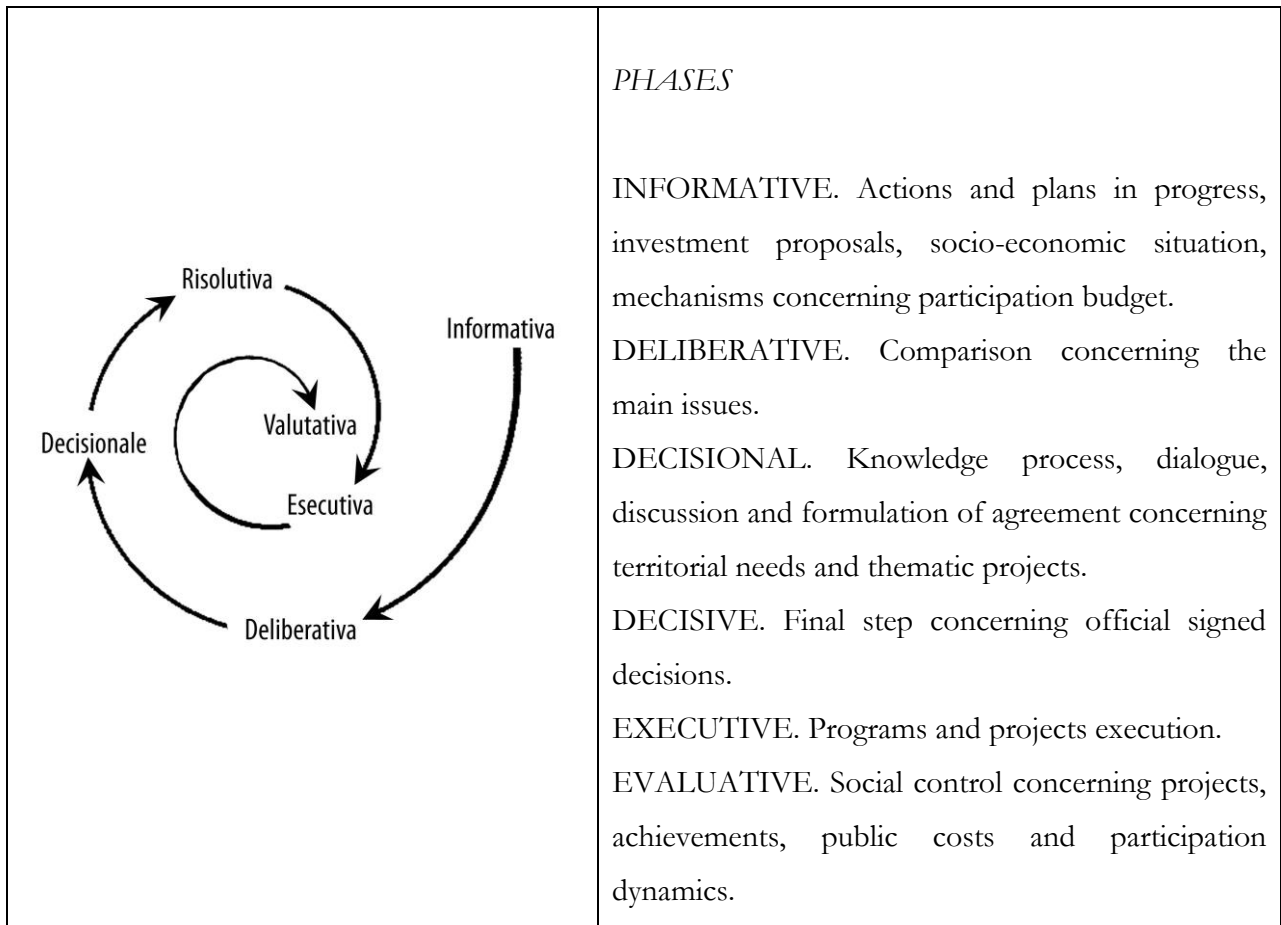


Fig. 4 – The phases of citizen participation cycle to territorial planning and policies.

