Original Research Paper

# Participatory Territorial Approaches: The Municipal Culture Agendas, Identity and Local Knowledge

**[1]Alejandro Noboa, [2]Mariano Suárez and [3]Natalie Robaina**

[1]*Ciencias Sociales, Universidad de la República, Uruguay*
[2]*Salto, Universidad de la República, Uruguay*
[3]*Sociales, Universidad de la República, Uruguay*

**Abstract:** This article offers a global presentation on the participatory process of elaboration of the Municipal Agendas of Culture taken from thirty-eight Municipalities of twelve Uruguayan regions; they were designed with the participation of great diversity of local participants between the months of August and December of 2017. The article gathers the synthesis of the conceptual framework, summarizes the work methodology, systematizes the results of participation in all the local processes, as well as the evaluations of the participants and presents lessons learned, conclusions and recommendations. It also explains in depth the processes and thoughts which have given birth to the specific case of the program developed in Uruguay.

**Keywords:** Participation, Action Research, Local Identity

## Introduction

This article offers a global presentation on the participatory process of elaboration of the Municipal Agendas of Culture (AMC) of thirty-eight Municipalities of twelve Uruguayan regions; they were designed with the participation of great diversity of local participants between the months of August and December 2017. The article gathers the synthesis of the conceptual framework, summarizes the work methodology, systematizes the results of participation in all the local processes, as well as the evaluations of the participants and presents lessons learned, conclusions and recommendations.

The Municipal Governments were protagonists in the elaboration of their cultural agendas. The Municipal Councils and Mayors invited the local people, generated the workspaces, managed the meeting places and generated the conditions of participation, besides offering orientations and participating in the dialogue among the locals.

The conceptual reference framework, the methodological approach and its conclusions and recommendations are presented in the following sections.

## Conceptual framework

### Changes in the Concept of Development

After World War II, one part of the world had to be rebuilt and the other had to be developed. A notion of essentially economic development and industrial economy prevailed, whose goal was to be achieved by processes driven from the outside, seeking the rebirth of war-torn economies, which applies especially to the societies of the so-called Third World. This genesis of the notion of development marked its contents and guided the actions carried out by international organizations and by the well known "central" countries. Development meant travelling a predetermined path, thanks to a set of "natural laws" marking the stages, advances and overcoming blockages originating in certain local traditions (Rostow, 1959; Arocena, 1995).

Subsequently, due to the detection of the so-called limits of economic development, this deterministic and predetermined concept for developing nations is problematized, even from the famous work of dependency theory (Cardoso and Faletto, 1973) where it is expressed that the development process of this group of countries would never go the default route, but that this is a systemic component of the economy of the advanced capitalist countries.

But what is important to note is that, when construction or reconstruction met its limits, it began to speak of development in all countries around the world. This has led the appeal of this notion and to questioning the ways it follows. The idea of a unique and progressive path within a limitless horizon is no longer easily accepted. The idea of economic development came into

crisis, forcing theorizing in another direction and talking about own development, in a particular way, taking into account the specificities of the societies involved. The new look defines the problem of development now integrated (economic, social, cultural, environmental, institutional) and oriented towards the tendencies of decentralization and the valuation of the local initiative (Arocena, 1998).

In this sense and together with the evolution of the concept of sustainable development (which warns about the need for economic growth with social equity and environmental balance and recognizes new participants in the development scene), visions of development emerge in much of the world, including Uruguay, that rescue the local component against the centralized planning that had predominated and think of development from more dimensions, transcending economic visions and including social, environmental and cultural aspects. In the following there are some approaches that rescue the local and the cultural in the planning, execution and evaluation of development policies.

### Local Development

Taking into account the discussion about the concept of development, a complex approach has been built, which rescues history, model and system from the different views of the local historicist, evolutionary and structural development paradigms, taking into account the local identity, the system of those involved and the mode of development, as well as local strategies and initiatives in a context of globalization (Arocena, 1995). It is not an ideal, rational model, nor does it have a unique answer (Barreiro, 2000) although it does propose a method of analysis based on the relevance of local identity, the system of those involved and the mode of development.

Local development is understood as a dynamic, non-linear process of improving the economic, social, environmental, political-institutional and cultural dimensions of a territory. The process focuses on endogenous capacity in terms of population, socio-cultural, institutional, economic-productive factors and also takes into account exogenous factors (Albuquerque and Dini, 2013). It recognizes the diversity of the area and its different possible configurations, for example, city, municipality, micro-region, department (Gallicchio and Winchester, 2003).

From this approach, territorial development strategies start from the basis of the participation of different participants and local institutions and tend towards a more comprehensive approach to development dynamics, for which it is necessary to address territorial characteristics and specifics, their past, present and the future desired by the local society (territory project) and articulate national and local strategies, since it is not about isolated processes.

In a context of globalization, local action is interconnected with different phenomena that occur at different geographical scales and the participation of those in development networks that are established within the local society and between it and the environment is key. The challenge is to be inserted competitively and maximize local/regional capacities so that territories are prepared and take advantage of opportunities that may arise in dynamic and

changing contexts (Arocena, 1995). Local development requires consultation processes between agents -sectors and forces -that interact in the territory, to promote, with the creative and responsible participation of citizens, a common project of integral development.

