

**URBAN PARTICIPATION AND TRANSNATIONAL SPACE:  
THE CORDOBA CASE STUDY**

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## Abstract

Thinking and reflecting about the experiences of citizen participation took me from the urban to the regional scale, always with a focus on the relationship between the institutionality defined by the political-administrative system and the practices developed by citizens. This paper's proposal is oriented to rebuild the ground covered by an urban citizen movement -*Red Ciudadana Principio del Principio*- that, from the political-administrative system's periphery, demonstrates the local-global tension in the passage from the local struggles to its integration in frameworks that allows to re-interpret its environment and to give a new sense to its practices. This offers us the opportunity to think about a possible transnational dimension of its practices.

Thinking and reflecting about the experiences of citizen participation took me from the urban to the regional scale, always with a focus on the relationship between the institutionality defined by the political-administrative system and the practices developed citizen's praxis. Within the framework of the *Programa de Estudios Culturales sobre MERCOSUR*, where the debate was concentrated on the tension between the democratic institutionality of the mentioned regional process of integration and the emergent citizenship in Latin America, my work was oriented to analyze the relationship between state defined regional instances and citizen participation. Particularly, the form in which the city "neighbors" of Córdoba integrate themselves in the supranational processes of decision making - Neighbors Forum of Mercociudades Network-, from a perspective that privileged the involved groups' autonomy. Later, this regional integration process was taken on board as a opportunity context of action for actors such as Women - *Centro Subregional de Intercambio del Cono Sur, Alahua (CISCSA)* -, the *Congreso Bolivariano de los Pueblos* and groups from the World Social Forum in Córdoba. In an effort that left from the hypothesis that affirms the destitution of the National State for the definition of the temporality and spatiality of the citizen participation. As much in the case of the Neighbors as the Women of the city of Córdoba, the performance in the regional scale made possible to problematize new questions. Subjects that had not been considered by the integrating processes as well as the institutionalization of alternative spaces of participation in the supranational deliberation. In this sense, we can say that the collective action in the regional scale contributed to the redefinition of the representation structures of state led spaces of integration. Nevertheless, in these works, the "transnational participation", in spite of referring the citizen practices that take place beyond space-temporary limits defined by the political-administrative system of the national state, finished limiting itself upon analysis of the supranational space of integration whose subjects of law are the national states. Spaces in which the citizenship is gotten up ad hoc or developing to spaces public who "watch" the formal spaces of decision making - parallel forums and conferences. The proposal of the present paper is oriented to thus reconstruct the way traveled by an urban citizen movement that puts in evidence the local-global tension, in the transit of the local conflicts to its integration in frameworks that allow them to give new interpretations to their surroundings and re-to mean their practices, allowing to think a transnational dimension us. We talked about to the experience of the Citizen Network Beginning of the Beginning [PdElP Network].

*Context of emergency: broken contacts between the political leadership and the citizenship.*

The scene of radicalization of the representation crisis in Argentina, referred to the mediation of the political parties, begins to be outlined in October of 2000 with the resignation of the vice-president -Carlos "Chacho" Alvarez- and became evident in the legislative elections that took place in October 2001, when the percentage of negative votes -invalid and in blank- reached protagonism. This surpassed the volume of positive votes in Capital Federal (29%) and Santa Fe (40%), while in the metropolis of Buenos Aires and Córdoba they remained in second and third place, respectively. It is important to emphasize, in first place, that this growth of the negative votes occurred by the expansion of the invalid vote and, in second place, that the electoral non-participation was made feel in those elections also, reaching the highest level of the last times - 30% of the electoral register.

In a survey, made by the *Centro de Estudios de la Opinión Pública*, the interviewed people reveal that they did not believe in the politicians, that they did not find any candidate who represents them or, simply, that they did not want "to give money to the politicians" -the parties receive a sum by each vote emitted in behalf of them. In the city of Córdoba, the voters chose, in the invalid vote, drawn characters accompanied by the phrase: "he does not have hands, perhaps does not rob" -they used the popular Clemente, a Caloi character.<sup>ii</sup>

After this electoral process, the 19 of December the public space was occupied by an intense and plural collective manifestation that extended by the main corners and squares of Buenos Aires, Córdoba and Rosario: the "cacerolazo".<sup>iii</sup> This protest, where the social identities were suspended, dismissed any situation of representation to the voice of: "que se vayan todos, que no quede ni uno solo"<sup>iv</sup> and overthrew the president, Antonio de la Rúa.

