

PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING WORLD ATLAS

PLACING OUTSKIRTS AT THE CENTRE

DEBATE ENGAGING CITIZENS IN DISCUSSING REVENUES:
CHALLENGES, EXPERIENCES AND LESSON LEARNED



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PLACING OUTSKIRTS AT THE CENTRE

GROTTAMMARE



I. Name of the country where the experience is/was located

Italy.

II. Name of the City

Grottammare.

III. Name of the Region

Marche.

IV. Name of the organization that promoted the experience

Municipality of Grottemmare.

V. Typology of the organization that promoted the experience

Municipal Government.

VI. Name of the process

Placing outskirts at the centre (Periferie al centro).

VII. Dates or year(s) in which the citizens engagement happened

2010.

VIII. Was the experience formally part of PB?

No, it was a parallel/separate process, even if this place had an ongoing PB.

IX. Short description of the methodology of the experience

Very often, money for huge investments is received by cities as an unexpected gift, that must be accepted no matter what and how it arrives, and no matter which risks the investment can generate.

In Grottammare Municipality, where a citizens' movement runs the local institutions since the mid '90, the habit to involve citizens is enrooted in a way that also extra-budgetary resources coming from big investors need to be submitted to a participatory process, so to maximize their benefit and remain under public scrutiny.

A proof of this come from an experiences that took place in 2009-2010, when the Carisap Bank Foundation proposed to fund the creation of an important architecture of public interest in the neighboring municipality of San Benedetto del Tronto, much bigger than Grottammare in terms of territorial extension and population.

At the time, the ruling majority of San Benedetto del Tronto - required to grant an area inside the town borders for a 10 million Euros investment - had several problems in identifying a specific area, failing to make the area available within the time limits provided by the Carisap. Thus, Grottammare expressed its availability to offer an area to implement the project (generically named by all parts involved and the media, as "La Grande Opera" or "A.N.I.M.A") in its own territory, in case the Carisap Foundation had agreed on that.

The Foundation board accepted the proposal, and offered doubling its investment proposal (10,000,000 Euros for each of the towns of Grottammare and San Benedetto del Tronto), with the clause that - in case one of the involved municipalities would fail in finding a suitable area within the right deadlines - the overall funds of 20 million euros would go entirely to the town demonstrating to be the more prepared to accomplish the location requests.

Within this panorama of negotiations, the municipality of Grottammare - since the beginning - clarified to Carisap Foundation its intention to involve citizens in the decision-making process about what to realize.

The Mayor's letter, number of protocol 2039 / sent on February 5th, 2010, clarified the rules of Periferie al Centro, the name that Grottammare chose to give to this participatory budgeting spin-off process, which started on May 26th 2010.

According to the letter the process was focused on three main issues:

- Are we going to build the “Grande Opera”?
- Where are we going to build the “Grande Opera”?
- Which “Grande Opera” are we going to build?

As previously happened with other public policies implemented in Grottammare, citizens were involved not only on the decisions on what to build with Carisap Foundation’s funds, but also on where to locate it. The “zero option” (if there was need and will to build it) was also considered in the main topics of the process.

Therefore, the first three meetings aimed to consider the opportunity provided by the bank Foundation, select a suitable area and judge collectively the proposal coming from a private company, willing to donate a strategic lot for the implementation.

The following meetings, instead were shaped around the discussion on what kind of architectural work citizens wanted to build, not forgetting that - when proposing the investment - the Carisap Foundation had set just few preconditions for the acceptance of the proposal coming bottom-up from Grottammare decisional process.

These rules were:

1. The A.N.I.M.A had to be designed by a professional chosen by the Foundation itself and the choice had fallen on architect Bernard Tschumi, an internationally reknown “archistar”;
2. The architecture had to be an equipment of public interest and a driving force for local business which, in both Grottammare and San Benedetto, is tourism-oriented;
3. The Foundation would be in charge of the ordinary maintenance of the public work, once implemented.

It should be clarified that, for problems not regarding Grottammare but depending on the Bank Foundation, the A.N.I.M.A was never realized.

X. Short description of the results of the experience

It is not so easy to tell how much the Mayor’s decision to inform the Foundation about his intention to involve the citizens influenced the Foundation in the choice-making, maybe this was an additional element that influenced and convinced them to move funds for the work of Bernard Tschumi from the more famous and bigger town of San Benedetto to Grottammare.

In Italy, the problems for the construction of big public infrastructures or equipment are many, because sometimes there is opposition from local communities; and in most cases citizens refuse to accept the realization of such big construction works. But this wasn’t the case of Grottammare maybe because of the long tradition of participatory budgeting. Here the conflict, although not completely absent, had minor impact.

With Council Deliberation n. 194 dated December 21st, 2010 the meetings results were officially acknowledged. The participatory budgeting process named Periferie al Centro came to an end with the recognition of an official act, that contain the story of the entire process.

Therefore, the town of Grottammare submitted its collectively-elaborated idea to the Carisap Foundation. The equipment to be built was imagined as a place able to contain and represent all the features of the Piceno territory, for the promotion of its culture, landscape beauties and - last but not least - its history.

New dynamics and a familiar approach characterized the participatory processes, conceived as a separate spin-off of the general participatory budgeting. Its innovative aspect is that it could lead to confirm the will of the city to receive the promised funding or not (“zero option”).

Compared to other traditional inclusive projects structured in the town of Grottammare, a third subject was involved (the bank Foundation), so changing the natural dialogue process typical of the participatory budgeting meetings. Here, the deliberation was not about the priorities to be implemented with given funds, but accepting the advantages and disadvantages of a private investment, and posing specific conditions (compensations) to the A.N.I.M.A.

Therefore, the most important new feature of “Periferie al centro” was going beyond the traditional bilateral agreement between the municipal executive and the citizens, including additional stakeholders, as the Carisap Foundation and the entrepreneurs that offered a plot for building the A.N.I.M.A..

Another new approach came from articulating the decision-making process into two different moments: the first aimed to discuss “if” and “where” to build the A.N.I.M.A, the second to decide “what” it could be.

The process leading to the decision about what kind of architecture it must be realized followed the usual face-to-face meetings’ dynamics, summarizing and discarding step-by-step those ideas resulted unworkable because of scarcity of resources and/or competences, and finalizing a shared solution among the proposals that appeared more feasible to participants.

Public meetings were addressed to everybody (open door methodology), and included individual voting procedures among participants in case of lack of consensus on proposals.

XI. Some data on participants

- 251 were the citizens involved;
- 5 the overall number of public open assemblies;
- 3 assemblies were used to establish if and where A.N.I.M.A was going to be built;
- 2 two assemblies focussed on what A.N.I.M.A should be;
- 89 days separated the start and the end of the process;
- 3 decisions were made: if, where and what to build;
- 2 were the public places where the assemblies happened;
- 4 were the Neighborhood Committees involved;
- the assemblies last 17 hours in total;
- 50 were the average number of participants for each assembly, 20,000,000 euros were made available by the Bank Foundation;
- 8 were the project proposals on which the assemblies focussed.

XII. Weblink or other sources

[There is no web-memory anywhere on this participatory process](#)

XIII. Name and address of the person who answered the questions

Luigi Merli, Mayor of Grottammare from 2004 to 2013.

Support offered by Pierpaolo Fanesi (civil servant at Grottammare Municipality)

