

Spaces and practices of citizen participation. Educational proposals from an intercultural perspective

Espacios y prácticas de participación ciudadana. Propuestas educativas desde una mirada intercultural

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Abstract

The article presents the doctoral thesis research that has been developed in four spaces for civic participation in the city of Madrid for three years (2015/2017). We believe that citizenship is learned by exercising it and that spaces for participation are citizenship schools. The purpose of the study is to formulate educational proposals for the learning of active citizenship from the analysis of what happens in those spaces. The text is structured around these sections: 1) reflections and premises in relation to participation and education for citizenship; 2) direct background of the research and the continuities that are given in this work; 3) intercultural approach from which we understand citizen participation; 4) ethnographic study conducted through participant observation and interviews directed to 30 key informants. The four case studies and the analysis process are described through the categorical definition; 5) results organized into three major thematic blocks: diversity and complexity, relational vision and educational practices; 6) educational proposals derived from the results and aimed at both education professionals and people involved in spaces for citizen participation

Keywords: Intercultural education; citizen participation; intercultural education; qualitative research; educational research; learning participation, citizenship education.

Resumen

El artículo presenta la investigación de tesis doctoral que se ha desarrollado en cuatro espacios de participación ciudadana de la ciudad de Madrid durante tres años (2015/2017). Consideramos que la ciudadanía se aprende ejerciéndola y que los espacios de participación son escuelas de ciudadanía. La finalidad del estudio es formular propuestas educativas para el aprendizaje de la ciudadanía activa a partir del análisis de lo que sucede en dichos espacios. El texto se estructura en torno a estos apartados: 1) reflexiones y premisas en relación a la participación y la educación para la ciudadanía; 2) antecedentes directos de la investigación y las continuidades que se dan en este trabajo; 3) enfoque intercultural desde el que comprendemos la participación ciudadana; 4) estudio etnográfico realizado mediante observación participante y entrevistas dirigidas a 30 informantes clave. Se describen los cuatro casos de estudio y el proceso de análisis a través de la definición categorial; 5) resultados organizados en tres grandes bloques temáticos: diversidad y complejidad, visión relacional y prácticas educativas; 6) propuestas educativas derivadas de los resultados y dirigidas tanto a profesionales de la educación como a personas implicadas en los espacios de participación ciudadana.

Palabras clave: educación intercultural; participación ciudadana; educación intercultural educación; investigación cualitativa; investigación educativa; participación en el aprendizaje, educación para la ciudadanía

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Since the end of the twentieth century, disinterest and distrust of citizenship in democratic institutions, called “political disaffection,” has provoked an extensive debate over the legitimacy of said institutions, where civic participation is considered one of the fundamental and constitutional requirements of governance in democratic societies (Puelles & Urzúa, 1996). This has become one of the principal courses of action in reform processes “from above”, as in the case of European governance. The creation of an active citizenship in the processes participation and change is presented as a medium for the accomplishment of inclusion and social cohesion in democratic societies (Official Journal of the European Communities, 2001).

In most European countries, citizenship training has involved the inclusion of the subject “Education for citizenship” in official curriculum; this has also been the case in Spain. However, evidence shows that school is not best place to learn about citizenship and participation (Conseil National d'évaluation du système scolaire, 2016). Learning about participation entails participating, and learning about citizenship means exercising it. Educational discourse focused on the individual and child does not promote civic education. The rigid structure of school does not foster the creation of spaces for participation and dialogue. It is necessary to promote dialogical, reflective, and socially integrating education practices (Vengeler, 2011) that come from an intercultural perspective, recognize diversity as normal, and assumes that every educator is committed to equality (Aguado, 2016).

If we understand said political disaffection as a response to the democratic deficit¹, we will be able to understand the moments of irruption and protest of citizens around the world in the beginning of the twenty-first

1 About the democratic deficit in European institutions one can consult Enzensberger (2012) or Laval & Dardot (2017); in regards to the processes of “de-democratization” as a consequence of neoliberal globalization, see Estévez (2013).

century (Castells, 2012) as processes of resistance to lost sovereignty and the power of decision as a consequence of the actual crisis of liberal democracies (Castells, 2017). One example of these moments is the 15M in Spain². It arises linked to the idea of democratic deepening, almost as an act of defense of a democracy perceived as threatened by the lack of representation and of courses of control that avoid political decision out of common interest (Manguijón & Pac, 2012). Awareness of the possibility of generating new forms of social participation is produced from an autonomous civic practice, or a kind of movement “from representation to appropriation” (Subirats *et al.* 2015). Different spaces for grassroots civic participation have been reactivated and strengthened, whose characteristics are defined around two related axes: social justice understood as the fight against exclusion and inequality, and the implantation of new forms of governance understood as the development of methods of direct and participatory democracy (Pradel & García, 2018).

In these spaces, people learn about and exercise citizenship, and participate in and contribute to the transformation for greater justice and social cohesion. These are true citizenship schools. We wonder how citizenship is exercised and learned in these spaces, what happens in them, what practices promote participation and what educational proposals emerge from this knowledge.

In the specific case of the city of Madrid, the change of municipal government that came as a result of the elections of May 2015

2 The Movement of May 15 also called the Movement of the Indigenous, arose in Spain after a protest demonstration by the reforms of the neoliberal court produced after the economic crisis of 2008. After this performed demonstration on May 15, 2011, a civic movement was generated that occupied public spaces (various places of the main capitals of the Spanish state) for many months and had different consequences in the political national spectrum, so much at a level of civic movement as of political parties. See Pradel and García (2018) for the first and Rodriguez (2016). Also, Castells (2012), Mangiron y Pac (2012), or Taibo (2011).

implied a transformation of model assumed by prior foreign policy makers or those confronted with these social movements. This change filled many of those involved with hope and excitement. However, soon after, the illusions were frustrated as far as what refers to the transformative capacity of the new municipal officials. The only course of institutional transformation is the point of extension of mechanisms of physical and digital participation, mainly applied in the participatory budget calls. (Rodríguez López, 2016).

The study that we expose here is situated in this context, as a product of a doctoral thesis (Melero, 2018), and carried out in four spaces of civic participation in Madrid. As we have already said, we consider these spaces as schools of citizenship where real people with diverse experiences, interests, and visions exercise and learn citizenship in an active and critical way. The purpose of this has been to analyze, from an intercultural view, what happens in said spaces of participation with an objective of formulating educational proposals for active citizenship education from an intercultural focus. This purpose has been defined as various formulated objectives as questions:

- What happens in diverse spaces of civic participation?
- What practices can be facilitating and which can be obstacles for civic practice?
- How is citizenship taught and learned in the studied participation spaces?

