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# The Importance of the Participatory Dimension in Urban Resilience Improvement Processes

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**Abstract:** This article discusses the approach adopted by the researchers into citizen participation in urban regeneration actions and projects. It describes the concepts of sustainability and habitability in relation to the urban environment and architecture within the framework of improving the resilience of our cities through the circular economy and decarbonisation processes in architecture. The authors review the participatory dimension of different urban regeneration actions carried out in Spain and the impact of this dimension on the results obtained by environmental, economic and social urban improvements. They then define possible strategies and methodological tools for integrating this dimension into traditional urban regeneration processes. The article presents case studies and their specific characteristics, and draws conclusions about their effectiveness and relevance. It also compares citizen-led interventions with interventions led by public administrations. Lastly, the authors analyse the potential reasons for success in these processes and projects, identifying weaknesses and proposing possible strategies for future development by researchers.

**Keywords:** citizen participation; resilience; urban regeneration; bioclimatic refurbishment; sustainable city

## 1. Introduction

The concept of integrated urban regeneration is defined in the Toledo Charter as “a planned process that must transcend the partial areas and approaches that have been commonly adopted until now, instead addressing the city as a functional whole and its parts as components of the urban organism, with the aim of fully developing and balancing the complexity and diversity of the social, productive and urban structures while simultaneously driving greater eco-efficiency” [1] (p. 7). As an umbrella concept bringing together the numerous city refurbishment aspects and approaches developed during the last half-century, including both urban spaces and buildings, it prioritises vulnerable neighbourhoods over the traditional classification of historic centres defined in numerous European urban plans in the last 20 years [2]. Adopting a European approach and based on specific programmes to strengthen and support the improvement of cities, it aims to address the environmental and economic crisis triggered at the beginning of this century and greatly exacerbated since 2008 [3]. Integrated urban regeneration prioritises a coordinated approach to the three dimensions of sustainability (environmental, economic and social) in a territorial framework with a global vision from the local perspective and bearing in mind the future determinants imposed by climate change. It places the emphasis on achieving the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy [4] by improving the economic performance, eco-efficiency and social cohesion of cities to improve quality of life for citizens, underlining the need for their involvement in urban development through citizen participation [1]. In short, it recognises and highlights the importance of participatory processes as a tool for ensuring that citizens are involved

in city improvement processes, from urban, territorial and building perspectives as well as from the perspective of the neighbourhood as a unit of identification and identity.

The urban regeneration processes promoted by Europe, which under the last edition of the Integrated Sustainable Urban Development strategy (ISUD, 2014–2020) allocated 730.917 billion Euros to integrated urban development in Spain [2], present a significant shift in the priorities of urban interventions, placing a greater focus on objectives that no longer apply solely to aspects of physical development but also include the social and economic improvement of towns and cities. These urban regeneration processes highlight the need to adopt new methodological approaches to solve some of the difficulties encountered in integrated projects, such as “obtaining results in the long term, changes in budget allocations, governance and coordination between the different actors (public, private, social groups, etc.), and managing different public scales (state, regional in the case of Spain, municipal)”, as pointed out by Fernández-Valderrama et al. [2] (p. 37).

At best, these projects, which often involve both building refurbishments and the redesign of urban spaces or modernisation of urban infrastructures, include poor or incipient participatory processes led by institutions. These weak processes threaten to undermine the collaborative capacity of citizens to take part in urban environment improvements.

### *1.1. The Sustainability Concept*

From a sustainability point of view, the urban regeneration processes carried out in our cities should include an environmental dimension, related to the bioclimatic design of the urban space and buildings; an economic dimension, related to the efficient and effective management of material, energy and information resources; and social management, related to satisfying the needs of citizens and improving their quality of life. That is, it is necessary in terms of urban regeneration “to find a balance among preservation instances, economic development, urban quality and the well-being of the population” [5] (p. 1). Effective social management demands the definition and development of the participatory dimension of the urban regeneration processes and its inclusion in specific actions, consolidating citizen involvement as a fact as well as a need, and developing the necessary tools to implement these processes. This way, citizen participation can be a positive turning point between the economic interests of business entities around urban development and governmental objectives related to urban space qualification and the improvement of citizens’ life quality, which may tip the balance in the conflict between these two forces [6] (p. 47). It is also necessary to make the most of these conflict of interests situations [5], promoting their role of articulating and catalysing improvement in the city.

To be able to talk about urban regeneration, it is necessary to first contextualise the concept in the field of sustainable development and the future sustainability of our cities, based on the European approach included in the Toledo Charter [1]. Without this wider perspective, there would be no point to urban regeneration because it would be presented as a change, perhaps a development, but not necessarily as forward-looking regeneration capable of improving local and global resilience, both of the city itself and the territory in which it is situated. Our premise is therefore a concept of urban regeneration that is directly linked to and developed on the basis of the concept of sustainability, fulfilling and implementing its requirements.

We therefore take the initial reference of the concept of sustainable development that includes the economic, environmental and social dimensions. When we address the environmental dimension in architecture, we are referring to aspects related to bioclimatic architecture [7], to understanding the place, harnessing the benefits of its characteristics and designing in response to them, controlling both the flow of the materials and the flow of energy, using nature as a reference, attempting to close all material and energy cycles through the architectural processes. Numerous authors have recently examined this area, directly linked to decarbonisation processes in architecture related to the energy distribution and generation system [8–12], energy efficiency, life cycle analysis and, in general, the management of the design, use and construction of buildings from the perspective of energy and materials.

The concept of decarbonisation initially applied by the European directive [13] to the global energy generation and distribution system of a country also has applications for architecture since energy is required in every architectural process, during construction, use and even, it if comes to that, demolition. Nearly zero-energy buildings [14] are a reference in this aspect. They are based on minimal energy consumption and a level of self-produced energy that permits a zero or nearly zero balance. Some studies highlight the importance of understanding the energy requirements of each building, not only during its use [11] but also related to the energy employed in its construction [8]. Other studies prioritise the global energy approach related to generation and distribution systems at the territorial level [9,11,12], defining the degree of decarbonisation assumed and developed by each country in relation to the use of energy in construction. On occasion, strategies based on polycentric and decentralised governance policies have proven to be very effective in these types of processes [10], which clearly demonstrates the necessary link between greater sustainability and political approaches based on improving governance at every level of society.

When we speak about sustainability in terms of the economic aspects, in the field of architecture and urban planning it makes sense to view it as understanding the need for a certain economy of resources: material, energy, human capital, information, et cetera. This enables us to focus on what is meant by efficient architecture and urban planning, which use materials chosen for their specific characteristics to cover the comfort and operational needs of buildings and urban spaces. In other words, we are referring to the construction logics but also the local logics, the use of the appropriate local materials that will last over time according to the needs or requirements of both the building and the urban space. It is also necessary to refer to the correct and efficient management of information as a resource, to the need to maximise the use of existing architectural knowledge in order to propose better and more appropriate designs, designs that work better and are better suited to the needs of future users. This implies efficient information management [15–17] of the information the architect needs to propose an appropriate response, and the management of information to genuinely understand citizens' needs, whether of those who will live in our buildings or those who will use the urban space that we are designing and characterising.

Meanwhile, the concept of the circular economy, developed by pioneers of ecological economics like Kenneth Boulding [18], can be directly adapted, albeit with a certain complexity [19], to architectural processes related to construction as well as the design of urban space [20]. This concept broadens the approach related to efficiency and effectiveness in resource management and applies it in greater detail to the field of environmental sustainability, insofar as it is intrinsically related to the closure of material cycles. In terms of the social field studied here, the aspects that may bear a direct relationship to the concept of the circular economy are those that are closely linked to citizen management and community [21] as a space for mutual cooperation and the sharing of goods and services. For example, some networks based on the circular economy [22] have developed their own type of currency that is used in very controlled and relatively small local areas and has had fairly positive results, although very few scientific data are available.

