

Participatory planning at local level.

The case of community planning in Trinitat Nova, Barcelona

Ismael Blanco Fillola
Óscar Rebollo Izquierdo

Participatory planning represents a new way of local governance in which a great diversity of actors interact in order to reach new ways of collective problem solving. Traditional modes of hierarchical governance are being substituted in local Spanish sphere by participatory networks in which citizens, civic associations, public administrations and private institutions try to reach agreements, exchange resources and collaborate. The case of community planning in Trinitat Nova, a little district of Barcelona, is one of the most suggesting experiences of participatory planning in Spain and it has become a referent for many other local participatory processes. We will start this work by trying to state some of the general factors that help us to understand the spread of processes of local participatory planning in Spain. Secondly, we will explain the case of community planning in Trinitat Nova: its origins, the network of actors involved and the programmes that the plan has generated. Eventually, we will try to state some of the lessons that could be drawn from this experience.

1. PARTICIPATORY PLANNING IN SPANISH LOCAL GOVERNMENT

In recent years, many Catalan municipalities have initiated diverse experiences of participatory planning: Local Agendas 21 in the environmental area, City Educational Projects in the field of integral education, Strategic Plans for the socioeconomic development, and Community Plans at district level. All of them are examples of a new way of conceiving local government in which concepts such as participation, transversality and strategic approach are taking strength.

Three general trends of transformation help us to understand this phenomenon. Firstly, the political significance of local government is significantly growing (Brugué & Gomà, 1998). In a context increasingly diversified and globalized, local government turns into a critical space that get better adapted to the diversification of social demands and to new realities of social exclusion. Local sphere is also becoming crucial regarding the potential of socioeconomic development of local areas. What is more, local sphere is being reconsidered insofar as a political space in which priorities have to be decided and long and middle term strategies have to be adopted. Local sphere, in the end, is becoming an authentic polity where a great plurality of actors, with different interests and values, interact.

Secondly, a general shift from traditional government to new modes of governance is taking place. Hierarchical modes of government are being substituted – or, at least, complemented – by new ways of horizontal governance (Kooiman, 1993; Pierre, 2000). Complex networks of public and private actors interact in the policy making process, share areas of activity, negotiate priorities, exchange resources, compete and complement both in policy formulation and implementation processes. The concept of policy networks grasps the whole of these interactions taking place between interdependent actors in specific policy areas, whereas *governance* reflects the need of management of such complex networks. In the end, both of them are based on the idea that governments have lost its traditional monopoly of social transformation steering.

Finally, the so-referred crisis of representative democracy is leading to the adoption of

innovative formulas of democratic participation. Democratic innovation is not only conceived as a way to renew democratic legitimacy of public institutions but also as a way to adapt to a new context of complexity and uncertainty (Subirats, 1997). Public administrations are promoting deliberative forums and other kind of instruments to consult and to dialogue with citizenship, and local sphere has a privileged position to experiment with such kind of participatory devices.

Participatory planning, in this context, might be understood as an instrument of participatory governance in which a complex network of private and public actors aim to agree on public problem definitions, social goals and priorities, cooperate to reach these goals and evaluate in common public policy results.

2. THE COMMUNITY PLAN OF TRINITAT NOVA¹

The Community Plan of Trinitat Nova – a working-class district in the surroundings of Barcelona – is with no doubt one of the most interesting experiences of citizen participation in Spain and it has become a referent for many other local experiences of participatory planning. Following will analyse this experience, by explaining its origins, the phases in which it has been developed and the current situation of the process. We will analyse the network of actors that take part in the process as well as some of the projects generated by the Plan, the way they have been elaborated and their results.

2.1 Gestation of the Community Plan of Trinitat Nova

Trinitat Nova is one of the many districts built in the metropolitan region of Barcelona between the 50s and the 60s, a period of strong demographic growth. Massive waves of immigrants from all over Spain arrived to Catalonia those these years to find a job in the prosperous Catalan industry. Like most of the new urban areas planned to take in the new immigrants, Trinitat Nova was built without any kind of urban planning, very bad quality buildings and totally insufficient basic facilities.

Although some specific aspects of the district significantly improved during the 80s – for instance, its connection with the city –serious urban problems and very precarious socioeconomic conditions have persistently marked the quality of life in this district. During the two last decades, Trinitat Nova has experienced an intense process of demographic ageing, and the quality of life of its residents has got worse in many respects. Together with the housing problem, unemployment has increased, working conditions have become increasingly unstable, and the population lacking basic resources has significantly grown. Low educational levels, family problems, unemployment and the ageing of the population have caused the emergence of new realities of social exclusion in the district.