Also in December of 2001, an e-mail network spread a message in the city of Córdoba, that would be repeated on the local radio, inviting the people "to celebrate Christmas in the squares and where, in a peaceful form of dialogue, would be expressed the complaints, protests... with the idea that the neighbors began to gain spaces" (Scicolone, interview 2004). The idea was "to organize meeting spaces [...] to speak and to see, between everyone, what could be done?" (Cf. Principio del Principio. ces.html, February 2006). The proposal obtained answers and support from diverse places in the world -calls and messages sent by e-mail. That was the "beginning of the beginning", the beginning of a movement that defined it self as non-partisan but not apolitical. It was oriented to become the citizens aware and responsible in order to "avoid the beginning of the end" (Bossio, interview 2004).

*En diciembre muchos de nosotros estábamos muy enojados, el enojo era como la fuerza, hay que pararse y decir basta no a ésta situación coyuntural sino a toda esta estructura corrupta. Han hecho lo que han querido, nos han metido todos los versos que se les han antojado, nos han robado el país y bueno... nosotros como ciudadanos empezamos a darnos cuenta de que esto es nuestro y que tenemos que participar. (Scicolone, interview 2004)*

Thus, since December of 2001, new local and singular forms of citizen participation are located in the limit of the political-administrative system, although without losing it as a reference of their speeches and praxis. For some authors, as Francisco Naishtat and Federico Schuster, the collective action adopts a "civic matrix", that in spite of precise and particular reclamations, tends "to reframe its narrative identity and its validity pretensions from a citizen story and a fight for rights, than from a strictly particular reclamation" (2005, p 16). Its sense would be given,

for other authors, by the "reencounter with the capacities of the multitudinous thing, the collective, the neighborhood thing" where "a new and active opening to fluxes" is being conceived (Colectivo de Situaciones, 2002, p. 34, 39).

What was observed, during the crisis and in the later protest organizational forms, was the sprouting of a complex network of alliances with diverse objectives, based in the exercise of the resistance, autonomy and citizen control in deliberative instances.

*Lo que aparece son nuevas formas de participación política autónomas del control de los representantes que transforman el mero derecho de libre expresión en el ejercicio organizado de petición y resistencia frente a las autoridades públicas [...] generando formas más racionales y participativas de representación y control ciudadano [...] el gobierno representativo aparece como un marco para desarrollar actividades autogestionarias y locales que debe ser reformulado en la dirección de un republicanismo deliberativo, donde la gestión de la cosa pública no se restrinja a la manipulación de las elites amparadas en la razón de Estado sino que incorpore efectivamente instancias colectivas de participación deliberativa y control ciudadano. (PÉREZ et al, 2005, p 411)*

In the case of Córdoba, in March of 2002, those who proposed the celebration of the "beginning of the beginning" in christmas made, through massive mass media, a new invitation to Córdoba citizenship and reunited 400 citizens at the National University of Córdoba's facilities. Members of different organizations participated in that meeting, among them the neighborhood assemblies, which also developed throughout 2002 diverse actions that, in their heterogeneity, questioned the capacity of the actual institutionality to face the demands of participation from the citizens in the frame definition of the political action of the society in that they live in. According to it, Carrizo affirms: "new publics take the word extending, in fact, the tight established mechanisms to process the popular sovereignty." (Carrizo et al, 2002, p 9), and they are related on the base of the premise: "to do something" with "the others" which also "are doing something", in such a way to make visible the possible convergences between the different social movements objectives, and thus to maintain in operation the assemblies and the conscience of "not being alone in the struggle". In this way, the extension and the permanence of deliberations had results in two orders, on one hand, to give content to "throw them all go away", the watchword that had given base to the movement, and on the other hand, to establish the foundations by watching and permanently attacking the scopes of local and provincial management (Carrizo et al, 2002, p. 8).

