



# The role of citizen participation in the socio-ecological transition of the city

## El papel de la participación en la transición socio-ecológica de la ciudad

**Dra. Marta Donadei** is a researcher of the group ADICI (HUM-810) and is an Honorary Assistant of the Urban Planning Department of ETSA Sevilla (Spain) (donadei.marta@gmail.com) (<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1620-1459>)

### Abstract

*Despite the growing sensitivity about the effects of climate change, its marked consequences show the risk of continuing with the unilateral imperative of economic growth, characterized by a «consumer intoxication» that has driven this society to the current situation of global chronic lack of resources. In this context, the new approach cannot be reduced to a mere cosmetic repair of a paradigm in crisis" but it needs a change of paradigm to advance towards environmental sustainability and social equity. Therefore, it is important to focus on the fact that a population that is actively involved is a key element in order to activate a change in the way occidental society has to understand nature, and to build real alternatives to the current model of territory occupation based on the ecological paradigm. The approach of this article has its theoretical bases on the Social Production and Management of Habitat (henceforth PGSH), understanding by Social Transformation of Habitat those processes that tend to transform the existing habitat in which citizen initiative has an active role in the decision making. Thus, it is concluded that participation cannot only help transforming the material conditions of the ecological transition of the city, but, from a profound work that requires great efforts by all stakeholder groups involved, it allows to generate a process in which citizens, politicians and technicians grow up and mature collectively.*

### Resumen

Pese a la creciente sensibilización a los efectos del cambio climático, sus cada vez más acusadas consecuencias demuestran el peligro que supone el seguir con el imperativo unilateral del crecimiento económico, caracterizado por una «intoxicación consumista» que nos ha llevado a esta situación de carestía crónica global de recursos. En este contexto, el nuevo enfoque no puede reducirse a mero arreglo cosmético de un paradigma en crisis, sino que requiere también un cambio de paradigma para avanzar hacia la sostenibilidad ambiental y la equidad social. Para ello se quiere incidir en el hecho de que la involucración activa de la población resulta elemento clave para activar un cambio en la forma que la sociedad occidental tiene de entender la naturaleza y para construir alternativas reales al actual modelo de ocupación del territorio, que estén basadas en el paradigma ecológico. Así, el planteamiento de esta investigación encuentra sus bases teóricas en la Producción y Gestión Social del Hábitat (en adelante PGSH), entendiendo por Transformación Social del Hábitat el conjunto de procesos tendientes a la transformación del hábitat existente en los cuales la iniciativa ciudadana tiene un papel activo en la toma de decisiones. A través de esta revisión se concluye que la participación no sólo puede ayudar a la transformación de las condiciones materiales de la transición ecológica de la ciudad, sino que, a partir de un trabajo profundo que requiere grandes esfuerzos por parte de todos los grupos de actores involucrados, permite generar un proceso en el que ciudadanos, políticos y técnicos maduren colectivamente.

### Keywords | palabras clave

*Social participation, social research, urban planning, socio-ecological transition, par.*  
Participación social, investigación social, urbanismo, transición socio-ecológica, iap.

**Citation:** Donadei, M. (2019). The role of citizen participation in the socio-ecological transition of the city. *Retos Journal of Administration Sciences and Economics*, 9(17), 55-69. <https://doi.org/10.17163/ret.n17.2019.04>

## 1. Introduction

Assuming the definition of architecture as “a set of modifications and alterations introduced in earth in accordance with the human needs, except only in the desert” (Morris 1981 in Benevolo, 1979, p. 15), the concept of architecture is in the field between nature and culture, and finds its foundation in the human needs. Thus, architecture as such, and therefore urbanism, cannot only be considered “things of architects” but it enters a larger dimension: The Social Habitat.

Pelli (2010; 2007) defines the Social Habitat as the system of physical, social, economic, legal, political, environmental and symbolic situations among which, applying the concepts of the “Theory of Complexity” of Morin (1994), are recursive and complementary relations (Manuel Jerez, 2010). In this sense “any act of production, elimination or conservation of a part or component of the habitat modifies the equilibrium, functioning and quality of the whole and affects those of other existing or future components “ (Pelli, 2010, p. 41).

But the Social Habitat is only a subsystem of the planetary ecosystem to which it interacts and transforms: «The rules of the dominant economic/financial game» (Naredo, 2000), characterized by an obsession with growth and based on the progressive exploitation and massive use of natural resources, which have provoked an ever greater territorial deterioration and show that we have already overflowed the regeneration limits of the planet (Emmott, 2013; Meadows, Randers, & Meadows, 2006).

In this context, the accused social inequalities and the increasingly alarming ecological crisis show the failure of the western model and put in crisis the same postulate of growth, proving that it is necessary to activate a deconstruction of the economic imperative thought, rethinking the place of the economy to see it as a simple means of life and not as the ultimate goal (Castiblanco, 2008; Common & Stagl, 2008; Georgescu-Roegen, 1971; Naredo, 2011) and revising the current urban and territorial models to move towards social equity and the recovery of natural and territorial balances, by means of the fair reduction of wastefulness, overproduction and over-consumption, while guaranteeing the increase of social welfare (Caravaca Llamas, 2012; Latouche, 2009; Marcellesi, 2010; Taibo, 2009).

Any social and cultural guideline, from the private issues of each being to the political-economic organization of a society, has a direct or indirect impact on the environment. Therefore, it is essential to work with the cultural dimension of sustainability because it is the culture that makes us act in the territory in one way or another, helping to build a model based on resource deterioration or fostering sustainable living patterns under an ecointegrative approach.

In this sense, participation becomes a key element in order to activate the socio-ecological transition of our cities and territories (García Montes, 2018): If we do not rethink the forms of consumption in our day to day, as citizens, professionals, companies, societies, etc., the new facilities and technological solutions – often seen as the solution to any kind of problem – these will lead us to increasingly foolish wastes (Paradox of Jevons). Thus, “we need an ethical system in which the natural world has a value not only as useful for human well-being, but for itself,” because we are part of it (Lovelock, 2006, p. 214).

