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THE POLITICAL INSTITUTIONAL DIMENSION AND CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN TERRITORIAL ANALYSIS: THE MADRID EXPERIENCE

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Abstract

The incorporation of the political institutional dimension in territorial analysis and the establishment of mechanisms for citizen participation are a response to the search for better results from policies for territorial re-equilibrium in contexts of great complexity and uncertainty. In this regard, a political institutional assessment enables an examination of the feasibility of policies and the monitoring of environmental factors that directly impact on proposed objectives, while favoring the evaluation of the performance of the institutions involved and the impact of policies on social reality. Regarding citizen participation, one of its contributions focuses on building collaborative relations between citizens and government, which tends to facilitate the interchange of information during the process of formulating public policy. In this way, the incorporation of civil society in the stage of evaluating and identifying solutions to social problems is considered a key factor in the design of policy.

Keywords

Policy, institutions, local government, citizen participation, territorial re-equilibrium

Introduction

The complexity of the great urban centers of the world, particularly in Spain where the principal cities have undergone strong population growth at a rhythm well above that for the country as a whole (European Economic Commission, 2007: 7), creates situations of risk in which areas of cities with good infrastructure and services and in which a population with higher income resides co-exist with other more extensive areas where the quality of services and the level of infrastructure is poor. This reality has led local governments to develop participatory experiences with the idea that participation can aid in the search for a greater social and territorial re-equilibrium in large cities and the formulation of more effective policies.

The city of Madrid has, over the last fifty years, undergone significant population growth, above all as a consequence of immigration, which has left important traces on the structure of the city. In general, notable differences persist in population density and the size of the different districts that form the city; and differences appear in the degree of satisfaction over housing, education, health and cultural services and mobility in some districts with respect to the average for the overall city. In this context, the municipal government of Madrid has pursued a strategic policy of territorial re-equilibrium which connects mechanisms of citizen participation with structural initiatives from the city.

The approach to be used here assumes that the complexity of large cities makes the adoption of innovative strategies that strengthen balanced and sustainable development of territories necessary. This is so because, despite territorial differences and specific individual features, they are connected for institutional, legal, economic, social, political, geographic, historical and cultural reasons. These strategies should preferentially incorporate the political institutional dimension as part of their territorial analysis and, within this, citizen participation should be conceived as a tool of good government that not only contributes to deepening democratic values, but also permits the consolidation of cooperative relations between the public and local governments, facilitating the interchange of resources and information during tasks of diagnosis, design and evaluation of policy.

Using the case of Madrid, we intend to show the importance of the political institutional dimension and identify the contribution of citizen participation in the design and execution of policies for territorial re-equilibrium in the city and, finally, to make proposals which improve the existing participatory mechanisms themselves.

1. The political institutional dimension in territorial analysis

Today, territory is increasingly considered as a dynamic component, an active resource in development processes, distant in certain measure from traditional approaches which basically conceptualized territory as the spatial setting for human groups and for different activities, particularly economic ones¹. Thus today, territory is seen as embodying a sense of belonging, identity and culture or a patrimonial legacy or resource from which a durable and sustainable added value is generated.

This approach has fueled the growth of territorial policies which, based implicitly on ideas of territorial development, are the framework for open collective and individual decision making processes which seek to link the management and use of space with improvements in the quality of life of the citizenry. To achieve this, experts have traditionally focused on the analysis of three dimensions: the first refers to economic development, understood as the overall improvement of productive sectors; the second refers to social development, which is perceived as complementary to economic development, being associated with population, income, employment and consumption, access to well-being and access to infrastructures and knowledge; lastly, is environmental sustainability, conceived as the adequate use and preservation of natural capital.

However, these dimensions take importance away from the institutional framework in which policies are developed, in which the interests and demands of the actors involved are organized, establishing incentives and disincentives in support of specific objectives or collective criteria that go beyond achieving private benefits while guaranteeing the flow of resources for the implementation of policies through taxes and transfer mechanisms. In effect, often the political institutional factor is reduced in importance in territorial analysis, this despite the strength the concept of territorial governance has gained in recent years, which, although claiming the importance of political institutions in territorial analysis, limits their strategic importance in comparison to the strength of

¹ The European Territorial Strategy (ETS) constitutes an important initiative that conceives of territory as an important variable for balanced and sustainable development.

other social and private actors, placing them on the same level as coordination and cooperation. For its part, the World Bank in its “World Development Report 2009: Reshaping Economic Geography” (2008) makes references to political institutions as a means for achieving economic integration and reducing inequalities, but without the emphasis one would expect.

