

Theme:

GOVERNANCE



B 01 Awareness and participation: Tools for public involvement and empowerment

The foundation of modern governance and LA21: Participatory Democracy and Budgeting as a means to involve citizens in local decision-making procedures

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City Profile: Mallorca, Spain

Short city/region profile:
Mallorca/Catolic

Number of inhabitants:
+ or - 600.000

Executive Summary:

An analysis of participatory systems in the context of Balear LA21, comparing results in different municipalities. Two methods, Participatory Democracy and Participatory Budgeting, have been developed to ensure both modern governance and LA21.

Abstract:

During the last years Local Agenda 21 schemes have been established extensively in the Balearic Islands. In the first place this communication will analyze the situation of the "Local Agendas 21" in the Balearic Islands and the experience gained through it. A detail on the participation systems promoted by the Balearic Regional Government will follow. Finally, we will present some future proposals already being developed.

But before getting into the main themes, let's introduce the geographical frame. Most of the towns in the Balearic Islands have less than 40.000 inhabitants, therefore the experience gained during these years and the proposal of participation that we will present, is conceived for towns of this size or smaller. For bigger towns, efforts should be multiplied or, maybe, the strategy must change. Until now, two main strategies of participation in the developing of a Local Agenda 21 have been carried out. Those that simply provide with information of the area considered (surveys, meetings area...) and those that, besides that information, also propose future solutions. These we call a Forum.

To get down to business, what the Government of the Balearic Islands wants to achieve is that the LA21 is applied as the ordinary system of planning and management of the towns. If one wants to reach a real participative democracy, we must start from getting the society involved in taking Town Council's decisions until citizens can really decide which town they want. Therefore, we should take advantage of the Forum's structure so as to develop mechanisms of participation that involve citizens in the Town Halls daily life.

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There are two fundamental ways of taking decisions in a Town Council, legislative and executive. Considering the legislative path, it is obvious that mechanisms of participation already established, are not effective. Public exposition of regulations, rules and by-laws does not encourage an active participation. What should be done is to motivate participation before actually writing up the rule. First of all, we must design a participation structure, classified by clear themes, that normally coincide with the budgetary chapters of Town Councils. Once organized, participation must be motivated to describe aims and objectives. Efforts done in order to achieve these aims will be essential for the future of participation. In the executive path, annual budgets will only be approached in a usual concept and common to all the Town Councils. Designing the Town Council's budgets is a domestic work that citizens do not usually know about. We propose to encourage public debate over the budgets so as to enrich the process of their approval. According to organizing subjects the structures mentioned before will be used. Efforts must be done to develop simple and understandable instruments of analysis so as to facilitate participation at the decision-making level.

We will only be able to speak about participative democracy if we manage to encourage people to participate in these two subjects, so essential for the development of their community. Participation is not the solution to all problems and not necessarily participation leads us towards sustainability. Constant participation will give us transparency, debate, information, motivation, interest and above all, an endless input of ideas.

Finally, it is important to point out which are the elements that will motivate and maintain participation:

1. Organization. Without a good organization participation fails. This means that budgets are needed to carry out all the activities.
2. One or several leaders that lead the participation. Usually the mayor or a councillor must show the necessary charisma to build up people's hopes.
3. Clear aims that will fill the people with enthusiasm. Taking part of the Local Agenda 21 must be capable to motivate them to go on.

Local Agenda 21 have been very useful to set the basis of the participation in the Balearic Islands. Now it is time to go a bit further, to really involve the society in local government's daily life. If citizens participate at least in the taking of decisions described here, then we can really say we have achieved a real local government.

C.V.:

Joan Sastre Barceló born in Porreres, Mallorca (Spain) in 1971. Graduated from the University of the Balearic Island with a degree in Tourism and a Master's degree in Tourism Management (MTA) specialized in Planning and Sustainable Tourism, and Hotel Management. He works as a Consultant since 1997 for the Environmental Department of the Balearic Island's Government. He provides with consultancy services in the drawing up of the LA21 and in the management and participation systems for the autonomous an local government. He has also given several lectures and lessons related to his work. According to politics, he was councillor in the Town Council of Porreres from 1995 until 1999. In this very last year, after the local elections, he was named mayor. In the 2003 local elections, he was re-elected with absolute majority.

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