In line with this general situation, the associative fabric of the district went through a very critical period in the middle of the 90s. The Trinitat Nova's Residents Association, which had led historical periods of resident struggle in the district, was losing capacity of social representation and social leadership. Whereas the active group was ageing and no young residents were willing to engage in the association, many fronts of struggle had arisen in the district, such as the so called water struggle, the vindication of the arrival of the underground

¹ The description of the whole process is based on several primary documents generated by the Community Plan of Trinitat Nova itself, which are referred in the bibliography. For more information on the plan see www.pangea.org/trinova

to the district or the housing regeneration demand. It was in 1996 when the Residents Association, aware of its incapacity to represent and to lead the residents in all these fronts, decided to initiate a process of community planning in the district.

This process was to fulfil three basic aims (AAVV, 1997):

- a) Firstly, to regenerate and to strengthen the associative fabric of the district. Beyond the Residents Association frame, the Community Plan was to contribute to the regeneration of parents school associations, youth and women groups, sport clubs and any kind of collective action that tightened the community and participatory life of the district.
- b) Secondly, to improve the ways of intervention of public administrations in the district. Administrations were to give up their traditional paternalist approach to residents' needs and demands, to involve them in the policy making process, and to adopt new ways of horizontal and vertical coordination².
- c) Lastly, both strengthening community life and improving the ways of intervention of public administrations make sense as long as they contribute to a general improvement of the socioeconomic structure of the district, its urban aspects and, overall, the residents' quality of life.

In 1996, the Residents Association of Trinitat Nova got in touch with friends, acquaintances and experts from the University in order to design a process of community planning in the district. The most important contribution to the project came from the expert in community planning Marco Marchioni, who drew up a proposal of a social and community development programme for Trinitat Nova. This proposal was widely broadcast and discussed with public administrations and local civil society.

The basic goal during 1996, in consequence, was to involve in the project district associations, civil servants working in the district and public administrations. That is to say, to weave the network of actors that could provide the project with the necessary financial resources, expertise and legitimacy. Several administrations – the City Council of Barcelona and the Social Welfare Department of the Generalitat de Catalunya (the regional government) – gave support to the project by providing funding and by encouraging their workers to get involved in the process.

The Residents Association of Trinitat Nova was to lead the project with the financial aid of these Administrations and the technical support of a small group of experts in community planning, the so called Community Team. This group was not to be composed of civil servants neither to be controlled by any public administration but it would be directly paid and controlled by the Residents Association, which, as a result, would become the clear political leader of the whole programme. The Community Team, for its part, was to provide the necessary expertise as well as to work full-time in the project by keeping in permanent touch with residents, district associations and civil servants, encouraging resource exchange and creating niches for collective deliberation. A Technical Committee, composed of all the public services working in the district, was created in order to enable the coordination between the administration technicians on the Plan. Finally, the whole process was to be developed through the active participation of civic associations and the whole residents of the district.

FIGURE 1

² That is to say coordination between different areas of a same administration level and coordination between the different administrations working in the district.

2.2 The Community Diagnostic

The first step of the Community Plan of Trinitat Nova was the elaboration of a Community Diagnostic, which had to put in order and systematise the available information on the district and to enrich this information with the views and the subjective opinions of civil servants, residents and district associations. Therefore, the basic aim of this phase was to get an accurate and exhaustive diagnostic of the problems of the district, its weaknesses and threats as well as its strengths, potentials and opportunities in the future.

The Community Team initiated and coordinated the elaboration of the Community Diagnostic by basing on the so-called IAP (Participatory Action-Research) methodology. The first step of this method consists of a recompilation and an analysis of all the data referring to the history and the social structure of the community. The Community Team recompiled data on Trinitat Nova from many diverse sources (local census, statistics and bibliographic sources) in order to sum up all this information in a systematic way. However, the basic aspect of the IAP methodology is its participatory character. The Community Diagnostic was not to be an academic work on the problems of the community but the result of a participatory process in which the whole community (civil servants, politicians, associations, residents and experts) exchange information, explain their own experiences and discuss their own views on the community problems. Therefore, the elaboration of the Diagnostic represented the first step in the participatory process of the Community Plan.

The Community Team did several interviews so that to incorporate the views of all these actors in the Community Diagnostic:

- 21 personal interviews to public services employees.
- 14 personal interviews to representatives of associations.
- 16 interviews to residents that had been selected by random.