It cannot be ignored that one of the causes of this situation is that disciplines such as economics and geography have a long history in this type of analysis, a solid relationship existing between their concepts and theories and a territorial perspective. However, the new approach from political science and the administrative sciences, centers its focus on the formulation, management and evaluation of public policies, on their effects and impact on a concrete territory. The current challenge is for public policy to adapt to the territory and not the reverse (Farinós, 2005: 220).

This implies that a process of reflection on the value and objectives of public institutions, the characteristics of the problems that should be addressed and the importance of citizen participation in the formulation of policies should be carried out. In reference to public institutions, these should be understood as the result of a social contract in which the aims that should guide their actions and the means necessary for their achievement are established. Their objectives center on the solution to social problems based on the common interest of the public. Their ends and the process to achieve them grant legitimacy to their decisions and enable the influence of their actions to be extended equally to all members of society. In addition, in the majority of cases, the consequences of these actions, whether positive or negative, continue influencing and shaping future generations over time.

First, institutions must guarantee that their decisions, which are concretized in public policies and programs in areas such as infrastructure, education, health, housing and security among others, provide successful solutions to social problems and have a positive impact on the quality of life of all the citizenry, in addition to being in harmony with the real needs and concerns of the citizenry. For this, it is fundamental to address the problems which, derived from the contradictions and conflicts from today’s post-industrial societies, directly or indirectly affect a wide variety of actors. These actors try to influence the formulation of public policy transmitting increasingly diverse and specialized demands and preferences, despite living in the same territory where one would expect a certain degree of homogeneity in interests and concerns.

Secondly, it cannot be forgotten that the actions of public institutions are based on political strategies and objectives which, when achieved, validate the mandate given to their elected leaders by the citizenry, impacting on the promotion or the continuity of public policies and programs. Thirdly, institutions should have a functional structure which has sufficient resources to complete its tasks, as well as having a legal framework which generates stability and transmits security and trust to actors in their relations with public institutions and, finally, and of no less importance, they must be supported by the budgetary means and resources that guarantee the financial feasibility and sustainability of the initiatives to be undertaken.

The complexity of these premises makes identifying a single solution for social problems impossible and, even worse, the risk exists that the consequences of public policies and programs generate unforeseen effects for those responsible. In addition,

when an attempt is made to carry out an evaluation of these effects, if in the same territory the actions from different public policies and programs overlap, it is almost impossible to determine what type of intervention corresponds to the facts observed (Ogando, 2001). An important aspect that reduces these limitations is the identification and incorporation of key actors in decision-making processes who have sufficient legitimacy and leadership to mobilize other actors and individuals that can, in a specific territory, contribute a more effective perspective that is closer to the problems being addressed.

In this context, public policies should be the result of the activation of stable mechanisms of participation, cooperation and interchange of resources between public, private and social actors who provide, not only, the aggregation and articulation of citizen demands or preferences, but also promote, around a common objective, their incorporation in the decision-making process.

In short, the incorporation of the political institutional dimension to territorial analysis is an essential strategy for assuring the success of any policy to be carried out. In this sense, the local level is an ideal space to verify this assumption, as its characteristics make the identification of and connection between institutional and territorial elements simpler. In addition, at the local level the distances are short and the political and cultural differences are few and superficial, the principal challenges being avoiding that rapid urban growth and changes in the economic-productive model generates congestion and that divisions in the cities become evident in the neighborhoods and districts that form them (World Bank, 2008)

2. Citizen participation at the local level

In recent years the public citizen has gone from being a mere receptor of public goods and services to taking on a more demanding role with respect to the form and the principles of action on which governance is based. Individual citizens now not only demand a greater volume of services and of better quality, or the efficient employment of economic resources, but in addition, many want to participate in an active manner in the making of decisions related to those public goods and services that directly affect them. We find ourselves with a citizen who has evolved from his/her facet as governed citizen to democratic citizen, a subject who desires to co-construct the society in which he/she lives.