### *Window on a local opportunity: the impeachment of the mayor*

During the second semester of 2002, a set of political and union organizations -for example, Municipal Workers and Employees Unique Union [SOUEM] and the Light and Force Union -, NGOs, citizen movements - for example, the citizen network "Beginning of the beginning" -, professional self-summoned associations -for example, Self-summoned Architects [ARCA]-, neighbors from the neighborhood assemblies, and so forth, they promoted the impeachment process of Córdoba's Mayor -German Kammerath. The impeachment process was "the cause" that canalized the activities of the citizen movement. I was recognized as the opportunity "to work in concrete things" (Bossio, interview 2004), as the passage from the deliberative and

demand instance to the action or to "the pro-active" instance, in the members of the network words.

Pdelp Network grouped with some of the mentioned actors, looking for developing the mentioned objective, in the "Multisectorial". This form of organization presents a kind of "rupture" with the past, given that it is about it was a temporary joint integrated by different and diverse organizations -unions, political parties and civil society organizations.

In the particular case, the Multisectorial conformation represented the union of "all" of those that somehow felt excluded from the power organization of the new local management, and, in general terms, of "those who lost before the advance of the neoliberalism" or those who responded to the violence installed in the State, that the local management represented. We are referring to the symbolic violence at the governmental corruption, "a kind of public insult" (Auyero, 2002).

Different from a political alliance, in the Multisectorial the political praxis and interests of its members are divergent; nevertheless, the presence of a greater threat, a common adversary adds them temporarily. According to it, De Piero affirms: "the same plurality that these spaces implies, helps to liquefy certain confrontations, since the sectors with greater divergences can be interceded by others who are closer and can act as a hinge" (2005, p. 13). In the case of Córdoba it was not different, and with the end of the "cause" and the "adversary" period of management, the Multisectorial dissolved.

Nevertheless, and in spite of not to have obtained the mayor impeachment, this organized effort, not very often seen in our city, represented a strong bet on democracy made by the citizen movement. The task of "joining the necessary signatures", had like answer, at first, more than 50 thousand signatures to qualify the process, and then surpassed the numbers demanded by the municipal law, with approximately 113 thousands signatures in 30 days.

The elections for the renovation of the local Executive were perceived by the network as a new opportunity for the action.

A pesar de que una de las reacciones normalizadoras del sistema político para atenuar movimientos de participación son las elecciones -ya que instalan agenda y despejan el escenario de la opinión pública de las demandas de la ciudadanía- en este caso las elecciones traían una serie de factores novedosos [renovación del sistema de partidos, un candidato diferente, relación de trabajo conjunto con Poder Ciudadano] en el escenario político. (Red Ciudadana Principio del Principio, 2005)

Thus, in September 24 of 2003 at the historic town council building -*Cabildo*-, the candidates to mayor signed, at the request of the Pdelp Network, the "Intention Act of Public Commitment of Government Transparency". In this act each signer -in case of gaining the municipal elections- was committed to obey the "20 points" which were detailed in the same one, referred to public policies of transparency and citizen's participation. Passed the elections, December 11 of 2003, the elected mayor -Luis Juezv, *Partido Nuevo*'s candidate- subscribed, as a continuation and a confirmation of the assumed commitment, an Agreement of Public Commitment of Government Transparency called "*Programa Discrecionalidad Cero*".

This agreement was impelled, at local level, by the Citizen Network Beginning of the Beginning and, at national level, by the Foundation *Poder Ciudadano* -national chapter of Transparency International. In addition, it was signed in a public act witnessed by eleven organizations of different provinces from the country - *Andhes* Foundation /Tucumán, *Poder Ciudadano*

Foundation/Buenos Aires, *Forins* Foundation /Jujuy, *Ciudadanía Activa*/La Pampa, *Participación Ciudadana*/Tierra del Fuego, *Foro Ecologista de Paraná*/Entre Rios, *Nueva Generación Argentina* Foundation /Rosario, *Favim* and *Grupo Ágora*/Mendoza, *Geos* Foundation /Córdoba- which conform the Federal Network for the Democracy.<sup>vi</sup>

The Pdelp Network assumed the responsibility of controlling the fulfillment of the points decided in the Act, with Poder Ciudadano Foundation as a monitorship.