Source: own figure based on data by Barrera, 2004, pp. 51-52.

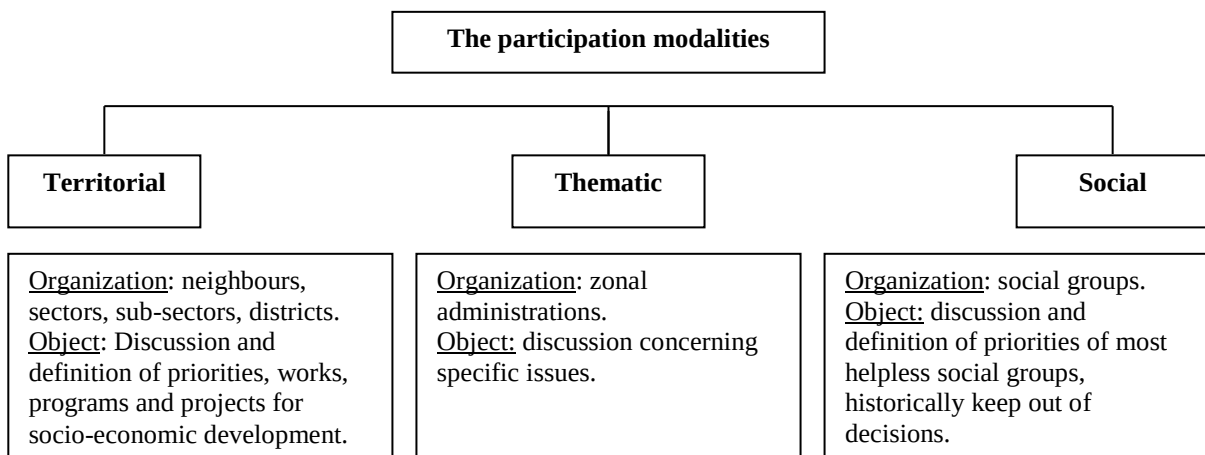
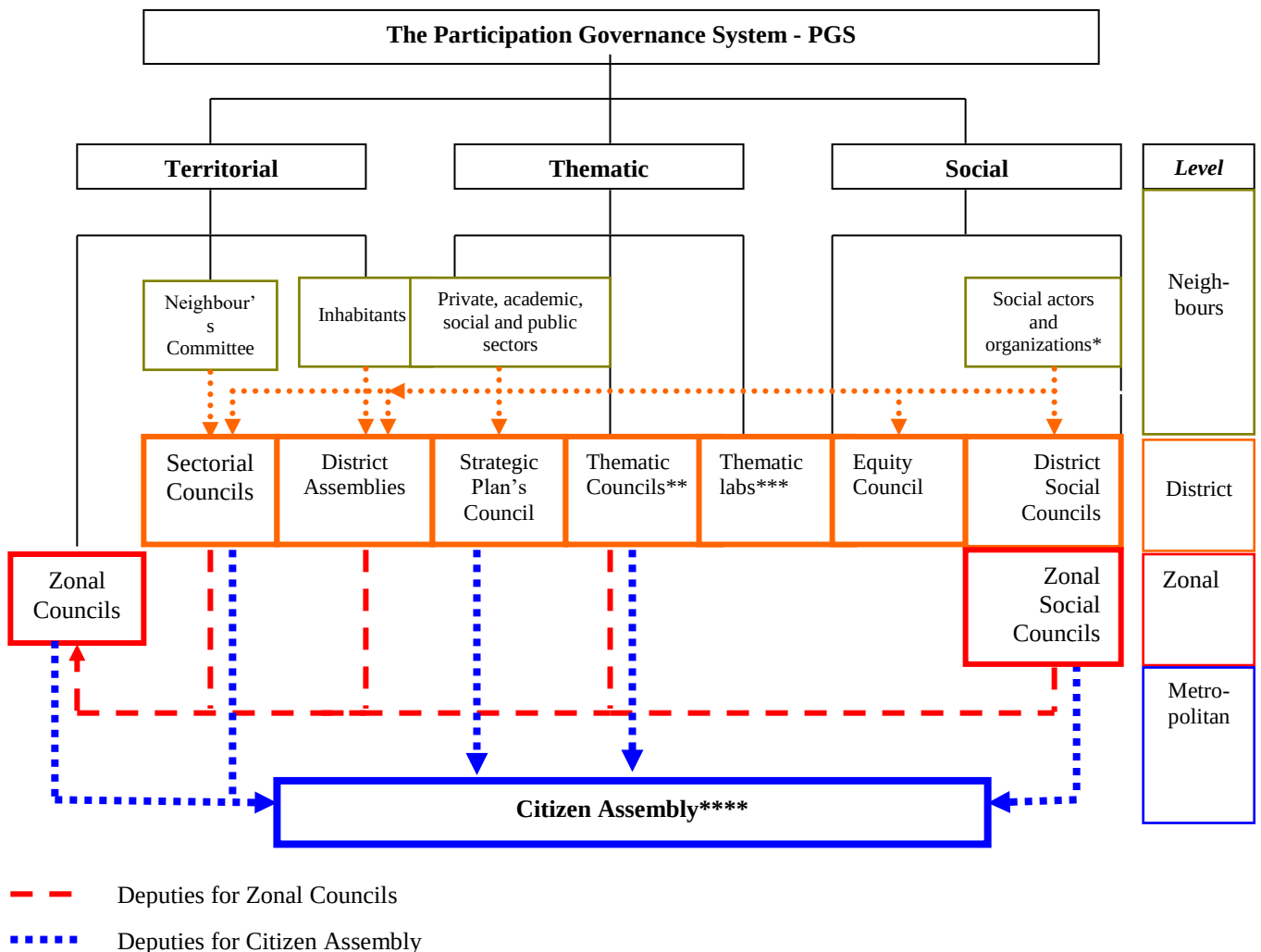