All this implies the generation of more consistent policies with the government of the territory, as well as the need to propose new ways of planning that are much more flexible and dynamic, so that they can adapt to the rhythm of the intense transformations due to the use of soil, and induced by socio-economic factors. But at the same time, it is necessary to promote strategies oriented to the change in the thought and the habits of life and consumption of the society to replace the current individualistic and cumulative values, but considering at the same time that people are active agents of that change.

Any attempt to impose projects based on new schemes developed exogenously generates feelings and rejection attitudes by the population (Díaz Rodríguez & Rodríguez Darías, 2012) and will be destined for the failure. On the contrary, there are numerous social initiatives that require a leading role in the decision-making on the habitat, particularly against conventional planned and regulated urbanism (up-down). In recent years, movements have proliferated, claiming their right to participate “from below” in urban transformation to improve the surrounding environment that affects the development of everyday life and that develops from the self-organization between citizens and the professional groups (Freire, 2009; González-Arriero, 2017).

With this dichotomy between the planned models of traditional urbanism and the increasing citizen initiatives that demand their protagonism and autonomy in the decision-making, the aim is to demonstrate the need to:

[...] To construct knowledge tools and action strategies that allow to understand and to act with complex problems, [...] that escape to the fragmentation of the knowledge in stagnant disciplines. And tools that insert the technical knowledge in transforming processes that recover the POLIS, the participation spaces of the citizens in the decision making (Cambil Medina *et al.*, 2006, p. 1).

## 2. Local Responses to global phenomena: towards a new urbanism

Western societies have faced radical transformations over the last century, characterized by a constant and increasingly technological innovation. This innovation has given way to a deep globalization that continues to generate great impacts, inducing progressive changes (positive and negative, and of material and symbolic order) in its political, economic, cultural and territorial structure. In particular, the current technological paradigm has generated a growing segmentation and decentralization of production to take advantage of the different potentials offered by the different territories. In this way, there has been a growing competition between companies, sectors and territories following different types of processes that have been shaping and articulating societies in a global system.

Power relations are redefined and the economic dimension is prioritized to improve competitiveness, following a development model based on the “Chimera of Growth” (Folch, 2011). The same concept of wellbeing has been reduced only to its material sense, leaving aside its most authentic meaning related to quality of life or “good living” (Acosta, 2013; Hessel & Morin, 2012).

In this way, the logics of the global market have been affecting the territorial processes, generating social and environmental imbalances at different scales: the territories occupy an economic role and a position in the global market, so that the pro-

duction and capital tend to be located in some areas and leave others; thus, generating a strong dependence on transportation (Fernandez Durán & González Reyes, 2014).

But this social and economic polarization does not occur only between territories, but is also reflected in the urban sphere, between the rich areas and the central neighborhoods and marginal areas, physically disconnected or isolated, turning cities into 'disputed areas'. In the same way, this inequality is evident on a global scale among the rich countries, where wealth accumulates, and the rest of the world suffers more and more a precariousness of its living conditions (Del Moral Ituarte, 2014; Naredo, 2004).

The strong environmental impact, social segregation at different scales and the economic inefficiency derived from high energy costs are among the main negative consequences of the dynamics of the global economy, as well as the consequential polarization phenomena of the territories and their fragmentation by the increasing urban expansion that follows a model of diffused, dispersed and disordered city that separates pieces and urban functions (Fariña Tojo & Manuel Naredo, 2010). It is in the cities, and especially in the big metropolitan areas, where the most shocking consumption and unsustainability spaces of the planet are generated and where the real decisions about what happens in their surroundings escape more and more to the capacity of citizens' control (Sassen, 1991; Verdaguer Viana-Cárdenas, 2002b).

But at the same time, cities have an essential role to play in reversing this trend. For this, any process of urban and territorial transformation has to be planned. Planning as a technical discipline of urbanism is a fundamental achievement because it is a legal instrument that, with its tools, methodologies and specific training, offers the basis for a sustainable management of the territory. However, it needs a reformulation to regain its vocation as a tool to serve the citizens. In this sense, it is necessary to reverse the "up-down" decision processes to create forms of "down-up" intervention that rescue citizens from the consumer/user status and return their role as protagonists in the cultural and collective construction of the city (*cf.*: Verdaguer Viana-Cárdenas, 2002a, p. 17).

### **2.1. Responses to the growth logics of territorial cities**

The new territorial city overflows, surpassing the classic rural-urban boundary. The city is no longer synonymous with compactness, mixture of uses and diversity (Monclús, 1998), but it transcends its limits, moving to the field, and deconstructing the systems of its environment and occupying increasingly extensive areas (López Trigal & Relea Fernández, 2001). The current extreme dispersion of uses constitutes one of the main deterioration factors of the environment and of the territory fragmentation. Gradually, the continuous physical space is losing importance to the discontinuous abstract space of the big global networks, supported by an increasingly dense and thick overlapping articulations. The nodes (big cities) have in this model a fundamental importance because of their economic role in the scales of the global market.

The model of the current urban-industrial societies is based on an "open cycle" model, consisting of centralized consumption/production nuclei. In this model, materials and energy are absorbed in an increasingly intense way, surpassing the regeneration capacities of resources by the ecosystems and the natural assimilation

capacities of the waste produced by the human activity (Requejo Liberal, 2011). But the essential element on which this model is based is the enormous amount of “horizontal routes of water, food, electricity and fuel resources, capable of exploiting other distant ecosystems and causing significant territorial imbalances in the planet” (Higueras, 2013, p. 70).

This “open system” model, which has already shown its unsustainability and unfeasibility in the medium term, has been the cause that different authors propose another type of model by means of which each population can seek, order and obtain from its territory the basis of its sustenance in semi-open cycles (*v. gr.* Requejo Liberal, 2011). It is a question of betting on a development model of prevalently endogenous type, based on a productive diversification where the network connections allow the necessary exchange for the systems to be able to complete self-sufficiency. “As long as there is more self-sufficiency in the multiple layers of the management of our habitat, we will have more capacity to decide the type of living space and the life style we want to develop” (Guallart, 2012, p. 21).