When we look more closely at the social dimension, the matter becomes more complicated because in recent years we have seen a paradigm shift in how architecture addresses the social aspect. Earlier studies have focused somewhat timidly on this matter, introducing certain aspects or relevant indicators [23]. But this has been insufficient, and in practical terms, there are only a handful of experiences that confirm its genuine application in urban regeneration projects. Barely analysed, in the urban regeneration encouraged by the institutions (mainly, European Urban Plans), this social dimension has occasionally generated major weaknesses in terms of social sustainability, sometimes leading to gentrification processes, accentuated by the actual regeneration strategies implemented [24].

Furthermore, the social dimension is not only referenced to the concept of sustainability but to understanding and defining the concept of quality of life, which has also been defined, analysed and developed in some studies through the use of indicators [25]. This article is based on the premise that the environmental and economic aspects related to sustainability have been fully defined by

researchers, leading to a large body of knowledge on the subject, and we therefore focus mainly on the social aspects. Participatory processes are an appropriate dimension for this purpose.

We must also define the last objective of urban regeneration. The Toledo Charter [1] emphasises the need to improve the quality of life of citizens, but after analysing the possible tools [25] for defining this concept, and in view of its complexity, we believe that it is more accurate to use the term habitability as a desirable objective of urban regeneration actions. Accordingly, "... the spaces necessary for daily human life must be habitable, offering the necessary characteristics to ensure the appropriate level of physical, psychological and physiological comfort and allow activities to be carried out" [26] (p. 72). This statement is key to our proposition that, if urban space and architecture in general must comply with the habitability condition regarding the ability to carry out activities, this habitability is therefore also necessary for addressing the real and specific needs of citizens as users of these architectural urban spaces [27].

In this respect, we must ask ourselves how we can possibly resolve urban issues without understanding citizens' real needs. As María Álvarez Sainz [28] (p. 5) says, "In the world of architecture and urban design, the key question resides in the ability to listen, to understand the needs and lifestyles of those who are going to live in the space designed." This demands an understanding between the technicians behind the proposal [29] and the ultimate users and their needs [30]; between the more technical urban design and the field of citizen participation to gain a genuine insight into the context of the issues in the urban space subject to improvement. However, the aim is not only to understand, but to build and check whether the regeneration proposed through specific actions, will have a high probability of success [31].

Accordingly, the proposal must provide a real response to the user's needs as expressed by the user; in other words, decisions regarding urban architectural design must take into account the user's experience and judgement. For this purpose, the development and adaptation to participatory practices of certain multi-criteria analysis [5] and multi-criteria assessment tools [32] is of great interest, although rarely explored.

From the point of view of social sustainability, improving urban resilience [33] is partly directly related to actions or processes associated with the development of citizen governance [34] and participatory processes in neighbourhoods, towns and cities, in line with a governance model which Pierre [35] first described as "corporate" and which Tomás Fornés, M., and Cegarra Dueñas, B. [36] subsequently developed and renamed "participatory". In addition to being beneficial for decision-making and the development of improvement strategies through urban regeneration, these inclusive processes are highly instrumental in community building. As such, they are essential for encouraging collaboration between citizens who identify as neighbours [37], establishing a positive bond between them. Insofar as it generates citizen exchange and support networks, this collaboration guarantees a better global response as a community to situations of scarcity or calamity.

We can best understand the relationship or enrichment of governance through participatory processes when they involve relations of power and the ability of non-governmental agents to influence the redistribution of resources, as well as in government processes. This prompts debates about the rights and obligations of all social groups, and about their responsibilities and demands, encouraging access to institutions where they can negotiate and regulate social conflicts [38]. There are different participatory models, some of them one-dimensional, based on a technocratic vision that imposes on citizens a specialist's analysis of their needs and evades citizen participation initiatives. Other multi-dimensional models are obtained from studies of certain urban movements [38] and, according to Castells [39], from demands for urban services and spaces more rooted in the local identity and therefore with a greater capacity for local self-governance. These are developed through contentious interaction between urban actors, a necessary characteristic for developing participation as a meeting between different positions in search of a consensus. Based on the focus of this article, it is these multi-dimensional models that are starting to lead to more successful experiences in Spain, and therefore provide the reference for a more interesting participatory approach.

## 1.2. The Place of Participatory Processes

The aforementioned arguments clearly demonstrate the need to rethink all actions in the city from the perspective of citizen participation. This refers to the need to analyse, develop, work and build with social and citizens' groups when it comes to improving the habitability of their cities and neighbourhoods, as advocated by María Álvarez Sainz [28] (p. 18) in relation to her commitment to "user-centred urban design and citizen participation as a collaborative model". The starting point for this will always be the need to improve quality of life and even address it from the subjective and perceptive dimension [31].

This need is examined by authors like Borja [40], who explains how the social movements of the latter decades of the 20th century (mainly referring to the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s) made enormous contributions to urban management and development, with significant achievements such as "the revaluation of public space as a place of gathering and social interaction, the social demand for quality of life in cities, the demand for democracy, dialogue and participation by local citizens, and the recovery of urban politics led by local governments". Borja [40] goes on to say that this transforms the concept of citizens as passive subjects into active subjects from the moment they intervene and participate in the construction and management of their city.

It is plain to see that, nowadays, there are more and more situations in which certain citizens' groups that demand the right to the city, are achieving success and social support [22], to the extent that, government recognition of the participatory dimension has been translated into a specific requirement of the rules for obtaining European grants for integrated sustainable urban development strategies (ISUDS) [2].

In certain cases, these citizen demands have laid the foundations for partnerships with local bodies and have led to specific actions carried out in the city. Although these cases have not always been successful, we are beginning to glimpse a possibility for change in the approach to urban regeneration in the city. They are usually initiatives that adopt new values [41], make local demands and form part of a logic that is perfectly integrated into the concept of improving the sustainability and local resilience of cities, linked to the dynamics proposed through a strategy based on encouraging the circular economy. In general, they tend to be defined from the perspective of citizen empowerment, prioritising micro initiatives and relationships on a human scale to rescue the molecular dimension of the social fabric [42].

This reflection demonstrates the potential of participatory processes for the success of urban regeneration programmes, and yet relatively few authors [43] have defined the specific reasons that guarantee this success in each case. There is clearly a need to identify successful representative cases that can serve as a guide regarding the dynamics of processes, actors, timeframes and methods, and what makes them successful: their management, the tools used, the actors involved or the socio-political context.

In the case of Spain, there are glaring weaknesses in the citizen participatory tradition apart from that related to the improvement in the urban fabric promoted by the state during the Franco period [28]. In fact, citizen participation started to emerge again in the 1990s. Based on a series of representative cases, we analyse the aims of these early projects as well as their characteristics, methods and tools, and the results achieved, in order to define opportunities for action, successful methodologies and useful tools for ensuring their efficient implementation and encouraging the proliferation of successful cases in the future.

The goal of this article is to define which aspects, strategies and tools can help to guarantee success of participatory processes in the Spanish context. For this purpose, an analysis of European and international methodological and strategic references is carried out, from which reference situations and characteristics are drawn to be valued for our case studies. Some Spanish cases known for being considered successful by citizens are taken into account. The criteria for the selection of specific case studies are defined, as is the methodology to be used in their analysis. A comparative analysis of



the cases is carried out. Finally, the strategies and tools that can be potentially extrapolated to other situations are pointed out, shaping the conclusions of the research.

## 2. Material and Methods

Having defined the conceptual framework for our research and justified the importance of participatory processes in urban regeneration actions in cities, we now develop a non-exhaustive, inductive process based on selected case studies that offer clear guidelines, methods and tools that may serve as the basis for successful participatory processes in the future.