Governments find themselves obligated to situate the citizen as the true focal point for their actions and as a fundamental actor in defining those actions. This means that public policies and decisions must necessarily be oriented toward the citizen, that public action must be governed by the attainment of greater effectiveness, efficiency and transparency and that public resources have to be managed in a responsible and transparent manner in the eyes of the citizenry, making their participation in the public policies and programs that affect them possible.

The dominant tendency in government is to incorporate the public, preferably in the phases of evaluation and design of public policies and programs, through the creation of specific mechanisms to provide information and for consultation. However, initiatives do exist which go beyond these levels of participation and which manage to involve citizens directly in decision-making through the creation of procedures for negotiation

and coordination among all parties with the aim of reaching agreements and establishing shared responsibilities in defining public policies and actions.

In any case, it seems evident citizen participation has little weight in the determination of the way in which decisions are adopted and public services are provided, as well as in the evaluation of their impact on the social sphere. This is due to two possible causes. In the first place, the fact that citizen participation has normally been limited in Spain and in the countries around it to the election of political representatives without consideration for the capacity citizens have to take part in decisions that affect them; and secondly, because the actions of government have, by preference, been oriented toward processes and not toward results or the measure of the impact of such actions.

It has been local governments that have developed and given greater importance to systems for citizen participation by really applying the principle of subsidiarity or proximity to the public. This proximity to government action impacts on the capacity that local government has to confront the problems that citizens face. In this way, citizens debate over their interests and look for the best formulas to resolve the problems that affect them or they attempt to have influence on defining the policies that are established in their municipalities. However, it must be noted that the local level, particularly in Spain, does not deal with the public policies which have the greatest impact on the life of individuals and that the model of participation at the local level has not spread to other territorial levels.

Therefore, we are talking about the progressive consolidation at the local level of an administrative model based on networking that promotes cooperation among actors, and in such a way that it encourages the participation of citizens and civil organizations in the solution of local problems, involving them in a decisive manner in the formulation of public policies. Faced with the complexity of today's cities, this model highlights the importance of the continual exchange of information and resources, the diversity of actors as representatives of social heterogeneity, the existence of a common objective that prioritizes the general public interest over private or group interests, the consolidation over time of these cooperative bonds and the initiation of continuing processes of learning and improvement.

In addition, the citizenry and social organizations understand cooperation and coordination with local governments as the most effective means for presenting demands or responding to the demands of their members and to the collectives they represent. In this way, participation, associated with common objectives that generate greater collective well-being, strengthens the bonds of trust among public, social and private actors, promotes networking and the solution of the city's problems through consensus.

3. Analysis of the political institutional dimension in the Special Plans for Territorial Investment and Action [Planes Especiales de Inversión y Actuación Territorial (PEI)]

The assessment of the political institutional dimension has been a fundamental element in the development of policy for territorial re-equilibrium developed in Madrid. This is due, in great measure, to the magnitude of the social and territorial impact of the actions contemplated in the Special Plans for Territorial Investment and Action (PEI), which, in

their totality, benefit 46.31 percent of the population, involve the direct participation of the public in decisions regarding a budgetary quantity of 829,581,341 euros over eight years (2004-2012) and the planning of 203 actions in areas as diverse as education, culture, social facilities, health, transport and mobility, among others.

The enormous dimension and reach of the PEI make it necessary to ensure the institutional means for their success, therefore analysis of the political institutional dimension gains in importance, which is done through five variables: context and identification of the problem, legitimacy and leadership, type of interaction which predominates among the actors, institutional capacity and citizen participation. These variables can be contrasted with the reality prior, during or after the development of policy, depending on the type of evaluation that is intended. Thus, based upon the time the following evaluations can be done: feasibility study of the policy, monitoring of the environmental elements that affect the policy and the results and impact of the policy.