To do this, optimization must be sought within the territory of the possibilities of obtaining beneficiaries that meet the real human needs (Max Neef *et al.*, 1994) using the exterior for goods and services that are not sufficient or cannot be obtained with own means; in addition, it is necessary to regain the old balance between territory and man, developing the capacity to integrate human activities into the logics and ecosystem processes (Requejo Liberal, 2011).

Finally, it is necessary to respond to the increasing demands of democratic innovation, giving citizens a leading role in decision-making, surpassing traditional forms of representative democracy (De Manuel Jerez, 2010; Requejo Liberal, 2011; Romero, 2011). In other words, it is a matter of equipping our territories with more resilience in order to achieve a dynamic equilibrium in the moments of crisis (Ojeda Rivera & Villa Díaz, 2008), mainly based on the response capacity and the involvement of communities (in the scale of the territory) and of the neighborhood (on the urban scale) for the ecological transformation of the territory and the city.

In this sense, it is essential to leave aside the conception of the territory as mere physical support of human activity: the territory is a valuable and non-renewable resource, and at the same time complex of history, culture, collective memory, identity. It is a space of tension, where there is a counter position of many diversified interests, and therefore it needs a look that is global, complex, holistic and, specially, shared to recover the different perspectives that help us understand that complexity.

Thus, it is necessary to deepen not only in the processes and ways of planning and management<sup>1</sup>, but also in the construction of the knowledge about the habitat. Our current system of scientific knowledge is in fact fundamentally based on the paradigm of simplicity which, with its separation, reduction and abstraction principles, has made extraordinary developments in different fields of knowledge; even though it has isolated the knowledge between fields of expertise, leaving in shady areas all

---

1 Not only with the scale change in the planning and management of the territory, but also with the need to overcome the sectoral and fragmentary policies, often incoherent with each other, and that reflect once again the limits of a form of disciplinary knowledge.

the transversal issues to the disciplinary limits, being thus difficult to frame (López Medina, 2012; Morin, 1994).

On the contrary, all the situations faced by the habitat have complex components and unapproachable from a single point of view, so they require that the flow of knowledge is open and subjected to a permanent uncertainty that leaves space for the introduction of new complex relationships (Lucca, 2017, pp. 17-18).

Therefore, it is necessary to reformulate our paradigm of thought by rebuilding it from the paradigm of complexity: if discipline is a parcel unit of knowledge, transdiscipline is a complementary construct of it (Lucca, 2009), which allows to dilute the disciplinary barriers to assume the uncertainty and the impossibility of a complete knowledge and to reconnect the link between subject and object (Morin, 1994). It is necessary to reinstate the subject in the production of knowledge (Ibañez, 1992), which constitutes a sociocultural fact that cannot be considered only as an exclusive patrimony of the technical-institutional sphere: the expert knowledge has a double slope, including the sectorial expert (specialist) and the experiential expert (the direct affected of the situation to study).

For all this, it is necessary that the responsibility to make the main decisions that affect the territorial organization is in the whole of the society, starting from the creation of participation and concertation spaces where it is possible to reach the construction of this expert knowledge, in its double slope. In this sense and as it will be seen later, many authors define the participatory process as a cyclic construction of knowledge, during which there are moments of opening and closing (synthesis or systematization) that are marking their “duration” over the time, according to a spiral scheme.

Thus, the idea is to highlight the importance of the social factor, especially by identifying citizens as the solution to build creatively and collectively new and enriching ways of life, more connected to the community, and by accepting the biological limits of the planet: the transitional goes through the social, it is by active communities that ideas and exchange information are generated in order to build in the territory alternative common projects towards sustainability.

And this becomes even more evident in complex environmental and territorial issues (Villasante, 2006): in contexts of uncertainty and plurality of legitimate perspectives of the different social, economic and institutional actors involved, local actors “can imagine solutions and reformulate problems so that the experts officially accredited do not find them orthodox in their own professional paradigm” (Del Moral Ituarte & Pedregal Mateos, 2002, p. 128).

## **2.2. *From users to citizens of the Polis***

Although there are more and more participatory experiences that show that citizen participation is seen today as a democratic requirement, it is observed among the different urban actors involved, a lack of participatory culture that affects the effective scope of participation, either because of a lack of methodological success or because of a low political coherence of the approach (Red CIMAS, 2015). But there are also other motivations related to the cultural dimension that exerts the way of acting of our societies, influencing it and justifying it. Martín Recio (1998) and Alberich (2008)

identify three “social diseases” – interpersonal dependence, permanent compartmentalization and permanent delegation– that provoke a lack of widespread participation in individual societies such as the current societies of the Western world.

On the contrary, it is necessary that the citizen regain his role of protagonist of the public life, of citizen of the πόλις<sup>2</sup>. Even though it is true that in order “to change the course of the world, it is necessary to change the management mechanisms” (De Manuel Jerez, 2006, p. 89), the solution is not in the invisible hand that regulates the markets, neither in the technicians and the professional politicians who alone do not have (n) capacity to formulate transformative policies, inter alia because:

[...] What is at risk is a model of civilization, a way of understanding life that affects everyday behaviors, and this task is not possible to undertake without putting in place processes that involve us all. We have to change values to change policies (ibid.).

However, it is not to nullify the role of professionals and specialists in the learning process and analysis of the reality (Donadei, 2017; Red CIMAS, 2015), nor of considering a society that works without representatives and only by direct participation (Alberich *et al.*, 2009), but of deepening in the democracy moving from a model of representative type, currently in crisis, a new complex formula that allow to generate spaces where the decisions are taken jointly between administrations, technicians and citizens in an equitable way (Encina & Rosa, 2004) and respecting to the ecological principles.

