





metropolis •









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01.Introduction

Within the framework of the pilot project Participatory Democracy, the cities of <u>Córdoba</u> (Argentina), <u>Montreal</u> (Canada), <u>Madrid</u> and <u>Barcelona</u> (Spain) exchanged insights about their participatory experiences in order to contribute to the increase of institutional capacities of the metropolises for the construction of governance and the decentralized cooperation. This project was developed at the request of the World Association of Major <u>Metropolises</u> and with the support of the International Observatory on Participatory Democracy (<u>OIPD</u>).

Since this initiative was planned and undertaken before the pandemic, it had to be adapted to a new context for it to be viable. Between September 2020 and December 2021, representatives of diverse cities participated in online workshops where they could present their different trajectories along their experiences and reflect on the strengths and points of improvement of the participatory tools of each city. In

addition, interviews and workshops were held with representatives from the public administration and citizens of Córdoba, Montreal, Madrid and Barcelona. These allowed us to analyze different aspects and perspectives of the participatory practices that made up this project, namely, Córdoba Participatory Budget, Montreal's Office of Public Consultations, and platforms Decide Madrid and Decidim Barcelona, from each city.

Such actions led to the systematization of participatory democracy experiences in each city, which involves generating knowledge that can enhance the strengthening and improvement of these practices in each of the four metropolises. Similarly, spreading knowledge arising from the analyzed experiences and tools has the potential of promoting more active citizen participation.

The present document shares the systematization of the case of the Neighborhood Participatory Budget of the city of Córdoba, Córdoba, Argentina.



¹ The extensive use of the masculine grammatical gender is avoided. This choice is made without detriment to the search for gender equality and with no intention of rendering the difference invisible, but just to facilitate fluent reading. This is why inclusive expressions are used and articles are omitted occasionally. Moreover, it has been decided that the feminine gender will be used in this document to make reference to both male and female neighbors.



02.El Presupuesto Participativo en Córdoba

"The Neighbourhood **Participatory** (Presupuesto Participativo Budget Barrial, PPB) is a process of neighborhood, voluntary and universal participation. Participation Through Community (Centros Centers de Participación Comunal, CPC), citizens debaté over, decide on and control the allocation of resources for projects related to public works, services, and social policies that the Municipality offers and carries out within the same budgetary period in which the projects are decided." Article 2 Ordinance No. 13,002 (2020).

Through this tool, citizens themselves establish and prioritize which neighborhood problems and needs will be addressed. Among the main characteristics of the PPB of the city of Córdoba, one important feature to highlight is that the actions decided upon by the citizens must be executed within the same budgetary period, i.e., during the year in which such decisions

are made.

In its current form, this instrument has been used only for an entire year because after the pandemic broke out and new regulations were adopted at the beginning of 2020, its implementation during such period was affected. In 2021, previously planned changes could be introduced with some modifications due

to the sanitary condition.

As detailed below, the tool started to be formally used in the city in 2008, with significant precedents dating back to 1994. It is relevant to point out that continuity over the years meant the instrument being maintained through administrations government different political positions. Previous experiences and fluctuations that participation as a public policy has been subject to over the years gave rise to learnings that led to the current configuration.

Regarding the topics, those that are most frequently chosen by the citizens and more feasible to apply to the neighborhood level correspond to the following categories:

Sustainable Urban Development (40.1%), Environment (43.36%), Human and Social Development (5%), Health (1.09%), Education and Culture (0.4%), and Popular Economy and Economic Development (0.3%). To illustrate, the percentages pertaining to 2021 were signaled between parentheses, meaning the remaining 8.51% corresponds to other topics.

Article 3: The goals of the **Neighbourhood Participatory Budget are:**

- a) to promote participatory democracy in order to strengthen the democratic system;
- b) to support the material and immaterial improvement process of city neighborhoods through participation in Neighborhood Centers and other neighborhood institutions;
- c) to foster the greatest community participation possible in the diagnosis and prioritization of needs for the design, execution and follow-up of neighborhood projects related to public works, services and, social policies;
- d) to favor neighborhood self-management processes through the Neighborhood Centers' involvement, by leading small public works per se and taking action at their jurisdiction level;
- e) to create, ensure and consolidate public integration, management between the neighbors and the Municipality of Córdoba, without detriment to the contributions they could make to the Participatory Budgeting, Neighborhood Centers, Neighborhood Commissions, Civil Society Organizations, provincial and national Governmental Organizations, as well as to international cooperation ones;
- neighborhood communities in relation to the guaranteeing liberty, social justice, and the representative,
- g) to devise a Neighborhood Improvement Plan supported by the neighbors' participation and the Ordinance No. 13,002/2020.

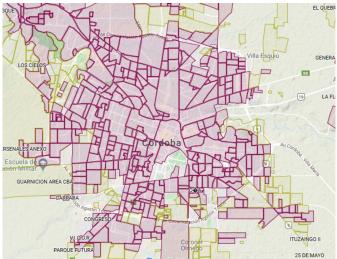
In terms of scope, it is mostly about basic maintenance actions, such as preserving lighting, squares, and public spaces; cleaning vacant lots or small-dumps; pruning and clearing up lights; naming streets; placing traffic signs; and removing bulky items from the street. The decision can be oriented towards sociocultural topics as well, though that is less frequently done nowadays. This can be the result of the presence of basic material needs in the neighborhood that have not been addressed yet and they are prioritized over immaterial ones.

To 'fully understand the instrument's significance, it is worth mentioning that the city of Córdoba has a vast territorial expansion of 576 km2, meaning it is one of the largest municipal common lands in Latin America and the largest in the country. To illustrate, it is three times bigger than the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires (Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires, CABA) and four times bigger than Rosario city (Córdoba: Figures of a City. 2019).

Similarly, regarding its population, it has 1,309,604 inhabitants (National Institute of Statistics and Censuses [Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos, INDEC], 2010), which positions it as the second most populated city in the country, after CABA. Its population density is 2,308 inhabitants per km2. To make it more explicit, only the population of the city of Córdoba surpasses that of 18 Argentine provinces when comparing the city of Córdoba with the 23 provincial jurisdictions and CABA.

