# INSTITUTIONAL INNOVATION

# AND CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

# THE CASE OF LOCAL AGENDA 21

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Sustainable development is "one that meets the needs of present generations
without undermining the resources of future generations to meet theirs »
(Bruntland, 1987). The paradigm of sustainability and its variant directed to action - development
sustainable - have been born as an alternative to exacerbated consumer capitalism
and progress without ecological limits, under the belief
that the prevailing economic-political model
can not achieve the development objectives
sustainable. You can say that sustainability
emerges from the contradictions of capitalism
(Krueger and Agyeman, 2004). Therefore, it is imposed
a new model of social, economic relations
and institutional measures to overcome deficiencies
of the current model, of market agents
isolated, which are related, on the basis of the
rational search of self-interest, in some markets
organized by the "invisible hand".
The idea of sustainability tries to alert us to the
need to balance economic development,
the evolution of social systems and balance
of the ecosystem that gives them sustenance. It is, therefore, a
concept that integrates environmental areas,
economic and social, and although it is not specified
explicitly, also institutional trends
and social trends, that of one or the other
way they affect the demand exerted in the market,
They are important in this process.
At the center of such tendencies, and as a fundamental axis

of the sustainability process, are the

citizens and their commitment and participation in

same. First, because they must be the ones who

decide on the activities that in the future

they will impact on their lives, and secondly,

so that between them and the rest of the agents of said

society the necessary information flows are generated,

so that they can be aware

of the consequences in terms of sustainability

of your daily actions.

Local Agenda 21 (A21L) is the tool designed

to work for sustainable development from

an optics radically different from the traditional one.

It constitutes a transnational program that includes,

at the same time, sustainable development objectives (in

that integrates transversely and comprehensively

368> Ei 205

I. CARRASCO MONTEAGUDO

goes environmental, social and economic issues)

and governance (Joas and Gronholm, 2004).

We could say that the A21L is the first case of

application of a new governance in which the

citizenship has a renewed prominence.

This document tries to reflect on the advances

of the concept of sustainable development, and more in

concrete, of its main tool (A21L) with

relationship to the role of citizens in the process

political economy and the forms of governance that

they are required. To do this, in a first section

briefly review the main features

of the A21L from the theoretical point of view. After

the main application experiences are reviewed

in Europe. In the third section, the new

role of citizens and participation, while

that in the fourth, we reflect on the necessary

institutional innovation process. The work closes

with a section of conclusions.

THE LOCAL AGENDA 21 AND DEVELOPMENT

SUSTAINABLE

Agenda 21 (Agenda 21) was born at the Summit of

United Nations Environment Program

Janeiro (1992) as a holistic action program

and long-term in order to mark the countries

a common path for sustainability in the Century

XXI. Agenda 21 recognizes the need for

local action and the importance of citizen involvement

and rest in the hope that participation

can help the public decision maker to take

better decisions, than improving access to

exchange of information from place to a process

more comprehensive learning, than knowledge

of the citizens of your local environment

can avoid planning errors and increase

the legitimacy and acceptability of the measures

potentials (Feitchtinger and Pregernig, 2005)

Europe has been the most active continent in the development

and implementation of Agenda 21. Various conferences

(table 1) have taken place, constituting

forums for debate and communication of experiences

local sustainable development (1).

Within the general framework of Agenda 21, the local

emerges as the most appropriate level of government

for sustainability, and local authorities spend

to be key agents for the application of their strategies

(Barrutia, Aguado and Echevarria, 2007). It starts

to speak, therefore of Agenda 21 Local (A21L).

206 368> Ei

First Conference. - Cities become co-responsible for human well-being and nature

Aalborg, 1994 - Cities recognize an important role in changing lifestyles, production,

d

e space distribution

- The cities recognize that each one is characteristic

- The cities are committed to solve their own problems under the principle of agreement

- Cities commit to devising local action plans

Second Conference

Lisbon, 1996

- Local authorities must facilitate, energize and lead the A21L process until the rest

of agents develop the necessary momentum

- Local authorities must promote internal networks of agents engaged in government

and municipal management

Third Conference

Hannover, 2000

- The international community is urged to support local self-government (financial autonomy)

- National governments are urged to create political frameworks to support sustainable development

- National governments are urged to recognize cities as valid interlocutors for

the realization of sustainable international development projects

Fourth Conference

«Inspiration for the future»

- Advocate for the promotion of participatory democracy (open decision-making process,

transparent and responsible)

Aalborg, 2004 - It advocates cooperation with other local entities and other levels of government

- Sustainable municipal management is advocated (processes of local sustainability in the management itself

municipal cross-cutting to all municipal areas)

Fifth Conference - The lack of relationship between authorities, municipal technicians and citizens is recognized

«Bringing commitment to the streets»

Seville, 2007

TABLE 1

THE EUROPEAN CONFERENCES OF SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND PEOPLES

Source: self made.