3.1 Context and identification of the problem

This variable refers to the identification of one or more problems that affect citizens in an individual or collective manner, whose importance makes the formulation of public policies or programs necessary. For this, the problem must meet a series of favorable political institutional conditions, among which should be highlighted the following: First, the problem must have relevance to the public, it must be known by everyone and be of interest to the population, thus permitting widespread agreement over giving it attention and over possible solutions. In such a case, politicians would find it costly to ignore public opinion, able to aid in identifying concrete actions for its solution. Secondly, there must exist pressure groups that enjoy enough influence or power to include the problem on the political agenda and to activate pressure mechanisms to ensure its adequate solution (Kelly, 2004: 66).

There are important differences among the twenty one districts that make up the city of Madrid, not only in spatial or population distribution, but also in regards to their social and economic characteristics. This situation has had an impact over various years on the quantity and quality of services that the public has access to, such as housing, mobility, education, health and social and cultural services.

The quality of life in the city varies in function of the district studied. Proof of this is the high concentration of economic activity and employment in the central districts of the city, the so-called “almendra central” which, despite containing a third of the population and only 6.9 percent of the city’s area, concentrated, in 2005, 52 percent of the city’s GAV² and 51 percent of the employment. The peripheral districts of the city, with 46.31 percent of the population and 48.7 percent of the immigrant population resident in Madrid, had a deficit in the provision of public services with respect to the total for the city. It is clear that there exists a problem of public interest which, although it affects all of the city, has a particular direct impact on the most disadvantaged sectors of the population and which has become a rallying point for the organized neighborhood movement and other collectives in the most affected districts.

² Gross added value (GAV) quantifies the criteria for the placement of businesses and the specialization of land use, providing a measure for the economic weight of the districts.

This situation and the commitment of the current government to develop actions in favor of the social and territorial re-equilibrium of the city brought about, in 2003, the establishment of the Special Plans for Territorial Investment and Action (PEI). This initiative forms part of the policies for territorial cohesion developed by the municipal government of Madrid and intended to coordinate actions directed at correcting or, at least, reducing situations of social and territorial imbalance in Madrid through participatory planning of a series of actions under municipal competency. It is an attempt to achieve greater efficiency and effectiveness in the policies for territorial cohesion by creating stable participatory mechanisms which guarantee the exchange of information and resources and by reorienting the investment of public resources to the most disadvantaged districts of the city.

CONTEXT AND IDENTIFICATION OF THE PROBLEM		YES	NO
Problem	There are objective indicators on the effects of the problem identified	X	
	It is of common interest and has an impact on public opinion	X	
	There are actors who promote its incorporation into the governmental or institutional agenda	X	

Chart 1. Consolidated from the variable Context and Identification of the Problem. Source: Dirección General de Participación Ciudadana [Directorate-General for Citizen Participation].

The PEI are limited to a specific time frame, generally of four years, with the possibility of an extension based on the extent of implementation of the actions or based on the request of neighborhood organizations and residents of the involved district. Each plan contains the actions to be taken by the government of Madrid, the transfer of land for the implementation of the activities that, despite being outside of municipal competency, are priorities for the neighbors and finally, the commitment of the local government to encourage other administrative agencies to promote agreed upon actions in these districts.

3.2 Legitimacy and leadership

Legitimacy and leadership are variables that refer to the identification of strategic actors with the capacity to convoke, bring together and mobilize other actors in favor of a common objective. It being necessary to achieve the best representation possible of all the sectors affected. In any territory there exists a multiplicity of actors that seek to have influence over public policy, therefore it is fundamental that said actors have legitimacy and provide leadership. First, in regards to legitimacy, in the case of public institutions it comes from their very nature, their objectives and the degree of power, based on the existing legal framework, that they have over the matter to be addressed. For their part, in the case of social actors, the recognition that they have from the state and other social organizations as valid interlocutors to represent specific interests or needs has influence.

Secondly, regarding leadership, it represents the commitment of actors to the achievement of a collective project and their mobilization capacity in regards to the project, and therefore should be based on the legitimacy, credibility and trust that some actors awaken in the public. This is without a doubt a fundamental condition to guarantee the success of initiatives that require the participation of diverse actors and the investment of enormous financial and other resources.

The PEI are the result of an agreement signed in 2003 between the municipal government of Madrid, represented by the Area Delegate for Citizen Participation, and the Regional Federation of Neighborhood Associations of Madrid (FRAVM). The agreement represented a firm commitment from these two actors for the creation of stable mechanisms for cooperation in the design of plans and the consolidation of a space for dialogue between the neighborhood movement and municipal government. Starting then, they defined, in an agreed upon manner, the selection criteria for the districts to be included in the PEI, the methodological framework for the participatory process and, in general, the subsequent working guidelines.