All the information obtained from these interviews was used together with the statistical data so that to organise three thematic discussion groups with plural participation:

- “Education and child and youth leisure time”
- “Women and participation”
- “Social problems: the exclusion phenomenon”

The resulting document was divided in two parts: the Community Diagnostic itself and a second part in which some criteria for public intervention were pointed out (FIGURE 2). The Community Diagnostic was structured in three sections. The first one was based on the statistical and document information on the district and summed up some of the most important structural aspects of the district: its history, its demography, its work and economic structure, urban aspects and issues related to public security. The other two sections were based on the opinions and the information provided by the community actors in the frame of the interviews and the discussion groups. One section analysed the district by policy areas whilst the other one focused on population groups. In the second part, criteria, objectives and some specific proposals were pointed out in relation to four policy areas: urbanism, economy, education and the associative fabric. However, the document itself highlighted that these areas are totally interrelated and, thus, integral and transversal approaches would be necessary in the development of the Community Plan.

The basic aim of the methodology used was to link the process of knowledge to the process of social transformation itself (AAVV, 1997). In consequence, community participation in the elaboration of the diagnostic was not only to enrich the available information on the district but also to encourage the participation of all the community actors around the Community Plan. For example, the discussion group on education formed itself in a permanent workgroup for the educational improvement of the district. The Technical Committee was not only crucial for the development of this diagnostic but it has kept active during the whole process. The Community Diagnostic itself, in the introduction of the document, emphasised that one of the basic outcomes of this work was to encourage the associative fabric, the residents and local technicians to get involved in the future development of the Plan. Eventually, the Diagnostic laid down some of the basic aims and strategies to be followed in order to improve the situation of the district.

The most relevant point here, however, is that the diagnostic did not intend to finish with the elaboration of this report but to continue in a dialectic process between action and research. The Diagnostic stressed:

“... we speak on action-research to the extent to which we do not renounce to go on researching the processes of social transformation we intend to generate. Therefore, after the first research action comes, and after the action, it comes the research again³”

The Diagnostic was presented and discussed with all the community actors, who had the chance to add new elements of analysis and to modify some parts of the document proposed by the Community Team. After this process, a general agreement was reached in relation to some of the outcomes of the Diagnostic (AAVV, 1997):

- a) The Diagnostic enriched and contributed to the systematisation of the information on the district and its relationship with its environment. Furthermore, this process encouraged the community actors to get involved in the process.
- b) This process contributed to the socialisation and the exchange of information among all the community actors. The Diagnostic generated a broad consensus on the problems, the needs and the priorities of the district. As a consequence, it also laid the foundations for further cooperation of all community actors in collective projects.
- c) The Diagnostic paved the way for greater coordination between public employees of different administrative areas. It contributed to the information exchange and to integrate some programmes. The Technical Committee was to play a crucial role here.
- d) In this process, foundations were laid for greater cooperation and integration of different public administrations.

All these elements, in the end, were contributing to a radical transformation of policy making styles in Trinitat Nova, by generating more cooperative and participatory ways of problem solving in the district.

2.3 The elaboration and the implementation of the Community Plan

After reaching a general consensus on the content of the Diagnostic, it was initiated the elaboration and the implementation of the Community Plan for the period between 1997-

³ This brings us to the basic idea of the whole process of community planning in Trinitat Nova. That is, that the Community Plan of Trinitat Nova is conceived as a process constantly developing, in which any diagnostic, policy aim or policy programme can be modified in any moment.

1999⁴. The Community Team became once again the key actor for the development of this phase.

During the implementation process, this group has based his work on the following principles (Rebollo, 2001):

- a) Firstly, the pedagogy of participation. Bearing in mind that participation is based on values, attitudes and ways of collective organisation, the Community Team plays a crucial role in the transmission of these values, practices and attitudes.
- b) Secondly, to provide residents with sufficient resources for their own organisation. The Community Team's philosophy is to work hard so that not to be necessary in the future.
- c) Third, the development of participatory devices. The Community Plan starts from the idea that participation cannot be improvised. As a consequence, methodologies such as EASW (European Awareness Scenario Workshops), deliberative forums, DAFOS (Weakness, Threats, Strengths and Chances methodology) and IAP have been implemented.
- d) Fourth, the integration of Public Administrations in the process. Although this process is clearly a bottom-up process, the Community Plan has always been aware that the complicity and the support of Public Administrations are absolutely necessary.
- e) Fifth, the integration of technical projects with participatory processes. Technical projects designed by public administrations should be complemented with participatory processes and vice versa. Participatory processes should also be provided with technical know-how and expertise.
- f) Sixth, the crucial idea of the process. We are always speaking on an open and flexible process, in constant evolution, sometimes unpredictable, where many social agents are involved by influencing the process and by transforming themselves. This is not considered as a trouble but as an intrinsic and necessary feature of the project.