Finally, a key detail to understand the tool is that 423 Córdoba neighborhoods are recognized within Ordinance No. 13,083. The PPB is directed to the residents of each of them.







Regulatory framework

In order to understand the PPB proposal thoroughly, it is important to describe in detail the complete network of instruments planned to aid citizen participation and to create greater proximity between the government and the society of a very large city, as stated above. The different instruments will be presented in order of hierarchy. It is important to mention that their development and regulation have been gradually evolving over the years.

The <u>Córdoba City Municipal Charter</u> (<u>Carta Orgánica Municipal, COM</u>), signed in 1995², incorporated key elements after which the current participation structure in the city has developed.

The Economic and Social Board (Consejo Económico y Social, CES) emerges after COM's creation as participatory space in which contributions and guidance can be offered through debate between representatives from different areas, such as universities and research social organizations, professionals, as well as representatives and organizations belonging to the production and labor sector, among others. Its regulation was established through **Ordinance No. 11,645** in 2009. It is convened occasionally.



² The reform of the Argentine National Constitution in 1994 strengthened municipal autonomy. As a result, numerous cities took the initiative to sign their own Charters, as was the case in Córdoba in 1995.

Even though Community Participation Centers (CPC) are not mentioned as such in the COM, they are conceived as territorial organizations of decentralized management and operations, with the objective of making municipal management more efficient and strengthening neighbors' participation.

In fact, the first steps were given before said regulation, and several buildings that are currently functioning as CPCs were planned in 1991. By 2021, the city already had 13 CPCs. Central data about each of them can be consulted in the following chart:

N°	СРС	Population density (inhabitants/km²)	N° of neighborhoods	Social Priority Index (Indice de Prioridad Social, IPS) ³	Total population	Population percentage (%)
1	CPC Centro América	6.644	29	3	127.565	9,6%
2	CPC Monseñor Pablo Cabrera	3.092	26	3	92.456	7,0%
3	CPC Argüello	2.948	61	4	145.047	10,9%
4	CPC Colón	2.607	54	4	117.074	8,8%
5	CPC Ruta 20	2.632	52	3	123.980	9,3%
6	CPC Villa El Libertador	1.396	86	3	157.760	11,9%
7	CPC Empalme	1.882	47	3	98.225	7,4%
8	CPC Pueyrredón	2.248	23	3	78.247	5,9%
9	CPC Rancagua	1.154	35	2	85.942	6,5%
10	CPC Mercado de la Ciudad	8.556	17	4	125.779	9,5%
11	CPC Guiñazú	1.055	10	2	15.514	1,2%
12	CPC San Vicente	5.860	10	2	51.334	3,9%
13	CPC Chalet San Felipe	1.231	46	3	87.757	6,6%
	UNCOVERED AREA	-	-	-	22.924	1,7%
	TOTAL IN CAPITAL CITY	2.300	496	3	1.329.604	100%

Source: <u>General Directorate of Participatory Budgeting and Neighborhood Participation Boards.</u> Secretariat of Citizen Participation. Municipality of Córdoba. 2019

³ "This indicator is a statistical methodology that allows for the establishment of an index of social, demographic, labor, and educational data and of social deprivations at a particular time. In this way, it is possible to identify those geopolitical areas that require a prioritized institutional response through the different governmental plans, programs, and projects. Source: General Statistics and Census Directorate and General Directorate of Social and Labor Indicators Analysis and Employment Promotion of the Provincial Government of Córdoba. 2016 Data: Elaborated based on the 2010 National Population, Household and Housing Census (INDEC) - Processed by Redatam+SP, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe, CEPAL) and the Latin American and Caribbean Demographic Centre (Centro Latinoamericano y Caribeño de Demografía, CELADE)." Source: General Directorate of Participatory Budgeting and Neighborhood Participation Boards. Secretariat of Citizen Participation. Municipality of Córdoba. 2019.

Neighborhood Participation Boards

(Juntas de Participación Vecinal, JPV) were designed through the COM as an instance of co-management between the local government and the citizenry, represented by Neighborhood Centers (Centros Vecinales, CV) and social organizations present in the territory. According to the regulation, there must be a JPV per each CPC. Each JPV is made up of three councilors (two from the majority and one from the minority), male and female delegates from CVs or Neighborhood Commissions, and representatives from instituțions present each CPC territory (educational, religious and civil society institutions). At the same time, the director of the CPC, whose appointment is in charge of the city mayor, assumes the coordination of the JPV. Its regulation was set through Ordinance No. 11,448 in 2008 and it was amended in 2020 through Ordinance No. 13,003 and Resolution 002/2021 - J Series. JPVs are an important body from the governance point of view, as models from diverse sectors meet there, which makes dialog and active participation possible. Besides, those exchanges create opportunities for citizens to carry out monitoring and to have public influence, with the potential for municipal units to drive open government, transparency, and accountability.

Considering the recent changes in ordinances related to JPVs, it is worth highlighting the role of JPVs in the participatory formulation of District Plans, Improvement which will implemented by central areas CPCs, in contrast with Neighborhood Improvement Plans, which are linked the Participatory Budgeting. participating in the design of the plan, the Boards can also have a role in its monitoring.

Neighborhood Centers neighborhood non-profit organizations in that participate municipal management and represent neighbors from their jurisdiction sector neighborhood. They have been created to satisfy the neighbors' common needs and to improve their quality of life based on the principles of democratic participation, mutual collaboration, and neighborhood solidarity. The Municipality of Córdoba recognizes, guarantees, and promotes the representative, republican and democratic creation functioning of Neighborhood Centers. It does so by supervising the actions that promote neighbors' participation carried out by them, as established by the COM, Ordinance No. 10,713/2004 and Ordinance No. 11,095/2007" (Institutional Presentation, Secretariat of Participation, 2021). Approximately, 45% of Córdoba neighborhoods have a Neighborhood Center.