The local development approach is present in the construction of municipal culture agendas, since it is a process that involves local people's planning strategies and actions at the local level, in coordination with other territorial levels.

### Cultures and Local Identities and Development

Culture can be understood "as a fabric of social relations and at the same time, as a product of these social relations" (Plan Cultural De Barcelona, 1998). Based on this idea and in line with the emergence of local recognition and respect for cultural diversity, in recent decades, a principle of coexistence has begun to be promoted in much of the world.

Local identities, as part of the collective identity, are part of the cultural and symbolic capital of a country. The national identity integrates all local and private identities into a single entity that sometimes represents everyone with great success and in some cases selects features different from those that sustain the localities, but that other times generalizes without giving good account of the existing diversity. The development of local identities, cultural and artistic values of the sub-regions serves the country, to which this diversity enriches and serves the people, being part of the whole without renouncing their particularities.

The binding concepts of development and culture have gone through different and even contradictory assessments, from the visualization of local particular and identity cultures as an obstacle to development to an interest focused on the promotion of cultural industries, among others. It is possible to affirm that culture has become a main theme when designing development plans and processes and today they cannot be conceived without taking into account the

identity aspects of the populations. This is a new concept understood as a space for collective democratic construction of symbolic universes, social practices and political agendas. (Rodriguez, 2000).

In this sense, the task of mapping municipal realities and developing local cultural agendas is on that path.

From Uruguay Integra (OPB, 2012) it is thought that the Municipal Culture Agenda (AMC) is an instrument within the Participatory Municipality designed for the new territorialities in Uruguay as of 2009, which seeks to strengthen municipal management for the development of local culture with citizen participation. They consist of the implementation of a participatory planning process aimed at detecting the needs and interests of the community in this matter and delineating the objectives and actions for its promotion and implementation.

In addition to the capacity of the Municipal Culture Agendas (hereinafter AMC) to develop the various cultural manifestations in themselves, they also have the potential to strengthen the internal and external links of local society, affecting other dimensions of local development. The deployment of this potential of the AMC depends in part on the harmony they have with the interests and concerns of those involved, so that local participation in the design of the agendas becomes transcendental.

*Decentralization and Participation*

The national states begin the modification of their centralized state structures to adhere to the decentralizing tendency, which does not explain itself and is caused or pushed by other primary forces that must be unveiled to understand the very nature of decentralization.

Firstly, decentralization is driven by the Scientific and Technological Revolution from Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). These produce changes that enhance each other to create a more favouring (sometimes essential) environment for the introduction of decentralized decision-making systems.

Secondly, decentralization is driven by state reform, at least in Latin America. Recovered formal democracy throughout Latin America in the early '90s, have striven to move away from old systems, replacing them with new trends in which agents of the permanent process of change are recognized in non-state actors.

Thirdly, decentralization is fuelled by a growing regional demand from organizations of the same civil society, especially territorial-based organizations. Fourthly, it should be borne in mind that decentralization was encouraged in the 80s and 90s by privatization trends in our region. Care is needed when explaining this aspect, which is basically very simple. If the privatization act allows the emergence of a new independent decision-maker in the system or country in question, for example, a foreign investor who was not present or a civil group formed ad-hoc for these purposes, the result is an extension of the number of independent decision makers present in the system and this, from the strict point of view of economic theory, means expanding decentralization but not democracy in principle. Finally, we must add another force behind

decentralization and that has to do with the logic of globalization: It is impossible to be competitive in today's world with centralized structures because they no longer have the required speed. In other words, the external opening of globalization necessarily forces an internal opening of apolitical nature (Boisier, 1996).

The decentralization process that has been operating in the region occurs at a time of political and academic changes. Politically, we refer to the imperative of democratic deepening in Latin America simultaneously with the democratic rise of the left in most of the continent's governments. In academics, we refer to the emergence of an alternative paradigm, governance, which has a close connection with new trends in public management and with territorial development through the approach of local governance and multilevel governance.

Governance refers to a different idea from the traditional vision of government whose livelihoods were fundamentally the centralized and hierarchical relations between rulers and governed. Now it refers to the need to involve all those affected by the policy in all its phases as it is elaboration, decision making, execution, evaluation. This new style of government and public management is characterized by a greater degree of cooperation and linkage between the State and non-state organizations within the framework of the decision-making networks developed between different government levels and social and private actors.

From governance, decentralization reinforces the territorial perspective and relations between levels of government. In the face of the crisis of centralism, decentralization presents the possibility of thinking from a horizontal-territorial logic and addressing issues collectively in terms of a geographically defined location. It is considered as a "positive" and "democratic" component to the extent that the institutions and processes of each country and region are transparent. Decentralizing processes include, among others, fundamental activities such as elections, open hearings, participatory budgets and legal processes, which must be exempt from corruption and must be accountable to the people. Good governance promotes equity, participation, pluralism, transparency, accountability and the rule of law, so that it is effective, efficient and lasting. This implies the adoption of inclusive and participatory mechanisms that involve the deliberation of different participants, resources, knowledge and own actions.