Starting from these basic principles, the Community Plan of Trinitat Nova generated several programmes of social intervention and created a complex structure that enabled the coordination between resident participation and public administrations.

As mentioned above, the Diagnostic differentiated 4 areas of intervention for the Community Plan: urbanism, economy, education and associative activity. However, four years later, most of the programmes and activities generated by the Plan have focused on urban and education areas. The so-called District Educational Project and Trinitat InNova programme – a programme of urban regeneration – have become the basic pillars of the Plan by concentrating most of its resources⁵.

2.3.1 Trinitat InNova: the urban regeneration programme of the Community Plan

As pointed out before, Trinitat Nova was one of the new urban areas built in the 50s to take in

⁴ The Community Plan is still working, since the contract between the Residents Association and the Community Team was renewed. Thus, is important to note that we are talking on a process that has not yet been closed.

⁵ Nevertheless, these projects have been developed on an integral and transversal perspective. The distinction between areas of intervention makes less sense in an integral mode of governance. The Community Team, regarding this subject, prefers to speak on *dimensions* of intervention – rather than areas – by emphasising that all the aspects of the reality are constantly interrelated.

the new workers arriving to Catalonia from other regions of Spain. The district was built with any kind of urban planning, without providing basic equipment and with poorly built buildings⁶. Most of the dwellings in the district are extremely small and serious housing pathologies appeared soon. An extremely irregular geography and the urban isolation from the big city are some other serious problems affecting the urban structure of the district.

The Diagnostic stressed the urgent need for long and middle term urban planning in the district as well as some criteria to be taken into account in this process:

- The urgent remodelling of housing and the provision of new dwellings to help the younger to settle down in the district and, as a result, to stop the constant ageing of the local population.
- The provision of basic equipment for the social and cultural life in the district.
- The recovery of some urban spaces that might be of public interest and might liven up the social life in the district.

Trinitat InNova is the programme that in the frame of the Community Plan should contribute to the urban regeneration of the district. Progressively, the criterion of environmental sustainability has become an intrinsic and fundamental feature of this programme, which has based on a triangular conceptual relationship between sustainability, urban regeneration and community participation.

In December of 1997, the Residents Association of Trinitat Nova organised a symposium on urban regeneration and citizen participation that aimed to be the starting point of the urban regeneration of the district. Since then on, a complex structure designed to involve the residents, technicians and public administrations in the urban programme has been weaving.

The main pillar of this structure is the so-called Remodelling Group - an open and permanent structure of resident participation regarding any aspect related to district urbanism and housing. Between 40 and 60 people take part voluntarily of this Group and meet every fifteen days to get informed, to discuss and to make proposals for the urban regeneration programme.

This group has initiated multiple participatory processes in order to draw up a proposal for a model of sustainable urban regeneration. For instance, in 1998 it carried out an opinion poll oriented to grasp the residents' perceptions and day-life experiences regarding the urban problems of the district. A team of experts on poll designing and analysis helped the residents to design the questionnaire and to prepare the fieldwork. The members of the Remodelling Group took part in the elaboration of the questionnaire, they were trained for the fieldwork and, coordinated by the Community Team, they worked as survey takers during several weeks. The polling process represented a chance to broadcast the remodelling project and to encourage residents to get involved in it.

Another significant moment in the development of the Trinitat InNova programme was the carrying out of a participatory workshop based on the EASW methodology. This workshop was initiated in opposition to the system that the City Council of Barcelona, together with the Generalitat (the regional government), had adopted to develop an urban plan for the district. These institutions announced a competitive selection process for an urban plan project open to any private firm, without leaving any room for residents' participation. In opposition to this process, the Residents Association celebrated these workshops in which all the

⁶ Most of the new buildings were built by public organisms linked to the Franco regime.

Administrations were invited. 40 people representing different areas – politicians and civil servants, experts, entrepreneurial and economic sector, civic groups and associations and, eventually, common residents – took part of these workshops. The first day, participants were grouped according to the area they belonged and they discussed a global idea on how the district was to look like in the future. The second day, they divided in six thematic areas:

- Interaction between the district, its urban surrounding and the city.
- New housing and sustainability.
- Economic development potential.
- Ecological infrastructures: water, waste, energy and transport.
- Citizen participation and social organisation.