Management Decentralization

instrument for favoring an efficient government and strengthening neighbors' participation. It reasserting the Municipality principle of unity.

Territorial Organizations

Article 154. By Ordinance and on the exclusive initiative of the Executive Department, the Municipality creates territorial organizations of decentralized management, establishing their organization, functions, and powers.

Neighborhood Participation Boards

Article 155. Neighborhood Participation Boards operate within the territory of each management body, and they are coordinated by the Executive Department. On the initiative of the Executive Department, the Deliberative Council enacts a Special Ordinance for their organization and functioning, and it has to ensure the participation of Neighborhood Centers as a legal entity.

Responsibilities

Article 156. The Ordinance settles the responsibilities of each Neighborhood Participation Board, among which the following are recognized:

- 1. to direct the participation of inhabitants of the jurisdiction to which they belong;
- 2. to propose neighborhood priorities to the Executive Department and to suggest public works projects, public service delivery, and correction and improvement of existing services, with the due feasibility and cost analysis;
- 3. to be consulted in the execution of public works and services carried out by the improvement contribution system;
- 4. to carry out public works, services, or programs with the authorization of the Municipality and in

accordance with the current legislation;
5. to collaborate in the management control of public services offered within their jurisdiction;
6. to apply the participation and opinion mechanisms to programs, projects, and any other issue that is of interest to the neighbors of their jurisdiction or that the municipal authorities inform or submit for consideration;

7. to draw an annual report about actions taken, which will be submitted to the Executive Department, guaranteeing its effective disclosure among neighbors." Municipal Charter, 1995.

Process

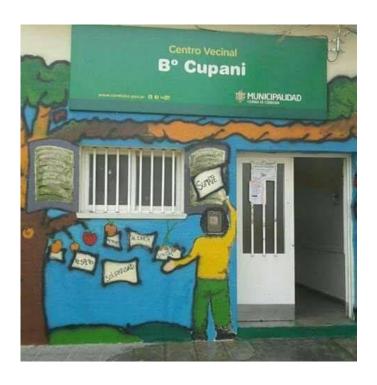
The PPB develops gradually on the premise of associated management. That is why its phases require permanent interaction between the government and society.

The first step, which can be considered a crosscutting or zero phase as it does not belong exclusively to this tool, is the neighborhood prioritization through the IPS, created by the Provincial Government of Córdóba in 2016 with the aim of improving and facilitating the decision-making process regarding public policies. It is an index compiled out of deprivations and social, demographic, labor, and educational indicators to help identify those territories that must be prioritized when providing governmental assistance.

The Municipality of Córdoba resorts to this provincial tool in order to analyze the situation of different jurisdictions corresponding to the CPCs and, particularly, of each neighborhood comprising these jurisdictions. For the participatory budgeting, this index allows to define the neighborhoods on which to work each year, as it is not implemented in all city neighborhoods simultaneously, but only in approximately 100 of them per year.

Once the neighborhoods have been

defined, the corresponding CPC Directorate assumes the responsibility of communicating to the institutions from the selected neighborhoods within their jurisdiction when the following PPB meetings will be held. The methodology involves four phases:



Fases del Presupuesto Participativo Barrial



Phase 1. Preliminary Diagnosis at Neighborhood Level. It consists of the analysis of the social and urban state of affairs of a particular neighborhood, carried out by a municipal team from said neighborhood CPC. This preliminary diagnosis is performed from a municipal perspective. However, it is open for neighbors' approval and modification on their based own assessment, expectations, possible agreed interests, needs, and problems that they consider must be solved. The preliminary diagnosis submitted to the neighborhood representatives' team, whose members are chosen by social organizations and CVs from that same neighborhood. At least 15 or 20 representatives from the neighborhood must constitute the team, who must prove their identity and their institution legitimacy by presenting the corresponding documentation.

Phase 2. Micro-Planning Workshops at Neighborhood Level. It comprises activities with neighborhood representatives and members of the municipal technical team. The workshop involves the following actions:

- a) The performance of a common diagnosis, which proceeds from modifications made to the preliminary diagnosis mentioned above.
- b) The prioritization of neighborhood demands, which are based on the criteria of severity, urgency, scope, and investment costs compared with the potential amount to be allotted, as provided for in the PPB regulation.
- c) The formulation of a Neighborhood Improvement Plan. Based on the prioritized demands, a municipal technical team conceives projects of selected public works and services and makes the timeline for their execution. Once written, this plan is also open to the neighborhood representatives' consideration for its confirmation or modification, and its final approval.
- d) Disclosure. The decisions and their execution must be informed to the community. At the same time, the municipal team must also submit quarterly and annual reports to the City Deliberative Council for auditing and monitoring.

Phase 3. Execution and Monitoring of the Neighborhood Improvement Plan. While CPC areas carry out the defined actions, the neighborhood representatives' team leads the monitoring.

Phase 4. Audit and Monitoring of the Neighborhood Improvement Plan.

The Secretariat of Citizen Participation and the corresponding JPV file an annual

report about the execution.

By being implemented at the neighborhood level, the PPB deals only with problems that can be completely solved at that level. However, it is supplemented by participatory instances at the JPV level, which tris to make progress in relation to those needs shared by several neighborhoods from the same jurisdiction or inherent to the entire jurisdiction. In this case, the Municipality's execution commitment

corresponds and is restricted to the subsequent budgetary period.

To illustrate, topics related to electric power, public transportation, sewage system, and gas-related public works could be discussed at the microplanning workshops for the sake of the diagnosis. Nevertheless, those needs will not be prioritized to be met by the PPB as they exceed its possibilities. Anyway, it is important these problems arise during the discussion since they will be communicated to the pertinent JPV for their consideration at the district level.

The 2021 implementation after the passing of the new regulation affected the terms of execution.