In this document we recognize the obtained responses through the research process developed in four moments or stages:

- 1) Revise the theoretical framework and actual approaches toward citizenship and participation, starting from previous research or the direct antecedents of the INTER Group and from a focus on intercultural education.
- 2) Identify spaces and practices of civic according to previous conceptual

delimitation and direct antecedents.

- 3) Describe and understand the practices of civic participation that occur in observed spaces of civic participation.
- 4) Make educational proposals for citizenship education from an intercultural approach.

These final proposals are addressed both to educational professionals and people that participate in various civic spaces.

Background and Continuities

The background of this study can be found in works done by members of the INTER Group (www.uned.es/grupointer) based, among other aspects, on the recognition that it is necessary “to investigate in depth about how citizenship is built in educational processes, understood in their broadest dimension, as learning processes that continue throughout one’s life” (Mata, Ballesteros y Padilla, 2013:51-52). Two recent studies of this group are especially significant: “Learning of Active Citizenship. Educational Speeches, Experiences and Strategies” from 2009 to 2013³ and “Spaces of Civic Participation: Analysis and Proposals from an Educational Perspective” from 2012 to 2014⁴. Both have the shared purpose of formulating effective strategies and educational proposals for active citizenship education. The first provides evidence in relation to the experiences and speeches of people who exercise participation in diverse fields (education, communication, unions, associations, and local institutions). The second study addressed a mapping of the participation spaces in the city of Madrid.

In the following sections, the theoretical and methodological continuities that have been presented in these previous works are exposed, because we estimate that they can

3 National Plan of R+D; ref.: EDU2009-09195); More information in http://www2.uned.es/grupointer/aprendiz_ciudadania_activa.html

4 Promotion of Research Plan at UNED; ref: 2012V/PUNED/0005; More information in http://www2.uned.es/grupointer/espacios_participacion.html

make it easier to understand what is presented here and guide future work in this area.

Theoretical-Conceptual Continuities

- *The Concept of Citizenship*: Citizenship is perceived by interviewees as a distant or narrow and excluding category, consequently, the first study started to talk about “citizenships” (Gil-Jaurena, Ballesteros, Mata & Sánchez-Melero, 2016). This is directly related to the conceptualization of citizenship as “practice” before “status,” since “the idea makes sense when perceived as practice, and linked to one’s own experience and closest spaces [...] with the clear awareness that there are different dimensions in practice, and thus, plural and diverse citizenships” (Gil-Jaurena et al., 2016:292). Citizenship as practice “necessarily implies *the relationship with others*, the creation of collective with a purpose” (Mata et al., 2013:62).

On the theoretical-conceptual level, this is clearly related to an intercultural approach. Since citizenship, or rather civic practice(s), are constructed in a relational and situated way, that is to say, in concrete context through an intersubjective manner, the intercultural approach is shown as an appropriate approach for research, given that it also understands reality in a complex manner and intersubjective construction through communication processes in which meanings are shared, interpreted and constructed among diverse people.

- *Choosing the Object of Study*: Citizen Practice: The results of previous research have led us to place the focus of study on practices that occur in civic spaces, that is to say, now it is not as important to define the concept of citizenship in a theoretical way, not only because that work has already been done throughout previous studies, but also because civic practice has emerged as a key concept that transcends the limitations of the concept of “citizenship,” by placing the emphasis on the dynamic and changing part of citizenship on democratic societies.

Again, in coherence with the intercultural approach, more importance is given to the dynamics of social processes.

- *Focusing on Citizenship Education*: One relevant idea has to do with how citizenship is learned. “Citizenship is learned at all times and places [...] thus we cannot limit learning to educational contexts” (Aguado, Ballesteros, Mata, & Sánchez-Melero, 2013:39); finding that gives strength to the idea of placing the focus on learning citizenship and not on citizenship education, as shown in the projects mentioned. The research that is presented here understands that it is necessary to first investigate how the people involved in different civic spaces “learn” to exercise their civic practice, before responding to the following question; “What education for what citizenship” (Cabrera, 2002). At the theoretical-conceptual level this focus prevents us from having to tackle the previous classifications about the diverse educational proposals for citizenship. Although we can understand that these proposals should always be in synergy with critical approaches and social justice (Carr, Pluim, & Howard, 2014) and that they should help “acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to promote social justice in communities, nations, and the world” (Banks, 2008:137), the pretension is to investigate the previous object of study that is the “learning of citizenship.”

- *Dimensions of Citizenship*: Finally, in relation to the theoretical-conceptual continuities, one of the aspects of previous research that has most influenced the doctoral thesis that frames this article is the dimensions of citizenship conceptualized and observed throughout the first study, since they describe and therefore limit the type of civic practices to observe, as well as the type of civic spaces in which research can be done. We are referring to the conceptualization of civic practices, as *critical, participatory and transformative* (Mata et al., 2013); conceptualization that also seems rouse interest and acceptance

among different people involved civic initiatives, which was observed during the development of the second project (Gil-Jaurena et al., 2013).

Methodological-Procedural Continuities

- *Choosing Research Methodology:* Everything previously said also has had an influence at the methodological-procedural level. When specifying the focus of the study, the selection of the research methodology and civic practices and spaces to investigate is specified in the same way. The qualitative, ethnographic and participatory approaches are presented as the most appropriate for research from an intercultural approach. Since the intercultural approach is also coherent with the results obtained in previous projects, by focusing on “civic practice” (with its dynamic, relational, experiential, situated and diverse aspect) as an object of study we also focus on research methodology. Furthermore this is consistent with the course of research established from *speeches and experiences to practices and spaces*.

- *Choosing Spaces to Carry Out Research:* All of this is also related to another of the clearest and most influential continuities: Focusing on the study of *citizenship learning* (and not on citizenship education) and having as a previous result the fact that “citizenship is learned, and learned through practice” (Gil-Jaurena et al., 2016:294), or in other words:

One of the first ideas that emerge from analysis is that critical and participatory citizenship is learned. This learning is a process of permanent construction that is accomplished more through informal means than by formal ones. That is, being a citizen “by being”, putting citizenship into practice, participating in the world around you, and being involved personally in groups, in collective processes and in decision-making (Mata et al., 2013:60).