We examine a selection of Spanish cases, chosen for their specific innovative characteristics, and analyse the general context, dynamics, agents involved, timeframes, and the method and tools used. Next, we draw conclusions about the explicit opportunities and weaknesses presented by each case, and finally we highlight the lessons that may be extrapolated to other situations according to the terms and dynamics analysed.

### 2.1. Analysis from the International Perspective

There are public administration initiatives that attempt one way or another to involve social groups and residents of certain neighbourhoods in the development and improvement of areas of their city, but their approach is always partial, failing to recognise the real value and potential scope of participatory processes [38].

Today, the debate is focused on citizen participation cases that have emerged from the proposals of concrete social groups [44] related to specific needs, and that have been developed outside the margins of public institutions and have sometimes even been much more successful. The survey of numerous “bottom-up regeneration processes” carried out in Europe [3,44–46], which heterogeneously focus on the principles of the progressive redistribution of resources, ecological sustainability and social responsibility [44], highlights both the fundamental aim of these types of processes and the characteristics that set them apart from traditional processes promoted by public administrations. According to Squizzato [3], the fundamental aim of these projects is to improve the urban environment through non-governmental private projects and for a non-speculative purpose. Developed spontaneously by citizens, they are innovative because they not only include physical improvements of the urban space but social improvements as well, using different models of social interaction, appropriation and possession of the space as well as alternative financing [47].

The conclusion drawn from the analysis of European cases is that the success of each individual case depends on numerous local factors related to the specific characteristics of each situation, and the scope of this article, therefore, focuses on an in-depth analysis of some interesting Spanish cases. However, this analysis of European cases also reveals interesting defining circumstances and characteristics [3] that must be analysed in the Spanish cases examined here, in order to determine whether these characteristics influence the degree of success. These circumstances and characteristics are as follows:

1. They incorporate the use of new economies and values, including identity ones, which in turn define a new method of intervention sustained by its own development [45].
2. They use strategies based on very limited financing, promoting realisation through creativity [46,47].
3. They use urban activists, entrepreneurs, or both, as catalysts for the social potential [48].
4. They address the changing role of professionals and technicians [45,48].
5. They involve citizens as the true actors in the city self-organisation process [45].
6. They include the active participation of the community in the design process [45].
7. They include the innovative use of graphic, technological and digital tools for management and active communication during multiple phases of the process [45,48].
8. They benefit the community involved in several ways, not just by improving physical aspects of the space [44].

## 2.2. Situation in Spain

Our investigation involved numerous cases at the national level in which the participatory dimension has played a prominent role. Examples of projects led specifically by citizens' groups without any input from the local authorities include the following: "Playa Luna" in Madrid, where Ecosistema Urbano [49] and local residents carried out a protest action concerned with the construction of an artificial pseudo beach in a disused square, Plaza Luna, in the centre of Madrid; the occupation of "Can Batllo" [50] in Barcelona, with assistance from the Lacol group, and its subsequent partial refurbishment as a civic space for local residents; the famous "Campo de la Cebada" [51] project in Madrid, with input from a number of citizens' groups, including Basurama y Zuloark; and "Oasis" [52] at the Ruedo de Moratalaz housing development, in partnership with GSA Madrid and Asociación Caminar. All of these cases represent landmark demands by certain social groups that have defined a *modus operandi* based on self-organisation and self-management. They have mainly arisen out of neglect by the public administration and actions that were "extralegal" a priori but were subsequently agreed with by the administration following social and media pressure.

There are also interesting cases in which the public administration has been involved and has worked closely with citizen groups. These examples include "Vamos a hacer la calle" (Let us build the street) by eP espacio elevado al público group [53], carried out in the 3000 Viviendas and Martínez Montañés area of Seville's Polígono Sur district. The aim of this action is to highlight the importance of local residents' abilities to improve the public space, enabling them to participate in and own the project. Another example is "El Ejido Elige" (El Ejido Chooses) in Málaga by Fundación Rizoma [54], Paisaje Transversal [55] and the Omau (Urban Environment Observatory), a participatory process in which the financial resources are used to build designs agreed with the local residents. In these cases, it is the public administration that activates the participatory aspect with the aim of generating preliminary processes that can then be continued through self-development.

As a particularly interesting complementary aspect of our research, we have been able to glimpse the possible links between citizen-led strategies and projects and their formal institutional support through different local, national and international programmes, although in practice the technical and administrative requirements sometimes prevent their implementation and even access [3] to European funds, as in the case of the Community Led Local Development instrument proposed by the European Commission [56].

After a preliminary analysis of the cases, we can affirm that, in general, a high percentage of the actions undertaken through citizen initiatives achieve a considerable degree of success [31]. However, their subsequent maintenance and development demands committed involvement from a local group of residents or citizens to ensure that they evolve and also to fill them with activities and uses. Otherwise, many of these improvement actions constitute a fleeting moment in time with no real continuity, and we therefore cannot conclude that they improve the local resilience of the community, although they do improve the short-term habitability of the space.

Meanwhile, the actions undertaken through public administration initiatives tend to develop the participatory process on a partial level (with specific exceptions such as "El Ejido Elige"). They achieve a notable success in the initial stages but if they are not redirected properly, they may not fulfil citizen expectations and may even undermine citizen trust in these types of processes. Sometimes, this leads social groups to deliberately exclude public administrations in their processes and the change and improvement actions they undertake.

All the cases studied offer enormous scope for extracting lessons but we have limited our in-depth analysis to a small selection to determine which of their characteristics are potential reasons for success, according to the European cases previously analysed, and to be able to draw more specific, substantiated conclusions. The cases chosen for our study fulfil the following selection criteria:

1. They represent landmark successes, corroborated by the awards received, express academic recognition or express acceptance by citizens.

2. They represent landmark cases as pioneers in citizen participation in specific areas of Spain.
3. They represent landmark cases in terms of research and academic education as reference models for social service-learning and transfer strategies.
4. They represent landmark cases that challenge the role of architects as professionals and trigger debate about their responsibilities and abilities.
5. They represent landmark cases that exemplify the different roles that a local administration and a group of citizens or professionals can play as the drivers of a participatory action, whether self-managed or collaboratively managed.

### 2.3. Case Analysis Methodology

The case analysis methodology developed is based on the following points:

1. Analysis of the project technical information, plans, timeline, regulations, academic publications and dissemination in the media, awards and distinctions. This information is decisive in order to carry out an in depth study of the case, and in case it did not exist, the case study would be dismissed in this research work.
2. Mapping of actors involved, citizens' and government groups, public administrations, and technical and professional teams. This is a key tool for understanding the process and it must include, not only the actors involved, but also the relationships among them and the collaboration dynamics developed, if any.
3. Interviews with technicians and mediators, as well as with the accessible groups, citizens and administration technicians. Deep understanding of the processes can be clarified by documenting opinions, preferably from different types of stakeholders to have a broad and complete perspective.
4. In depth analysis of the development of the process, focusing on timescales and schedules, actions, strategies and tools used. This analysis has been done in great depth, using all the data initially extracted. In the first stage, the analysis is carried out individually, and is later used in a comparative way with other case studies, providing a wider perspective for the drawing of conclusions.
5. Extraction of conclusions about the characteristics and circumstances predefined as possible catalysts for the success of these projects. They will respond initially to the circumstances and characteristics observed in the international cases as potentially successful. In a later stage, conclusions will be drawn from the case studies and their circumstances and specific development.
6. Identification of interesting tools used. Beyond those referred to by international cases such as the map of actors or the graphic, technological and digital tools for management and communication, another type of interesting tools is found.
7. Identification of possible guidelines or management methods used in the process that may provide a reference for future cases. The possible use of specific methodologies with a previously established scientific basis is considered, against the construction of new methods.

The four cases analysed in depth are briefly described below.