After adjusting the PPB methodology in accordance with the COVID-19 pandemic and post-pandemic restrictions, 101 PPB workshops (i.e., in 101 neighborhoods) were held between the months of May and October 2021. In these meetings, citizens defined the current problems in their neighborhoods in a participatory way and, together with municipal technicians and public officers, they agreed on different alternative solutions for them. The micro-planning workshops ended in the first week of October 2021 and 523 institutions and organizations participated (such as CVs, and sports, educational, and civil society institutions) through 1,487 delegates.

A common diagnosis was performed, and neighborhood demands and problems were organized hierarchically, considering the criteria of severity, urgency, and scope. At the workshops, 1,188 problems were identified and 1,751 projects were set up to tackle them. On average, during 2021, between 85% and 90% of the planned actions for those 101 neighborhoods were being carried out. Likewise, during that same year, 13 District Improvement Plans were devised for them to be considered in the 2022 budget.



JPV



Three councilors (two from the majority and one from the minority), male and female delegates from cvs or neighborhood commissions, educational and religious institutions, and non-profit civil society organizations present in each cpc or jpv area (which had asked for participation)



District level



District Improvement Plan



Subsequent year budget

At the district level corresponding to JPVs, the process is important—it is similar but not identical. The methodology involves five phases:

- 1- Invitation and integration of JPVs. Each CPC invites district organizations to register in an Organizations Record in order to form the JPV, which is established in the first regular assembly.
- 2- Functioning of JPVs. As stated above, the CPC Directorate also coordinates the JPV. Concurrently, each JPV has a Coordination Committee and Commissions for different topics, which cover the following topics:
 - -Sustainable Urban Development
 - -Human and Social Development
 - -Education and Culture
 - -Environment
 - -Social Economy and Economic
 - -Development
 - -Health
- 3-DistrictImprovementPlanformulation, involving at the same time the following phases:

- a) Preliminary diagnosis, performed by the municipal technical team, which provides an analysis of the district state of affairs.
- b) Workshops for the development of a District Improvement Plan. At this point, the following participatory sequence is followed:

I. making the preliminary diagnosis available to the public and analyzing it:

II. performing a district diagnosis, based on the preliminary diagnosis and other contributions and agreements;

III. prioritizing problems according to the suggested criteria of scope,

severity, and tendency;

IV. presenting and prioritizing projects, which must include at least a justification, goals, a beneficiaries' identification, a brief description, and the approximate budget; and V. formulating the District Improvement Plan, which is formally created when the prioritized projects are approved by the assembly and included within the municipal budget for the next year.

4- District Improvement Plan execution and monitoring. While respective municipal areas are responsible for the execution, the JPV is in charge of monitoring its implementation.



Resources

"The sum allocated to the Neighborhood Participatory Budget shall not be less than the ten percent (10%) of the whole resources earmarked for public works included in the General Budget of Costs and Resource Calculation of the Municipal Administration, approved in each period in which projects are planned and prioritized," as stated in Article 4 of Ordinance No. 13,002/2020 and in accordance with dispositions under 2008 regulation.

Within this framework, each year, the Municipal Executive Department determines the share of the total amount intended for the PPB that each CPC will receive depending on demographic variables and urban and social needs, with the help of the IPS.

For instance, in 2021, the amount allocated to the PPB was ARS 458,000,000.

Regarding public works and services corresponding to the District Improvement Plans of the JPVs, they are assessed by municipal central areas. These areas can ask for its execution or inclusion in the plans' planning and budget the following year. In this way, the municipal management agenda is set based on information about the priorities and demands of the different city areas, as defined by citizens themselves.

IV

Landmarks in the History of the Neighbourhood Participatory Budget

In 1991, in line with the global trend, the Municipality of Córdoba, under the administration of the city mayor Rubén Américo Martí, initiates a Decentralization and Deconcentration Program. Within the framework of said program, the creation of the CPCs was planned, among other decisions. First, 10 of them were designed to be located forming a circle and being equidistant from the city center, and to be connected by main routes, always at city entrances. Over the years, new spaces have been incorporated, reaching the current amount of 13 CPCs.

At the same time, a Citizen Participation

Promotion Program was implemented, which involved two subprograms. First, a subprogram for the standardization and construction of CVs, since, at that moment, less than 50 of them were standardized. Second, a subprogram known as neighborhood micro-planning. That methodology gave rise to the current practice. Initially, a pilot test was implemented in four neighborhoods per each one of the CPCs that were functioning. It consisted of three sessions held between Friday afternoon and Sunday morning. On Friday afternoon, neighbors and municipal representatives undertook a diagnostic



CPC Centro América



CPC Villa El Libertador

tour through the neighborhood. On Saturday, they worked on the prioritization of problems and solutions. Finally, on Sunday, a sum and an execution modality were agreed on, and a minute was signed by the neighborhood assembly at midday. At that moment, the tool proposed as neighborhood microplanning was already the methodology of a participatory budgeting, though it was not referred to as such at that point. At the beginning of 1994, the first CPC was created, and by the end of 1999, there were already 10 CPCs working in the city.



Source: Google. (n.d.). [Community Participation Centers, Córdoba City, Province of Córdoba, Argentina]. Consulted on March 21, 2022 from https://bit.ly/3irliW0

Extract from Community Participation Centers: Urban Icons, Sara Bongiovanni

During the 90s, a modern approach has been adopted for the city, with the execution of an administrative decentralization project, the adoption of participatory management, and the creation of peripheral centers—CPCs. (...)

These new centers, scattered over the different neighborhoods, soon transformed into real urban icons due to their daring avant-garde architecture, rooted in the indefinite plots of the city peripheries. (...)

Towards a modern city. By then, this experience was an exceptional one in Latin America. Among their goals, it is worth highlighting the following: to end power centralization and to bring the administrative management closer to citizens; to eliminate bureaucracy in municipal control, making management and processes modern and efficient; and to voice the needs and cultural aspirations of the community in these centers and to have an impact on the city through images—shapes and spaces—as new aesthetic experiences associated with social functions.