With the idea that this learning is not limited to educational contexts, and the fact the results will highlight that social movements

are spearheading citizenship. Thus, exceptional models for learning civic practice (Aguado et al., 2013), have determined and justify the idea of researching said civic learning in the spaces where social movements exercise their civic practice, and reason for being in this research.

In terms of the selection of study cases, it is necessary to highlight the influence and continuity with the previous works, since spaces in which we hope to find a critical, participatory, and transformative civic practice are looked for. In addition, it is used as a tool to select the produced map for various civic initiatives, in relation to the select project mentioned.

Conceptual framework

As pointed out in the introduction, the construction of democratic societies demands exercise and learning from an active and participative citizenry. Learning participation implies participating and learning citizenry implies exercising it. The educational speech predominantly centered around the individual and the child does not contribute to the advancement of citizen education. The solid structure of the school does not promote the construction of spaces for participation and dialogue. It is necessary to promote dialogical, thoughtful, socially integrated (Vengelters, 2011), and productive educational practices from an intercultural perspective that recognizes the diversity/complexity as a normal and assumes equity as a commitment of every educator (Aguado, 2016). We keep ourselves from defining the means to adopt an intercultural approach to education and in comprehending what citizen participation means in the context of this study.

Intercultural approach in education

Education is a tool for liberation and emancipation, and is only liberating when it implies the inclusion, appropriation, and capacity of agency of the people. It implies eliminating the dialectical relationship between the oppressive and the oppressed, getting to transform this unequal and

oppressive world into one that is equitable and free (Freire, 1980, 2012). This way, the educational processes require the involvement and active participation of every person in a specific socioeducational space.

We refer to the intercultural approach and not intercultural education to appreciate that intercultural is not an adjective but rather a perspective with which we can comprehend the diversity and complexity of the world. We focus on culture by reflecting on education and assuming diversity as normal. Our ethical and political commitment is equity and social justice, proper values of democratic societies (Aguado, 2009; 2016). The intercultural approach is practice, communication, and hermeneutic; it is a tool for analysis and interpretation and we engage it in contextualized practices in real educational spaces. In our study, the selected spaces are spaces where processes of citizen participation, associated with social transformational movements and critics, are carried out.

The meanings, norms, ideas, and beliefs are built, expressed, transmitted, and updated only through concrete people. Such objects like “cultures” do not exist: what does exist are concrete human beings creating, recreating, and sharing a cultural medium. The essentialized culture functions as a barrier that impedes us from “seeing” the other and connects us with the reciprocal key. (Mata, 2011: 39)

The intercultural approach to education is a critical communicative praxis of co-construction and sociocultural transformation between specific, diverse, complex, and changeable people (Melero, 2018).

Therefore, the political project of interculturality, thus linked with a critical pedagogy, is a part of the need to epistemically implode hegemonic and dominant knowledge; not trying to be included in it (like neoliberal multiculturalism), but rather to intervene in it, generating participation and provoking an opposition and questioning (Walsh, 2007:33).

Citizen participation

Participation is the most pertinent way to assure that the social transformation we are pursuing from an intercultural perspective takes place from the recognition of the diversity of all those involved, so much of their characteristics as their statuses and social situations.

There have always been real world interventions that can, in theory, be implemented by different systems of knowledge. The concrete election of the form of knowledge should be informed by the precautionary principle, in which the context of the ecology of knowledge, should be formulated as follows: the preference should be given to form of knowledge that guarantees the highest level of participation of social groups involved in its design, execution and control, and in the benefits of the intervention (Santos, 2009:60).

Citizenship is considered a category of analysis by understanding it implies relationships of horizontality and equity. We prefer to talk about citizen participation to emphasize its dynamic and practical character. We distinguish between participation “from above” when it is promoted by state institutions and “from below” when it is generated by the citizenry itself. It is in these spaces where the study that we present has been situated.

Methodology

Investigative work has been carried out from an ethnographic approach in education (Del Olmo, 2008; Goetz & LeCompe, 1988; Sabirón, 2006) framed by the intercultural approach that understands the world in a complex way in continuous intersubjective or communicative construction between different agents (Abdallah-Pretceille, 2001, 2006; Aguado, 2009), to such an extent that the most adequate form to understand the social reality is from direct communication with different people that participate in the construction of meanings and in the contexts in which communicative interaction occurs (Abdallah-Pretceille, 2001). Only in the social

context where information and communication are processed is it possible to comprehend the meaning (Castells, 2009). The ethnographic approach, based on participation during long periods of time (del Olmo, 2008), aspires to comprehend the social reality from the people who built it, to look for the shared meanings that guide its behavior, as well as the individual and collective behaviors that modify these meanings (del Olmo & Osuna, 2014).

Field work and case studies

In field work, the main research tools from an ethnographic work have been utilized: *participant observation and guided interviews* (del Olmo, 2008). In a complementary way, documentary analyses have been carried out in documents produced in their own spaces in different formats.

The selection of case studies for participant observation are carried out in two consecutive processes: a) intentional selection of significant cases and b) access from the previous cases. Next, the followed process and selected cases are explained. Figure 1 also presents a summary.

a) For intentional selection, base (not promoted from the Administration), critical characteristic, participative, and transformative citizen spaces were looked for. As a tool for selection, a map of “citizen initiatives” in Madrid (<http://bit.ly/losMadriles2015>), developed from a network of social movements in collaboration with the City Council and the one in which we had participated in its first developments, was utilized.

-We are the neighborhood (SB): <http://bit.ly/SBarrio>) citizen initiative from neighborhoods in Argüelles, Casa de Campo, and City University whose purpose is to improve the quality of life in these neighborhoods through citizen participation. At the time of access, there are few months of activity as a group, although the majority come from previous groups originating after the neighborhood decentralization of the 15M

movement in Madrid. During the observation there was an active group of 10-12 people, mostly women 40-45 years old.

- Espacio Vecinal Arganzuela (EVA): (<http://bit.ly/EVArganzuela>) is a group of people and organized collectives trying to obtain a handover, on behalf of the City Council, from the ‘Antiguo Mercado de Frutas y Verduras de Madrid’, to citizen self-management, with the purpose of social and cultural development through direct participation from the citizenry. During the observation there is a wide group, with a strong presence on social media, very fluid, for which it is difficult to quantify given the number of people present at the meetings tends to quite vary, more than 30 at most and 6 or 7 at the lowest influx. For this one must add the highest participation through channels of digital communication, for which the profiles are varied. The middle age is about 35 years, although the band ranges from 25 to 78 years.

b) From EVA, one has the opportunity to access other areas of interest, which is possible thanks to the qualitative approaches that permit a flexible and interactive design in which the phases of research are continually influence others in the process of continuous character in which the development of each phase influences and modifies the others (Rodríguez, Gil & García, 1996). The interest in these two new areas resides in two different aspects: of the areas answered the other criteria that guided the intentional selection, with the addition of being a medium of communitive communication. The other area of participation did not answer these criteria, because it was promoted from the Administration; however, it was of interest as a contrasting case and as a response from the Ayuntamiento and the Junta de Distrito to EVA’s demands. For this reason, the exhibition of results makes reference to the general ways the three citizen spaces completed all the criteria, unless it makes reference explicitly to this final institutional space.