*The municipalization Process in Uruguay*

The implementation of the Law of Political Decentralization and Citizen Participation in Uruguay has been trying since 2010 to install and consolidate the municipal level of government by updating the country regarding democratic systems. The Uruguayan State has

been heading for a democratizing reform, oriented on two dimensions: Modernization and institutional strengthening (Narbondo, 2010) and approach to citizenship. The objectives of the new institutional framework point to the democratization of the local through universal election of municipal authorities and citizen participation mechanisms, as well as favouring local development from the territorial level as a concrete field of action (Oroño 2010).

At present, between 2015 and 2020, municipal governments are completing their second period in the country and progress is expected in the capacities of this new level of government within their areas of competence, among which is local culture.

The Uruguayan municipalization process is progressing along a path marked, among others, by gradualness (a new level of governments that have been elected and that do not depend hierarchically on the departmental mayor or other national hierarchy have been established, but do not have legal status and do not have fiscal autonomy) and proximity to citizenship. The Law has provided the municipal level with concrete instruments of citizen participation, in which the figure of public hearings stands out as the most used mechanism. However, according to the relevance that each municipality grants to the involvement of local society in municipal issues, various social participation strategies have been developed, from consultative instances to others with a more direct impact on the development of the community. (Bisio, 2017).

When analyzing the municipalization process in Uruguay, it develops between several dichotomies, namely: Deconcentrationvs. decentralization. The concept of decentralization that is assumed in this proposal refers to the notion that Veneziano (2009) proposes an integral process, characterized by different dimensions, which naturally involve participants of various kinds (social, political, economic, cultural) at different territorial levels. This vision understands that decentralization can produce benefits but they are not direct effects; analysing the process, this has been so far more a decentralization of administrative services than an effective decentralization process, in the dimensions and integrality outlined above.

What has been observed is that in Uruguay a process has been generated that is midway, although a space has been established where governments that have been elected have been established, which do not depend hierarchically on the departmental mayor or other nationwide system, the financing they receive still needs support from the departmental government, they do not have legal status and they do not have fiscal autonomy.

Mayor's office vs. municipalization. The process underway so far, realizes that the municipality is overshadowed by the process of mayor, that is, the figure of the mayor stands out from that of the municipal council. Some studies show that the figure of the mayor has dismantled the actions of organized groups in territories: "In some Municipalities the game of party politics has inhibited and dismantled pre-existing organized groups in the locality, who demobilize before the figure of the elected Mayor, according to the party to which it belongs and because when charging a salary he is responsible" (Andrioli, 2015: 102). There is an asymmetry between the mayor and the councilors, structured according to the following aspects: Mayoral salary compensation, presidency of the sessions of the municipal council by the mayor and double vote of the mayor in case of a tie in the decision-making process. The councilors themselves acknowledge their disengagement from some issues, due to the honorary nature of the designations, which contributes to the decisions that should be of the organ end up being resolutions of the mayor only (Suarez Elías and Andrioli, 2013: 7; Andrioli, 2015).

Legitimizing civil society vs. citizen participation. The few investigations that have addressed the issue of participation, refer fundamentally to the figure of public hearings as the clearest mechanism of population involvement, figures that are clearly indicated in the law as concrete spaces for social participation. Depending on each case, the relevance and definition that has been given to the involvement of local society in municipal issues, that is, each municipality understood the participation from the definition of government members. In this way, municipalities that develop open participation strategies and others that stipulate only consultative instances were identified.

Law 19.272 of September 2014 (complementary to Law 18.567) determines a powerful legal and conceptual framework for municipal actions such as those promoted by the program for the preparation of Municipal Agendas of Culture. Articles 7 and 12, in particular, define the municipal competences in terms of participation of neighbors and civil society organizations in public management and culture, respectively. On the one hand, Article 7 subsection 5 includes "The articulation with the neighbors and the prioritization of existing initiatives, in which they can intervene." And subsection 6 "The relationship with civil society organizations in their jurisdiction. "These competencies not only cover concrete initiatives but also the search for essential synergies for the development of economic, social and/or cultural projects. On the other hand, in matters of culture, Art. 12 subsection 12 includes among the municipal powers: "Formulate and execute social and cultural programs within their jurisdiction, stimulating the development of local cultural activities."

In this way, the Municipal Culture Agendas are framed within the competences provided for in Law 19.272, complementary to Law 18.567; Both laws regulate the matter of municipal decentralization in the country and

particularly the aforementioned articles 7 and 12 enable the consultation of neighbours and social organizations for the elaboration and prioritization of projects and proposals in the cultural matter that concerns us. It should also be noted that the Law does not explicitly state but the theory indicates (Veneziano, 2009) that the consultation of neighbours and social organizations should be open and ensuring that it is as heterogeneous and numerous as possible within the municipal sphere.