Each thematic group drew up in a brainstorming process multiple ideas and projects that were explained and discussed with the rest of participants in a plenary session. In the end, all members of the workshops voted for all the proposals in order to prioritise them. Five projects were selected: “Trinitat Nova: district of water”; “Let’s build a sustainable district”; “Commitment for resident participation”; “Barcelona opens to the Collserola mountains”; and “Thinking about the public transport and connection from a metropolitan perspective”. Each of these projects were to be further developed in a participatory process in which all community actors should be involved. In addition, the rest of the proposals elaborated in the workshops were also included in the final report in order to be taken into account in the future urban planning of the district. The construction of the Centre of Interpretation and Water Museum of Trinitat Nova or the further elaboration of an ecological district project, among other projects, stem from the celebration of these participatory workshops.

Finally, the Remodelling Group has organised other thematic workshops, seminars and open lectures on the triangular relationship between sustainability, urban regeneration and citizen participation. Some meetings with politicians and technicians of public administrations as well as workshops within the Technical Committee have also been celebrated in order to get information and to negotiate specific projects for the urban regeneration of the district with public administrations.

The technical quality and the innovative character of the residents’ proposals, as well as the public legitimacy these projects enjoy, have enabled the Community Plan to become a legitimate interlocutor in front of public administrations. Currently, public administrations are negotiating with the Residents Association a programme of urban regeneration for Trinitat Nova in which sustainability criteria have become central.

2.3.2 The District Educational Project: the socio-educational dimension of the Community Plan

The other basic pillar of the Community Plan of Trinitat Nova has been the so-called District Educational Project (DEP). The Community Diagnostic revealed serious problems in relation to the educational level of the district population, which affected the whole age groups. In 1996, a 30% of the district population did not have the primary education level - in contrast with the 15’8% of Barcelona’s population -, whereas only the 2’5% had finished the higher level - in contrast to the 9’9% of Barcelona.

Regarding the childhood, the Community Diagnostic stressed the following points:

- The younger ones could not enjoy leisure time alternatives in the district, which condemned them either to stay at home or to look for such alternatives out of the district.
- High level of school failure and great school demotivation among children because of family problems, low educational level of parents and few economic resources.
- Many cases of child mental illness.
- Lack of school support resources.

Among the adults the level of illiteracy and the degree of insufficient education were extremely high, which opened the doors to social exclusion. High levels of unemployment and working instability were direct consequences of this fact, too. Problems related to health prevention were also significant among the young and adult population. Furthermore, the younger residents with middle and higher education were leaving the district attracted by better urban and social conditions of other areas of the town, which indeed made worse the educational structure of the district.

The Community Diagnostic stated the need to develop a programme of “ permanent community education” in the frame of the Community Plan. This programme was to intervene in three main areas: formal education – with the aims of reducing school failure and of extending the average educational period of youth; permanent education of adults and, eventually, health education⁷. Besides, in relation to the economic area, the Community Diagnostic emphasised that the Community Plan should work hard on the field of professional training of youth and adults. All the interventions developed in the frame of the Community Plan were to base on the coordination between the whole community actors and, mainly, all the educational services working in the district.

Starting from these premises, the Community Plan has generated several programmes of social intervention, which were grouped into a District Educational Project in 1999. From then on, the most important organism in the development of the District Educational Project has been the District Social and Educational Commission, which provides a space for the coordination of the whole educational services, civil servants and the Community Plan. To be precise, the Social and Educational Commission is composed of the two crèches of the district, all the public schools, several educational institutions of the Town Hall, the Social Services that work in the district, a group of consultants in psycho-pedagogic issues and the Community Team.

Some examples of the programmes that the Educational Project has generated are:

- “Jubilado? Sí, activo también!” (Retired? Yes, Active too!) - a programme on health, entertainment and public safety for elderly people.
- Childhood Centre “El Desvan”, in which the so-called Childhood Dynamization Project is developed – a programme consisting on the provision of a socio-educational alternative that educate children in values such as solidarity, diversity and tolerance.
- “Aprender a aprender” (Learning to learn), a programme of working insertion that gives support to the residents who are looking for a job.
- Omnia Project, which promotes the use of new technologies of information and communication from a community, educational and working perspective.

⁷ Health education was considered a crucial area of public intervention as long as many diseases related to the lack of prevention (mainly, diseases linked to sexuality, i.e. AIDS) affected the district population.