### 2.4. Case Studies

#### 2.4.1. Moret Park, Huelva

This case is a pioneer in Spain insofar as the citizens' demands were addressed by the public administration and there was a participatory process for the design of a public space. The case began around 2000 and the initial phase was completed in 2005 with an official inauguration. Huelva city council was interested in recovering the so-called Moret Park in the centre of the city, a 50-hectare area that had been neglected for decades and was in an advanced state of decay.

Local residents had already been demanding use of this public space and had set up the Moret Park Platform to campaign for the recovery of the park as the "green lung of Huelva". The



platform, which brought together numerous groups (see Figure 1), succeeded in persuading the public administration to invite tenders for the project based on a set of specifications that both parties (platform and administration) had previously agreed during a series of workshops.

COLECTIVOS INTEGRANTES  
 EDUCAM  
 SCOUTS CATOLICOS  
 CARAVANA POR LA PAZ  
 ECOLOGISTAS EN ACCION  
 A.VV. POLIGONO DE SAN SEBASTIAN  
 ASOCIACION PRO DERECHOS HUMANOS  
 ASOCIACION DE VECINOS LOS JARDINES  
 FEDERACION LOCAL DE AA.VV. TARTESOS  
 ASOCIACION DE VECINOS DE LA HISPANIDAD  
 ASOCIACION DE PARADOS MAYORES DE 40 ANOS  
 ATENEO ALTERNATIVO ANTONIO GARRASCO SUAREZ  
 ASOCIACION DE VECINOS MIRADOR DEL CONQUERO  
 ASOCIACION DE VECINOS BARRIADA DE ZAFRA  
 AULA ECOLOGICA JOAQUIN FERNANDEZ CALLE  
 CONFEDERACION GENERAL DE TRABAJADORES  
 HERMANDAD OBRERA DE ACCION CATOLICA  
 PARTIDO SOCIALISTA OBRERO ESPANOL  
 ASOCIACION TIERRA NUEVA-VALDOCCO  
 UNION GENERAL DE TRABAJADORES  
 PERSONAS INDEPENDIENTES  
 UNION SINDICAL OBRERA  
 PARTIDO ANDALUCISTA  
 ASOCIACION EDUCAM  
 IZQUIERDA UNIDA  
 SOCIEDAD HIGIA  
 NACION ANDALUZA  
 SABINAS DEL ODIEL  
 ASOCIACION CAMINAR  
 SINDICATO UNITARIO  
 COMISIONES OBRERAS  
 FUNDACION UTOPIA VERDE  
 LOS VERDES DE ANDALUCIA  
 PLATAFORMA PARQUE MORET-PULMON VERDE DE HUELVA

**Figure 1.** Moret Park citizen group. Source: Own elaboration.

A set of activities were carried out throughout the process (Figure 2) with the ultimate aim of developing an agreed design with the community platform:

1. Regular meetings to establish objectives and contents.
2. Contact with groups, political parties and organisations to involve them in the meetings.
3. Talks, exhibitions, educational, artistic and environmental routes, and a panel of experts to provide a greater understanding of the Moret Park Complex.
4. Briefing on the history of the area to contextualise the Moret Park phenomenon.
5. Proposals for the design of Moret Park.



(a)



(b)



(c)

**Figure 2.** (a–c) Different activities carried out to design Moret Park. Source: Own elaboration.

The design of the park was finally undertaken by the architecture studio Seminario de Arquitectura y Medioambiente, based on bioclimatic and environmental criteria and with the innovative inclusion of a professional mediator between the public administration and citizens. Thanks to the participatory process, the park was officially opened (Figure 3) to great success and with mass attendance by citizens. In spite of being an incipient urban regeneration action, the initial participatory dimension led by citizens was key to the successful execution of the project and its subsequent acceptance by the public.

The design process for the park has won several awards and distinctions: first prize national competition for the Moret Park, Huelva; first prize of the Andalusian Federation of Municipalities as an example of citizen participation with the Moret Park Platform, 2005; and being selected at the Dubai International UN-Habitat Best Practices Awards, 2008, earning the classification “Good Practice”. The dynamics involved in the project have been analysed and disseminated extensively in research articles, at academic meetings and through postgraduate programmes.



**Figure 3.** Official opening of Moret Park. Source: Own elaboration.

#### 2.4.2. Arraijanal Park, Málaga

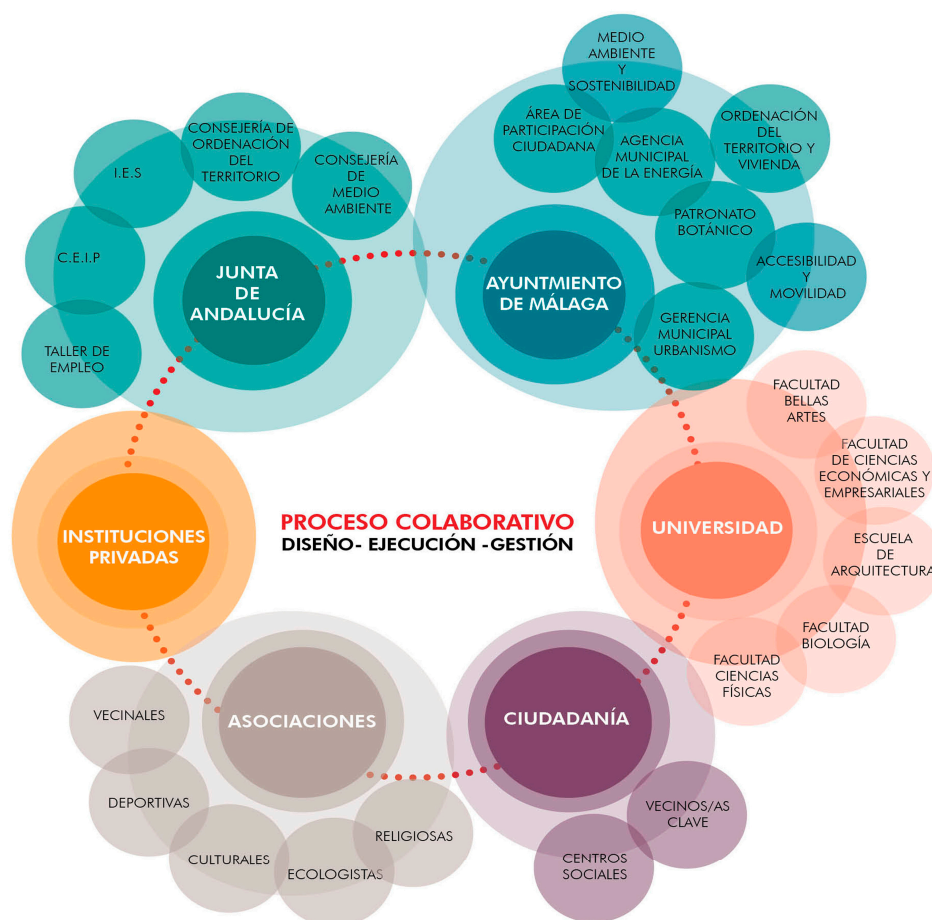
Arraijanal Park is a vast urban space on the edge of Málaga with a history of enormous social pressure as the subject of numerous demands. The only remaining virgin piece of coastline belonging to the city of Málaga, it is extremely picturesque as well as boasting great ecological, historical and archaeological value. Numerous projects have been proposed for the space but to date none have been approved. Within the scope of our research, we examined the preliminary proposal commissioned by the Regional Environment, Climate Change and Land Management Ministry in 2015. In spite of the approach envisaged by the regional ministry, this proposal does not constitute a design project as such, but rather the design of a participatory process. During the development and execution, it would allow a preliminary in-depth analysis of the characteristics of the context subject to intervention, such as the participatory design of the future park with residents' and citizens' groups, and the collective construction of the parts of the project that are physically feasible and buildable with the groups and citizens. This is the first time that a public administration has ever allowed the transformation of a project into a participatory design process, although in light of the recent political changes, the project currently under way, has been awarded by tender under the traditional terms of architectural design.