### 2.3. *Participation from the PGSH paradigm*

In the Production and Social Management of the Habitat (PGSH), three groups of actors are identified with dialogical and recursive relations with each other, generally conflicted by having competing interests and different power in the decision making:

1. The political leaders of the public administration at all levels, who are responsible for approving habitat programs and making decisions on different areas (economic, social, cultural, etc.), always ensuring the general interest.
2. Technicians and scientists to the public or private service, responsible for advising and managing habitat programs.
3. Citizens who present their wide diversity of habitat needs.

On the other hand, it is often appropriate to introduce one or more groups of actors by disaggregating the previous groups. Thus, the original triangle can be undermined by disaggregating, for example, the category of citizens in two new actors: the economic sector, constituted by those companies linked to the habitat (developers, builders, supplying companies, etc.) and other organizations and entities that constitute civil society (Figure 1).

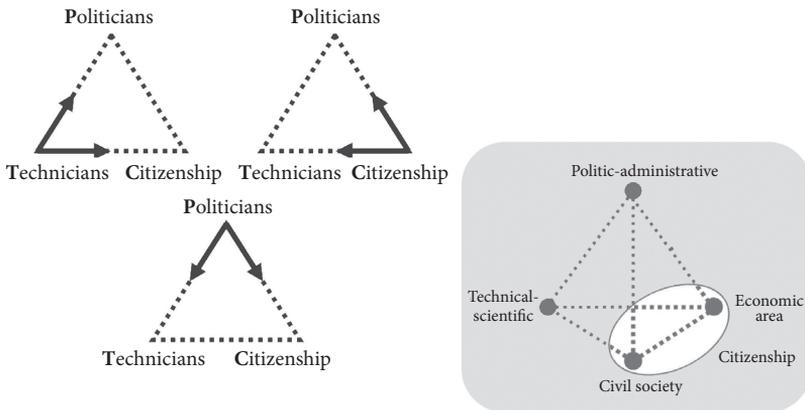
2 Beyond the strong limitations existing in the former democratic Greece on what categories entered the definition of a citizen of fact and of law, every citizen considered as such had the right and duty to participate directly in the life of the city, maybe appointed to occupy public office of a different nature; and those who renounced to take care of public affairs to devote themselves only to their particular interests were called ἰδιώτες (idiots) or useless.

The construction of the city has always been marked by a variable relationship between these large groups of actors: if on the one hand the architect has usually worked for the “prince” and the “merchant”, on the other the town has built the rest of the city by their own (De Manuel Jerez, 2006; Sassen, 2011; Verdaguer Viana-Cárdenas, 2002b).

Thus, participation is understood as the equitable redistribution of the power of decision in all the processes that tend to the social transformation of the social habitat (Encina & Rosa, 2004), so that the sectors targeting the transformation processes are not trapped in their traditional passive role of recipients of change (Pelli, 2007). In this way, the responsibility to make the main decisions affecting the organization of the habitat falls to the whole of the society from the creation of participation and concertation spaces where politicians, technicians and citizens are called to share this desire to initiate a long process of concertation, co-creation and cooperation, through a process of collective learning that will build the “equilateral triangle of social management of the habitat” (De Manuel Jerez, 2010, p. 18).

The equilateral construction of the triangle can start from the initiative of any of these three groups of actors to start building a first side (the base): It can be technical-neighborhood, political-neighbor or technical-political (Figure 1). Once this base is built, it will work to involve the missing vertex: the more actors involved in the formulation of the problem, the greater the real social incidence.

**Figure 1. Activation of changes from the three categories of actors and possible breakdown of socio-economic actors**



Source: Own elaboration based on De Manuel Jerez (2010) and Donadei (2017)

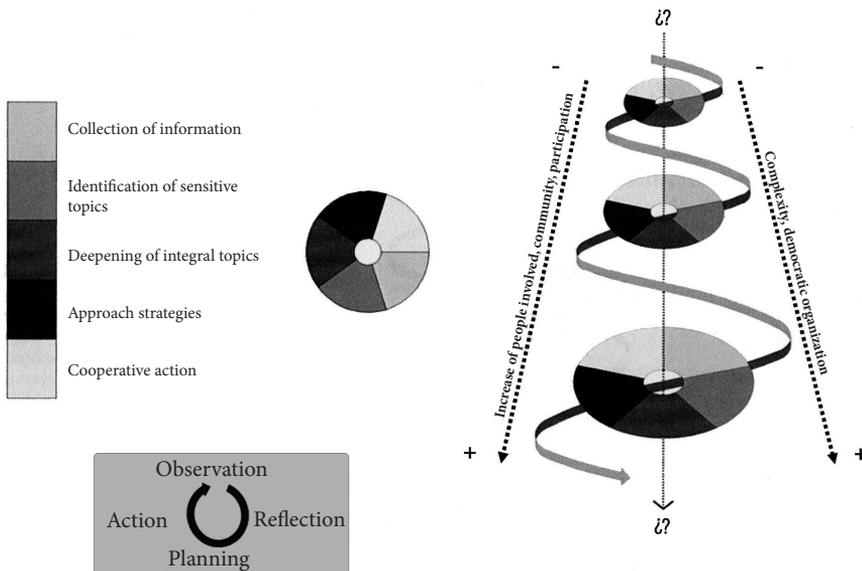
In this context, the use of participatory Action Research (PAR) is defended as a methodological basis to be able to accompany the different groups of people involved in the encouragement of participation processes that allow the collective construction of the knowledge and design in complex strategies of integral intervention that convert neighborhoods, cities and territories into key mobilizing parts of the ecological transition at different scales. The PAR, understood as a process of social research and

at the same time of social intervention – and with a certain dose of social commitment (from the most militant positions to others of affective implication – (Alberich, 2008; Montañes Serrano & Martín Gutierrez, 2017; Villasante & Montañes, 2002), tries to unite the time of the study with the time of the action for the achievement of the results in terms of transformation of a collective situation, stimulating the participation of the citizens in all research-action phases. In the same way, it tries to rescue the validity of the knowledge and popular skills as a result of the interaction with the others, with the environment and with the own culture of belonging and with the institutional sphere.