The cases of access derived from the previous case were:

- Radio Arganzuela (RA): (<http://bit.ly/tRadAr>) after from the presentation of the project in an EVA assembly and an appeal by e-mail, different interested people were trained for this project of a creation of a free radio in the neighborhood. It is an incipient process during the observation, that is communicated fundamentally through e-mail and, after the first workshops on radio training, only carried out in in-person meetings in sporadic form. Its composition is fluid as well, and is not consolidated during the research.

- Proceso Institucional Mercado Legazpi (ML): (the internet could not find this operative) was developed by the Government of Madrid through a group of architects that did the work of facilitators during the months of Abril to July of 2016, with the objective to declare a “co-creation and co-management” over the future of the Market, although in practice it is a process of consultation and deliberation non-binding over the rehabilitation project that the Government has previously planned. The number of people was reduced throughout the sessions.

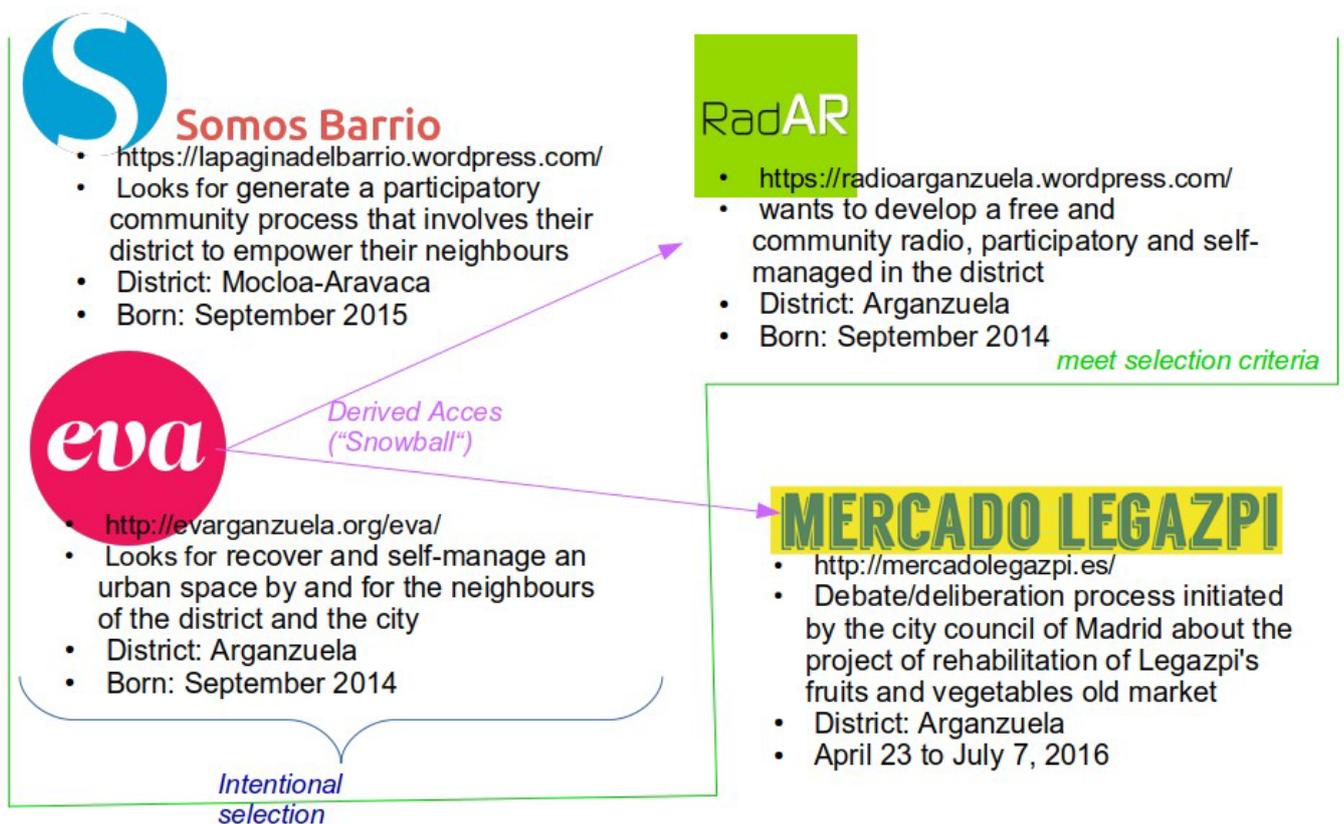


Figure 1: Case studies grouped in relation to the selection process (own elaboration)

The field work (<http://bit.ly/GraficoTCyDPs>) developed from September 2015 to April 2017 includes the vagrancy, selection, access, and exit of the field, but the thick of the participant

observation was carried out between December 2015 and July 2016, collected in the field diary.

Additionally, it includes 29 interviews from 30 key informants (one of them doubled) selected in an intentional manner to reflect different forms of being, behaving, understanding, and showing participation. For that, men and women, people of different ages, and people with different levels of power and influence in the group have been selected. The distributions vary according to the characteristics of each area, and in some of the interviews different areas were explored. In total, 15 men and 15 women between ages 25-78 were interviewed.

Analysis

The process of analysis is also a flexible process and continued in ethnographic investigations (Goetz & LeCompte, 1988), being the reduction of data through the codification and categorization of representative work (Rodríguez et al., 1996). For the process of analysis, they used computing foundation through Atlas-ti 7, for which they prepared the material in independent documents of each daily entry of the field (which in many cases includes embedded documents prepared by the appropriate spaces) and the transcription of

every interview, with a total of 136 documents. The first reduction of data was to exclude those that weren't suitable to direct observations in the spaces or to the interview transcriptions, leaving a total of 109 analyzed documents. After this they completed two processes of consecutive casting. The first was assisted digitally by the documents provided by Atlas-ti for each category of analysis. From these documents the second casting was formed through the selection of explanatory quotes for each part of the final definitions of the categories of those that had arrived.