Conference Main conclusions on governance and citizenship

INSTITUTIONAL INNOVATION AND CITIZEN PARTICIPATION ...

The A21L is drawn as a tool for the

open, flexible and based on sustainable development

the active participation of local communities.

The opening characteristic is the most important component

important and assumes that the protagonism of

citizens and their participation is fundamental, and

that the solution of conflicts must be given by negotiations

open That is why it is the most problematic

practical, due in many cases to

the deficits of participation of companies

present, and the difficulty of organizing such participation

within given institutional structures.

The local administration is required to adopt a

active attitude to the process: develop a vision

long-term commonality of what a city or city is

sustainable town; invite all sectors to the

active participation; make decision making

an open, transparent and responsible process;

to cooperate with other local entities and other levels

of government; to consolidate and root processes

of local sustainability in the municipal management

(transversality).

In sum, the A21L is a tool for development

decentralized sustainability, which requires answers

proactive by the local public sector

as well as greater autonomy, while the

participation, as a means to mobilize support

popular and facilitate the support of the strategies,

makes essential (Echebarría et al., 2004).

This means radically changing the panorama of

public policies by advocating a methodology

«From bottom to top» and transversal.

THE APPLICATION OF THE LOCAL AGENDA 21

IN EUROPE

As stated above, Europe has been the

continent more active in the application of the agendas

21. However, these tools have not

Draft in all countries with the same intensity.

Following Echebarría, Barrutia and Aguado (2007),

We could classify them into three groups: (a) Pioneer countries

(Sweden, United Kingdom and Holland) and the rest of

Scandinavian countries (Denmark, Norway and

Finland), in which more than 65% of the

local authorities have initiated processes of

Agenda 21, with the exception of the Netherlands, (which still

being one of the first to mobilize after the summit

of Rio, has somewhat smaller proportions).

(b) Germany and Austria, with a late response

and a weak follow-up and (c) Mediterranean countries

(Italy, Portugal, Spain and France) plus Ireland;

with an interest in the much more recent Agenda 21,

that has allowed some of them (Spain and

Italy) to move faster following the lessons of

the previous experiences.

From the study of the different European experiences,

give off a series of elements that, from a

otherwise, they have conditioned the processes of

implantation of A21L:

one-

| Size is an explanatory factor of the answer

from municipalities to the Agenda 21 process (Kern

et al., 2004), because the dimension of governments

local, determines in turn the disposition of resources

and capabilities.

two-

| There is a positive relationship between the level of autonomy

municipal level and the degree of implementation of

A21L (Joas et al., 2007). It especially affects the autonomy

fiscal (legal and political) of local governments,

especially in matters related to the

Environment

tea, economy and social affairs.

3-

| The lack of momentum on the part of the levels of

supra-municipal government can slow down considerably

the process (Narodoslawsky, 2001). It has been

manifested as fundamental clear leadership

and a long-term commitment by the levels

of government, as well as financial support,

the contribution of human resources and creation

of technical support structures (Echebarría

et. al., 2007).

4-

| The participatory tradition and the environmental culture

of the regions favor the diffusion of the processes

of A21L (Eckeberg, 2000).

5-

| The existence of a horizontal organizational structure

that allows collaboration between different

departments of the municipality also favors the development of the A21L (Joas et al., 2007). This does reference to transversality, understood as the ability to integrate in the same strategy the different policy instruments that act about a reality; transversality and participation have been the factors identified as most important in the management of Agenda 21 (Castiella and Subirats, 2007).

6-

| The existence of leaders or agents who lead the project also benefit the implementation and development of the projects (Joas et al., 2007).