In this way, the PAR propitiates the dialogue as a mechanism used to create processes, where the affected subjects contribute, after the reflection, with solutions to their problems (Álvarez & Álvarez, 2007). Thus, citizen participation is understood as a process of cyclical and incremental nature, a “space-temporal spiral” of exchange and collective construction of knowledge that begins with the awareness of the need to face a habitat problem on the part of a community. On it, each cycle gains organizational complexity and number of actors (Rosa, Saavedra and Hernández 2008; Rosa & Encina, 2005) to progressively define and implement action strategies, encouraged (and not conducted or directed) by methodological experts (Encina & Ávila, 2010).

Knowledge is built in and for transforming action, in a close collaboration between the people and the technicians who support them, going through successive degrees of reflexivity in the elaboration of the strategy of needs, or in the progressive taking of Decisions (Figure 2).

**Figure 2. Spiral development of participatory methodologies**



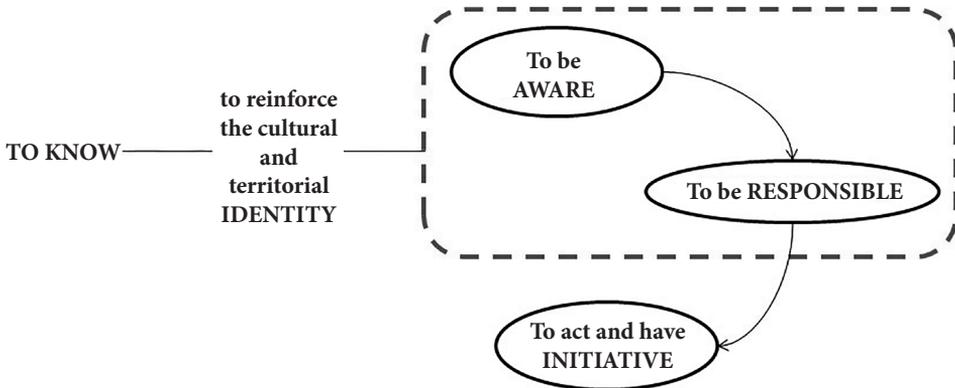
Source: Rosa, Saavedra & Hernández (2008)

There are three prerequisites for the activation of really effective participation processes: the desire, being able to participate, and the knowledge to participate (Encina & Ávila, 2010; Montañés Serrano, 2008):

[A] desire that concerns the motivations, a power relative to the channels and a knowledge related to the skills. But [...] in relation to the paradigm of complexity, not understood as independent premises but as elements linked in the same strategy: a desire more motivated from the existence of channels and skills; more demanded channels from motivation and capacities; and a more encouraged knowledge from the opening of channels and the impulse of motivations (López Medina, 2012, p. 166).

Thus, the “desire to participate” is related to the feeling of belonging that gives the motivations to get involved in the process: for this it is necessary the application of strategies of social identification that arise from the popular culture and that work with the identifications and affection of the social groups involved (Figure 3).

**Figure 3. From user to Citizen**

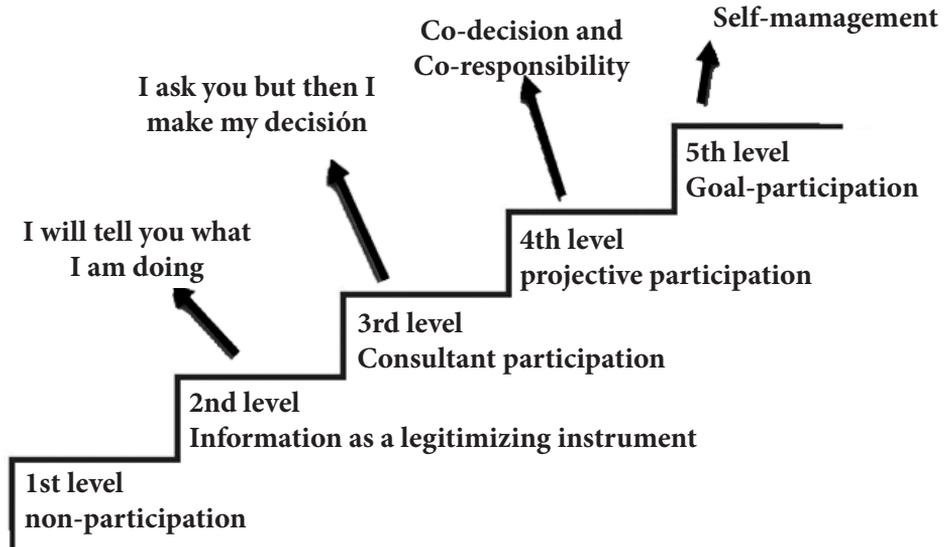


Source: Donadei (2017)

“Knowing how to participate” is related to the awareness of the meaning of “participation”, i.e., that each citizen involved could internalize the fact that the personal interest is before the collective interest (and in respect of the environmental interests). To Activate this transition from individual subjects to collective subjects, it is necessary to work methodologically to provoke not only organizational changes, but also exchanges at symbolic level and in cultural grammar, as well as changes in the system of rules that structure social relations and interactions (Rosa & Encina, 2004).

Finally, ‘being able to participate’ refers to the need for appropriate circumstances for participation to be possible. This requires the adequacy of spaces and times that allow different social actors to get involved when taking part in the process. This implies overcoming the current and convoluted forms and administrative structures, accommodating new and renewed forms of urbanism based on more dynamic and flexible methodologies; but in addition, a real political commitment is required to cede power to the citizen.