The specific interest of this proposal as a case study is the analysis of the systematisation and design of a concrete process, which may provide a reference for the development of a specific method or tool for designing participatory processes (Figure 4). The key aspects have been analysed, classified and characterised to serve as a basis for the proposal included in the scope of this research.

#### 2.4.3. Pepe Dámaso Cultural Centre, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria

This is a case of the encouragement of citizen participation without the existence of a prior explicit demand by local residents. The initiative emerged in La Isleta, a neighbourhood of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, as part of the "La Isleta Participa" research project carried out between 2008 and 2010 by the University of Las Palmas. At the time, the neighbourhood did not have any adequate spaces for community building and partnerships. In the context of a severe economic crisis, during which Las Palmas City Council made concerted efforts to encourage citizen participation, the project furthered the demands for greater participation in the fields of architecture and urban planning.

One of the most resounding successes of the project was undoubtedly the fact that it capitalised on the existence of different national investment plans (known at the time as "Zapatero plans") to secure a budget for the construction of a cultural centre as a reference point for participation and cultural creation in the neighbourhood.



**Figure 4.** Collaborative design process for Arraijanal Park. Actor tree. Source: Own elaboration.

The Pepe Dámaso Cultural Centre occupies a plot in a public space designated for educational use, bounded to one side by a residential building and to the other by an infant and primary school. This was once the site of an old fighting ground, and in the 1970s it was used for student assemblies. The building has three storeys and a basement. The ground floor contains the entrance hall, a triple-height courtyard forming a visual connection with the adjacent building, the toilets and a large hall. The basement comprises an exhibition hall, a courtyard and various storage areas. The debating hall or Tagoror, which is also used as an exhibition space, occupies the first floor. Lastly, the second floor contains the quadrangle that forms the rooftop space, with access to the adult education centre next door.

In 2018 this was selected as one of the top five new builds of the last 10 years in Gran Canaria, but its merits also include the variety of excellent activities that are conducted inside the building. It is used by the children from the adjacent school, by residents' groups and by the city council for district meetings. Theatre rehearsals, concerts, exhibitions, workshops, courses, social gatherings, et cetera, all take place in the cultural centre. It has been used as a polling station for a referendum, commercials have been filmed here, and it has been the venue for miscellaneous events, political rallies and meetings. No programme of uses could ever have anticipated the enormous variety of events (Figure 5) that have been hosted at this centre. In fact, in his book "Architecture Depends", the theorist Jeremy Till [57] discusses how the dependent nature of architecture often makes it difficult to envisage the uses that a space should provide. In recent years we have witnessed a procession of technical, professional and artistic profiles that have discovered these spaces as places in which to carry out a whole range of extraordinary activities. This clearly demonstrates that citizen participation does not only concern social or residents' groups but impacts society as a whole.





Figure 5. Example of the various social and cultural activities currently being carried out in the Pepe Dámaso Cultural Centre. Source: Own elaboration.

What was originally planned as a building for citizen participation, more related to debate and discussion, has become a place for the participation of the entire neighbourhood, on every level. This invites us to reflect on the need to recover the ambiguous nature of spaces that architecture undoubtedly offered until the 19th century. It also prompts the demand for participation spaces in every neighbourhood, whether explicitly proposed by citizens or not. This proposal highlights the importance of the role that other sectors of society can play, in this case university researchers, teachers and students, as mediators between citizens and technicians to enrich citizen participation.

#### 2.4.4. Majanicho Citizen Participation Programme, Fuerteventura

Our last case concerns the application of a citizen participation tool in an action led by the public administration, but precisely at a time when the European Commission is questioning interventions in the ecosystem that lack an impact assessment and citizen participation.

The case is centred on the town of La Oliva, in the north of the island of Fuerteventura, specifically a space that has been impacted by the construction of a housing development that contained multiple irregularities from the outset. Between 2000 and 2002, the town council of La Oliva approved the Partial Plan (“SAU 12 Houses Majanicho”) and the urban development project and granted permission for the construction of 748 homes and a commercial area. That same year, 2002, the approval was refuted by the Canary Islands government for the first time and an environmental association lodged the first complaint. In 2006, during the completion stage of the project, two important events occurred: the Canary Islands High Court of Justice (TSJC, after its Spanish initials) declared the Majanicho Partial Plan null and void (ratified by the Supreme Court in 2011), and the Canary Islands government established a new series of special bird protection areas (SPBAs) affecting part of the area comprising the housing development. It was precisely the invasion of part of an SPBA, among other factors, that prompted the European Commission to send a letter to the Spanish government in 2018 calling for the adoption of measures to mitigate the effects of the Majanicho Partial Plan. The measures finally proposed include the execution of an ex-post environmental impact assessment (i.e., conducted after completion of the housing development) and the preparation of a citizen participation programme (Figures 6 and 7).

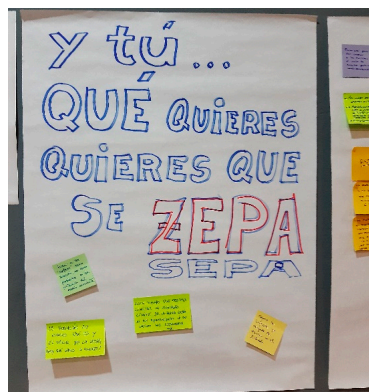


**Figure 6.** Image of citizen protests due to the development of Cotillo and Majanicho urban plans, in La Oliva Town, Fuerteventura. Source: Own elaboration.

This case therefore provides the opportunity to turn a participatory process, as part of an ex-post environmental impact assessment (encouraged partly by citizens and partly by the public administrations involved), into a programme: “Citizen participation programme in the framework of the Environmental Impact Assessment for the Majanicho housing development project—SAU 12, La Oliva (Fuerteventura)”. In the short term, this could contribute to the design and adoption of the appropriate compensatory measures, and in the medium to long term, it could result in the



coordinated management of the present and future of the island's northern coastline. In this case, citizen participation should help to raise the level of debate and restore the trust of the residents of La Oliva, and by extension those of Fuerteventura as a whole, in their institutions, particularly regarding sensitive issues like interventions in the natural heritage and landscape.



**Figure 7.** Image of the citizen participation workshop carried out during the development of the Citizen Participation Programme within the frame of the environmental impact assessment. Source: Own elaboration.

Scale has been an important dimension in this process. It was necessary to incorporate global issues like the climate emergency and the UN Sustainable Development Goals [58], and reconcile general laws with the various plans affected (SPBA, island plan, general plan, land management plans, special plans, etc.), while at the same time, taking into account local and even individual interests. The clearest example of the importance of scale is that one of the reasons that has led us to this point is the Kentish plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus*), a small bird that visits this area and whose defence and protection has led us to rethink the use and enjoyment of this place from a more sustainable and resilient perspective.

On a technical level, the circumstances surrounding this citizen participation project have led to the sharing of space and time with a very broad and experienced technical team, mainly with expertise in the environmental field. Lastly, technicians have sought to reconcile the analysis and diagnosis tasks with the desire to draw up a series of compensatory measures for the environmental impacts detected.

In view of the unique nature of this entire process, the institutions and the technicians involved in the work and the discussions, as well as citizens, firmly believe that the project should culminate in decisions that effectively change the way in which these environments are used and enjoyed. The SAU 12 Houses Majanicho project has been halted for technical and legal reasons for years, and today there is a certain degree of consensus about the importance of taking action. The priority is to implement compensatory measures as a means of starting to regain the trust of citizens.

Lastly, this case has demonstrated the importance of participation education, insofar as it should not only reach the local citizens, but professionals, technicians and politicians as well. Each actor must climb up the “ladder of citizen participation” that Sherry Arnstein [59] proposed more than 50 years ago. Getting past the non-participatory rungs (manipulation and therapy) and involving more people on the intermediate rungs (informing, consultation, placation) or even on the top rungs (partnership, delegation, citizen control) are tasks for which we all share responsibility.