These categories were also constructed throughout the investigation, in dialogue with the theoretical frame, the collection of data and analysis, in a process that we can divide in three times: the initial moment in which the categories simply formed as ideas, but without a closed definition; an intermediate moment, in which thoughtful work was done that relates the categories with theoretical blocks but thought of as parts of an integrated whole; and a final moment in which a definition was formed that tried to list the categories definitively and in an extended manner as created in Table 1.

Table 1- Analytical categories and their definitions according to Melero (2018)

Category	Definition
Diversity	Makes reference to a complex version of reality, which is complex because of its diversity, heterogeneity. The heterogeneity is therefore the norm and due to this is assessed positively. Educationally we speak of heterogeneity as an educational principles
Change	Makes reference to the dynamic vision of reality. Therefore, the norm is that reality is in a constant state of change, which is a value in and of itself, and just as much as flexibility, the ability to adapt. Educationally, change is just as much the end as the driving force/educational principles
Communication	Makes reference to a relational vision of reality. It is understood that reality is a network of connections and relations, that are valued and promoted, and where the manner of relating to one another gains much importance. Reality is interdisciplinary and therefore shared meanings and feelings are created and expressed. Dialogue becomes a fundamental tool for this common setting and the coordination of actions between different agents, meaning that communication strategies should be set in motion that allow that decisions are taken through the exchange of reasoned arguments in positions of equality and in search of consensus. Educationally we would talk about education as communication and of dialogue as the educational principles
Criticism (thoughts/attitude)	“Criticism” refers to the questioning of situations of inequality and the relationships of power. When we talk about “critical thinking” we refer to the reflections, debates and ideas that are shared in this direction, while “critical behavior” refers to the conduct and actions that look to create horizontal relationships based on free association. On an educational level we would talk about the democratic learning through the questioning and cessation with what’s already in place.
Participation	To participate is to influence public life, to form part of the decisions that influence us as members of a group or community just as the actions from which they are derived. To seek out participation is to try to collectively make decisions among the greatest number of possible agents and to bring them about in a cooperative manner. Thus, participating has an active and collective component. Therefore, on an educational level we would talk about civic learning as an experiential and practical act from the action and collaboration.
• Levels of Participation.	In relation to the category “Participation”. Traditionally the levels refer to a classification of participation that is arranged according to the ability to influence the citizenry when making decisions. We identify four levels where the two first ones relate to information, that being crucial to decision-making are not sufficient nor do they guarantee the ability to influence, while the two second ones already take the ability to influence into account in the final decision. 1. Information: Communication is unilateral; the citizenry is a mere recipient of information. 2. Consultation: Communication is bilateral; the citizenry is heard but has no ability to influence the decision. 3. Implication: The citizenry has a limited ability to influence the decision, it can debate and decide some aspects, but it doesn’t have full control and many decisions that determine the final result are outside their influence. 4.: Self-Management: The citizenry has full influence over the decisions that it takes.
Transformation (objective / process)	The citizen’s actions pursue social and/or personal change, understood as objective and as a creative process for a better world. Due to this, the directionality or finality of the change that is pursued is social justice. On an educational level we’d talk about civic learning as creation and experimentation.
Educational Holism	Refers to a great, complex vision of education. A holistic educational vision considers intentional and/or incidental educational results, of planned and/or informal educational actions and therefore can and do occur throughout one’s whole life, in different places and moments and through different media and channels.

Results

The results are explained in relation to three fundamental, derived dimensions of the complete analysis based on the theoretical frame and the construction of the data: diversity and complexity, a relational vision of reality and educational practices.

a) Complexity and Interdisciplinarity

The first aspect to point out is that we find ourselves with a complex versión of reality: the people that participate in these spaces, en different amounts, know clearly that the social world is complex:

And later as a being, I like to use the word "being", it's super complex, if a human being is already complex, all these types of things such as EVA, 15M and loads of stories are super, super, super, complex [...] I would define them as a complex being that, or I would say that they are like an air duct with eyes with a ton of pipes and from each pipe comes a stream of air of a different color, and then depending on how the air comes out perhaps that day a certain color comes, such as sky blue or hope green, or another day it's just black, black, black that you don't see anything but black." Interview: 26 ♂(EVA).

We see in the previous quote that this complexity relates with diversity through the "different streams of air" and with the changes that are produced "that day". These two elements, diversity and change, are related on many occasions and jointly describe the complexity of the world. The social world is complex because it is in continual change and because it is composed of diverse people, it is heterogeneous and dynamic.

This complexity entails the existence of different tensions, but it can be said that these tensions are not resolved by eliminating complexity, but rather confronting it in every moment it arises. Diversity and change are valued positively, so that they don't have to be renounced but rather empowered. We find in all the interviews this positive assessment of diversity and change:

The majority of people that first put together

Somos Barrio (We are Neighborhood), now, unfortunately, there's a larger group and not everyone comes with the same process. Interview:60 ♀(SB).

For this reason, given that the world is complex by its great diversity and its continual change, this diversity and dynamism is a positive fact, then the flexibility and openness are desirable qualities, as much to empower the greatest diversity possible as to take advantage of change in a favorable way.

Throughout field work this idea has been repeated by a vast number of agents. The meetings completed between the 28th and 30th of January, 2016, stick out from those that helped people from different spaces of participation; on the 28th EVA organized a type of group discussion in which people from Tabacalera, Esto es una Plaza and the Campo de la Cebada⁵, participated, and on the 30th a meeting of civic spaces organized by the brand new Red de Espacios Ciudadanos (REC), in which diverse spaces of participation and self-management from all of Spain participated⁶. During both days various people stressed this idea of the need for flexibility and openness:

"(Name♂) speaks about Campo de la Cebada in order to emphasize the topic of the open climate, the network has to be open and diverse, one must build between difference and diversity, all the time becoming more different but we can still work together" Journal: 30Jan2016(EVA).

"And keep in mind that the initial idea that everyone has is not the one with which they leave, but rather another, so that it's necessary to work with flexibility and openness, in order to get things done and so

⁵ Spaces of participation in the city of Madrid, more information can be found at: Tabacalera (<http://latabacalera.net/>), This is a Plaza (<http://estaesunaplaza.blogspot.com.es/>), "El campo de la Cebada" closed at the end of 2017, their website is suspended (<http://elcampodecebada.org/>)

⁶ There is more information at <http://www.espaciosciudadanos.org/la-red/> where there is also a video with the final common setting.

that they don't keep in words what they must try without fear, but with control" Journal:28Jan2016(EVA).