**Figure 4. The ladder of participation**



Source: own elaboration based on López Medina (2012) and CIMAS network (2015)

On the other hand, it should be considered that this is an opening to the involvement of other actors in a process to which they have no access a priori (Arnanz Monreal, 2018; López Medina, 2012). It is therefore necessary to clarify the degree of openness and appropriate involvement to consider that a participatory process is really effective. There are many authors<sup>3</sup> who have proposed the image of a pyramid or ladder to point out the different gradients of participation: in all of them what is evident is that the lowest level is occupied by non-participatory management models until reaching the more emancipatory models, where citizens take an active role in the decision-making, along with technicians and politicians.

All these models can be summed up in a five-step diagram (Figure 4). At the lowest level there would be direct management without participation, where decisions are made in the instances of power that involve a political office or technical role. The second level would include the formulas that provide simple information as a legitimizing instrument: all these models can be summed up in a five-step diagram (Figure 4). At the lowest level, there would be direct management without participation, where decisions are made in the instances of power that involve a political office or technical role. In the second level we would find the formulas that provide simple information as a legitimizing instrument: “However, this cannot be considered participation but a prerequisite [...] so that there may be participation” as “information favors critical awareness, creation of opinion and transparency” (Red CIMAS, 2015, p. 44). A third level is

<sup>3</sup> The first author who introduced the metaphorical figure of the stair was Sherry Arnstein, an American social worker.

characterized by the consultation of opinion, very characteristic of many of the writing processes of urban documents of different nature and whose only objective is often to give a certain participative direction to the process, specially by the fact that in most cases the results become mere ratifications of the proposals by means of nuances but without substantial modifications, or are collected in some complementary document which is not binding and whose application only depends on the political voluntarism.

The last two levels have to do with the real involvement of the citizens in the decision making, thus exercising, once it has been informed, consulted and heard, the right to be active subject of the transformation processes of the habitat. If in the fourth level the principle it is assumed as co-decision and co-responsibility principle in which the citizenry shares the management of the transformation processes along with politicians and technicians, it is the last level that really supposes a huge qualitative leap in the understanding of participation, requiring a high degree of maturity on the part of citizens and other groups involved.

At this level, self-organization and self-management are the ones to which organized citizens are responsible for the management of some part of the public life (López Medina, 2012; Red CIMAS, 2015). In this sense, participation acquires a greater degree of complexity as it moves:

[...] The institutionalized processes to the daily life processes of the population as a source of self-management mechanisms to be fed and strengthened from the public. [...] In this sense, the habitat is constructed in a daily basis (López Medina, 2012, p. 168).

### 3. Discussion and conclusions

The ecological crisis shows that it is necessary to restructure the model, going through a cultural revolution that should lead to a refoundation of the political (Latouche, 2009). If a first step towards “coevolution”<sup>4</sup> between human and ecological systems is the convergence between theory and practice in the integration of environmental sustainability principles into the legal policies and instruments of urban planning and management of the territory, the second step would be for ecological principles not to become a new dogma that replaces the collective decision-making capacity of a community (Lucca, 2015; Verdaguer Viana-Cárdenas, 2002b), but that these principles are assimilated by their maturity degree.

In this sense, the citizens turn out to be the active subjects of this change as they are the ones who define the territoriality through their daily practices (Bonora, 2006). As opposed to the dominant attitude of a theoretical participation, which is often concreted in specific events and actions (and driven by the different administrations), it is necessary to bet on a real appropriation by the citizens of the new urban and territorial body, reinforced at the same time with a greater degree of involvement and

4 By co-evolution is understood the process of reciprocal interaction in time between socio-cultural systems and biophysical systems, which maintain a close interaction conditioned by mechanisms of feedback and adaptation (Norgaard, 1984). While societies have benefited from this type of process throughout history, the dominant economic model has broken this balance by pressuring the ecological system beyond its coevolution potential.

responsibility on the part of the communities in the environmental issues that affect its surroundings and its founding landscapes.

Thus, the great long-term challenge is for citizen participation to become a habit, a laboratory of constant experimentation to adapt languages, instruments and methods of the different disciplines to generate complex strategies and collective intervention on the habitat, oriented towards the ecological transition. Understood in this way, participation can not only help the transformation of the material conditions of a particular field, but, from a deep work that requires great efforts on the part of all the groups involved, it allows to generate a process in which citizens, politicians and technicians mature collectively. Thus, active citizenship will be able to take the control of the place they live.