### 3. Results

In this section, we present the data resulting from the analysis of the characteristics of the participatory processes studied, from the approach and layout of the study to the results obtained. A synthesis of such results is presented in Table 1.



**Table 1.** Analysis of the characteristics, approach, considerations and results of the case studies.

	Moret Park	Arrajanal Park	Pepe Dámaso Cultural Centre	Majanicho Citizen Participation Programme
New economies and values	Highlights the identity of the neighbouring residential areas linked to the history of the park's use and its collective memory. This memory is linked to a natural design of the park demanded by the citizens. Attention paid to ecological dynamics. Approach based on flexible use.	Highlights the identity of the natural and archaeological space following the demands of local associations. It rejects economic and speculative performance and it promotes previous interventions from local associations. The land is understood as a common good (right to the town and space justice). Attention paid to ecological dynamics. Inclusive participatory approach, also cross-generation and gender approach. Design approach based on flexibility and reversibility. Extension of time frame.	Highlights the cultural identity of a neighbourhood following proposals emerging from the academic sphere. Experimental emphasis on the concept of citizen participation in Las Palmas. Public funding through traditional means. Chance of highlighting social, cultural, political, commercial and educational activities previously non-existent. Approach based on the flexibility of the built spaces.	Highlights the natural ecosystem and its species. Calls into question urban use, claiming a series of compensatory measures.
Financial resources	In this case, the collaboration agreement with the city council provides the necessary resources.	Scarce financial resources coming from the regional government. Boosting of alternative social resources in kind	Governmental financial resources.	Financial resources from the local government are used as a compensation for a wrong legislative procedure.
Urban activists and entrepreneurs as catalysts for the social potential	Citizen associations themselves are able to start and manage the process without the need of external activists.	The catalysts in the process are the technicians appointed by the public administration themselves, despite the fact that their proposal is eventually dismissed.	University researchers as initial catalysts of the process.	The group Ben Magwc-Ecologistas en Acción as catalysts of the process thanks to their claims.
Role of professionals and technicians.	Technicians act as mediators between the city council and the Moret Park platform of associations, providing answers to the demands through debates and workshops.	Proposal of technicians as mediators, speakers and process managers.	Technicians (in this case researchers) take a mediation role between public administrations and citizens. Technicians are also architecture professionals. The new potential technical role for architects is specifically studied.	Four of the five technical teams involved are professionals coming from different fields linked to environmental science (ornithology, oceanography, etc.). The fifth team carries out a mediation role between public administrations, technicians and citizens.
Role of citizens in the process	Citizens are the triggers of the process, although they are involved mainly in the initial stages of it.	Citizens' proposals as true actors of the process, always working hand-in-hand with public administrations and technicians. Self-pedagogical process.	In this case citizens have a passive role until the building is finished and activities started. The building is used in a variety of ways that go beyond the cultural sphere. Process led by the institutions.	Environmental associations are the ones that initially claim the process. At a later stage, citizens are involved in the process of "fixing the problem".
Community's participation in the design process	Only in the initial phases.	Participation in all phases of the process, from planning to design and construction.	No involvement in the design process.	There is no involvement in the design process, but it does occur in the later critical process and potential solutions.
Innovative use of graphic, technological and digital tools.	Not known.	Use of graphic and technological means of communication between actors, from social networks to purpose-built platforms.	From the starting phase of the research project graphic means are used to inform the public administration of the importance of spaces for participation.	Not known.
Provide benefits to the community	All the associations and citizens' groups are represented, providing specific spatial answers to their needs.	The demands of the social associations are met, involving them in the development of the project.	Technical and academic deficiencies found in the social, political and cultural sphere are taken care of. All sorts of unplanned opportunities arose, providing tangible or intangible benefits to the community.	The right of citizens to decide is acknowledged in the case of a poor management process by the local government.
Results of the work	Adequate development of the project and later social acceptance.	Proposal accepted by the administration but turned in a later stage into a traditional management model.	Project developed and finished with the built centre; current management by the local government.	Participatory project developed, pending the implementation of the agreed actions.

All four projects highlight relevant aspects for citizens, both cultural (historical, anthropological, artistic, etc.), natural and ecological. They enhance both group identity and citizens' memories on the one hand, and attention paid to ecological and systemic dynamics on the other, both approaches being key issues for the improvement of resilience in our communities and towns. It should be pointed out how environmental approaches are changing chronologically and are more and more ambitious. Whereas in the case of Moret Park the focus is centred on maintaining the existing ecosystem adequately, in Majanicho the inappropriate use of a natural protected area is claimed. In Arraijnal, on the other hand, the focus is on the potential values of the ecosystem that they want to restore and maintain, taking into account the effects that climatic change may bring to it on the basis of a specific study on the matter.

Whereas three of the projects emphasise the need to make use of architectural and urban spaces flexible (Pepe Dámaso, Moret and Arraijnal), as well as the benefit coming from a certain reversibility of some projects; the fourth project (Majanicho) provides answers to the deficiencies resulting from the lack of flexibility of one-sided urban projects. The introduction of inclusive participatory dynamics strategically develops into a need for flexible architectural and urban spaces and land use, as well as for a flexible management of such spaces, as they are heritage of all citizens.

The four projects follow an inclusive approach from a gender and cross-generation perspective, at least as far as the development of the participatory process is concerned. However, the actual dynamics of every process, their characteristics, timing and circumstances, cause the results to be distinctive. In the cases of Moret and Pepe Dámaso (already completed) the benefits for the whole community resulting from the actions are clearly seen. Regarding Arraijnal and Majanicho, they are still to be studied when the works are finally carried out. In any case, the greatly important gender aspects related to participatory processes could not be studied in further depth in these cases, due to the lack of objective data available. It is clear that the approach followed in the processes has aimed to be inclusive in gender terms, although it is not possible to provide clear evidence of it, at least in the frame of this research.

Two of the projects (Pepe Dámaso and Arraijnal) have been developed in a context of poor financial resources, without this implying a cause or an excuse for its abandonment. The other two projects (Moret and Majanicho) were developed according to traditional economic dynamics, noting that there are sufficient public resources for well-managed participatory projects, despite the fact that in the case of Majanicho the context was that of a solid economic crisis. Beyond what they may seem at first sight, the participatory processes are economically affordable, if compared to the building processes involved in any urban qualification project. Besides, they can use social resources, which make them even more affordable if well managed. However, it is also true that it should be taken into account that the participatory processes take longer to develop than traditional top-down processes.

The actors acting as catalysts in each case are very different, from the citizens themselves in the case of Moret Park to the technicians appointed by the public administration in Arraijnal, as well as environmental groups and researchers of the public university. This reality implies that organised groups of citizens are no longer the only potential activists of participatory processes; such processes are starting to be seen as necessary and convenient by the government and their professionals and technicians themselves. The next step would be to transfer this need to the political agenda.

In all four cases, the changing role of architecture professionals is posed and developed, more linked to mediation rather than to the design of architectural spaces in the participatory processes. Nonetheless, their technical abilities (graphic, communicative and in media terms, as well as in constructive terms) continue to be necessary for a correct development of such processes, regardless of the fact that they may or may not lead to the design and construction of specific architectural spaces. In case where they do, architects can also develop their traditional technical roles and associated responsibilities.

The role of citizens in the different cases is very diverse; in three of them (Moret, Arraijnal and Majanicho) citizens directly or indirectly trigger the participatory process itself. In the case of Pepe Dámaso, they are collateral beneficiaries of it. In the case of Arraijnal, the citizens are called to

empower themselves and be the true actors of the process as ultimate historical claimants, the process understood as self-pedagogical. That is, the process is seen as an opportunity for social learning linked to the different actions and professions involved in the design and construction of the urban space. The process can thus be also defined as a deep educational, emotional, environmental and even technical practice.