7-

| A political orientation of the municipal corporation sensitive to the philosophy of sustainable development It also facilitates these processes (Sancassiani, 2005)

8-

| The information and the formation of the municipalities it is also an important factor; The complexity A21L technique, inhibits in many cases its diffusion

368> Ei 207

I. CARRASCO MONTEAGUDO

tion, so that the existence of orientations towards good practices and transfer institutions (consultants, etc.) favor the process. Even the The fact of belonging to a network affects the greater involvement of local governments, which As mentioned, it is positive in the development of the Agendas (Echebarría, et. al., 2007).

On the other hand, from the study of Spanish experiences, The following deficiencies stand out (Echebarría,

et al., 2004):

? The lack of cooperation between regions and coordination between administrative levels different regions. While some regions have understood the need to promote creation of sustainable city networks to enable them share information and resources, others on the other hand, they have not done it; missing, so many times cooperation between municipalities. In addition, the lack of regional planning and integration of the principles of A21L in the highest-ranking policies, is reflected in budgetary allocations for this type of measures, at best, modest.

? Transversality is difficult to achieve. In the In most cases, the development of the A21L is in charge of the environmental departments, so other areas of the municipality can see these issues as a burden. The creation of exclusive departments and, possibly, their connection direct to the mayor's office would be positive.

? The successful application of the processes of A21L require perceiving the individual as the element most important part of the LA21 process, because public decision makers need feedback continuous of the information available to them and must be facilitated by citizens and because their involvement in the design and implementation of Concrete measures must be basic. For this, new Participation channels must be created or improved so that they serve as a communication channel (i) for the public to raise their concerns and (ii) so that you can become aware

of the need to change some habits of

consumption, and can learn how to redirect such

behaviors The mobilization of citizens

is, therefore, a key element that together with that of

transversality, it is costing a lot to reach.

CITIZENS AND PARTICIPATION IN THE AGENDA 21

LOCAL

Some geographers doubt the ability of

municipalities to move towards sustainability. In

In the case of the United States, Lake (1988) explained

that this distrust is due, among other things,

to the lack of authority, of resources, and especially of

power to initiate fundamental transformations

in the production and consumption systems needed

in order to achieve sustainable development.

Success stories (2) teach us that the

The A21L process must be articulated in several phases.

In the initial phase, the impulse and direction of the administration

local (especially by officials of the

areas of environment and urban planning) is very

important, following a political-economic scheme

Classic type from top to bottom (top-down).

Next, a new approach must be taken

that emphasizes citizen participation and innovations

Institutions: coordination meta-structures

at the supra-local level, offices or agencies of

coordination at the local level, platforms

negotiation for the development of projects (workshops

of projects and ideas), etc. In es

ta second

phase, the coordination offices play a role

mediator, while citizens will have

gained autonomy and self-determination capacity.

The interaction and structuring of the dialogue

between the more technical offices and the participation forums

citizen will result in different types

and levels of participation.

Feichtinger and Pregernig (2005) provide us with a

analytical framework to study the different groups

of citizens based on their abilities and

capabilities to (1) identify autonomously

their own interests and (2) take those interests to

the practice (that is, if they have enough knowledge,

material resources and political power).

The combination of those two skill groups

and capabilities give rise to four possible images

different from the citizen, one of which,

obviously, it will be inconsistent, because one can not

be unable to identify their own interests and, to the

Once, be able to carry them out.

Citizens are inserted into political programs and

modes of participation. The first ones will determine

the type of mediation that exists between interests

citizens' politicians, and the second the type and

the degree of participation they have in life

public. The result of all the above is summarized

in table 2.

In the first type (instructive citizens), the agents

they are little more than mere taxpayers

and consumers of public goods. The political decision maker,

you must arrange what is good for them and

teach them how to act, in this case, in terms

of sustainability. This type of citizens is related

with models of paternalistic type (although not

necessarily authoritarian), in which decision makers

public should educate and advise them.

Judicious citizens, on the other hand, are invited

by the public decision maker to express their wishes and

concerns, but it is still required that this veils

and defend your interests. Citizens relate

in a mediation model of interests of the

type "needs model", in which the participation

is understood as a consultation process

and information exchange.