- Permanent Education of Adults: a project of adult education in issues such as literacy, health and culture.
- Active School of Parents: a space for parent school associations meeting and training.
- Shared Education Plan, which coordinates the educational activity of all the primary and secondary schools in order to promote the educational continuity among the younger ones between 0 and 18.

Each of these programmes has been coordinated by the Social and Educational Commission and has generated his own network of actors. District associations – youth groups, parent school associations, welfare associations, among others -; public employees of the Social Services; teachers and headmasters and headmistresses of the district school centres; residents – adults, retired, youth, children -; all of them participate in these projects not as passive objects but as the subjects that live up all the programmes.

2.4 Provisional results of the Community Plan

The evaluation of this kind of participatory processes is not an easy task since many variables should be borne in mind and much subjective views should be taken into account. Currently, the Community Team is working on the reelaboration of the Community Diagnostic in order to provide some empirical evidences of the outcomes of the Plan. Even though these data are not still available, some practical results could be pointed out:

- a) Nowadays, the Community Plan draws 400 people together actively participating in some of the programmes, projects and activities generated by the plan. Two points should be emphasised regarding this subject: first, those who participate in the Community Plan are extremely plural – we can now speak about the participation of youth and elderly people, children and women, people involved in associations and people who are not; secondly, all the programmes generated by the Community Plan have been drawn up and are being implemented by the community actors themselves. Provisionally, we could affirm that the Community Plan is effectively contributing to the regeneration of the associative fabric as well as to the strengthening of the community life in the district. The Community Plan, might be said, is renewing the social capital of Trinitat Nova.
- b) The Technical Committee, which is currently composed of more than 20 public services, reflects a radical transformation of the way public administrations operate in the district. The Community Plan has led to new ways of intervention based on integral perspectives of problem solving, multilevel and horizontal coordination and permanent interaction with citizenship.
- c) As a result of resident participation, and together with the support and the complicity of experts and public employees, the Community Plan has generated a complex system of public programmes and specific proposals of intervention in the district. All these projects rely on the ideas and the resources provided by many residents, employees of public services, experts and associations of the district and of the whole city. Trinitat InNova and the District Educational Project – and all the programmes it includes – are real programmes of social transformation that enjoy a great amount of resources as well as a strong legitimacy among the residents.
- d) Eventually, the Community Plan of Trinitat Nova has become a referent for many other processes of participatory planning and it has received the recognition of academicians,

politicians and social movements. At micro level, this experience has favoured the initiation of other processes of community planning in the surrounding districts (Verdum, Roquetes and Torre Baró).

Obviously, the development of the Community Plan has to face up to some handicaps. The Residents Association itself, the residents of the district, employees of public services and politicians, all of them have to adapt to new ways of performing their public roles.

The Residents Associations, for instance, has not only been the initiator and the political leader of the process but it has also put out some resistance as long as the Community Plan forces it to share its power of social representation with other associations and with non-organised residents. Public employees, for their part, are used to performing their activities in a fragmented organisational framework, without coordinating with members of other departments. Furthermore, they are not used to accepting citizens' opinions as inputs for the development and the implementation of public programmes. Residents themselves tend to lack confidence on their capacity of influencing social transformation processes, they tend to mistrust politicians and public employees and they tend to have a passive behaviour in relation to collective issues. Lastly, politicians are reluctant to share their power with citizens, even though they usually ask citizens to have a participatory behaviour.

The Community Plan has not neglected all these aspects and it has intended to integrate them as an intrinsic feature of the reality it tries to transform. That is to say, the Community Plan aims to democratise the Residents Association, to generate self-confidence and participatory attitudes among residents, to educate public employees in integral and transversal ways of public intervention and to convince politicians of the potential of citizen participation. All these aspects involve a great cultural change that, according to the Community Plan itself, cannot be reached without a long term process.

2.5 Concluding remarks. Some lessons for local participatory planning

Even though a more systematic assessment is needed, the case of community planning in Trinitat Nova could be considered in many respects as a successful case of local participatory planning. But, which factors do explain the relative success of this experience? What makes it different from other cases of participatory planning? Which lessons could be drawn from this process? We will finish this paper by trying to provide some speculative answers to these questions.