## Method

### Research-Action-Participation Methodologies

While the aforementioned discussion was developed in relation to development, a research design inspired by socio-critical paradigm approaches and complexity perspective begins to take place in the academic world (Noboa, 2019; Noboa and Robaina, 2015). The methodologies of action research (Coghlan, 2019), which expanded rapidly in the world from the contributions made by Kurt Lewin (1951 in 1972 edition) in the United States that were later taken up by Latin American researchers, supported by Pedagogical works by Paulo Freire (1970) and the Frankfurt Critical School, such as Fals Borda and Rodriguez Brandao (1986), more recently from Spain but also with experiences in Latin America Tomás Rodríguez Villasante (Red Cimas, 2009). In this sense, these methodological strategies take a turn towards the commitment to social transformation, accompanying the changes in the subjects investigated and researchers (Stringer, 2014), essential to understand social reality with certain claims to also influence the quality of life of the populations involved.

For Latin American Sociology, the relevance of this work has a double purpose: One that has to do with the need to improve the methods of construction of knowledge of the social, especially those with direct effects on theoretical construction, as is the case with participatory methods and also those who assume the obligation to promote at the same time the knowledge of these transformations in the social reality in which they act, accelerating the impact of the findings on the lives of the populations.

Similarly, in the public policy debate it is no longer disputed that the sustainability of any development strategy relies on the involvement and participation of those involved in the elaboration, decision-making and execution of the policy that values the various actors and their opinions in those processes. Promoting the development of a state management with governance requires the participation of interested parties, in instances that strengthen the trust between government and civil society, expanding opportunities for cooperation and coordination in other words, the need to strengthen the so-called commuter government. In the

processes of local development such as those that are being processed in Uruguay after the creation of the municipalities, the urgent need for strengthening is clear and must go this path of democratic enrichment. In this context, Research Action Participation (IAP) contributes to the notoriety of active development subjects, since it presupposes the constitution of a collective subject capable of intervening with prominence in the resolution of their own ideas. By expanding the possibilities of feedback between complex realities -between the State and civil society -it can stimulate development processes based on local capacities, improving the design and rectification of the different intervention programs. (Contreras, 2002). This proposal to specify the AMC comes in that direction.

These work designs (Greenwod and Levin, 2012), which have been at the base of the AMC, imply not only the realization of diagnoses (with rigor) but also the search for viable alternatives and their execution. These are research designs that actively incorporate the subjects involved in social problems throughout the process (diagnosis, elaboration of alternative proposals, execution and monitoring and evaluation) (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2013).

Participatory methodologies allow us to better understand the social problems of the communities in which we work, share with the population and build paths of improvement in a consensual way (Red Cimas, 2015). To apply these designs it is essential that there is a small group of people trained, or interested in training, in order to achieve a methodological dynamization of the process.

Although no participatory process is the same and that it must be adapted to the specific circumstances in which it occurs, there are some common criteria:

The process is aimed at building common objectives based on the diagnoses developed by the group and for this purpose it is essential to accept that no one has the truth and that both the diagnoses and the ways to deal with the problems must be collectively constructed.

Those involved in the process must be protagonists, there is a subject-subject relationship between researchers and participants and this implies that the participants will provide proposals that will mark the future lines of action. Once the lines of action have been set in motion, it is necessary to evaluate the process itself, monitor and correct it on the fly if it merits it. In this way an action-reflection spiral is generated (Red CIMAS, 2009).

### Participatory Planning Methodology of the Agendas

The participatory design of municipal culture agendas is at the crossroads of the major themes presented above. In addition to the value that each Agenda for local society has in itself, it is also the product of a process

that sought to promote conditions for a planned, autonomous and sustainable cultural development, from citizen involvement and the meeting of local authorities with the members of the culture in each locality.

## Results: Municipalities Involved: Individual AMC and Network AMC

Based on the agreements between Uruguay Integra-OPP and the 38 Municipalities involved in the AMC initiative, 11 Municipal Agendas of Culture were worked on individually (one per municipality) and 12 Municipal Agendas of Culture on a network mode, according to the details offered below.

The methodological approach was the same for both modalities. However, in order to facilitate the viability of joint participatory workshops between municipalities, the workshops rotated among the locations in each network.

All municipalities involved in the process are included here regardless of whether they worked individually or in a network. They are: Municipalities A and D of Montevideo, Suárez, José Pedro Varela, Vergara, Young, Corrales Mines, Libertad, Rodríguez, Paso de los Toros, Ansina, Atlántida, Salinas, Barros Blancos, Junction Olmos, Cannelloni, Los Cerrillos, Santa Lucía, City of the Coast, Nicolich, La Paz, Las Piedras, San Bautista, San Ramón, Solís de Mataojo, Solís Grande, Dead Friar, Arévalo, Santa Clara de Olimar, Juan Lacaze, Tarariras, Rosario, Colonia Valdense, Guichón, Piedras Coloradas, Quebracho, Chapicuy and Lorenzo Geyres.