Finally, educated or enlightened citizens,

can be considered as true subjects

politicians who have more autonomy for action

when it comes to identifying and achieving your interests. These

citizens are related to a model of

mediation of "empowerment" interests or

training, in which politicians and own

public administration are reduced to the role of

mediators

The process of A21L starts from the assumption of citizens

instructive, within a paternalistic model

in which cities commit themselves to lead the

process of change and political transformation that

It will culminate in a model of "empowerment". The

lot of experiences put into place

have allowed to house the three possible types of citizens,

However, at the 5th Conference

European Center for Sustainable Cities and Towns, "Taking

commitment to the streets »(Seville, 2007)

recognizes the lack of a generalized relationship between,

authorities, municipal technicians and citizens, what

that makes it difficult for them to know about the problems

real (at street level) and therefore limits the possibilities

to give them an answer

From this we can deduce that most of the

municipalities are still in the models

initial paternalistic, in which the process of A21L

is being led by experts (technocratic strategies)

who think they know what is best for

citizens and strive to educate and inform them.

The cities, therefore, in their majority,

They are having difficulties facilitating movement

towards a model of participatory democracy,

characterized by the involvement of citizens.

What is causing most problems is, precisely,

the mobilization and involvement of society

civil society, which inhibits the possibility of generating processes

of political decision-making (based on

negotiation) alternative to hierarchical forms

prevailing until now. Without such participation, no

it is possible that new institutional relationships (and

new institutions) can be installed.

FROM GOVERNMENT TO GOVERNANCE

The paradigm of sustainable development, and the application

of the A21L as a tool of it,

it requires certain institutional modifications. He

makes it necessary to pass a logic of coordination

policy in which the achievement has prevailed

of objectives marked from above, to a mode of

self-reflective organization of independent actors,

who, however, recognize their dependence

reciprocal and are able to organize to promote

the change, that is, the passage of the

governance to governance (3).

During the decades of the 80s and 90s, we have

assisted (in particular in the countries of the Union

European Union) to a double process of "emptying" the

nation-states: from below, due to the demands

of greater autonomy of the reg

ions, and from

above, by the movements of formation and consolidation

of large supranational regional blocs.

Decentralization and transfer of competences

from top to bottom, it has been seen

accompanied by the increase in demands and

mobilization of sub-national spaces (below)

up), within a new regionalism, compensator

of the pervasive dynamics of globalization

(Perry and May, 2007).

368> Ei 209

Citizens are able to identify their interests autonomously

NO YES

Citizens are able to put their interests into practice

NO YES

Citizens Citizens, instructive Citizens, judicious Educated citizens

Political Program Paternalistic model Needs model "empowerment" model

Modes of Participation

Exchange of information in

an address (Instruction)

Dual information exchange

(Query)

Dialogue

(Control of citizens)

TABLE 2

TYPES OF CITIZENS, POLITICAL PROGRAMS AND PARTICIPATION MODES

I. CARRASCO MONTEAGUDO

However, some authors have emphasized

the problems posed by the mismatch between

functional political-administrative structures and

economics of spaces, which, in particular,

hides the importance of subnational actors,

which can play an important role

in the development processes. (Ache, 2000;

Tewdwr-Jones and McNeil, 2000).

Today, from the perspective of sustainable development, they are

unavoidable new advances in the theory of governance

policy, to pick up the different relationships

multiscalars that occur when considering

new spaces (like cities) and new ones

tools (such as Agenda 21 Local).

Strategies for sustainable development, and in particular

the tool constituted by the A21L advocate

by bottom-up methodologies (bottomup),

where the local, and sometimes even levels

inferiors (the neighborhood, the district), they acquire, as

we have seen in the previous sections, a renewed

leadership. In turn, the need for inclusion

and interconnection of these environments in networks

regional, regional and international is also

remarkable.

Also, issues of social or cultural order, to

often forgotten, they now stand out as central.

For Agenda 21, citizens have a

protagonist role, on the one hand, in the detection of

priorities for action, and on the other, in determining

of how to achieve them from the perspective of the

sustainability New mechanisms for intensification

of citizen participation and commitment

political, as well as the development of competencies

for the debate, negotiation and achievement of

consensus, they become urgent.

The A21L is, therefore, also a tool for

democratization of municipal policy and transformation

of the current forms of representation

local democracy based on political parties,

since in the current political model, the limits between

the government, political parties and civil society

are not often clear and civil society does not

has been able to develop as a sphere

autonomous Participation and integration in institutions

corporatists, such as unions and cameras

of commerce, has been crucial for participation

in this system (Novy and Hammer, 2007).