Fig. 5 – The participation modalities to territorial planning and policies.

Source: own figure.



* Women, young, children, indigenous, afro-Ecuadorians, disabled persons' organisations

** Councils concern the following issues: health, security, transport, environment, culture, tourism.

*** Thematic labs are organized when thematic council referring to a specific issue is not operative.

**** Citizen Assembly is presided by Mayor or his delegate. Other participants are deputies by Chamber of Production, University, workers and NGO, Citizen Council.

Fig. 6 – The Participation Governance System: institutionalization of dialogue spaces among citizens and government actors, with participative modalities on different spatial scale levels.

Source: own figure based on data by Ordinanza 0187/2006.

The institutional engagement on different spatial scale levels indicates a top-down process that, in addition to participation planning and a bottom-up approach, are substantially a product of governmental input, both on the national scale (*Participacion Ciudadana Ecuador, Secretaria des Pueblos, Movimientos Sociales y Participación Ciudadana, Consejo Nacional de Planificación*) and the metropolitan scale (*Quito para todos, Consejos Locales de Planificación*, citizen office and citizen consultation lab).

This approach (and the poor budget), after all, appears to be the first cause of partial or missing results. Furthermore, a study commissioned by MDQ and UNDP (Novillo, 2005) and interviews conducted during research in the field confirm this. Specifically, the development of the participation governance system was not homogenous, but rather weak and cyclic. In fact, in various cases it was reduced to the consultative level, often coinciding with election time. The report (Novillo, 2005) indicates four levels of participation: void, medium-low, medium and medium-high. The medium-low level is when participation is interpreted as functional to the “traditional” dynamic of government and failed initiatives were simply discarded. The medium level refers to participation experiences without continuity and with weak results. The medium-high is characterized by a nonstop application of tools and proposals of PGS. So, in the best of cases, this kind of participation¹⁹ produced “ordinary” services, such as the police, recreational and sportive structures, the urban green and public lighting (fig. 7). On the other side, however, we have observed the persistence of clientelism practices, iniquity and exclusion.