### Synthesis of the Workshops Carried out

The methodology proposed by the process was developed during an initial meeting with the local authorities and three participatory workshops in which the diagnosis was made on the local cultural reality and the planning of the municipal cultural agendas remaining

in the hands of Uruguay Integra -OPP execution, monitoring and evaluation.

Each workshop lasted approximately three hours, which worked with the following objectives and activities.

The process was developed in different stages, Fig. 1 shows the phases performed. We will then proceed to explain each of the stages by specifying the main technique used in each of them and as developed in the field.

### *Auto diagnosis*

### *Initial Negotiation*

The process was initiated in a participatory manner, negotiating with the project promoting institution (Uruguay Integra Program of the Office of Planning and Budget-OPP), as well as with the social members involved at that time (Municipalities, especially its mayor and council members). The initial negotiation stage involved agreeing on a joint work process (the design of AMC), resolving the starting points in agreement. This implication of the different subjects from the first moment was in response to the intention that the process be participatory in each and every one of its stages. At this time the discussion of the objectives of the work, the commitments to be assumed by the different parties involved, the resources available, among others, were raised. It should be said that it is important to keep in mind that not all participants were involved to the same degree, however, it was relevant to have their opinions from the beginning.

In order to finalize an exhaustive call of the participants from the consulting team and OPP (through the regional references of UI) communications were maintained with Municipal authorities to proceed to an identification of institutional members, leaders and organizations, networks of participants to be convened, thus showing an open, transparent and participatory process.
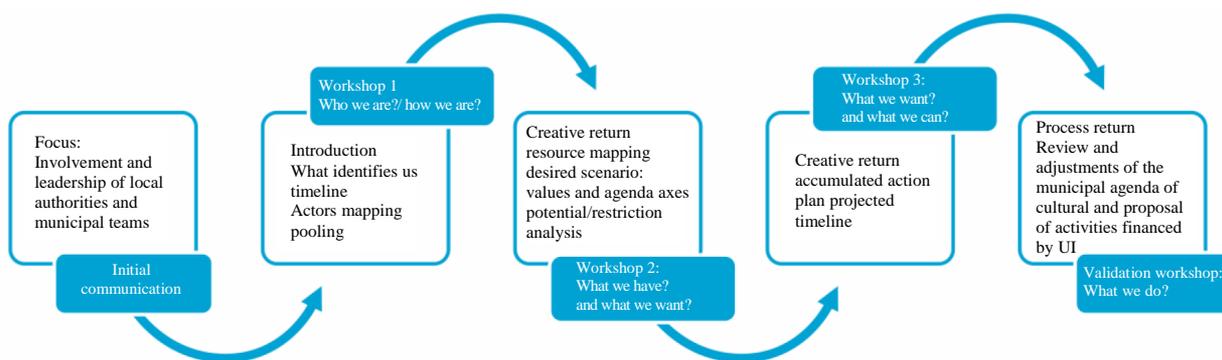


**Fig. 1:** Source: Own elaboration

### *"Brainstorm"*

After the previous agreement with the municipal authorities, we proceeded to work on what was the first workshop where the concepts of culture that exist in the participating population were explored in the first part. Thus, word clouds linked to the subject were produced and a broad notion of culture was built.

### *Timeline*

Subsequently and at this same stage, knowledge of historical events or recent significant events for the community called "historical analyzers" became relevant. Knowing these allowed us to know what those aspects of motivation and interest of the community are.

To identify the moment in which you live in a community, it is relevant to know the history and to start with those aspects that people remember most, or other participatory processes. In order to carry out this historical journey, the Timeline was used as a tool: It consisted of drawing a timeline (establishing months, years, etc., as appropriate) on which the participants noted the events that are considered most relevant, allowing a reconstruction of how previous events have been perceived on the theme that summons them (culture). Here, all versions were collected, although discussions were not exhaustive as to whether or not that was the case; in some cases there have been questions that were later clarified. It was possible to point out in this line the different feelings and anecdotes of opportunity, changes and problems that were generated by the graphical facts, which allowed us to reflect on them and enabled the construction of the first features of the local culture over time.

### *Matrix of Restrictions and Potentialities*

From then on, the Matrix of Restrictions and Potentialities was applied (it is a simplified version of the SWOT matrix), thus avoiding the complex aspects of the technique in its application with people. The simplicity of the Matrix of Restrictions and Potentialities was what was preferred in this initial stage, added to a certain fatigue due to the use of the technique on other occasions that the participants demonstrated.

Finally, in a plenary session, the different matrices achieved through consensus will be presented with a definitive role that will present a first status of the subject matter.

In some cases the use of the SWOT Matrix at this stage is convenient, although here another technique was chosen in order to define and contextualize the situation of a community regarding a theme (the culture in this case), analyzing the following aspects: Strengths, opportunities, weaknesses and threats. The technique is developed in a participatory manner, forming groups (the number of subgroups will depend on the number of workshop participants and it will be ensured that representatives of the same institution/organization are distributed therein) and where everyone's voices were collected through a brainstorm and a subsequent deliberation for the location of the different aspects in each of the dimensions. The strengths indicate the positive internal aspects and do not depend on others while the opportunities refer to positive aspects that are believed to take advantage of external circumstances. On the other hand, the weaknesses refer to the negative aspects of an internal nature and finally, the threats are those that are experienced as a risk and their dependence is external.