This implies, as was foreseen in the last quote, appreciating the idea of "trying" through action, valuing the ability to improvise and experiment as sources of individual and collective learning and, thus, of transformation:

"Because we always leave all the improvisation (laughs) if you realize it, when we do something, there's a margin there. And in the end everything turns out well, that is, and that is the good part of the ability to react, that is, to have the ability to react, to adjust to the circumstances in every moment and to reject any difficulty that we have, and that's good, because that helps us as people, it helps us as a whole and it helps with what's to come" Interview:38♀(EVA).

"There are projects that can already be started and that have that potential of making a neighborhood, which is what they're about, if what we want is to change the rules of the game, it has to be from a space where there is a certain type of lab, and nor do we know where we'll end up, that's the beauty of it as well, then lots of generosity so that the empowerment of others is there." Interview: 60 ♀(EVA|RadAr).

Besides the ability to adapt, of being prepared for change, and not just prepared, but rather actively seeking it out, allows us to be attentive in order to take advantage of opportunities that arise.

Moreover, having this dynamic conception of the world can also allow a vision of continuity at the same time as transformation; it connects in a certain way the past from which one can extract knowledge for the future that is pursued through the actions of the present. For example, in the presentation from the 30th of January it is noted that "REC lays out an open conversation that looks forward and also looks back where they recognized a tradition from generations past". Journal:30Ene2016(EVA). Another informant also says to understand EVA as a paradigm shift with the previous model of recognition

and proper protest of the neighborly associations, going with it from the protest to the proposal. But at the same time they assure that the idea of "neighborly space" is a form of paying homage to that tradition.

There is also some interest in drawing attention to and valuing the different roles and functions that are exercised and that are not always highlighted or are kept in mind for being different from what is typically classified as such:

They comment about the anecdote of a neighbor from the countryside that always calls when the activities that they do go above a level of annoyance, he doesn't come down for the meetings or anything, but you know that "if (*name♂*) calls you then you have to lower the volume" and through this anecdote we can talk about this type of role, that is typically not kept in mind and that can be important, self-imposed roles" Journal:28Jan2016(EVA).

Furthermore, during the whole observation there was a couple divided by categories that were especially important, this is "citizenry-institution". In the majority of observations developed in spaces, when some municipal representative is present, they warned of a polarization of positions and a centrality of the municipal figure that moved the discourse of the citizenry towards recognition and complaints. It became pertinent to emphasize the use of these categories and their consequences regarding the "elimination" of diversity and multiplicity. For example, this divisive vision generates speculative visions, so these spaces try to be diverse, pluralistic, of opposition, and representative of "one" institution that seems to perceive itself in a homogeneous manner.

"In some way, we build ourselves up as this active subject in the process, also so that the administration has an opponent, has a conversational partner, has a mentor, and that this mentor, if good, is the most diverse-rich-plural as possible" Interview: 46♀(SB).

b) Relational vision of reality: community, interdisciplinarity, and dialogue

A relational *visión* implies a communicative *visión* of reality, this means that there are various intertwined and interconnected elements that we can group into three big blocks: on one side, the practices and discussions focused on the relationships with others, among networks, the community, the group; on the other, that which is related to the collective construction of reality, the interdisciplinary creation of meaning; and lastly, communication as a form of coordination of collective actions, dialogue as a tool to make decisions.

There exists in these spaces a centrality of the relational that has different consequences; on one hand there is a continual insistence on creating networks, promoting connections and implicating the greatest number of agents possible in actions, that is, it's important to make the neighborhood and other agents known in order to connect and engage in group activities:

"Since we met up, we've opened what are the debates of presenting ourselves to the neighborhoods as a platform for which, people hear about us, they learn a little bit about what our objective is" Interview: 46♀(SB).

The centrality in the relational that gives great importance to the community does not mean, however, an elimination of the individual diversity, how one detaches from how they present themselves. The existing criticism towards actions that respond only to individual interests is not based on the nonexistence of those interests or their "hypophora" to some general interests, but rather it is a criticism of the lack of worry about the greater good, the lack of effort or ambition to combine personal interests of different people to craft them into collective interests. They mention therefore the idea of "balance" or connection between the individual and the community, to this connection responds the centrality of the relational and the interest in collective action:

"If it's a community, or rather, it is a community, but to me it's important also, to have in mind that everyone has an,

individual and everyone has their ideas and those do not have that either, for me it would be important to look for balance between the individual and the community and I believe that it can be done, but one must talk a lot" Interview:44 ♀(EVA|RadAr|ML).

Another fundamental aspect when discussing the relational and communicative *visión* of reality is the idea that the meanings with which we interpret reality are created in an interdisciplinary manner, that is to say, it is the communicative relationship itself which generates the frames of interpretation under which we explain and understand the world. One has been able to observe this process on different occasions during field work, some of which were intentional and others no, although there exists in observed spaces a clear conscience of the importance of transmitting ideas and creating "common feelings" in order to transform reality. There is an awareness that the struggle for equality and social justice, the struggle for social change, should also play in this reflective field. This has been another recurring idea in many conversations and observations throughout the study. In fact, Somos Barrio organized some debates and themed meetings about "culture and participation" in which they transmitted this notion of transforming the "common feeling" in order to transform the world. Specifically, it was the speaker Montserrat Galceran (philosopher and city councilor at the time) who insisted about this topic. Below are some of his gathered ideas in his journal during his intervention:

The importance of the cultural field, since it's a field in which social conflicts reverberate, because exactly in the cultural field the imaginary collective is formed by that which is not a trivial field, makes reference to the cultural war even though they don't come to use this term. [...] Here they create the meanings that give a common sentiment, that is to say that previous sentiments, the prejudices and assumptions that are constructed in common discourse and that are taken as universal truths (essentialization), until the point that when someone questions some of these premises they are considered not in their right mind (the example of the

controversy of the wardrobe of the Christmas magi is mentioned). This produces a shock when another person arrives that has different common sentiments and who questions the establishments, since they believe the common sentiment to be universal, dominant and unquestionable, and it's very hard to demonstrate partiality of this partial common sentiment that is shown as universal. This comes to produce a shock that makes almost impossible the understanding between parts. [...] Therefore all the creation of cultural meaning is a field of basic struggle, in the sense that when creating culture one questions the limits of the dominating discourse or it is reinforced" Journal:9Jun2016(SB).