## References

- Acosta, A. (2013). El buen vivir. *Sumak Kawsay, una oportunidad para imaginar otros mundos*. America Latina: Icaria-Antrazyt.
- Alberich, T. (2008). IAP, redes y mapas sociales: desde la investigación a la intervención social. *Portularia: Revista de Trabajo Social*, VII(1), 131–151. (<http://bit.ly/2snoyHT>) (2018-11-14).
- Alberich, T., et al (2009). *Metodologías participativas. Manual*. Madrid: CIMAS. (<http://bit.ly/2Rpwr4J>) (2018-12-03).
- Álvarez, C., & Álvarez, A. (2007). La Investigación Acción Participativa como instrumento para la resolución de problemas sociales. *Anuario*, 30, 227-252. (<http://bit.ly/2AJyBF3>) (2019-01-03).
- Arnanz Monreal, L. (2018). Metodologías de la democracia participativa en el ámbito de las políticas públicas locales: hacia un sistema de gestión participativo. En E. Santos (Ed.), *Metodologías participativas y democracias transformadoras* (pp. 31-38). Madrid: CIMAS.
- Bayon, D., Flipo, F., & Schneider, F. (2011). *Decrecimiento: 10 preguntas para comprenderlo y debatirlo*. Intercención Cultural.
- Benevolo, L. (1979). *Introducción a la arquitectura*. Madrid: Blume.
- Bonora, P. (2006). Percorsi della socialità e della partecipazione negli spazi deterritorializzati dell'urbano. *Inchiesta*, 152, 3–5.
- Cambil Medina, E., et al (2006). Líneas de investigación en ADICI: Diseño de procesos de Producción Social del Hábitat. En *II Jornada de Investigación en Arquitectura y Urbanismo*. Escuela De Arquitectura Del Vallès, Sant Cugat Del Vallès. (<http://bit.ly/2SQGPZF>) (2018-11-14).
- Caravaca Llamas, C. (2012). Más decrecimiento y menos Prozac. El decrecimiento como alternativa económica y social a la crisis actual. *La Razón Histórica*, 18, 81–101. (<https://www.revistalarazonhistorica.com/18-7/>)
- Castiblanco, C. (2008). La Economía Ecológica: Una Disciplina En Busca De Autor. *Gestión y Ambiente*, 10(3), 07-22. (<http://bit.ly/2Mabmz0>) (2018-11-14).
- Common, M., & Stagl, S. (2008). *Introducción a la economía ecológica*. Barcelona: Reverté.
- De Manuel Jerez, E. (2006). Participar para recuperar la polis. En *Educación de Adultos y Participación* (pp. 89–102). Sevilla: Unilco.
- De Manuel Jerez, E. (2010). Construyendo triángulos para la gestión social del hábitat. *Hábitat y Sociedad*, 1, 13–37. <http://dx.doi.org/10.12795/HabitatySociedad.2010.i1.02>.
- Del Moral Ituarte, L. (2014). Crisis del capitalismo global. Desarrollo y medio ambiente. *Documents d'Anàlisi Geogràfica*, 59(1), 77–103. <https://doi.org/10.5565/rev/dag.36>
- Del Moral Ituarte, L., & Pedregal Mateos, B. (2002). Nuevos planteamientos científicos y participación ciudadana en la resolución de conflictos ambientales. *Documents d'Anàlisi Geogràfica*, 41, 121–134. (<http://bit.ly/2TMNTGR>) (2018-12-03).
- Díaz Rodríguez, P., & Rodríguez Darias, A.J. (2012). Fundamentos del paradigma ecológico en las ciencias sociales. *Pasos*, 10(1), 167–172. <http://doi.org/10.25145/j.pasos.2012.10.016>

- Donadei, M. (2017). *Conservación de la naturaleza y bienestar humano: el papel de la participación ciudadana en la transición socio-ecológica de la aglomeración urbana de Sevilla* (Tesis Doctoral). ETSA Sevilla, España.
- Emmott, S. (2013). *Diez mil millones*. Barcelona: Anagrama.
- Encina, J., & Ávila, M.Á. (2010). El ilusionismo social: más allá de la última frontera metodológica. En J. Encina, M.Á. Ávila, & B. Lourenço, (Ed.), *Las culturas populares* (pp. 73–104). Sevilla: Atrapasueños.
- Encina, J., & Rosa, M. (2004). Democracias participativas desde la praxis social. En J. Encina, M. Rosa, M.Á. Ávila, & M. Fernández (Eds.), *Democracias participativas e intervención social comunitaria desde Andalucía* (pp. 13–46). Sevilla: ACSUR-Andalucía, Atrapasueños Editorial, UPO, Consejería de Asuntos Sociales-Junta de Andalucía.
- Fariña Tojo, J., & Manuel Naredo, J. (2010). *Libro blanco de la sostenibilidad en el planeamiento urbanístico español*. España: Ministerio de Vivienda. (<http://bit.ly/2D7qt9D>) (2018-10-26).
- Fernández Durán, R., & González Reyes, L. (2014). *En la espiral de la energía. Volumen 2: Colapso del capitalismo global y civilizatorio*. Madrid: Libros en acción.
- Folch, R. (2011). *La químera del crecimiento. La sostenibilidad en la era postindustrial*. Barcelona: RBA Libros.
- Freire, J. (2009). Urbanismo emergente: ciudad, tecnología e innovación social [Emerging urban planning: city, technology and social innovation\*. En *Paisajes Domésticos / Domestic Landscapes*, Vol. 4 (pp. 18–27). Madrid: SEPEs.
- García Montes, N. (2018). Desarrollo urbano, crisis ecológica e importancia epistemológica de la percepción ciudadana. En E. Santos (Ed.), *Metodologías participativas y democracias transformadoras* (pp. 31-38). Madrid: CIMAS.
- Georgescu-Roegen, N. (1971). *The Entropy Law and the Economic Process*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- González-Arriero, C. (2017) *Urbanismo en transición. Producción y gestión social del Espacio Público* (Tesis Doctoral). ETSA Sevilla, España.
- Guallart, V. (2012). *La ciudad autosuficiente*. Barcelona: RBA Libros.
- Hessel, S., & Morin, E. (2012). *El camino de la esperanza: una llamada a la movilización cívica*. Barcelona: Destino-Paidós.
- Higueras, E. (2013). *Urbanismo bioclimático*. Barcelona: Gustavo Gili.
- Ibañez, J. (1992). *Más allá de la sociología. Teoría y práctica del grupo de discusión*. Madrid: Siglo XXI editores.
- Latouche, S. (2009). *Pequeño tratado del decrecimiento sereno*. Barcelona: Icaria.
- López Medina, J.M. (2012). *El diseño participativo en programas de rehabilitación de viviendas* (Tesis Doctoral). ETSA Sevilla, España.
- López Trigal, L., & Relea Fernández, C.E. (2001). Ciudades y periferias sostenibles. Una revisión de conceptos y enfoques aplicados a España y Castilla y León. *Polígonos*, 11–12, 113–136. <http://dx.doi.org/10.18002/pol.v0i11-12.523>
- Lovelock, J. (2006). *La venganza de la tierra: la teoría Gaia y el futuro de la humanidad*. Barcelona: Planeta.
- Lucca, E. (2009). *Interdisciplina. Cuadernos del Ambiente n° 1*. Resistencia: Cospel.
- Lucca, E. (2016). *La gestión de los territorios. La cosecha escondida o la percepción ambiental de los espacios*. Buenos Aires: Diseño editorial.
- Lucca, E. (2017). Estrategias y metodologías de formación de equipos interdisciplinarios para trabajar en hábitat. *Hábitat y sociedad*, 10, 15-34. <http://dx.doi.org/10.12795/HabitatySociedad.2017.i10.02>
- Marcellesi, F. (2010). Cooperación internacional y sostenibilidad. *El Ecologista*, 65, 30–31.
- Martín Recio, S. (1998). *Reflexiones y acciones para propiciar la participación comunitaria*. En *I Conferencia de Política Municipal*. Madrid: IU Secretaría Federal de Política Federal de Entes Locales.
- Max Neef, M., Elizalde, A., & Hopenhayn, M. (1994). *Desarrollo a escala humana: conceptos, aplicaciones y algunas reflexiones*. Montevideo: Icaria/Nordan-Comunidad.
- Meadows, D., Randers, J., & Meadows, D. (2006). *Los límites del crecimiento: 30 años después*. Barcelona: Galaxia Gutenberg.