The CPCs are placed strategically, forming a circle and functioning as points of entry at the main city entrances. All of them are equidistant from the center and they are located at the intersection of peripheral access routes and the concentric route to the beltway, at kilometer 5 approximately. This is the case of CPC Pueyrredón built on the Eastern access to the freeway, or of CPC Ruta 20, which serves as an entrance to the valley of Punilla, Traslasierra, and Carlos Paz city. That is also the case of CPCs Argüello, Colón, Monseñor Pablo Cabrera, Centro América, and Libertador.

Geometric virtuosity. CPCs stand out in the neighborhood net where they are inserted in, having a true architectural impact by challenging the surroundings and thus, turning them into identifiable urban icons.

Through basic geometrical forms—such as cubes, cylinders, and cones—and, in some centers, through the extreme use of color, the architect Miguel Ángel Roca incorporates aspects of modernity into strategic spots in the city.

Even though these buildings are characterized by color and geometry, it was possible to establish a different style for each center, each one being easily recognizable, but maintaining characteristics belonging to the new typology at the same time.

In the first projects—Argüello, América, Colón, Libertador, and Pueyrredón—, the urban dimension prevailed, which is why the concepts of "street" and "civic square" predominate. In these buildings, a pedestrian area, working as a street, connects the lobbies of each different sector.

In the subsequent projects—such as CPC Ruta 20 and CPC Monseñor Pablo Cabrera—, the construction is structured to be separated from the urban context and the different spacial experiences occur within the building.

A meeting place. An idea that is constantly present when planning these architectural complexes is the establishment of a civic square.

All projects are based on the premise of "social encounter"; thus, a public meeting place is created in different ways, which can serve as a local market, as a space for the development of cultural activities, or just as a meeting place.

The square is always the element that connects the sectors where basic functions are performed. In CPC Pueyrredón, a circular square is surrounded by three bodies placed in a stepped manner, like an amphitheater. In CPC Ruta 20, curved line architecture encloses a civic square.

(...)

In general, in these complexes, architect Roca designed each basic sector or body, clearly identifiable, to fulfill different functions: one destined for political and administrative functions and another working as a cultural center.

The exception to this trend is CPC Monseñor Pablo Cabrera, which is distinguished for being a big four-story central prism, where political, administrative, and social functions are carried out. It is surrounded by a great curved structural envelope, and several smaller bodies are connected, in which cultural functions are performed.

As time goes by. It is worth doing a historical-critical analysis of this new typology that is so typical of our city. Far from falling into disuse, these architectural complexes address the needs created by the rapid city growth.

This new typology attained its three main goals: municipal administrative decentralization, the promotion of social and cultural active participation, and their transformation into peripheral urban icons.

Even though the daring architecture of these centers provoked bitter criticism, it cannot be denied that their provocative images have an impact that allows them to be easily recognizable as current representative symbols of a decentralized and participatory city.

Source: Bongiovanni, Sara (September 29, 2007) Community Participation Centers: Urban Icons. Note in the Architecture Supplement, La Voz del Interior newspaper (Printed edition). Supplement cited in the website Design Landmarks in Córdoba.

Community Participation Centers (CPC) in Córdoba City

СРС	Foundation
CPC Argüello	March 16, 1994
CPC Centro América	August 9, 1994
CPC Pueyrredón	November 30, 1994
CPC Villa El Libertador	March 27, 1995
CPC Empalme	April 24, 1995
CPC Colón	May 18, 1996
CPC Guiñazú	October 21, 1997

СРС	Foundation	
CPC Ruta 20	October 14, 1998	
CPC Monseñor Pablo Cabrera	February 26, 1999	
CPC Rancagua	September 16, 1999	
CPC Mercado de la Ciudad	October 1, 2001	
CPC Chalet San Felipe	December 10, 2019 Sub CPC since April 11, 2011 Activity since 2008	
CPC San Vicente	December 21, 2012	

Own production.

Between 1991 and 1999—the time when those programs were implemented—, they set the stage for the beginning of a transformation process that lasts until today. The planning at that moment could not be completely materialized. However, it set a precedent in relation not only to the new practices but also to the beginning of a regulatory and institutional framework aimed at consolidating citizen participation and decentralization. Nevertheless, progress has been gradual during the last 20 years.

In 2004, neighborhood micro-planning turned formally into the Participatory Budgeting of Córdoba, and it started to be executed in more and more neighborhoods. Another landmark is the simultaneous creation of the Participatory Budget Directorate, dependent on the Secretariat of the Government of the city, and the issuance of Ordinance No.

10,713/2004 related to CVs.

Afterward, in 2007, Ordinance No. 11,095/2007 was passed, which is related to the legal entity of CVs. This measure was a step forward to standardize the functioning of these associations in the different city areas and their relation to participation instances proposed by the

Municipality.

In 2008, a relevant event took place the creation of the Secretariat of Participation. Although implementation of a Secretariat like this only lasted for two years, it does demonstrate that, somehow, Córdoba has focused on participatory democracy over time, even when goals could not be achieved or when commitments already taken on could not be fulfilled. An important event that took place that same year was the issuance of two key ordinances-Ordinance No. 11,448/2008 Participation Neighborhood Boards and Ordinance No. 11,499/2008 about Participatory Budgeting. Later, in 2009, Ordinance No. 11,645/2009 was passed, establishing the existence of the Economic and Social Board, already provided under COM in 1995. During that period, significant contributions were made to build head offices for Neighborhood Centers or Neighborhood Commissions that held their own pieces of land or as a loan for use.

Since then, the Participatory Budget was established as a local practice with territorial presence, which strengthened JPVs and Neighborhood Centers. Another key aspect is that, over the years

of implementation of this instrument, municipal teams acquired and developed the necessary competencies. Nevertheless, some difficulties remained, such as not having a secretariat that provided administrative support and impulse. In fact, the execution of approved projects took longer as they were in the hands of central areas, which had to provide a response and support to all neighborhoods. These difficulties make it clear that the decentralization and the deconcentration planned in 1991

were not a reality yet.