### *Frameworks or contents for "that they all go away"*

We can say, according with Perez, Argelino and Rossi, that 2001 crisis faced the Argentine citizenship with the "decomposition" of their foundations -transgression of republican controls, representation crisis and dismantling of the Welfare State- and offered the possibility of redefining its political practices from "the extended" political participation, the assembly deliberation, the redefinition of the political representation entails and the revision of the decision-making processes (2005, p 387).

A member of the Pdelp Network bases on the participation the new form of making politics affirms:

La palabra es **participación**, de ahora en más **se acabó la pura representación**. Yo voy a nombrar a mi representante y los voy a controlar. El control es participación. Yo voy a votar a mis representantes, pero también quiero participar. Es decir, no me voy a quedar estático, ni esperando que me resuelvan mis problemas, los problemas los resolvemos todos. Entonces me parece que el tema de la participación es la nueva forma, concepto que resumiría en forma integral los nuevos tiempos que se avecinan, **la nueva política**. (Proyecto Ciudadanía , 2005, our underline)

The collective action horizon is not the civil disobedience, as could be the case of other movements post 19 and 20, which inclusively took the action format spread by the human rights movements in the country: "*escrache*". The "reclamation of rights", that characterizes the civic matrix of the movement, becomes in the public scene to traverse of campaigns oriented to the "exercise of the rights". It means "to have presence and incidence in the politics", specifically, in the exercise of the "rights that allows the public management accountability" (Principio del Principio. ces.html, February 2006). Nevertheless, in the activist's words, that recognize the transforming potential of the actual institutionality, is possible to see an inquiring about its democratic legitimacy.

Las instituciones tienen un aspecto positivo, **respetar las instituciones en un sistema democrático donde las instituciones fueron creadas democráticamente...** tiene que ser debatida permanentemente esa institucionalidad. Pero mientras los mecanismos para cambiarla están instituidos, en la propia constitución, en todo el cuerpo de derecho, entonces se puede cuestionar las instituciones dentro del sistema... (Proyecto Ciudadanía , 2005, our underline)

In its rhetoric of the change, the urgency in of Pdelp proposal is centered in the risk that the inactivity and the indifference of the citizen mean. The network tries to fight against "*no te metás*" -don't get involved-, reminiscence of the period of military government and repression in the country; where the inactivity seems more prudent than the public space occupation and,

inclusively, than the interference on the political-administrative system dynamics. This last one would include the form in which the democratic representation relationship would be being interpreted, which was dominated by a extraordinary delegation during the 90s.

Then, why the action, the mobilization and the participation are not only possible but desirable when everything seems the "beginning of the end"?

The movement makes an optimistic reading of the political conjuncture, especially about the involvement of the citizenship in the public matters. The reached mobilization during the impeachment process offered an unpaired moment that opens a window of hope for the change. It operates like a real parameter of the possible that it increases the potentiality of the movement to interact with the political-administrative system.

Principio del Principio no está en contra de la protesta, pero su intención es **ir más allá, y pasar de la mera queja a la propuesta**. La intención es **fomentar el debate** y la búsqueda conjunta de soluciones a las necesidades más urgentes, pero también a las legítimas aspiraciones de mediano y largo plazo que nos merecemos los argentinos. (Principio del Principio. ces.html, February 2006, our underline)

The promise associated to the collective action is linked to the Justice demand that characterized the events of 19 and 20 of December of 2001, especially when it talks about the factual democratic institutionality. In such sense, the focus is on the management transparency and the opportunities of participation in the decision-making processes.

The identity configuration, that provides the base to the collective action, fluctuates between "citizens of a country in crisis" and "neighbors of the city of Córdoba". Pdelp presents as network of "mobilized citizens" -many of them are linked with civil society organizations -, nonpartisan, without profit aims.

[...] no es un partido político, ni tiene aspiraciones en ese sentido. Tampoco está en contra de los partidos políticos tradicionales ni de los que pudieran crearse como nuevas opciones. La Red entiende que su acción está destinada a fortificar la posición de las personas en cuanto a su condición de ciudadanos [...] (Principio del Principio. ces.html, February 2006)

In this sense, it assumes, like collective challenges and north of its practices, the following principles: sense of the common good; fairness and nonviolence; equal, protagonist and responsible participation; accounts rendering; and punishment to the treason and the corruption. These definitions have allowed to the group extension by the integration of diverse mutual reconnaissance nets and by interactions that surpass the local space (for example, Federal Network for Democracy).