The weak points perceived by citizens are, for the most part, attributed to the administration and concern financial, organizational, technical and political aspects²⁰. For example, financial

¹⁹ The territorial level had a better run also if only in some cases the participation planning was realized, while in the majority of cases, the experiences were at the consultation level. The unique participation experience at the thematic level concerned the health. In this regard, a board was created but without effect on the governmental policies (Novilio, 2005, p.88).

²⁰ In the same report, some recommendations appear in order to overcome the weak points. We officially demanded about their realization by a note sent to the MDQ Planning Office, but we did not receive any reply. In the MDQ web site, the only information available on the 3rd September 2013 concerned the goals and focus of the *Secretaría de Planificación* (www.quito.gob.ec/el-municipio/secretarias/secretaria-general-de-planificacion.html), the aim and focus of the *Secretaría de Coordinación Territorial y Participación*, and the tools to act programs and projects (www.quito.gob.ec/el-municipio/secretarias/secretaria-de-ordenamiento-territorial-habitat-y-vivienda.html). Nevertheless, the historic and current information, references and future scenarios concerning the participation planning are missing (www.quito.gob.ec/; <http://serviciosciudadanos.quito.gob.ec/>).

resources are limited and poorly distributed²¹; coordination among municipal departments and a logistical organization is lacking; internal technical capacity is absent with a consequent stagnation of the process; assumed decisions are not realized, and PGS meetings are politicized; consequently solutions to the town's basic issues have failed.

Moreover, in regard to the PGS-CR act, two direct dialogue experiences between the mayor and citizens were realized: the municipal radio program “*El Alcalde y la Ciudad*” and fortnightly public auditions. These initiatives contradict and partly frustrate the PGS and, more generally, thwart attempts to structure spaces and processes for citizen participation, which is more than the simple reception (and possible satisfaction) of opinions, demands and reports. It is the case, for example, of appeals that, also without general agreement according to PGS, were received and satisfied by the mayor using the above-mentioned mechanisms. This has generated distrust in the participation process. After all, the study commissioned by MDQ and UNDP points out the disarticulation of the PGS due to the absence of a vision and systemic updating within the municipality (Novillo, 2005, p. 90). Furthermore, recent studies indicate that the situation has not changed and reveal that neither model has achieved the goal of citizen participation or full implementation of the SGP-CS (“*ninguno de los modelos ha logrado el objetivo de la participación ciudadana ni de la aplicación integral del SGP-CS*”²²) (Moya Mena, 2012).

²¹ During 2000-2006, the resources established for participation decisions were 1,4% of MDQ total investments for works and were not homogeneously distributed (Novillo, 2005, p. 76).

²² *El ejercicio de participación por parte de los funcionarios que se vinculan directamente con la población es débil, mientras que a la población le hace falta formación y capacitación. Se puede decir que la gente del sector no conocía ni conoce, hasta ahora, el SGP-CS y su derecho a participar [...] Ni siquiera en los temas presupuestarios de su localidad la comunidad participa totalmente, pues el Municipio determina un rubro para obras de infraestructura y sobre ese presupuesto deciden. Cuando la población ya no necesita obras de infraestructura en su sector, la participación es menor, porque ya no hay un interés común [...] En cuanto a la gestión municipal y corresponsabilidad social se observa que se ha venido trabajado sin una articulación y coordinación institución/ciudadanía de forma permanente, lo que conduce a un debilitamiento de la organización social y un bajo nivel de participación. [...] No se han encontrado documentos de seguimiento de los compromisos que se asumen en las reuniones de los comités, ni se socializan ni se difunden las acciones ejecutadas, excepto en el seguimiento y control de las obras de infraestructura, lo que ha servido para la rendición de cuentas de la Institución, pero no de la participación de la población, de la cual se ve poco compromiso y asistencia a las convocatorias del MDQ [...] Se puede decir que en variadas ocasiones la convocatoria del MDQ es utilitaria en función de las necesidades de contar con la población para diversos eventos* (Moya Mena, 2012, pp. 84-86).