Despite successes and failures, the fact that different participation institutions have remained relatively active over the years should be considered a achievement, for areat both citizens and the different government Their administrations. permanence and their appropriation by neighbors, the municipal public administration staff, and political and academic representatives generated debates and learnings, consolidating the practice and allowing for the identification of areas for improvement, which have been reflected in the most recent modifications.

There two main difficulties were encountered during the implementation. First, Municipality's delays in meeting its commitments and its difficulties monitoring projects damaged confidence and participation in the territories. Second, when establishing the participatory budget at the JPV level, there could be concerns, since those neighborhoods that had greater participation could be favored over the years, while those within the same district that had less participation or a smaller population were unable to get their needs prioritized.

So, in 2020, Ordinance No. 13,003/2020 about Neighborhood Participation Boards, and Ordinance No. 13,002/2020 about the Neighbourhood Participatory Budget were issued, modifying the 2008 regulations and introducing key changes. These are summarized below:

- a) The scope of the Participatory Budgeting is the neighborhood, which is why it is now referred to as Neighbourhood Participatory Budget (PPB).
- b) The JPV works at the district level together with the CPC, which directorate assumes the coordination

role of the former.

c) The execution period of the Neighborhood Improvement devised within the PPB framework corresponds to the same budgetary period in which plans are formulated...

d)The execution period of the District Improvement Plans developed in the JPVs corresponds to the budgetary period subsequent to that in which plans are formulated.

The changes mentioned above clarified the participation levels, the functions and the possibilities of previously established spaces, making their original mission

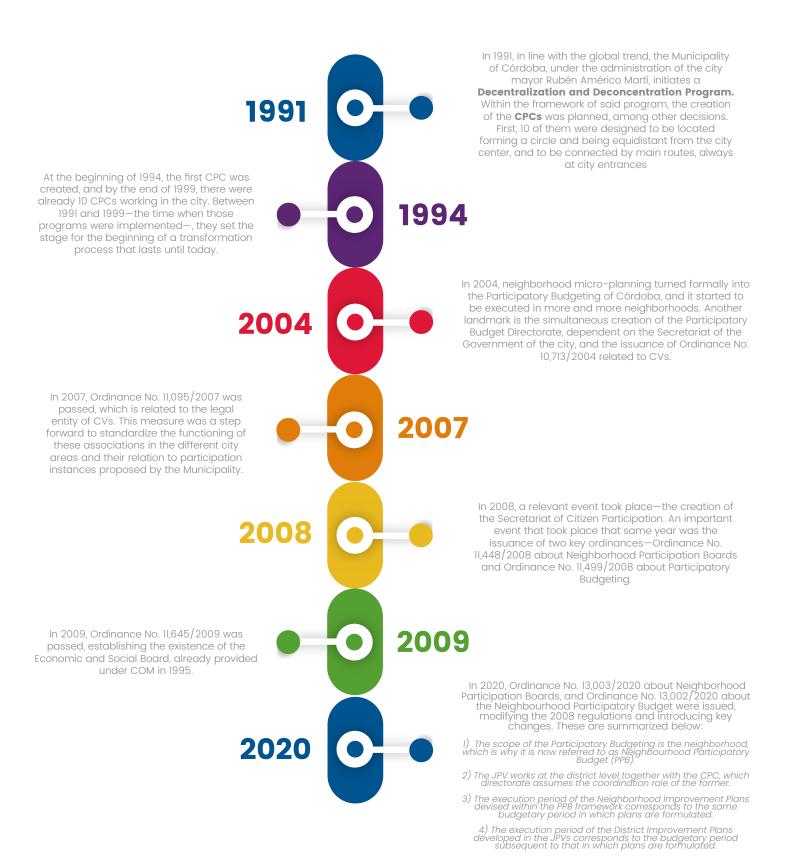
more specific.

Three other innovations been implemented with the aim of complementing and strengthening The decisions. first previous consists in the Municipality possibility of direct selection of public works and services that Neighborhood Centers could offer (Ordinance No. 12,995/2019 and Ordinance No. 13,006/2020). This neighborhood for decision allows needs to be met in a new nimble way.

Neighborhood Development Self-Management Regime through Neighborhood Centers (Decree No. 040/20 and Resolution 003 - J Series/2021) Neighborhood Centers, with the participation of the neighbors of each territory, to carry out actions so as to improve the neighborhood infrastructure and to control municipal public services within their jurisdiction. Its goal is to improve neighbors' standard of living by providing specific answers in a more accessible way and through citizens' participation. In this way, neighbors themselves can take care of neighborhood public spaces—such as squares and parks—, clean a particular area, maintain infrastructure, and even lead small neighborhood public works. In order to be part of the Regime, the Neighborhood Center must approve it through an assembly and it must sign an agreement with the Municipality. Secondly, the application

Çiudadana has been developed (currently in beta testing), which representatives from Neighborhood Centers and municipal areas are already using. This resource allows the Municipality to gather georeferenced data about the neighborhood needs and to generate work orders to address them. As for the citizens' benefits, they include comfortable and digital management and monitoring in real time. The application CBA147, which allowed citizens to file complaints digitally, was a first resource in this development. Concurrently, there exist initiatives launched by the organized civil society, such as the app Reporta Ciudad proposed by Our Córdoba Community (Red Ciudadana Córdoba), which focuses on citizens' monitoring and collective gathering of information.

Third, two decisions were made in order to strengthen CVs. The first one is related to head offices. During the 90s, it is estimated that less than 50 neighborhoods had a well-established CV, and fewer were those that counted with head offices for its activities. Over the years and administrations, different Municipality has helped in the creation and standardization of CVs, by aiding in their correct registration and by grantiņg them a territory. Ordinance No. 13,169/21 grants CVs their corresponding head offices as a loan for use for 99 years in order to create a stability environment that promotes participation and allows for the work of neighborhoods to be implemented in better conditions. The second one makes the administrative limits and the neighborhood naming Through clearer. Ordinance 13,083/21, the corresponding territorial boundaries were set, facilitating the CVs' performance.