During the 2002, since the meeting made in the National University of Córdoba, the Network work was organized in seven commissions: health, education, social, economy, policy, culture and justice. With the decrease of the activism, the developed public sphere turned on a space, on one hand, of withdrawal and (re)grouping and, on the other hand, of base and training of its influence on ampler public. Thus, the Network began to systematize the acquired knowledge, working on the analysis of the developed practices results. In this process, their members identified like "strengths", their monitoring practices ("social accountability") and their linking role.

Nevertheless, the frameworks construction reveal as a deep process of deliberation between activists who have divergent points of view, described by disputes about the senses given to the

"new politics". Consequently, these deliberations refer to the recognition of the political opportunity, as much for the interaction with the political-administrative system, as for the integration of ampler networks in contents and influences.

Nosotros nos proponíamos [...] abrir como una especie de debate desde abajo [...] un debate que diera como resultado un modelo a aplicar en Córdoba, un modelo propio. No un modelo propio a la cordobesa impuesto desde arriba sino un modelo propio a la cordobesa construido desde abajo. Esto es una quijotada... pero creíamos que esto es estar en la línea de aportar un granito de arena en la construcción de la ciudadanía. (Proyecto Ciudadanía , 2005)

The movement repertory of action consolidates on "monitoring" or social accountability. Natalia Molina, a Network member, identifies the following practices like typical of this type of repertory:

[...] monitorear el comportamiento de los funcionarios públicos, exponer y denunciar sus actos ilegales y activar a las agencias horizontales de control. [...] ejercer influencia sobre el sistema político y las burocracias públicas. Puede canalizarse tanto por vías institucionales (acciones legales o reclamos ante los organismos de supervisión) como no institucionales (movilizaciones sociales y las denuncias mediáticas). (Molina, 2003, p. 5)

Initially, focused in the "institutional roads". They participated in the mayor´ impeachment process (see above), monitored the Constitutional Matters Commission of the Town Council (about the established schedule, subjects, the internal discussions identifying the different positions, the voting, the performance of other spectators at the meetings, the scene description and, finally, they registered everything that was not understood, their feelings and intuitions). From these records, they made three information documents that were spread by e-mail and published in the site "Civic Journalism", a local newspaper project (*La Voz del Interior*). At the moment the activity is developed in around the *Acta Discrecionalidad Cero* monitoring, specially centered in which it talks about the right of access to public information, transparent contracts and participatory budget. In all these actions the axis is given by the citizen´s participation, in the decision-making processes, based on the knowledge of alternative policies and its consequences.

The *Acta Discrecionalidad Cero*, like a practical model, was developed by Poder Ciudadano Foundation to establish a frame in the joint between the organizations and the different government instances. The *Acta Discrecionalidad Cero* is defined, by Poder Ciudadano, like "agreements" by means of which the "authorities" are committed to implement public policies related to the transparency -referred to the implementation of a system of accounts rendering and management monitoring- and the "good practices" of government. Understanding as good practices those that foment and extend the citizen participation.

This model was adopted initially by *Participación Ciudadana*, from Ushuaia, and later by the Pdelp Network, who adapted its contents to the actual legal frame and to the local political reality. It is possible to emphasize that the members of the Network consider that this Act "summarizes" and "empower" the activities that are being developed since May of the 2002. This instrument has been spread by organizations from the different provinces, adapting it to each context and using most of the time the presence of *Poder Ciudadano*, as witness and external monitor.