- Monclús, F.J. (1998). Suburbanización y periurbanización. Ciudades anglosajonas y ciudades latinas. En F.J. Monclús (Ed.), *La ciudad dispersa. Suburbanización y nuevas periferias* (pp. 5–15). Barcelona: CCCB
- Montañés Serrano, M. (2008). *El cuadro semiótico y las posiciones complejas de la participación*. Madrid: Cuadernos CIMAS. (<http://bit.ly/2RK2qpr>) (2019-01-06).
- Montañés Serrano, M., & Martín Gutiérrez, P. (2017). De la IAP a las Metodologías Sociopráticas. *Habitat y Sociedad*, 10, 35-52. <http://dx.doi.org/10.12795/HabitatySociedad.2017.i10.03>
- Morin, E. (1994). *Introducción al pensamiento complejo*. Madrid: Gedisa.
- Naredo, J.M. (2000). Ciudades y crisis de civilización. *Boletín CF+S*, 15. (<http://bit.ly/2RKLyPh>) (2018-12-03).
- Naredo, J.M. (2004). Diagnóstico sobre la sostenibilidad: la especie humana como patología terrestre. *Archipiélago*, 62, 13–24.
- Naredo, J.M. (2011). Fundamentos de la Economía Ecológica. En F. Aguilera Klink & V. Alcántara (Eds.), *De la Economía Ambiental a la Economía Ecológica* (pp. 231–252). Madrid: CIP-Eco-social.
- Norgaard, R.B. (1984). Coevolutionary development potential. *Land Economics*, 60(2), 160–173.
- Ojeda Rivera, J.F., & Villa Díaz, Á. (2008). La ciudad es cultura fronteriza en un mundo cambiante. En *Ciudades, culturas y fronteras en un mundo en cambio. IX Coloquio de Geografía Urbana* (pp. 284–301). Sevilla: Junta de Andalucía.
- Pelli, V. (2007). *Habitar, participar, pertenecer: acceder a la vivienda: incluirse en la sociedad*. Buenos Aires: Nobuko.
- Pelli, V. (2010). La gestión de la producción social del hábitat. *Hábitat y Sociedad*, 1, 39–54. Retrieved from [http://www.habitatysociedad.us.es/images/stories/N01/n01a02\\_la\\_gestion\\_del\\_la\\_produccion\\_social\\_del\\_habitat.pdf](http://www.habitatysociedad.us.es/images/stories/N01/n01a02_la_gestion_del_la_produccion_social_del_habitat.pdf)
- Red CIMAS. (2015). *Metodologías participativas. Sociopraxis para la creatividad social*. Madrid: Dextra Editorial.
- Requejo Liberal, J. (2011). Territorio y energía: Orden mecánico versus orden orgánico. *Hábitat y Sociedad*, 2, 33–47. <http://dx.doi.org/10.12795/HabitatySociedad.2011.i2.03>
- Romero, J. (2011). ¿Territorios inteligentes, sostenibles e inclusivos? Enseñanzas de la experiencia española. *Hábitat y Sociedad*, 2, 13–32. <http://dx.doi.org/10.12795/HabitatySociedad.2011.i2.02>
- Rosa, M., & Encina, J. (2004). Las culturas populares. *Cuchara y Paso Atrás*, (9), 9–20.
- Rosa, M., & Encina, J. (2005). Haciendo metodología al andar. En J. Encina, M. Á. Ávila, M. Fernández, & M. Rosa (Eds.), *Praxis participativas desde el medio rural* (pp. 89–116). Madrid: IEPALA/CIMAS.
- Rosa, M., Saavedra, L., & Hernández, G. (2008). Fundamentos teóricos y metodológicos de la participación ciudadana. Conferencia en el Máster en Gestión Social del Hábitat (1ª Edición). US, Sevilla, España.
- Sassen, S. (1991). *The global city: New York, London, Tokyo*. New Jersey: Princetown University Press.
- Sassen, S. (2011). Open Source Urbanism. *The New City Reader: A Newspaper of Public Space*, 15. Retrieved from (<http://bit.ly/2D7amc5>) (2018-10-30).
- Taibo, C. (2009). *En defensa del decrecimiento. Sobre capitalismo, crisis y barbarie*. Madrid: Catarata.
- Verdaguer Viana-Cárdenas, C. (2002a). Ecologismo urbano y urbanismo ecológico: convergencia necesaria. *El Ecologista*, 34, 16–18.
- Verdaguer Viana-Cárdenas, C. (2002b). El paisaje construido: una perspectiva ecológica. En Ó. Bermejo García, J.J. Laforet (Eds.), *Ecología, una perspectiva actual* (pp. 155–182). Telde: Real Sociedad Económica de Amigos del País de Gran Canaria.
- Villasante, T.R. (2006). *Desbordes creativos: estilos y estrategias para la transformación social*. Madrid: La Catarata.
- Villasante, T.R., & Montañés, M. (2002). Algunos cambios de enfoque en las ciencias sociales. En J. Martí Olivé, M. Montañés, & T. Villasante (Eds.), *La investigación social participativa* (pp. 13–28). Barcelona: El viejo topo.