FIG. 7 A



FIG. 7 B



FIG. 7 C



FIG. 7 D



FIG. 7 E



FIG. 7 F

Fig. 7 – Structures and services produced from citizen participation (Quito, 2007): social training lab (a); police office (b); football field (c); amusement park (d); urban green (e); public lighting (f).

Source: own photos.

4. *The interpretation and evaluation of participation planning policies in Ecuador and Quito.* The case study indicates that participation planning is basically produced and legitimated by institutional-politic initiatives, both at the national and urban scales. In both cases, in fact, the acts that produce territory (Turco, 1998), i.e. referring to the symbolic dimension (designation: denominative acts), material dimension (construction and/or predisposition of participatory spaces) and organizational dimension (participatory modalities), come about by governmental inputs. So, participation is practiced in the so-called “invited” spaces (Cornwall, 2002, 2004; Miraftab, 2006, 2009; Sinwell, 2010, 2012). They are established from national government (*Participación Ciudadana Ecuador, Secretaría des Pueblos, Movimientos Sociales y Participación Ciudadana, Consejo Nacional de Planificación*) and metropolitan government (sectorial and zonal councils, strategic plan council, councils and thematic labs, district and zonal social councils, district and citizen assemblies, fig. 5), according to hierarchic-pyramidal logic. On the other hand, we did not observe a common consciousness or a shared social vision²³. The result of participation planning developed according to the above is that if it also “intercepts” segments of people who are interested in solving a specific issue for practical or ideal reasons, it doesn’t guarantee a real, dispersed and permanent engagement of inhabitants.

So, despite not observing substantial dissimilarities on the operative level between planning policies on the different spatial scales, we observed from a theory-paradigmatic point of view a gap between the national (*Plan para el Buen Vivir 2009-2013*) and metropolitan levels (*Plan Quito Siglo XXI-2*).

At the national level, the plan recognizes, considers and censures the irregular changes that involved Ecuadorian territories producing important “breakdowns” or “jumps” referring to territorial traditional government²⁴ (such as colonization, oligarchy, capitalist modernization, developmentalism, economism and productivism, neoliberalism, competitiveness, deregulation and privatization, commodification of resources and common good). It proposes a “new” population-resources relationship, referring to the democratization of production means and access to water and land, to credit and technologies, to knowledge and information, diversification of production and property forms, a different concept of productivity, the economy based on inclusion, sustainability and democracy, the reinterpretation of humans’ relationship with nature passing from anthropocentrism to biopluralism, the decentralization of power, and the acknowledgement of environmental, social and ecological debt²⁵.

²³ Torres (2002) emphasizes that, if participation vision is absent, a law is not sufficient for the legitimation of the system both from municipal officers and people.

²⁴ On the other hand, the Constitution by 2008 also sentences any form of imperialism, colonialism and neo-colonialism, and recognizes the right to resist and emancipate from each kind of oppression.

²⁵ The concept of ecological debt originated in Ecuador from people, who suffer the oppression of productivist economic system, the intrusiveness of “occidental” culture and the violence of “developmental” policies. It makes

In contrast, at the metropolitan level there is no reference to the above-mentioned changes. The concepts of modernity, productivism, as well as, in general, the “occidental” system, are considered as a reference model (after all, the plan mentioned is entitled “Development Strategy”). The territorial, social and economic competitiveness are assumed as general objectives²⁶. The privatization process is criticized only because it was not realized.