Also the Promotional Group of the Participative Budget for Córdoba [GPPPCba] was constituted. This group committed itself with the development and implementation of the democratization process of the resources management and municipal expenses. This group, that maintains a tension between the continuity and the autonomy with the organization assumed by Pdelp, assumed the monitoring of the participatory budgeting experience implemented by the municipality:

Finalmente la matriz que predominó era un poco esto, que finalmente desembocó en el seguimiento, es decir, bueno... existe una experiencia, no ponernos en la vereda del frente, arrimémonos y veamos, si nos permiten, de qué se trata, qué está sucediendo. No opinemos por versiones, estemos en el lugar y en el momento y, a partir de ahí, vamos a poder opinar. [...] bajemos a la tierra, veamos la experiencia y en base a la experiencia, desde la experiencia misma saquemos conclusiones. Dejemos un poco de lado lo conceptual y vayamos más a lo pragmático, si se quiere, pero en el buen sentido. Entonces nos pusimos en una actitud no confrontativa pero sí de seguimiento crítico. (Proyecto Ciudadanía , 2005)

In addition, the group elaborated an alternative participatory budget proposal and, to its way of thinking, that “goes beyond” the model developed by the Municipality. That proposal has been complemented with a regulation project the *Juntas de Participación Vecinal* -Meetings of Neighbors Participation.<sup>vii</sup> Also, at request of the GPPPCba it was constituted, in 2004, the Participative Budget for Córdoba Permanent Forum.

Again, on the base of the Multisectorial, the Forum has by objective to join all the local organizations -political, academic, union, social and citizen- interested in spreading and promoting the citizen participation in the public matters, with emphasis in the implementation of an integral process of participatory budgeting in the city of Cordova. It is a matter of the creation of an informal public sphere, outside the institutional design of the municipality, which acts in name of the extension of the local democracy, facing the restrictive proposals of the municipal budget democratization made by the political power.

Ahora, como siempre, lo fundamental es entender que un horizonte de participación ciudadana existe cuando se lo construye desde abajo. Si usted votó, no se vuelva a su casa. Pregúntese qué puede hacer para prolongar en su práctica cotidiana el sentido de su voto. Si no, la democracia (que se alimenta de la vitalidad de la ciudad, de la participación voluntaria y lúcida de los ciudadanos y sus creaciones alternativas y autónomas de poder) muere en la urna. De tristeza y soledad. (Invitation for the Participative Budget Forum, february of 2005)<sup>viii</sup>

### *Convergence across borders*

As Jelin affirms, "more than any previous moment in the history, the expression of collective social demands in the local space contains in itself the same multiplicity of senses implied by [the significant changes in the dynamics of the entailment between places, times, actors and levels] in the interpenetration, joint and superposition of scales" (1996). In this sense, in the PdelP Network intervention at the local public space we can identify a search, referred to practices and contents, that finish integrating the local, national and transnational scale, as much in the definition and deepening of the frameworks from which they tried to understand and to modify the local situation, as in order to taking part in the national and transnational scale for the diffusion of what they had assumed like principle of action: transparency and participation. Thus, while other groups linked to the protest post 19 and 20 of December of 2001 in Argentina assumed organizational forms based in the territory -like the *piqueteros* and the neighborhood assemblies<sup>ix</sup>-, the PdelP Network acts on the base of "relations of proximity" with national and international nongovernmental organizations. In which the Network is looking for a space of recognition, as much as a resources supply.

As a recognition space, the incorporation to networks -advocacy networks- represents newness in terms of citizen claim. Given that it surpasses the limits of the idea of citizenship recognized and guaranteed by the positive law of the national state, to talk about democratic faculties recognized and guaranteed in public spheres or spaces -formal and informal- that cross the territorial borders. Today, although the alter, or adversary that justice reclamation goes to, determines the irruption of the collective action in the argentine public sphere, continues being the State. The more embracing informal public spaces -networks and forums-, that congregate national actors and more than that, are valued like opportunities that empower the incidence in the redefinition of the normative framework that regulate the action of the citizens in the local scale.

Thus, when we observed the repertory of the collective action, in the case of the PdelP Network, and the outstanding presence of *Poder Ciudadano* in the consolidation of the content and format that assume their practices, we have nothing more to do than to ask for this actor with as much ascending in the Córdoba scene.

*Poder Ciudadano*, define itself as a "network of people and institutions undertaken with the public matters in the local, national and international scale, for democratic and inclusive societies", whose objective is "to promote the citizen participation, the transparency and the access to the public information to fortify the institutions of the democracy through the collective action" (*Poder Ciudadano*. ces.html, February of 2006). In other words, they identify in the collective action the opportunity to harness the "public impact" of their actions, thus, it is oriented to the construction of which it denominates "diffuse power" from the joint of local experiences, like Pdel P Network, and international ones. In this case, they join international networks that have as objective the fight against the corruption, through the development of actions and tools to promote the transparency in the State administration.