First of all, we should borne in mind that the whole process of planning in Trinitat Nova has been led by the Residents Association. The most exceptional feature of the Community Plan of Trinitat Nova, compared to most of the experiences of participatory planning in Catalonia, is its purely bottom-up nature. This Plan has not been initiated by public administrations but by the residents themselves. Although the Residents Association has always been aware of the need of integrating public administrations in the process and even though the public funding has been very important for the Plan, the Residents Association has taken the political leadership of the whole process and it has enjoyed a great autonomy for stating the philosophy and the methodology of the Plan. The fact that it has been the residents and not the public administrations who have played a leading role has enabled the residents to feel the Plan as *their* Plan, and not as a project imposed or designed by politicians who are not in the territory.

Anyway, the Community Plan could had not been developed if it were not for two previous

reasons. Firstly, the fact that the Residents Association acknowledged its increasingly lack of social representation and leadership and, as a consequence, become aware of the urgent need of adopting radically new ways of social mobilisation. Secondly, the very fact that the Residents Association, despite the critical situation through which it went in the middle of the 90s, is widely respected by the residents of the district as well as by the public administrations because of its long tradition of resident mobilisation in the district.

Another key factor for the success of the Plan has been the presence of the Community Team, composed of several persons who have undertaken a strong personal commitment with the Plan and who have worked full-time for it. They are the real architects of the network of actors involved in the process. By being in permanent touch with people, they have managed to encourage the residents, associations and public administrations to get involved in the Plan and they have reached the crucial support of external experts that have provided the Plan with technical know-how. If it were not for the work of this Team, the community actors would hardly get involved in the Plan and would hardly interact on their own volition for the development of collective projects.

Finally, another exceptional aspect of the Community Plan of Trinitat Nova is the philosophy on which the Community Team has based his work. Apart from the general idea of community participation, the idea of *process* has become central in this experience. By the idea of *process*, the Community Team assumes that social reality is in permanent evolution and that in this context, what is need to be respected is not the planning itself but the social dynamics. Therefore, uncertainty, complexity or change are not considered as a problem that has to be eliminated through planning but as a chance for generating projects better adapted to the social reality. More important than planning, could be said, is to be able to react and to adapt to such complexity. Community participation has to be understood as a permanently open process through which more effective ways of problem solving can be reached.

REFERENCES

- AAVV (1997) *Plan Comunitario y Social de la Trinitat Nova (Barcelona). Diagnóstico Comunitario*. Non edited
- Brugué, Q. Gomá, R. (1998) *Gobiernos locales y políticas públicas*. Ariel. Barcelona.
- Kooiman (1993) *Modern Governance. New government - society interactions*. Oxford University Press. Oxford
- Pierre, J. (2000) *Debating Governance*. Oxford University Press. Oxford
- Rebollo, O. (2001) "El Plan Comunitario de la Trinitat Nova: una experiencia de participación ciudadana", in *Revista Mientras Tanto*, nº 79. Barcelona
- Subirats, J. (1997) "Democràcia: participació i eficiència" en *Revista CIFA*, nº6. Barcelona

RESEÑAS BIOGRÁFICAS

Ismael Blanco es miembro del Equipo de Análisis Político del Departamento de Ciencia Política de la Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona y está desarrollando sus estudios de Doctorado en el mismo departamento con una beca de Formación de Investigadores de la misma universidad. Sus principales áreas de trabajo son la participación ciudadana, las políticas públicas y el gobierno local. Como investigador del Equipo de Análisis Político ha participado en varias investigaciones sobre las temáticas citadas y ha participado además en la organización y la gestión de diversos procesos participativos en municipios catalanes. Actualmente está desarrollando su tesis doctoral sobre nuevos escenarios de *governance* participativa en el gobierno local.

Ismael Ivan Blanco Fillola

Equipo de Análisis Político

Departamento de Ciencia Política y Derecho Público

Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona

ismael.blanco@uab.es

93 581 34 47

Óscar Rebollo es profesor del Departamento de Sociología de la Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona y coordinador en esta misma universidad del Posgrado de Participación y Desarrollo Sostenible, desde el que se impulsan proyectos de Investigación-Acción-Participativa (IAP). Ha ejercido la función de coordinador en numerosos proyectos de participación ciudadana en el nivel local, entre los cuales una experiencia de presupuestos participativos y diversas experiencias con las metodologías EASW (European Awareness Scenario Workshops). Es coordinador técnico del Plan Comunitario y Social de la Trinitat Nova.