### *Drift and Transect*

A last technique that is interesting for its high performance in order to collect a broad vision of women, men, adults, young people and children of the space where they live their daily lives, giving account of preferences, problems and values is the drift and transect. It is a tool that consists of walking with a specific predetermined or drifting route, through the neighbourhood or town, with people who live there to tell what they see, reflecting on the uses and implications of the environment. This tour allows us to identify: How the most immediate environment is, relevant cultural infrastructure, spaces for meetings between neighbors, spaces for cultural activities, pleasant walkable sections, sections of conflicts, what could be enhanced, etc. The route is recorded (recorder, on a card, with a camcorder) and then captured on a map of the route faithful to it, which will then be used for the analysis of the environment and spaces.

Although it is true that the recommended application of the technique, in this case the modality that was applied, implied that the participants had to draw on the printed map the cultural landmarks of the locality, thus being a record of the most relevant elements of the local culture, exit to the outside was avoided so as not to disperse the attention of the group fulfilling the objectives. On several occasions, walks were carried out through the municipality in the company of the Mayor or a Councilor.

### *People Mapping*

Once the initial negotiation was established and the techniques described above were applied, it became necessary to know the social fabric, in order to visualize the people and social groups present in the territory and trace the existing connections between them. The sociogram's mission is to graphically represent the relationships of a group of individuals, who are present at a given time, it functions as an "x-ray" of the moment.

The Mapping of people serves to identify our partners in the project, those that remain isolated or that are not in the tasks that have been proposed and of the alliances

that are needed and must be carried out. It also allows us to visualize what antagonisms are expected to appear and how to counteract them.

For the realization of the sociogram it was important to have a group of six to eight people (open to dialogue, debate and to accept the opinion of others) who know the scope or territory and the people who live there. They were asked which people they know in relation to the theme that was going to be covered (cultural development), with time for them to consider and the names of those that arose through geometric figures inserted below were noted:

- We draw a vertical axis and a horizontal axis on a flip chart. The vertical was divided into three, at whose base those with less power will be placed, in the middle part, those that have medium power, while the top part will be reserved for the people with more power in relation to the subject matter. The horizontal axis is that of identity and support for the proposal and the positions of the people are established in relation to the subject we are dealing with:

  - Firstly, we will indicate those that will be closer to the vertical axis and will be allies -with whom it will be easier to work with
  - Secondly, those who are not against the project, but who 'go their own way' will be considered
  - The third position is that of others or indifferent people, who are those who have no interest in the subject
  - In the last space and the furthest from the horizontal axis we observe the opposites that are those that do not agree with the proposal because they have contrary interests. This vertical axis measures the capacity of power that they have in relation to the analyzed proposal; here we measure high, medium and low power

Once all those involved are located, the relationships between them are plotted:

Through the graphing of these people according to the power and the proximity, or not, that they have on the subject, they could be placed according to their real socio-political weights and forces and their ability to help in our strategies. Once the map was finalized, the areas where it becomes more dense in their relations, where they become more intense, the existing blockages, the articulating elements (dynamizers) and the empty spaces of actors or relationships were reflected. It served to select which groups it is essential to listen to have in order to have a diagnosis with all the "important positions" involved, an aspect that constituted the third step of the process.

As mentioned above, we work with a map of the present to know how people see their current reality, but more than one map can be used: One from the past, with functions of historical analyzer and/or another from the future scenario, to know how they want to see their network re-articulated. Thus, the maps fulfill other functions: (a) To check and evaluate the effects of network recompositions and (b) to set performance objectives.

*New Listening, Multi-Slogans and Flowchart*

Technically, it is advisable to comply with this phase when the mapping of participants will probably make others who did not participate in its elaboration visible, but who it is nevertheless important that we listen to. That is, to continue "going out" to the community, opening up to the people, collecting a wide spectrum of perceptions from the different positions of those involved and also allowing a break from the hegemonic discourses of the majorities. In this case, we do not consider it pertinent to resort to this stage due to the dynamics foreseen by the workshops and the dimensions foreseen for the project. Sometimes the listening techniques that can be applied are diverse, namely: Participant observation, visual techniques (drawings, usually for working with children), interviews and workshops. Due to its high performance and its wide rules of application, the interview stands as the technique to be highlighted at this stage. This technique of the conversational group is understood as a meeting to share perceptions between two people, the interviewer and the interviewee, although it can be applied with more than one respondent, in which, through questions and answers, a communication process is generated that allows the joint construction of meanings.

Once the listening is done, it is necessary to analyse it, reflect on the information generated and then return it to the participants so that they corroborate the analysis produced. In the case at hand, as stated above, this phase was only used accidentally, there was no systematic construction of listening components, but some elements such as those mentioned here were complementary.

The return of the information was done in a simple, accessible and understandable way by building a flowchart, so that it enabled the debate in which people can rethink their positions and their perceptions.