The PEI are centered on debate over actions of municipal competency. The Area Delegate for Citizen Participation acts as the representative of the municipal government during the stages of elaboration and implementation, being the only valid institutional interlocutor in relation to the social actors. The rest of the areas of government affected complement the work of the Area for Participation through the exchange of information in the evaluation stage, by carrying out technical-financial feasibility studies, through the public presentation of projects and the contribution of data on the implementation of each action.

For its part, the FRAVM is the principal participating social actor. This organization gathers together at the regional level all the neighborhood associations – more than 230 – which, as legally independent entities, decided to integrate in a vertical work model, of a specialized character and guided by motives of efficiency in the aggregation and articulation of demands (Montero, Font and Torcal, 2007: 209). It is the job of the FRAVM to coordinate the work of the neighborhood associations in the districts which are the object of the PEI and mobilize their resources in the elaboration of plans. In this way, the active participation of organized neighborhoods is guaranteed and increased support for and identification with the initiatives undertaken by the local government among the citizenry is achieved.

3.3 Collaborative relationships among the actors

This variable refers to the disposition that the actors have, guided by their desire to participate in the carrying out of collective projects, to adopt common principles which determine behavioral guidelines during interactions with other actors; to create stable mechanisms for cooperation and sharing of resources with the local government; to respect the formal and informal rules that may be established in a consensual manner among the participants and to permit the inclusion of other multilevel actors.

In the case of the PEI, the consensus and the interaction generated among the actors involved have contributed to the establishment of the following principles: social and territorial solidarity; the search for social and territorial re-equilibrium through the contribution of the city to the most disadvantaged districts and neighborhoods; co-responsibility in public administration, which is related to the joint work of city government leaders and social organizations in satisfying neighborhood demands; establishing the citizen as the principal reference, providing greater effectiveness, efficiency and transparency in the management of public resources; promoting participation in associations and social organizations and the increase of social capital in the city; participation in the evaluation of the needs of the districts that are the objectives of the planning; and public monitoring of the actions implemented.

In addition, there exists a higher authority for the coordination of all the plans consisting of the Directorate-General for Citizen Participation and the FRAVM. Additionally, in each district, during the stages of elaboration of the PEI, three authorities or coordinating councils are created which bring together all the actors interested in the participatory process: the Citizen Coordinating Commission, with the responsibility of coordinating the overall participatory process and approving the proposals that each plan considers; the Forum of Associations which groups and articulates the demands of all the district associations; and the Territorial Councils- Agenda 21 Commission, which links the proposals of the Agenda 21 Action plan with the evaluative and prioritization tasks of the PEI.

At the end of the stage for elaborating the plans, in each selected district a Citizens Monitoring Commission is formed, made up of the Directorate-General for Citizen Participation, the FRAVM and neighborhood associations from the district. Each commission has the technical and administrative support of personnel from the Directorate-General for Citizen Participation and that of professionals and technicians who, as representatives of the FRAVM, intervene in the management and processing of information.

At the intra-organizational level, the PEI make territorial unity and participation a cross-cutting and strategic core which improves the policies and programs developed by local government through the incorporation of and commitment to the proposed objectives, not only by the competent body on matters of citizen participation but also by the whole structure of the municipal government. At the same time, the PEI incorporate government at other levels through the creation of sectorial commissions and the inclusion in each plan for the transfer of land for the development of actions that are under the competency of other governmental levels and the commitment to involve other institutions in attending to some of the needs or demands previously identified.

3.4 Institutional capacity

Institutional capacity refers to the characteristics of the structure and functioning of the state apparatus that has a bearing on the implementation of public initiatives. This variable can be analyzed assessing four interrelated elements: the existence of mechanisms of accountability for all the actions undertaken by the local government, thus guaranteeing transparency in public management; counting on a technically competent team; availability of sufficient budgetary resources to guarantee the feasibility of all initiatives; and the existence of a solid legal framework which assures the continuity of the actions planned.