Óscar Rebollo

Departamento de Sociología

Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona

oscar.rebollo@uab.es

TABLAS

Figure 1. Network of actors in the Community Plan of Trinitat Nova

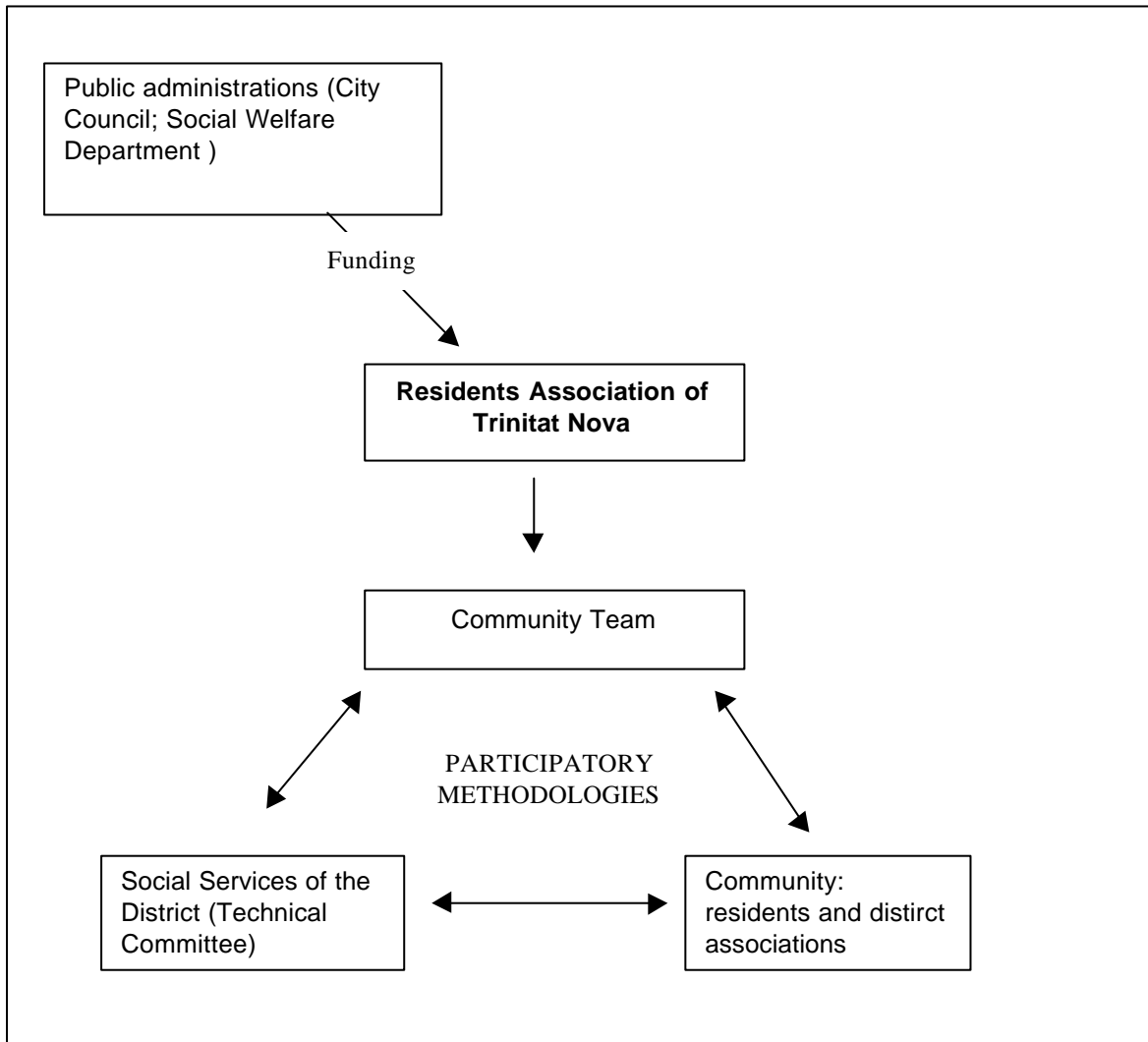


Figure 2. Summary of the Community Diagnostic of Trinitat Nova

1. INTRODUCTION

2. COMMUNITY DIAGNOSTIC

2.1 The district

- Brief history
- Population
- Educational level
- Work conditions
- Commercial activity
- Public security
- Urban conditions

2.2 Analysis of the situation by social and community interest areas

- Education
- Health
- Culture, sport and leisure
- Working conditions
- Social services

2.3 Analysis of the situation by groups of age

- Childhood
- Youth
- Adults
- Elderly people

3. CRITERIA AND INTERVENTION AREAS OF THE COMMUNITY PLAN

- Premises
- Urban area
- Economic area
- Educational area
- Social and associative area