In general terms, the participation of the different social actors in the design process is scarce. It was initially proposed in Arraijanal, but was dismissed when the approach of the project changed and the participatory process was cancelled. Numerous cases exist (some previously mentioned yet not selected as case studies) in which the involvement of citizens as actors in the design and construction of the architectural project is a reality. This leads us to think that such participatory dimension is an opportunity for the progress of this kind of process, despite the fact that it has hardly been addressed in the reference cases.

The use of innovative graphic, technological or digital tools is not known in any of the projects except for Arraijanal, where they were proposed but not used. In the case of the Pepe Dámaso Centre, some graphic instruments were used at the beginning of the process to inform the authorities, but they were traditional ones. This circumstance is despite the fact that in many references previously analysed as possible case studies such tools were seen as an interesting asset for the success of certain participatory processes. We can deduce that they are desirable tools still little developed in this sort of process and which are not decisive for its success.

It is clearly seen that all four cases provide different kinds of benefits to the community, not only in terms of space but also in ecological, social, educational, cultural, political and even economic terms. In environmental terms, this sort of process implies a step forward as they follow a serious and rigorous approach, demanding conclusive results regarding the respect for the ecosystem, a good bioclimatic performance of both indoor and outdoor spaces and, ultimately, an answer to climatic change through the improvement of resilience of environmental communities. They also imply an educational opportunity from the perspective of social inclusion and following a cultural approach, which is attractive as a communication strategy to involve different types of actors from the social sphere. In the political and economic spheres, the benefits emerging from these sorts of processes include a sense of belonging to a political community capable of making decisions in terms of citizen empowerment and improvement of urban governance; an improved management of economic resources; and the involvement of citizens, which become responsible for their correct management.

Two of the participatory projects have been developed and are in the process of later management and the other two are currently being developed. One, the Arraijanal case study, can be considered a failure in participatory terms due to the government's rejection of the continuous action taken by the citizens to defend their rights and because no technical solution was achieved. The other, the Majanicho case study, is being developed at the moment and we may expect that it will be carried out successfully.

The strategies used for the correct development of the process are diverse and have been defined according to the characteristics of each case study, as can be observed in Table 2. The importance of multidisciplinary teams and the mediation work among administrations, technicians and citizens is noteworthy. The latter, has sometimes been developed by the architects themselves, exploring this new role of their profession, and other times directly by researchers of the participation field, therefore being more flexible in their functions and methodological skills.

**Table 2.** Analysis of strategies, tools and methods developed by the case studies.

	Parque Moret	Parque Arrajanal	Pepe Dámaso Cultural Centre	Majanicho Citizen Participation Programme
Process strategies	Multidisciplinary teams. Citizen-government mediation. Fostering trust between the parts	Multidisciplinary teams, multidisciplinary process. Inclusion of all agents involved throughout the whole process. Adapting time span and strategies to social context. Citizen-government mediation. Information adapted to users, transparency. Community building and fostering trust between the parts. Flexible and adaptable methodology [60]. Time and space for creative innovation	Technical and academic teams in collaboration. Methodology based on the involvement of research project both in the neighbourhood resources desk (promoted by the administration) and in different communal activities. Technicians as drivers of the participatory process and citizen involvement. Short times adapted to traditional local administrative procedures.	Multidisciplinary team with a strong representation of environmental issues. Inclusion of all agents involved during participatory process. Recovery of trust on the part of citizens. Involvement of academic actors that provide credibility and prestige to the process.
Tools	Workshops and meetings	Map of actors, workshops, mediation strategies, surveys, interviews, cultural actions. Definition of “motor team” as manager of the participatory process.	Fieldwork is carried out, analysing the neighbourhood’s situation and obtaining a diagnosis of deficiencies in terms of participation.	Map of actors, workshops, mediation strategies, interviews, provision of alternatives.
Method participatory phases	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Citizens’ claims.</li> <li>2. Definition of demands and needs.</li> <li>3. Project acceptance.</li> <li>4. Successful inauguration.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Citizens’ claims.</li> <li>2. Public intervention proposal.</li> <li>3. Analysis of opportunities in the project’s approach and management.</li> <li>4. Comprehensive participatory process proposal (from design to construction).</li> <li>5. Withdrawal of public administration and traditional tender.</li> <li>6. Citizens’ struggles continue.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Academic proposal.</li> <li>2. Acceptance and local government initiative.</li> <li>3. Project design.</li> <li>4. Citizens’ consultation.</li> <li>5. Citizens’ acceptance and building works.</li> <li>6. Local government management with great involvement of citizen groups.</li> <li>7. Very successful outcome of the project in social terms.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Citizens’ claims through environmental organisation.</li> <li>2. Legal requirement.</li> <li>3. Proposal of compensatory participatory process by the government and university.</li> <li>4. Successful participatory process.</li> <li>5. Waiting for building works of project agreed through participatory process.</li> </ol>

In the four cases under study, generating a climate of trust among the actors involved has proved to be greatly important, allowing the development of actions with a constant involvement of all parts, and at the same time narrowing down the expectations linked to the process in real terms.

On the other hand, the processes ought to be flexible in terms of adaptation to administrative times, which are radically different to those of social management in participatory processes.

With regards to the tools used, they are numerous, depending on each case and the specific needs of citizens' involvement, communication and technical and administrative management of the process. It should also be noted that in those processes led by the government, cultural strategies aimed at calling people's attention are used, whereas in those processes led by citizens peer communication attains greater significance, using graphic, audiovisual and any other means which are adapted to the common language of citizens. The proposal of defining a "motor team" is highlighted, with the involvement of actors from all the spheres (public administration, technicians, citizens, university). This team will be responsible for the management of the participatory process and embraces the following functions: coordination; communication and dissemination; design and production of the necessary material; stimulation of activity; and legal-economic management. This tool, although only proposed in one of the cases, should be further investigated in the light of its potential relevance as an opportunity to improve management within the processes.

As far as the participatory phases of the method are concerned, it is not possible to define an organisational tendency beyond the existence of three main distinct phases: a phase of proposal (by citizens, university and institutions); a phase of design and construction of the project (with different degrees of participation in each case); and a final phase of use and maintenance of the project (sometimes managed by the administrations and other times self-managed by the citizens). Every case is unique and its circumstances mark the way it is used through time.

#### 4. Discussion

##### *Transferable Opportunities and Learning*

Following the case studies carried out, some learning can emerge from them which can later be useful for future situations:

In this sort of participatory process, the figure of the technician as mediator and translator is greatly important; an agent of citizen participation "... creating a dialogue between divergent and often opposing perspectives, of transforming citizens' claims into proposing strategies, and of implementing new tools and communication channels that speed up the processes and prevent lack of coordination between different governmental areas, as well as between them and the citizens." [61]. This ultimately poses the need of new professionals and new working opportunities around citizen participation.

We can confirm, as commented before that, in general terms, a high percentage of actions developed by citizens' initiatives achieve considerable success [31]. However, for them to continue and evolve through time they need some additional factors that favour them, such as involvement of local social or neighbourhood organisations; their usefulness and link to existing dynamics that provide activities and use. Otherwise, many of these actions will represent a specific moment in time and improved habitability of a space in the short term, but will not last in time and will not improve local community resilience.

On the other hand, the actions proposed by the administration usually obtain partial participation. They are successful initially in their approach, but without a good management method, they may not fulfil citizens' expectations and could even undermine citizen trust in this sort of process. In some cases, this provokes rejection from certain citizen groups that deliberately exclude public administrations from their processes and actions for change and improvement.