3.4.1 Transparency and access to information

There exist a series of actions associated with the PEI aimed at optimizing the management of information and favoring transparency and citizen access to information. All involved actors carry out joint tasks which permit the public to know how the consultation process or the implementation of plans are advancing based on the reality of each district. For this, the methodological norms agreed upon between the Directorate-General for Participation and the FRAVM state the following: “to inform

the public processes of promotion and dissemination of the PEI for each district are carried out throughout their duration and at their termination.”

The information is aimed, in part, at the overall population of the city. In this case, they usually disseminate the actions undertaken to reduce the social and territorial imbalances in the city, always emphasizing the values of solidarity, participation, transparency and co-responsibility that guide the participatory process. In addition, more specific information is disseminated to the population of each one of the participating districts, with the aim of promoting the incorporation of citizens and associations in the tasks of evaluation, coordination and monitoring.

The new technologies are an important tool of support in providing information. The local government, through its official website (www.munimadrid.es), offers important information to the public, such as: general data on the actors involved, the structure of the department responsible for the participatory process, contacts based on the needs of the user, budgetary aspects, regulations for citizen participation, statistical information about the districts that are part of the plans, a timeline of actions and all the documentation produced during the process.

3.4.2 Technically competent team

Staff assigned to work on the coordination of the PEI [Special Investment Plans]		
	Persons	Hours
Directorate-General for Citizen Participation	4	Full-time
External Consultant (documentary support)	3	1/3 full-time
University Rey Juan Carlos (scientific-technical advice)	6	One full-time researcher
Other occasional tasks (publication of materials)	3 (estimated)	200 hours annually

Chart 2. Staff incorporated in the PEI. Source: Directorate-General for Citizen Participation.

The technical team needed to carry out the PEI consists of personnel from the Directorate-General for Citizen Participation, but the magnitude of the plans and their extension to nine districts has made it necessary to count on the additional support of an external company which carries out the tasks of documentary support and the support of the University Rey Juan Carlos for scientific-technical advice on the participatory process. In addition, in each plan a technical team from the district councils participates under the supervision of the managers and council presidents of these councils themselves.

3.4.3 Financial sustainability

During the elaboration of the PEI the deliberations center on the problems and needs identified in each district, without entering into an assessment of the budgetary aspect of the proposals that are on the table. In other words, there is no prior allocation of resources or specific percentage of resources that limit the participatory process.

The municipal government of Madrid makes the commitment of incorporating into the annual budget the part corresponding to the implementation of all the investments and actions in the PEI, guaranteeing their complete financing and implementation in the timeframe for each plan. The ten plans implemented have cost, up until April of 2009, 829,581,341 euros. In the cases of Puente de Vallecas and Villa de Vallecas (2008-

2012), the quantity of 65,010,389 and 136,965,064 euros respectively has been committed.

SPECIAL INVESTMENT PLANS [PEI] Budget committed until April 2009	BUDGET
Latina	51.013.361
Carabanchel	195.548.279
Tetuán	75.285.858
San Blas	38.317.885
Vicálvaro	101.607.548
Villaverde	123.501.340
Puente Vallecas	65.010.389
Villa Vallecas	136.965.064
Usera 2009-2013	24.515.375
Usera 2006-2008	17.816.242
TOTAL € COMMITTED	829.581.341

Chart 3. Budget committed to the PEI. Source: Directorate-General for Citizen Participation.

3.4.4 Legal framework

In 2003 the City of Madrid approved the Regulation for Citizen Participation which has served as the framework for the PEI and other initiatives of a participatory character developed in the city. Subsequently, the municipal government and FRAVM, in consultation with neighborhood associations and groups of experts, approved internal regulations for the consultation and monitoring process of the PEI. These regulations provide general principles and guidelines and gather together the methodological recommendations elaborated by the University Rey Juan Carlos.

3.5 Citizen participation

This variable refers to the existence and promotion of participatory mechanisms during the process of elaboration, implementation and evaluation of policy. It is important to emphasize that citizens must be involved in the formulation of the policies that directly affect their quality of life, as this strengthens local democracy and make it possible to increase the legitimacy and effectiveness of public actions, thanks to the sense of belonging and the exchange of resources that takes place through the cooperative mechanisms established.