Therefore, the transition towards ideal scenarios

proposed by the A21L requires certain changes

in governance. At first, the municipalities

they must gain power quotas in making

decisions on issues related to sustainability.

After, new forms of access and participation

in the political life of local actors

They must be organized. The A21L must be, therefore,

understood as an important political process

(Joas and Grönholm, 2004).

Different institutional spaces, in the style of

"Councils for Sustainable Development" have to be juxtaposed

to existing institutions, without

occasions coincide with the distribution of power

traditional politician This, to allow permanent structures

of representation and debate among citizens;

to become "schools of participation

»Improve social skills and the

know-how of collective action; to reinforce

potential to search for approaches and solutions

innovative, flexible and participatory before the different

problems; to coordinate with the elites

political and administrative local or regional; for

share information within regional networks,

national or international and to allow

modernization of administrative structures

current

The institutions of sustainability should look for their

compatibility (and sometimes reconciliation) with existing ones,

so that problems can be confronted

like the environmental ones, whose dimensions

scalars are not adequately addressed by

the current institutions (Meadowcroft, 2002). To the

style of intermediary organizations (boundar

Y

of bridging organizations) defined by Cash,

Adger, Berkes, Garden, Lebel, Olsson, Pritchard and

Young (2006), the Development Councils

Sustainable must fulfill an intermediation role

between different areas of activity, levels and

scales, and facilitate the transformation of structures

centralist and hierarchical in more horizontal systems

and flexible (Novy and Hammer, 2007).

CONCLUSIONS

The paradigm of sustainable development, and the application

of the A21L as a tool of it,

it requires important changes in relationships

social and political Two kinds of pluralism are

needed: institutional pluralism and pluralism

of citizen participation groups.

The A21L process aims at a social scenario and

ideal politician in which citizens who know how to identify

autonomously their interests and are capable

to put them into practice, they are related in a

participation model based on dialogue

continuous between different agents. For this, it is done

the government's move to governance, from

a logic of political coordination in which prevails

the achievement of objectives marked from above

210 368> Ei

INSTITUTIONAL INNOVATION AND CITIZEN PARTICIPATION ...

ba, to a self-reflective organization mode of

independent actors, who recognize, however,

their reciprocal dependence and are capable of

organize to promote change.

The governance of sustainability is causing

modifications that go beyond substitution

of the national states by regional agents and

local when implementing development policies.

Much more changes are taking place

subtle, sometimes ambiguous and difficult to draw. The

cities, rather than scenarios of application of

policies, they must be participants of them;

beyond playing a role in the application of

policies, they must be authentic policy-makers. New

instances for participation, representation,

the debate, the decision making and the application of

the measures have to be created. New process

of institutional innovation are required.
Paradoxically, a topdown approach must be applied
to allow structures of self-organization
of citizenship (bottom-up). That is, the institutions
in force should favor the evolution from the
citizen instructible to the trained citizen (or
illustrated) to enable self-determination in
the lowest levels of power and generate a culture
of participation and consensus. The current powers
politicians should promote new institutions that
host new ways to democratize politics
municipal, different from the traditional ways of
representative democracy at the local level based on
political parties. The institutions of democracy
representative must give rise to others of democracy
participatory direct Two kinds of pluralism are
therefore necessary for sustainable development: the
institutional pluralism and the pluralism of groups
citizens of participation.

NOTES

[1] At the First European Conference of Cities and Towns
Sustainable, more than 600 participants agreed on a
document, the Aalborg Charter, in which the signatories
committed to work for sustainability at the local level,
formalizing its accession to the European Campaign of
Sustainable Cities and Towns. Today the formal beginning of the
A21L in a municipality is the signature of the letter. At present,
Signatory local authorities, more than 2600
from more than 45 countries (in Spain there are 1114 municipalities
adhered).
http://www.aalborgplus10.dk/media/short_list_20-07-
2007.pdf).

[2] Vid. for example the case of Vienna in Feichtinger and Pregernig, 2005

[3] The definition of governance of Jessop (2002) is assumed here: governance is the reflective self-organization of independent actors involved in complex relationships of interdependence reciprocal, basing such self-organization on the continuous dialogue and in the fact of sharing resources for develop common projects that provide the benefit mutual and to manage the contradictions and dilemmas that inevitably arise in such situations.

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