Another alternative that meets these requirements to make the return is to appeal to the Multilem; a tool that was accompanied by speech analysis documents prepared by the motor group.

The difference was that the first allowed a more active participation of the participants, transcending the mere consideration of key informants. In addition, it enabled the different leaders and members of the communities, as well as organizations and institutions, the search for different options to overcome the problems within the scope of the Cultural Agendas. It allowed us to see reality in a different way than we are

used to seeing it: "Get out of the tree, climb the mountain and look at the forest". Those relationships that allow us to demonstrate deeper causes in order to overcome the dilemmas that repeat what is already known are deepened. On the other hand, the flowchart served to return the information based on concrete phrases of greater significance for those involved in relation to the subject in question in order to establish cause -effect relationships between them. For the realization of the flowcharts, phrases expressed by the participants in the workshops were taken and asked to establish the relationships between them and then enable the construction of the problem tree.

### The Problem Tree

In this stage of Creative Workshops where the returns were intended to be creative, as stated, the flowchart was applied and the problem tree was added. The problem tree on the other hand was useful to identify the symptoms that account for a problem and link them with its causes and its most outstanding consequences. Perceptions are deliberated taking the speeches produced in it, to which you can add phrases of aggregates made by others in this group stage of the problem tree. It enables the identification of the issues (represented in the sentences) that are most important for the participant group and allows prioritizing the situations that were later embodied in the comprehensive plan. Specifically, the technique involved the realization of a graph in which the cause-effect relationships between the different aspects of the subject matter in question were reflected, in order to identify the "critical nodes" on which it is going to act: Visibility of the problems - Immediate causes -Deep causes.

With the concretion of these techniques grouped in the creative workshops, the analysis stage was closed, being able to move towards the elaboration of the Comprehensive Plan, which is that of the proposed stage, of action programming.

### Planning

Depending on desirable scenarios (the idea force, "where we want to go") the plans, programs and projects were specified. This stage was also done with the aid of the population, avoiding planning "from above" that, without contemplating citizenship, would likely fail. In other words, people defined what is going to be done, how, with whom, with what resources, in what terms and for what purpose. Here the technique called The Nine Questions was applied; namely:

1) What? (theme to be addressed)
2) Why? (foundation)
3) For what? (objectives)
4) For whom? (recipients)
5) Where? (territorial reference)
6) How? (activities to be carried out and methods)
7) With whom? (people, collaborating entities)
8) With what? (materials, economic resources, times)
9) When? (schedule)

The work done at this stage was systematized by the technical team and embodied in an action plan document that was configured as an operational instrument for the execution and monitoring stage.

It is important to highlight the importance of evaluating the execution of the plan so that errors can be corrected and adjustments are made that allow the objectives set. The evaluations should assess the following dimensions: Results, process and method of work, generation of useful information for the community and the participation of the population.

### Assessment of the Process and Its Results

As a way to contextualize the evaluation, it can be said that in the implementation of the policy, it has been possible to mobilize political and social participants at a good level at local level. In terms of quantitative results achieved, these can be summarized as follows:

- 38 municipalities conducted participatory diagnoses.
- 1 municipality has an incomplete participatory diagnosis (municipality D)
- 22 AMCs were designed from the interaction of municipal governments and local actors
- Participatory diagnostic and planning workshops on all agendas had 653 participants in the first workshop: 509 in the second; and 409 in the third

To collect the assessment of the participants, paper forms were supplied at the end of the workshops. In this way, their perception was collected in relation to the dynamics of the workshops and the participatory process in general. Broadly speaking, the participants showed a very good assessment of the general proposal. Some aspects to highlight:

- Participants' evaluation of the "general assessment" and "thematic contents" of the workshops yielded averages between 3, 5 and 4, on a scale of 1 to 4 (1 Bad, 2 Regular, 3 Good and 4 Very good), in congruence with written comments (e.g., "Truly excellent"; "It was really very good"; "Let it be repeated")
- They were followed on average by the "dynamics" used in the workshops: Although they also had scores between 3 and 4 (Good and Very good)
- The assessment of the "times" of the workshops is where more disparity arose among the participants,

with scores that in most of the workshops reached 3 and in others they touched it but from opposing assessments: For some it should be lower and for others, higher; by way of example, for the same workshop one participant evaluated "Very enjoyable and time passed quickly.", while another says "I would prefer less workshop time to not disperse.")