The PEI are framed within a participatory strategy that makes the citizen the center of governmental action and recognizes the importance of social actors in identifying problems, in the search for the best solutions and in the evaluation of governmental actions. The PEI are elaborated and implemented following six stages agreed on previously among the public and social actors in which different participatory mechanisms are integrated.

The first stage corresponds to the organization and launching of the process. The Directorate-General for Citizen Participation convokes, promotes and coordinates a series of preparatory meetings with leadership from the District Councils and representatives of the FRAVM. Each plan is agreed upon independently, based on the particularities of each district.

The second stage is diagnosis or evaluation, where a wide study, with citizen participation, of the needs and priorities of the district is made. The work of gathering the information and the elaboration of the diagnostic document is done through the activation and joint work of three levels of participation in each district: the Citizen Coordinating Commission, where the Directorate-General for Citizen Participation, the leadership of the District Councils, the FRAVM and the neighborhood associations of each district involved in the plan participate; the Forum of Associations, which gathers all the associations and collectives relevant in the district; and the Agenda 21 Commission which is made up of diverse social and economic actors from the district. To guarantee the direct participation of citizens direct and on-line consultations are carried out.

The third stage is the presentation and prioritization of the proposal. Under the framework of the Citizen Coordinating Commission a series of meetings take place with the aim of establishing, through broad agreement, the priorities for investment in the district. During this stage, the neighborhood associations organize assemblies in the neighborhoods of each district with the aim of informing the public about the deliberations underway, gathering opinions about the proposals presented and passing these opinions on to the Coordinating Commission. The diagnostic document passed in the previous stage is the basis for further discussion.

An initial agreement reached, the fourth stage, referring to feasibility studies, is initiated. The proposals given priority are evaluated by different departments of the municipal government of Madrid; studies are completed of their technical and economic feasibility and whether they fall under the competency of municipal government. This process leads to an important exchange of information among the leadership and departments of local government. The results of each study determine the inclusion or exclusion of the actions prioritized, which makes it necessary to convoke additional consultative meetings. This whole stage, of a merely technical character, is limited to the local government.

In the fifth stage of approval and programming, the Area Delegate for Citizen Participation and the members of the Coordinating Commission discuss and approve a draft of the Special Investment Plan with the prioritized and viable activities. After the approval of the document, the Area Delegate for Citizen Participation and the FRAVM sign an agreement that concludes the consultative process. After, the mayor of Madrid and the president of the FRAVM sign, in the presence of the associations and other groups in the city, a protocol in which the definitive plan is approved and in which the guidelines for its execution are set.

In the sixth and final stage of implementation and monitoring, a Commission for Administrative Coordination is created in each district, integrated by the different areas of government affected by each plan, and responsible for the correct completion of the commitments acquired by Madrid's municipal government. A Citizens' Monitoring Commission is also created, in which the Directorate-General for Citizen Participation, the leaders of the District Councils, the FRAVM and neighborhood associations participate. This commission has the task of controlling and evaluating the execution of

the activities in the plans and channeling the information and suggestions contributed by citizens, civil associations and other groups in the district.³

Taking as an example the PEI elaborated in the districts of Puente de Vallecas and Villa de Vallecas, the following chart shows the mechanisms and volume of participation:

TYPE OF MECHANISMS IMPLEMENTED		NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS IN EACH MECHANISM	DURATION OF THE MECHANISMS
Puente de Vallecas			
Round tables		35 associations	6 months
Citizen consultations	Survey	2 295	From 1 to 15 October 2007
	On-line	304	
Interviews with important agents in the district		12	
Villa de Vallecas			
Round tables		19 associations	6 months
Citizen consultations	Survey	2 031	From 19 to 30 November 2007
	On-line	134	
Interviews with important agents in the district		12	

Chart 4. Mechanisms and volume of participation. Source: Directorate-General for Citizen Participation.

4. Conclusions

The incorporation of the political institutional dimension in territorial analysis is fundamental for the success and continuity of the policies that are undertaken, as it permits an evaluation of the institutional framework in which decision-making is made over issues which affect all citizens equally. Additionally, it is a valuable opportunity for creating incentives that mobilize social and private actors around a collective project.