The last element of the communicative aspect in these spaces is dialogue, which is the key tool for collective action. It gives a clear relationship between decision-making and dialogue; therefore, when one asks about the functioning of these spaces, one is always referencing the meeting as a place of coordination through debate, argumentation and deliberation. Conventions and meetings are the place to express ideas and interests to reach agreements and a consensus about the actions to carry out, consensuses that are laid out as a process and not so much as something closed and finalized.

"Everything is based on consensus, you know, based on consensus and base don agreement, [...] we come to agree on everything, are subject to consensus, we plan out everything, everything is debated and that's it and we reach a consensus and we reach an agreement on all the things that we must do" Interview:77♂(EVA|ML).

c) Learning and civic practice

The implication of those social transformation processes such as those described is in and of itself a learning experience and this in turn is a tool for social transformation (understood as comprehension and an interdisciplinarity construction of reality; Mata, 2011). It turns out interesting to look over the experience of incorporation of the people in these spaces, which in reality is not far from our experience during field work.

It begins by listening and observing with the objective of beginning to incorporate the group meaning and personal abilities that will allow greater participation in the group:

"I put myself in EVA, I go in September, not in October like two years ago, I'm going to Intermediate and well I see, all that energy and all those ideas, first, I didn't know how to participate in a convention, nor how to talk, you know? I was there until I started speaking but I spent two or three months like that, just listening" Interview:36♂(EVA|ML).

The process is diverse and unique for every person, it fluctuates in a different way between passive participation in activities and/or meetings and active participation in activities and meetings. But for many people the way of going about socializing and learning to participate in these groups in order to modify that initial position of observation, is through action:

"At the beginning, with all that I talk (laughs), it was just listen, listen, listen, and watch a little bit, learn of the people that spent lots of time in the neighborhood, who I knew. The things that they knew of the neighborhood really called my attention, the information with which they managed, the ease and precision with which they managed, all of that at the beginning perplexed me because I, I didn't know if, if I would be able to contribute anything. But I come here to watch, and if something has to be done, I don't know, if some activity or thing has to be prepared well I'll prepare it, then on that side of action, for me it was easier, easier to enter" Interview: 42♀(EVA).

In addition, this process of socialization and learning allowed the resolution of a detected problem for completed collective action from horizontality and equity, a problem that is related with the previous level of experience in participative processes and in this type of space. In other words, learning allows the elimination of differences created by previous, different participative competitions:

"Well then, at a later level, I think that there is another type of segregation, which has to do more with the experience inside these movements, then people without much

experience are embarrassed, whether man or woman” Interview: 60♀(EVA|RadAr).

The idea of experimentation is related with learning through the practice setting of new ideas and experiences to later reflect on the good and bad decisions in order to draw conclusions.

“For me there have been lots of errors that we’ve committed, but it’s what I tell you, it’s that we have to err many times in order to gain experience and knowledge, look, the other time that this happened to us, well now we have to do this other thing because we don’t want it to happen to us again, one learns from everything” Interview: 38♀(EVA)

This idea of reflecting on action and experience, this idea of praxis, is also shared by the spaces. So that, besides spontaneous or unplanned moments like that which was just exemplified, the reflection of one’s actions plans and organizes. During my whole stay in the field, EVA, which was a big group and thus could not complete deep, shared reflections in informal moments which involved most of the members (a thing that happened in smaller spaces), I periodically organized meetings, called “metaphysics”, on reflection about actions, experiences and conflicts, about their own practice in the end. The meetings of “the metaphysics” tended to last a whole day and even a weekend and their main objective was group reflection about themselves. In fact, from one day to the next when some topic arose in a meeting but required a deep reflection that would take up the whole meeting, it was postponed to address it in these moments of “metaphysics”. These gatherings were thought of rather highly, as expressed by this member. In addition, similar organized gatherings of reflection were completed in other civic spaces every now and then:

I think that it is a moment which is rich, very rich, and besides I believe that it is in the only place, despite everything, where they are talking, they’re saying things from deep inside, very personal, that’s something that doesn’t happen everywhere, eh? ” Interview: 62♀(EVA).

“In Esto es una Plaza one time a year they get together to make conferences of reflection in order to decide and think about what they want, including the purpose and going in depth, helping that throughout the rest of the year the small decisions that are made agree with that purpose” Journal: 28Ene2016(EVA).

In relation to reflection over action, it must be said that in an institutional setting, the Market Process (ML), never occurred at any time. Spaces of debate and reflection were missing, and so was learning, that is to say, a lack of reflection about what’s happened to, through criticism, be able to generate learning. In fact, this idea of learning that was indeed an exculpatory discourse of the possible errors in this type of institutional processes, inevitably brought about the idea and complaint of “evaluation”, understood as exercise of reflection and assessment, of the process itself, evaluation that however was not completed.

Although the processes of learning and incorporation to these spaces are diverse and unique for each person, there is a certain pattern that appears more frequently. The first thing is that learning involves changing from more passive attitudes to more active ones, and differentiates between these attitudes in the spaces for debate and decision making (such as meetings) and in moments with more action (such as activities). Thus, a more active attitude is usually developed first in the activities, that is, it seems easier to fully incorporate into action and gives more “objection” to do it in the debates and decision making. Although this also depends on previous experience.

Another aspect that is rather interesting has to do with the possibility of practical exercise in different roles and functions in the various actions and activities carried out by the spaces, which implies a practical learning of these roles and functions. In addition, this practical exercise is done with the support of the rest of people who also participate, which implies a mutual support that gives

confidence and security as well as allows and eases such practical experimentation.

“but don’t tell me how I have to do it, that is, help me or guide me, you can give me advice, but allow me to fix them because I believe thie beauty of EVA is that lots of people are losing their fears, including having to organize things, which is good, that is the empowerment, that is where I see empowerment and the power of EVA, the learning” Interview: 44♀(EVA|RadAr|ML).

Experimentation by itself is also a beginning of learning in these spaces; the idea of experimenting through experiences, of being able to try, and to learn from the good and bad decisions, involves understanding the action itself as learning. In fact, this idea relates to the three defined elements in the model (Melero, 2018): the practical experience implies active participation, experimentation is the implementation of prefigurative proposals aimed at social transformation, and the evaluation of good and bad decisions involves applying the critical ability about the results of the developed experiment.