As a national chapter of Transparency the International [TI], *Poder Ciudadano* works fundamentally to increase the levels of accountability and transparency in its country, monitoring the performance of key institutions -the legislative ones and "pressing" for the necessary political reform from a "nonpartisan" way (*Transparency International*. Ces.html. February of 2006). The Transparency programs provide resources to the national chapters, in form as much of attendance for the development of policies and implementation of projects, like of development of information tools, based in the premise that the main tool to fight against the corruption is the right of access to information.

In this way, speeches and technologies, institutional developments are being promoted in the diverse campaigns in the national and transnational scale, that come together strategically in the local scale, where they are adopted and later socialized in domestic understandings -free access to the information and participative management of the public resources-. For example, the set of guidelines, that orients the discussion and definition, of participative budget model for the city of Cordova. In this case, the discussions and interchanges canalized by the *Central de Trabajadores Argentinos*, about to the participatory budgeting implemented in Porto Alegre (Brazil), and the developments of *Poder Ciudadano*, in the systematization off different experiences from the region, permeate the movement debates.

Antes de que se largara el presupuesto participativo en Córdoba, [...] lo que nosotros disponíamos eran de elementos teóricos, teoría conceptual, nada más. Es decir, en Porto Alegre, tal cosa; en Córdoba/España, tal otra cosa; en Ecuador en Cuenca, tal otra cosa... y de todo esto uno extraía elementos para decir: qué interesante, estos han profundizado la participación así, la han sustentado de esta manera... entonces, nosotros hacíamos críticas desde lo conceptual. (Proyecto Ciudadanía , 2005)

The debates and interchanges contributed for the definition of the premises on which the alternative model of participative budget for the city was constructed. Namely, public scope of co-management -understood as co-presence and public/private interaction sphere-; universal rules of participation -where the universality of the rules do not only make reference to the equality of participants status, but also to the right of access to the information (being distanced of the Brazilian experience in the conception of this point) -; pre-established method of allocations -like counterpoint of the discretionally public decisions and equivalent of transparency and distributive fairness-; and finally, public control of the State -referred to the permanent and shared evaluation for its democratic reform.

But these premises, not only gave viability to the construction of an alternative model, they also contributed to create a minimum consensus that endorses and orients, as a mandate, the intervention of the movement's activists in embracing public spaces. It is possible to emphasize the participation in the Participative Budget National Forum Budget (Buenos Aires 2004); the workshop of Participatory Budgeting and Social Control of the Public Budget (Ushuaia 2004); the debate on participative budget in *Calle Ancha*, a space of Cordoba National Radio (2005). And inclusively, the carried out effort in order to "appear", spreading the experience, and "incidence" in the dynamic and the decisions that surround to the transnational space; when its about elaborating transformation proposals of the democratic institucionality at local scale as much as national one. In this sense, we must point out the participation in the International Observatory of the Participative Democracy (Buenos Aires 2004) - GPPPCba is a member of the "best practices" jury- and, more recently, in the World Social Forum, through the workshop "School of Citizenship, Democracy and Participative Budget experiences Network ", looking to built a network about participative budget.

### *By way of a pause...*

We have reconstructed the covered ground by the citizen Network Beginning of the beginning, from the local conflicts to its integration in different networks, national and international ones, linked to the promotion of the transparency of the public acts and to extend citizen participation

beyond the vote. Initiated during a moment of breaks or fractures in the Argentine democratic institutionality, consolidated itself interacting with the political-administrative system through the breaches offered not only by the institutional design, but also by the extraordinary political situation that opened opportunities for the creative phase of the local collective action.

When it is about thinking the national and transnational space, the PdElP Network tries to integrate itself to the contemporary debates about participative democracy through the participation in networks. We can affirm that PdElP does it in two-way traffic, on one hand, as a form of meeting with "others" that share their demands and to give visibility to their experience, as much about the newness of its practices as in terms of denunciation of the democratic deficit of the local political system.