As well as the instruments that nowadays provide a greater transparency in public management and bring institutions and people closer to one another, the rise of citizen participation and its quality, without a doubt, leads to a greater degree of involvement on the part of citizens in common

issues and in public management, at least at three different levels: at the urban-land level, at the technical-environmental level and at the social-political level. In the urban-land level we can point out, firstly, the centrality of participation, that is, the importance of including citizen participation in the early stages of any urban planning instrument, achieving a highly qualified degree of participation, defined by Pretty as active participation [62] and closer to the two upper rungs of Pretty's ladder. The coming together of citizen participation and urban planning is providing both concepts with new dimensions. Architecture and urban planning are proving they have a lot to offer to participatory processes, given their ability to anticipate through projects or forward thinking, on the one hand, and their approach to complex thinking through a skilful use of scaling, on the other. The field of urban planning conveys an opportunity to all kinds of participatory processes, while at the same time such participatory processes are an opportunity for improvement in urban regeneration processes that aim at being successful in the medium or long term. In this sense, it would be interesting to apply the new paradigm proposed by Mussinelli et al. [63] (p. 66) that "combines two levels: the long-term strategic vision and the short-medium term experimental vision".

In the political and social sphere, the map of actors becomes a key tool to determine the place of citizen participation. Given the complexity of our societies, sometimes it is difficult for the different actors involved in a territory or in a given issue to be aware of the multiple dimensions at play. One of the goals of the citizen participation project and particularly the map of actors (or sociogram) is to increase the numbers of variables involved. In the case of Majanicho, we have found that from the macro scale of the European Union to the micro scale of Majanicho's neighbours, all parties have something to say.

The dialogic process starts when the higher number of possible actors has been identified and the chance to participate in each case is balanced. Not all actors can or wish to participate in every case, as sometimes not all actors should or need to participate. It is from the moment when the map of actors is established that we can start planning the fieldwork, implying a higher or lower degree of participation in the participatory project designed. In this sense, the definition of a "motor team" for the management of the participatory process can also be a useful tool as long as it implies a previous selection of those actors and agents capable of involvement, management and communication within the participatory process. It is necessary to go deeper into the research of the potential of this tool.

Similarly, the importance of teaching the mechanics of participation has also been stated. That is, the pedagogy of citizen participation should reach the citizens, the professionals, the technicians and the public representatives. Every actor should in their own way move up in the ladder of participation as proposed by Sherry Arnstein [59] half a century ago. Overcoming the non-participatory rungs (manipulation and therapy) [62] and getting as many people as possible involved in the intermediate rungs (informing, consultation, placation) and even in the higher rungs (partnership, delegation, citizen control) [3] is a task that we are all responsible for.

In this research, the existence of appropriate tools which are common to different fields and help participatory processes, adapting to different scales, is clearly stated. These tools should be further studied to determine in which cases they can be used and their scope in each kind of process. This way, as in the case of Majanicho's Citizen Participation Programme, they can become a minimal agreed cell for citizen participation to be applied in all aspects related to the town and its safeguarding. It should also be pointed out that the complex nature of public policies that take social and cultural values into account, as well as their participatory dimension, call for the development of adequate tools capable of dealing with large databases and decision-making systems. Some research works [64] have developed a work frame for the use of analytics in supporting the policy cycle. This progress is a key reference for the further study of the potential of certain tools.

In particular, in the legal administrative sphere, the existence of Bologna Regulation for the Care of Urban Commons is a very relevant tool to support these participatory processes [65]. This regulation regulates partnership between citizens and governments for the care and regeneration of the urban commons. It sets off from an organisational model based on partnership instead of the struggles



between citizens and the government. Here, citizens are not considered mere users and recipients of the State, but are finally acknowledged as key actors in the treatment and management of the common goods. It regulates the terms of collaboration for the safeguarding and management of urban commons through "Collaboration Pacts" based on mutual trust and a relationship of equality. This approach, developed by laws, is a very important step forward and a reference for the development of local and national legislation based on the same terms.

To sum up, successful participatory processes are characterised in general terms by the following: Understand the territory as a common good; work from the understanding of residents as active citizens to improve governance through shared management; work with proposals of inclusive, cross-generation and gender-sensitive processes, including all phases of analysis, design and construction. This process should at the same time respond to the environmental dynamics of the land and provide an environmental, flexible and reversible project (fostering conservation rather than building) that is also social, self-pedagogic and that stands for the right to the city and spatial justice for all citizens.

As a consequence, this sort of process is expected to provide proposals that are built on an increased level of creativity thanks to collective work, that enhance the territory safeguarding habitability of urban spaces, increasing investment on green areas and, with an adequate design, increasing its biodiversity.

We could also expect that these proposals work with a certain critical mass of population and enough activity in order to be representative in real terms; that they generate a certain degree of self-sufficiency in terms of energy, water and material resources, as well as in the provision of self-managed facilities, fostering improved alternative means of transport such as public or non-motorised transport. And it could also be expected that this dynamics builds on urban resilience in terms of social cohesion and adaptability to climate change.

There are still no predefined methods to guarantee the success of this kind of process and subsequent positive consequences, only some strategies and opportunities such as the ones elucidated by this research work.

## 5. Conclusions

It is clear that the processes of citizens' involvement linked to urban regeneration are still at an early developmental stage. We can also prove their important roles for improvement in terms of urban resilience from a social point of view. A number of tools exist [66] that can help the development of such processes (coming from different fields), but the processes are currently so diverse and unique that there is no specific pattern or methodology to follow for guarantying their success.

However, taking as a starting point the unique character of each of these processes and of the partial generic tools from other fields (and gradually also from the urban planning field) it is indeed possible to establish a series of criteria, strategies and opportunities that can guide such processes.

The precise definition of these opportunities, strategies and processes has been outlined in this research work (as has been described in the partial conclusions of the different chapters) and should be further developed in future investigations. In any case, the opportunities more clearly defined by the present research are listed below:

### 5.1. Citizen Participation and Environmental Sustainability

The participatory processes imply an opportunity to include aspects of environmental sustainability linked to the preservation of ecosystems, to establish social-systemic synergies [67] and ultimately to mitigate climatic change. For this purpose, an approach based on flexibility as a strategy and action criteria is necessary, adapting every action to include the needs, actors and specific local situation. The advantages of developing reversible actions from an environmental and social point of view also imply a decisive advantage for the correct development of these processes whose context and conditions often change through time.

### 5.2. Citizen Participation and Economic Sustainability

In the participation processes studied, we have clearly seen that its low economic cost in relation to the number of actions developed or the use of human resources could well compensate the economic cost derived from longer building times. This issue must be subject to further scientific study in any case.

### 5.3. Citizen Participation and Social Sustainability

Concerning the complex map of participation processes, we have stated how the different dimensions involved in citizen participation demand the use of useful tools to deal with them. Thus, creating a map of actors becomes one of the first necessary actions to be taken in participatory processes. This map should be able to show the social, economic or political complex picture that we are going to face in any participatory process. Trying to introduce to the discussion “the interests, goals and logics of action that the various categories of actors have, but also the dimension, from a local to global scale, of the interests themselves, since it has important consequences on the solution of collective problems” [68] (p. 53).

The catalysts of participatory processes are more and more diverse and closer to political management, potentially improving governance processes with the inclusion of citizens. This could imply a chance to come closer to political power through a meaningful and solid approach, allowing citizens and government to work hand in hand naturally and on the basis of agreement in urban planning and improvement processes.

The involvement of citizens in the design and even more so, the building stage of urban improvement projects, is still at an early stage and lacks a specific legal framework. This involvement means a great opportunity for the development of participatory processes that needs to be studied in further detail. Similarly, the potential of a rigorous gender approach to these processes has still not been sufficiently studied and needs further attention.

### 5.4. The Spanish Case

This article is only a starting point for the scientific study of such processes in the Spanish context. The results of the research carried out are of great interest, although they need to be further developed due to the complex nature of the issue, as has been stated throughout this article.

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