Another aspect that must be highlighted is the importance of critical thinking as an enabler of creativity. Becoming accustomed to questioning the "common sentiments", trying to look beyond the established frameworks of analysis and interpretation, not only allows the discovery of more just and democratic ways of acting and questioning the mechanisms of oppression and inequality, but it also implies a continuous learning because it means creating new ways of looking at the world.

Finally, the idea of conflict must be highlighted. This appears inevitable in spaces that look for participation and the inclusion of diversity, since this implies a conflict between different points of view. Having said this, if they have built safe spaces for sincere and open debate, under the premises of caring for one another and the search for understanding by active and creative listening, the conflict is not a problem but rather a learning opportunity. On the contrary, if they have not created these spaces, the conflict will not

cease to exist, but rather its results will only get worse. As much because it tends to produce the abandonment of some of the people in conflict, as because it impedes the learning associated with the confrontation and resolution of the conflict itself.

A certain attempt to establish peace and not stories, such and such, and fuck, it’s that I think that it’s not that, that is, because that is to understand the conflict as a problem and, another thing is how to verbalize the conflict and how it is treated, et cetera, et cetera, which is different, is it not? But screwing the conflict... it is at the basis of the movement” Interview: 46♂(EVA).

Educational proposals

As was indicated at the beginning of this document, the purpose of the study was to formulate educational proposals from an intercultural perspective through the analysis of what occurred in spaces of civic participation in the city of Madrid. This we will realize in this final section.

The importance of these contributions is derived from our responsibility as investigators and as shapers of social educators, teachers, professors, and other professionals of pedagogy. Our aspiration is that the results of the investigation contribute to improving the training of these professionals which refers to the exercise and practice of citizenry in diverse social contexts. For that, a series of very specifically oriented proposals is formulated, aimed at two different audiences (Melero, 2018):

- a) the educative proposals for education professionals, understood as any person dedicated to the exercise of educative action;
- b) the thought-out proposals to improve the educative action in the proper civic spaces.

a) Educative proposals for education professionals

- *Contextualize your action.*

Civic learning is part of the practice of the

same, with which any established educative proposal should have in mind the concrete reality in which it is carried out, and be connected with it.

- *Remember that you work as an individual, a group, and a community.*

Personal changes produce changes in the learning group, but at the same time, changes in the group produce changes in its members. Civic practice is a product of collective action, for which cooperative and group work is essential for its learning.

- *Work as a network and collaborate.*

Involve the connection with other committed education professionals with civic learning, and with critical, participative, and transforming civic spaces.

- *Democratize your educative space.*

Think about increasing the involvement of decision making for all the possible agents and generating horizontal relationships.

- *Construct safe spaces. Practice ethics of care.*

A fundamental aspect to generate spaces for democratic participation is that the people feel safe in said spaces; that they can express their ideas and feelings without fear of being judged, to disagree without fear of being rejected, a concern shared by all people.

- *Make room for dialogue.*

Think about developing enough capacity to learn and express ideas; reason them out; and find, select, evaluate, and utilize information, as an active listener and with empathy.

- *Make visible diversity and heterogeneity.*

Try to make diversity visible not as a series of statistical differences of each individual, but rather as a unique conjunction of continuously changing situations and construction.

- *Analyze reality from positions of privilege and oppression.*

When facing nearby situations of inequality, try to think of alternatives and try to carry them out, as well as avoid them in manner that forms a developing critical attitude.

- *Pose transforming objectives.*

The learning processes should pass through the posing of transforming objectives, always in relation to the purpose of democratic deepening and increasing social justice, thus, to increase participation and equality.

- *Split from direct action and reflect on it.*

Civic learning is a practice, thus, it is a continuous action and reflection. For that, civic exercise learning only can be executed through concrete actions over which we then reflect on, and over reflections that bring concrete action to us.

- *Foster and practice experimentation and improvisation.*

The process of democratic deepening is a way to build, so you have to be able to rehearse and try different ideas and tracks.

- *Utilize mistakes and conflicts.*

Through mistakes we learn just as much as what does not work as what does, and through conflicts colliding dialogically in a safe space and below the democratic prism of equality and freedom, we learn new ways of operating and deepening civic exercise.

b) Educative proposals for participants in civic spaces

- *Be conscious of your power as an educator: the transformation as learning.*

Teach about and through proper civic practice, in a way that other people not actively involved can have models and experiences of learning about critical, participative, and transforming civic practice.

- Clarify the purpose of the transformation/learning.

More than the immediate objectives and particularities of each space, critical, participative, and transforming civic practice allow the development of a participative democracy and an increase in equality.

- Take conscience of the necessity for learning and how it is produced.

Experience is achieved through active practice; learning is experiential. If it is attempted that all people can have practical experiences in different functions and roles, and in different actions, learning will be fostered.

- Give value to improvisation and mistakes.

Critical, participative, and transforming civic practice is in continuous construction and also requires finding new tracks, so you need to experiment with new ideas and proposals. So that the experimentation serves as learning, we should understand that the errors committed are as valuable as the successes.

- Systemize the reflection and value the criticism.

Learning is produced by practice, by integration of action, and reflection. It is important to periodically carry out actions of self-reflection, centered the proper practice.

- Conflict as learning. Learn to care.

Conflict is inevitable in any group that tries to be diverse, inclusive, and also horizontal and democratic. So, conflict is simply a sign of the encounter of different points of view. For that it is an opportunity to create a understanding between those different points of view.

- Practice Consensus as a Process

In order to generate consensus, it is necessary to have a pretension of

collective building, not of manipulation or imposing one's personal ideas. The pretension of including all distinct points of view should always be present.

- Involve Educators and Avoiding Experts

Spaces of civic participation should incorporate educators, so they can take advantage of their backgrounds for the implementation of these and other learning proposals; not as "experts" of education, but as another participant, like the rest, that contributes his experience and knowledge to the common good.

As we have pointed out at the beginning of the article, the aim of the study has been to analyze what is happening at the citizen participatory spaces in order to stablish educational proposals to promote active citizenship learning from an intercultural approach. This last paragraph has exposed those proposals for teachers and educators, in general.

Last but not least are the recommendations to whom we dedicate ourselves, from the university, to the formation of social educators and teachers or professors of different educational levels. Among others, we highlight the need to assume the complexity of the social world and the recognition of human diversity as normal; to form democratic theory and schools of critical thought; to literate informationally; to practice reflection and deliberation; to practice dynamics in order to take action in diverse groups; to use dialogue as an instrument in decision making; to appeal to participative techniques and methodologies; to apply techniques and resources in order to face conflict, and to form from the experiential and experimental.

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