The case of the PEI is an important example of this dimension. From the elaboration of the first plans in 2003 until the latest plans agreed on in 2008, the political-institutional elements have been determinants so that we can currently speak of nine districts, ten plans, and 46 percent of the Madrid population benefiting and a budgetary quantity without precedent in initiatives of this nature. Success is due in great part to the legitimacy and leadership of the actors involved and, fundamentally, to the preeminent role that the municipal government has had in leading the process. The government of the city has contributed its institutional capacity for obtaining and processing information and, what has been essential, its willingness to reorganize public resources to achieve the proposed objectives.

However, this institutional capacity is affected by the fact that the PEI have gone from two initial plans to the current ten, to which must also be added 16 neighborhood plans, making it necessary to establish innovative mechanisms which promote the integration of all participating authorities and the constant flow of relevant information for

³ Until now 132 meetings of the Coordinating Commissions have taken place in the nine districts involved.

decision-making and for monitoring and evaluation of actions. This volume of activity justifies, even more, the value of the political-institutional dimension, as in the case of the PEI, it allows for identifying two critical points in what is referred to as the technical capacity and especially the existence of sufficient technical teams and resources: the coordinating unity of the overall process and the District Councils, authorities upon which the majority of the tasks and responsibilities of the PEI fall. Support should be given in this sense, to strengthening the use of new technologies to advance toward a model of government that is integrated internally and externally and connected to public, private and social agents.

The variable referred to as citizen participation merits special attention. Without a doubt the incorporation of citizens in the formulation of plans has brought with it a series of advantages. First, it has strengthened democratic values as organized citizens participate in public decision-making, permitting the inclusion of different and varied sectors of the population with diverse interests and demands. Secondly, it permits the calculation of the impact that each measure adopted in the planning process has on district populations, in this way reducing the possibilities of failure in the long term.

Thirdly, thanks to the contribution of the participants and the information obtained from them, regular adjustments can be made to internal processes and the course of actions revised, identifying and eliminating factors which are obstacles to the achievement of primary objectives. Fourth, citizen participation is bringing about greater transparency in the allocation of public resources, favoring greater efficiency and effectiveness from public intervention. Lastly, the participatory model adopted is the basis for a greater commitment from politicians and top-level and mid-level administrators to the results and to the introduction of systems for the recognition of good performance on the institutional as well as group or individual level.

However, notwithstanding the foregoing, citizen participation has some drawbacks that must be resolved. First, the multiplicity of actors and the high number of actions contemplated can generate problems in defining responsibilities, which is most evident in evaluating the completion of the proposed objectives and evaluating if public moneys have been invested in an adequate manner. Secondly, the negotiation and search for consensus among the actors involved results, in some cases, in delays or slowness in the tasks of prioritization and coordination, preventing issues being addressed which require immediate action.

Third, the multiplicity of interests of the participating actors can bias the participatory processes, as it is possible that each actor has a specific interpretation of reality in which his/her own interests have priority. As a result, it is not unthinkable that actors try to influence decision-making guided by their own interests. Fourth, it is possible that conflicts are produced between the technical vision of the officials of the municipal government and the vision that the citizens or other social actors have of social reality.

Fifth, the actors participating in the PEI can be affected by the procedural inertia of the innumerable meetings for the prioritization of objectives, of coordination and of monitoring associated with the plans and lose their true purpose.

Finally, citizens and social actors can have high expectations for their participation, and if not satisfied with the results of the PEI, can undermine the general credibility of the

participatory process and affect the mobilization of social actors around other initiatives of this type in the future.

Faced with these obstacles, political leaders must see participation not as an end in itself, but rather basically and fundamentally as a means that citizens have to improve the quality of their lives. This carries with it the obligation, particularly on the part of the municipal government, of integrating social collectives which are generally excluded or marginalized from decision-making processes, as well as trying to connect with the maximum number of associations, groups and individual citizens that are interested in participating.

For participation to be successful it is important that the objectives of the process be clear and the interests and roles of the actors clearly identified; it being essential to define the responsibility of each actor during the whole participatory process. A fundamental step in this sense is the strengthening of the institutional framework along lines which guarantee the preservation of values of public interest and encourage trust among the participants.

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