On the other hand, derived from the observation of the technicians and the dialogue with the actors in different fields, other aspects stand out:

• In the return of many of the participants in most of the AMCs, it was highlighted that: "It was the first time we met to talk about culture" or similar comments. It was found that although in all municipalities there are those with cultural knowledge who know each other, there are only a minority of cases in which they share reflections and discuss orientations. Although there were experiences of coordinating the calendar of cultural activities at the local level (in several locations) or even departmental (in Canelones), many of these are contained within the "circuits" of participants

• Mayors and Councilors valued the presence of others that cooperate in the process as positive components for their management in general

• Regarding the technical team, it should be noted that the motivation, dedication and commitment of each member allowed to cover almost twice the municipalities of those foreseen in the proposal submitted to the call for proposals (rather than working with 23 AMC instead of 20, we worked with 39 municipalities instead of 20)

• The relationship with the counterparts of Uruguay Integra showed harmony and synergy, the instances in which there were communication problems with the territorial reference were rare

## Discussion: Evaluation of the Process and Final Thoughts

### *Learnings and Recommendations*

Among the most notable lessons learnt in the process are:

The call for proposals as a relevant element. The importance of it is fundamental with regard to the dialogue with the local authorities or the corresponding institution, so that the clarity of the call allows alignment of the expectations of the participants regarding the scope, objectives, contents and work times.

Proximity infrastructure: Another factor to take into account is the emphasis on the locative conditions necessary for workshop work as, without a doubt, these components are either facilitators or obstacles to citizen participation.

The effective duration of the workshops in cases is shorter than planned. There is a tension between the amount of time that these processes require from the participants and the times that they can effectively devote to them, which implies reviewing some very effective dynamics in terms of their efficiency. Undoubtedly, this factor depends largely on the maturation in the participation capacities of those involved. Also, in relation to the times, the workshops are long, from the perception of the participants, because they are so concentrated and the application of the methodology requires time (this should be taken into account when thinking about the number of workshops). Similarly, in some workshops many participants needed more time to share the work in groups.

Another important element to take into account for planning is to know beforehand the items and amounts that can be financed, when there are any, or if there will be any at the end of the process. This is configured as an essential element by the authorities and other participants when getting involved in the process, since it means, in the end, a direct benefit resulting from the process.

In any case, the design must be taken flexibly within the methodological framework to take advantage of the dynamics that best suit each place and community. There are more "controversial" populations where it is more difficult to control the times, or others in which the understanding of the directives becomes more difficult.

The lack of continuity of the participants in some places can affect the complementarity between the products of the techniques, the application is prepared so that each of the techniques provided inputs for the next and for the overall process. In some cases, if a nucleus remains active and others alternate, it does not affect so much. The problem arises when the dropout is excessive. Perhaps we have to think of some more personalized stimulus or really differentiate in economic items those processes that keep participation from those that do not.

The "Projected timeline" can be worked on in some processes and turns out to be interesting to motivate innovation and creation, with a perspective of time in the workshops in which it is applied. This allows the regular and new events that are being included in the Plan to be placed in the planning of the following year. It complements the dynamics of the 9 issues for the purposes of the plan. Although this leads to the identification of problems and solutions, it limits the time of innovation, which is a differential that provides the "projected timeline".

## Conclusion: Final Thoughts

At theoretical level, the article demonstrated the transformations that have occurred in the conceptions of development which give meaning to the existence of local participatory policies on the non-economically

productive aspects, such as the Municipal Culture Agendas. The aforementioned participation process was designed with an inspiration from participatory methodologies and broadly stated: Making a diagnosis, returning and deepening information together with the participants, generating a culture plan for the municipality (ies) that at a later stage implemented with support from the central government.

It is possible to assert that the participation process could become more powerful if realized with less hurry by decompressing the workshops, allowing the participants and technicians to contemplate along the way, looking for information that complements what is produced in the workshops, etc. It is a challenge to be able to think of a plan with different time horizons in such a short time frame. On the other hand, scarce resources (local and those allocated to politics from the central level) also become an obstacle in planning and dealing with complex situations.

Despite this, the Municipal Culture Agendas were one of the first experiences of participatory public policy applied at the site for many locations. Its basis in the deliberative component gives politics an importance that goes beyond the allocated resources and the developed culture plan itself. Municipalities are a recent level of government in Uruguay, which in many cases are situated in localities with little experience in local governance issues. In this scenario, implementation of the Municipal Culture Agendas can be assessed as an instance of articulation between citizens and government at the local level that made methodological contributions and contributed to the creation and/or strengthening of networks.

Thus, despite the limitations of institutionalized processes, the experience of applying participatory methodologies shows the emergence of social creativity by looking at culture with a strategic vision to promote local development with equity. Finally, public policy is strengthened by the application of these methodologies since it substantially manages to transcend the particular interests of the participants (and their organizations or groups) and make plans based on certain aspects of community interest identified in a participatory diagnosis.

Like all human processes, the evaluations about education included in the corresponding section can be improved, especially aspects that have to do with the maturation processes of the social and public actors themselves. In this way, the processes of empowerment from below or at the state initiative as it can possibly be, where both configure two sides of the same coin that are dialectically related and in turn must be balanced so that the social innovation that is intended to stimulate is carried out by the same active subjects by facilitating social transformation in favor of those planned by the actors themselves.

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## Author's Contributions

**Alejandro Noboa**: Contributed in Theoretical section.
**Mariano Suárez:** Contributed in Methodological sections.
**Natalie Robaina**: Contributed in Conclusion writing.

## Ethics

All the information contained in the article is the responsibility of the authors and was produced in the framework of their work as investigators.

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