Enabling Factors

When analyzing the regulatory framework and the reality of the PPB, the following enabling factors can be identified:

The group of institutions that are involved in the initiative has created increasingly better conditions for citizen participation. The fact that they have been established under the COM and different ordinances provides stability regarding participatory spaces created through programs and projects. In addition to this, the citizens' appropriation helps to guarantee the permanence of these practices in the life of the city of Córdoba.

- The provision stating that decisions made within the PPB framework must be executed within the same budgetary period has the potential to generate a virtuous circle since completions will bring about credibility and motivation to increase and strengthen participation. Besides, the shorter execution period can facilitate the monitoring role taken up by neighbors. Of course, the increase in the CPC operating capability is a key element to achieve these assumptions.
- In its current version, the city participation scheme is more easily communicable to citizens in general, even to those that have never taken part in public spaces. This is very important as it is about elements directed to the whole population and not exclusively to those that have been participating in community spaces for a long time.
- The selection of neighborhoods where the PPB will be implemented according to the IPS and the decision-making process at the neighborhood level contribute to achieving equity among neighborhoods, even among those within the same district, and to reducing asymmetries between different city areas in the long term.
- Sinceits beginnings, the implementation of participatory activities in the territories involved the participation of staff members from both the central governments and the CPCs. The regulatory framework is very enabling, as well as the appropriation by neighbors and those individuals working

for the public administration. Among the benefits, it is worth highlighting a two-way reassessment: first, citizens appreciate the contributions can made by public officers to the actual implementation of a particular policy; second, the staff perceive a rise in their value as public officers, which has an impact on their motivation. It is also important to remember that the members of the public administration also live in a neighborhood and that they know the problems that affect their community the most...

The app, currently in use mainly by CV representatives and individuals working in different municipal areas, can be a favorable element in the future, so long as the citizens can incorporate it, express the needs they identify, and receive an answer in the short term. Technology can increase participation. However, it is important to highlight that there are people who prefer to participate in person, while others prefer to do so in a virtual manner.



Limiting Factors

Similarly, current challenges and elements that affect or might affect participation can be identified. They are described below:

- The preliminary diagnosis and the classification of problems made by the Municipality can condition the prioritization that neighborhood representatives make, risking the exclusion of needs that might be more relevant.
- There is still centralization and bureaucracy in administrative operating procedures, though they have been simplified and decentralized considerably. In this respect, the operating capability in the territory remains a considerable challenge, especially, from the citizens' viewpoint in terms of process standardization. In other words, an answer should be provided to address the problems selected in the same year. In order to achieve that, management agility in main governmental areas (e.g., in technical direction) and simultaneous operating and management capability in the CPCs are required. As 2021 was the first year of implementation of the tool under these characteristics, a pilot procedure could be adopted, which should be adapted and standardized so that the dynamic of reaching same-year execution could take place naturally at different levels (Municipality and CPCs) in the following years. It is important that it fits the administrative area and that it is well-known by public officers and staff members. There should be a clear procedure that would allow for the CPCs' internationalization and acceptance of the PPB, their Improvement Plans, Neighborhood the JPVs activity, and their District Improvement Plans as part of their daily activity.
- The third limiting factor is related to the monitoring and assessment system established by the regulatory framework, but for which concrete mechanisms for monitoring and transparent communication of the results are yet to be defined. Just as in the previous case, it is important to secure it by means of agreed

- procedures so as not to depend on the goodwill during a particular period or of a specific administration, but to work as a true tool that provides transparency and offers learning opportunities to all parties...
- approach that The focuses public works and services for the neighborhood can take visibility and decision away from other needs that might be much more important. Even though it is true that topics related to social or health promotion, or sport and cultural strategies may require more complex approaches and involve more municipal agencies for their correct planning, it is also essential to consider that they might have a greater impact on the transformation of IPS indicators. It is advisable to design strategies to identify the more relevant needs in the diagnosis and to create mechanisms to provide an answer even if it is not given through the PPB.
- Lastly, citizen participation can be affected by several factors. The permanent creation of new resources is vital in order to increase, diversify and strengthen participation. This is of paramount importance in today's post-pandemic context and in other contexts as well.

Achievements

Although there were several challenges, it is worth highlighting undeniable achievements along the way:

The **ongoing** efforts directly aimed at strengthening participation over and through the administrations, which a socio-political consensus regarding its importance.

The constant citizens' appropriation. Even during periods when the Municipality provided few answers, citizens did not stop participating and demanding the validity of the created spaces.

The most recent achievement is related to the current procedure and the distinction of different levels, which makes it easier to communicate, with the potential to promote more citizens' involvement.

The PPB during COVID-19 Times

As a consequence of the 2020 pandemic, health emergency measures were taken in Argentina that included preventive and mandatory social isolation. Initially, the decision was made in March and the measure was supposed to last for a period of two weeks, but it was permanently extended for similar periods over several months. Due to this situation, a great amount of public and private activities lacked predictability. Under these circumstances, during 2020, the goals of the PPB have not been achieved.

In 2021, in a pandemic under a less restrictive context, different actions and participatory spaces were modified in order to carry them out. For instance, only one workshop per neighborhood was organized instead of the two planned ones. Besides, meetings were held in open spaces, with social distancing and health measures according to the situation.

The neighbors' availability and their renewed willingness to participate and trust the tool, even in such a complex context, are highly valuable, as well as their enthusiasm for learning about recent regulatory changes and its implementation, working for their neighborhoods, and transmitting the new knowledge to their neighbors.

Thepossibility of incorporating technology as a complement is expected, though the current experience shows that direct meetings have a greater impact in comparison to contributions published

in or send through social media. In the planned dynamic, a great amount of face-to-face contact and ties to instill confidence are necessary.