The issues linked to the key elements of sustainable territorial planning (inequality/social justice, ecological disequilibrium/equilibrium and territorial conflicts, tab. 1) are linked to the centre of general policies only in name (MDQ, 2004), but in reality they are at the level of principle and enunciation. In fact, the plan does not address the difficulties that produced the problems mentioned above, neither on the paradigmatic level nor on the relational level. So, it is very difficult to consider the alternatives to a population-resource relationship. On the other hand, the choice of modernization and competitiveness is not neutral and affects recognising their respective roles in the deterritorialisation/riterritorialisation process that regarded Quito and Ecuador (and generally South America), as well as the reasons behind the relationships’ destructuring process that historically has guaranteed ecological equilibrium.

This indicates a net dichotomy between the ideological basis of participation that has been developed on the national scale by laws, and operative practice that is realized on the local scale. The first is plurinational and intercultural; the second has an “occidental” matrix. This incoherence simulates a possible “game” played simultaneously on various scales, with a dual aim: to give the appearance of an ideal change (through *narration* and *representation* on the national scale), and to preserve the *status quo*²⁷ (by the substantial reproduction of relational dynamics on the local scale). Otherwise, the Participation Governance System of Quito has undoubtedly increased the *potential* of citizens to check and control, as well as their capacity to contribute in decisional processes. However, the latter has concerned marginal aspects referring to the population-resource relationship, and general experience does not present any effective and substantial element of power redistribution.

reference from a historic point of view to the existence of an unequal ecological interchange between “North” and “South” countries. The latter supplied and continue supplying raw material necessary to current economic model and to “North” style of life (Ciervo, 2005).

²⁶ The plan “busca la *competitividad de la sociedad, de su economía y su territorio*, con eficiencia, productividad, calidad, exclusividad y atraktividad, como condición general del desarrollo en todos los ámbitos de la vida social. Con estas premisas, la construcción de un *territorio equilibrado y competitivo* tiene como condición la construcción de una cultura integral de la sociedad, de carácter material, técnico y espiritual, que contiene a las acciones, estructuras e instituciones que expresan y portan la *modernidad, cuya expresión más alta es la cultura ciudadana* [...] El DMQ debe alcanzar *competitividad territorial* para sostener y expandir su participación en los *mercados nacionales e internacionales* y elevar simultáneamente el nivel de vida de su población, partiendo de su condición de ciudad-región, que le confiere ventajas para lograr una mejor inserción global” (MDMQ, 2004, pp. 27-29).

²⁷ This gap between the enounced aims and observed dynamics (with consequent contradictions) was also observed in others “participation processes” such as the renewal program concerning the Rio de Janeiro *favelas*. In this case, the political nepotism and populist logic seem to characterize the relationships between citizen and municipal power (Bautès, Soares Gonçalves, 2009).

So, considering the contradictions between symbolic and material fields, and between form and substance, participation planning assumes (as a whole) the characteristics of a propagandistic initiative and seems functional in regard to the consolidation of existent power relations (historically determined by colonization, capitalism and neoliberalism). Thus, we think that these kinds of participation planning policies do not present the essential requirements necessary to solve ecological problems and structural conflicts that originated on account of the above-mentioned relationships²⁸ and to create a system respecting the existential needs of territorial communities.

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²⁸ According to Miraftab (2009, pp. 40-41) “In the liberal democracies of the global North, citizens experience the pretense of neoliberal capitalism through the shrinking of the public sphere and some infringement on civil liberties. In the global South, however, for example in Brazil and South Africa, new found universal citizenship rights are starkly contradicted by the material inroads on citizens' lives made by neoliberal capitalism. Their political citizenship and abstract formal rights have expanded, yet simultaneously their economic exploitation and the abdication of public responsibility for basic services continue, and their livelihood erodes. In societies that have emerged from a colonized legacy, ‘citizens have gained rights they cannot eat!’”

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