On the other hand, space of national and transnational solidarities allows them to gather support, that legitimize their practices and the values that motivated their action; incorporating them -not without contradictions- in a sphere that surpasses the particularisms of local political dynamics. And to collect resources that contribute to the sustainability of the movement. In this sense, as Tarrow (1998) analyzes, the national and transnational networks are offered, in this case, like an external actor that supplies resources and opportunities, talking about the strictly financial thing, as much as the diffusion of basic knowledge, forms of organization and action, that they use to democratically defy the political-administrative system.

In spite of some scholars, like Mc Adam (1999), who maintain that the movements that fight by the effective use of the rights in democratic systems are "little in ambitious", we consider, from the Córdoba case of study, that these struggles contribute to the expansion and fortification of the public sphere in political systems where not only the legitimacy but also the effectiveness - effective use of the democratic order- is questioned. These demands actions developed by those who lack regular access to the public decision-making process have the potential to contribute to the publicity of the political-administrative system, about the internal scope -local, national. Nevertheless, it is at the transnational dimension of its practices where we can question its democratic potentialities. Both in the consideration of the transnational space like space of solidarities that go beyond of the local particularisms, as much as in the form of insertion in the informal and transnational public sphere. In other words, the conditions in which these movements exert the citizenship when they are integrated to the international networks.

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<sup>i</sup> Carlos Alvarez had arrived at the vice-presidency in 1999, with the triumph of the "Alliance" -that reunited the *Unión Cívica Radical* [UCR] and to the *Frente País Solidario* [FrePaSo] -. As planned by the National Constitution, presided the Senate when a denounce about "briberies in the Senate" took public state. It was for the approval of the labor law reform -well-known like law of "labor relaxation"- and surrounded the Ministry of Work. The demands of the vice-president to investigate the denounce and the changes made by the Executive in the portfolio of ministers - who removed *frepasistas* members from the government- demonstrated the spacing to the interior of the Alliance that finished in the resignation of Alvarez. The vice-president resigned in a press conference with a speech based on the ethics and transparency.

<sup>ii</sup> In Córdoba, these phrases were found in order to void the vote: "Not any party. I vote no one. Impugned vote", or votes which candidate's list included word games like: "*Dejen C de Robar. Noles Creemos. Novoto Más. Basta D Políticos*", etc. Another vote, promoted by internet from Buenos Aires, chose San Martín, Belgrano and others national heroes. Some voters just put pieces of paper where had been written, for example: "Ha! I deceived you. Do not count this vote. It is not valid" (Cf. Carreras, 2001)

<sup>iii</sup> The name refers to the symbol of the protest: the pans. That day everybody went out whit their pans and made noise with them.

<sup>iv</sup> "Throw them all out, don't leave one"

<sup>v</sup> Luis Juez had occupied the Anticorruption Public Prosecutor's Office of the province of Córdoba. From this place he made forts denunciations that involved civil employees of the province's government as much as the Governor. This action as well as his later destitution made him won the neighbors affection. Promoted by his increasing popularity and with the support of some people form the traditional parties -in disagreement leaderships-, and the assembly movement of the city, the *Partido Nuevo* was constituted. Its basic slogans were: transparency of government and participation of the neighbors. It obtained 62% of the valid votes.

<sup>vi</sup> In December of 2003 was created this "network of action and mutual care" oriented to strengthen the interchange of experiences and the joint operations developing. Its presence in the signature of the Act, from the members of the Network PdelP's perspective, acted providing with "national witnesses" to the commitment, in other words, contributed to publify it.

<sup>vii</sup> Given that is this "territorial organism" which is attributed, in the Municipal Law, "to propose the neighborhood's priorities" of public works and services and "to practice the mechanisms of participation and opinion on [municipality's] programs, projects" (Articles 155 and 156).

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<sup>viii</sup> Now as always, the most important thing is to understand that citizen participation exists when its built from the bottom. If you voted do not come back home. Ask yourself: what can I do to extend I my daily practice the sense of my vote? If you do not, the democracy (that is feed by the city vitality, volunteer and clear citizen's participation and its alternative and autonomous power creation) dies in the ballot box, because of its sadness and loneliness.

<sup>ix</sup> It is possible to emphasize that the assembly movement in Argentina bets in the construction of space, that we could denominate a transnational public space, with the development of the "Autonomous January" meeting.