Transfer Potential

In the case of the PPB and other participatory instruments of the city of Córdoba, it is clear that they have been developed considering greatly their own reality and their specific characteristics, such as the territory and the community. Yet, the experience is transferable since the way in which difficulties were solved led to a great amount of innovative learning and ideas that can be useful in other cities.

Some aspects that would contribute to it being transferred and replicated can be identified. First, the fact that regulations make available participatory spaces and mechanisms of semi-direct democracy allowed to secure such spaces more effectively than simple programs of a

particular administration would do. Second, the variety of instances, the plurality of agents, the decentralization, and the degree of openness shown by institutions enable dialog and joint action between the Municipality and the civil society, favoring an urban governance path.

Third, it is possible to coordinate in a more flexible way planning tools with neighborhood and community structures, representation together with the unorganized community; thus, enriching the participation dynamic.

V Notes on Participation

As there is no monitoring, it is not possible to accurately characterize neighborhood participation within the PPB. That is why the evaluation of municipal and neighborhood representatives is taken into account.

The different consulted individuals agree that, apparently, adults and women participate more than youngsters Regarding respectively. men, participation by age group, the pandemic introduced some changes since adults have been reluctant to come back to public spaces due to being part of a high-risk group and fearing infection. In contrast, younger individuals have shown a new willingness to get involved in neighborhood activities as they have greater experience and abilities to use online tools to hold meetings.

Women's greater participation associated with a greater presence at home and in the neighborhood due to the existing differences concerning the distribution of family duties.

Each neighborhood has distinctive features regarding participation, but in general, social institutions and academic entities, such as universities, have a greater presence in neighborhoods that are more centrally located. In those cases, participation might be more fluid and nimbler considering the experience in the field.

from both Representatives the Municipality and CPCs notice that people are disinterested in and reluctant to commit themselves to the existing spaces. Although 2021 was an atypical year, it serves as an example of what has been stated above. For instance, on average, only 15 individuals per neighborhŏod participated in the 101 workshops held during that year. This figure is equivalent to the minimum amount required to carry out the participatory instances.

Thus, there are challenges to face regarding participation diversification and promotion.



Public Administration and Government

Local public administration staff provided very positive feedback. Its members are from areas not directly involved in the PPB experience, but who can perceive the benefits that it offers to the institution and the neighborhoods.

Within the institution, the PPB contributes to the coordination and acknowledgment of society needs. It also improves communication with neighbors, since it starts out of dialog and proposals and

not out of complaints.

In the neighborhoods, an immaterial impact is perceived in the social fabric related to the commitment and participation, and the importance of being part of decision-making and solution development processes. Besides, the visible and tangible impact resulting from the public works themselves is also perceived.

"There is a very enthusiastic participation on the part of public officers from other areas and a willingness to facilitate spaces, time, people and resources. So, I think this feedback is the result of the collaboration and the participation of all agencies."

"Even though the tool does not work very well, it is important since neighbors have the possibility to express the neighborhood needs. Participation is always good, it is never something bad; sometimes it is inefficient, but it is not inaccurate."

> Interview with municipal representatives



Neighborhood Centers

Citizens, represented in Neighborhood Centers, consider the tool has many positive aspects, among which, the following stand out:

neighborhood level the The for participatory budget;

the The ips introduction for neighborhood selection;

The presence of councilors in jpvs;

The same-year execution of decisions

made through the ppb;

The learning gained by neighbors when participating in the ppb workshops and understanding the functioning of different instances and levels for problem-solving;

The 99-year loan for use of cvs head offices, which provides stability to perform their activities. Moreover, the head offices are greatly valued because they open up the possibility to create bon'ds an'd a sense o'f belonging, they favor interaction with other neighborhood institutions and they allow them to bring stability to their activities;

The possibility of direct selection to provide an immediate answer to the needs and to promote popular economy.

perceived Among the areas improvement, there exists the need to promote participation and diversity within it. For instance, regarding generational

> "I believe this open and overt situation of providing required solutions is fundamental because they vary from year to year. Besides, neighbors need solutions right away, not for the coming year."

> Workshop with Neighborhood Centers' representatives

"I believe the commitment assumed by someone that decides something lasts forever. Why? Because if I invite you and you decided that a ramp is needed, then you cannot complain, because you participated, you are part of it and you are responsible."

Workshop with Neighborhood Centers'

differences, it can be observed that the convergence of different age groups helps identify needs that would be ignored if conditions were different. Similarly, it is a matter of concern that the use of technology is an obstacle in this sense, excluding those who do not have access to it or the abilities to use it. Moreover, there is still a long way to go in

understanding the role of the CV, which, in some cases, is misunderstood as an extension of the Municipality, when it is in fact a nexus and its members perform honorary tasks.

"There is a certain lack of commitment, and neighbors do feel represented, but they cease to participate. I think we have to encourage commitment and participation."

Workshop with Neighborhood Centers' representatives



05. Corolario

Summarizing an experience implies learning from the revision of the whole process, rebuilding contexts and turning points, decisions, progresses, problems that shape this experience and that offer multiple interpretations and explanations of the achievements.

There is no doubt that focusing on initiatives that foster citizen participation requires tools that open up the dialogue between different parties, each of them with an opinion based on their roles and at different time frames. It is an exercise that starts from the description to finally achieve a stage of criticism and reflection. When we reflect upon the journey made, the changes implemented and the expectations about the improvements needed, we promote new adjustments and decisions that shape the instrument to comply with its ultimate objective.

Additionally, being able to share experiences and doing so during the register process implies being open to hearing other voices and getting to know other journeys that may be valuable and may bring innovative ideas related

to this practice.

Lastly, socializing our register and shared information leads us to have an open dialogue with those that participated in some of these experiences but not in the systematization, and with those who are interested in the topics developed, either with a study objective or intervention objective in their own communities.

From this perspective, with these pages,

we hope to provide information to discuss about and innovate in the tools cities use and to align them with this new governance. Mainly, the objective is to contribute to strengthening citizen participation and participatory democracy.



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