

THEORETICAL BASES OF LOCAL AGENDA 21 AND ITS APPLICATION IN CASTILE-LA MANCHA (SPAIN)

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I. INTRODUCTION TO THE IDEA OF SUSTAINABILITY IN URBAN AREAS

The philosophy of sustainability can be considered as a new cultural revolution that, from the last decade of the 20th Century, has allowed man to reach a idea of respect that is basic for the survival of the planet. It is derived from the concept of Sustainable Development that appeared in the middle of the 1980s, although the idea was implied in the first international meeting that the United Nations organized to discuss the environmental problem, the celebrated *Conference of Stockholm* of 1972 with the motto: «The Man and his Means: bases for a better life» and in which they affirmed that the defence and improvement of the environment for the present generation and future ones had become urgent for humanity.

In the territorial section, the urban areas, characterized to present one varied problematic link not only to different types of pollution (atmospheric, acoustic, etc.) but also to the difficulties of management, have been one of the scopes in which the application of sustainability has been declared more necessary. Immersed in the «environmental crisis» of which all the spaces of the planet are involved, since this is a global question, the urban areas have been objects of detailed attention for their contribution to the problematic complexity of the environmental one is more than proven. Imbalanced populations, North–South divisions, the diffusion and consolidation of the consumer society, technological developments, migration, the urbanization of the planet, the accelerated loss of biodiversity, the contamination of continental and marine waters, the air and the ground, deforestation, the lack of access to resources for a part of the global population or the increasing poverty of women (Novo and Lara, 1997: 212) mark the scene of the turn of the century, in which the cities are protagonists as much in the more developed areas of the planet as in the less developed ones.

II. THEORETICAL ASPECTS OF LOCAL AGENDA 21

In general, the *Local Agenda 21* is the commitment of the towns and cities with sustainable development, a universal program to make the progress with respect to the environment compatible which arose from a long process which was finalized in 1992 when almost two

hundred countries decided at The Earth Summit of Rio de Janeiro to sign a historical agreement, the *Program 21*. But to analyze its theoretical bases requires us to consider some institutional contributions of international character, to also deal with the contributions of the European Union and to thus be able to descend to the local scale, in relation to the municipalities of Castile-La Mancha.

Among the institutional contributions of international character we will begin with the Report *Our Common Future* (1987), also called *The Brudland Report*, made by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED). In this, for the first time, the concept of «sustainable development» is mentioned, defined as the «development that satisfies the necessities of the present generation without jeopardizing the capacity of future generations to satisfy its own necessities» (CMMAD, 1987: 10). But it would be the *Conference of the United Nations on Environment and Development (I Earth Summit)*, held in the Brazilian city of Rio de Janeiro in June 1992 under the motto «Environment and Development», which would be responsible for consolidating the theoretical arguments of sustainability. In *Rio'92*, as it is commonly called, the approval of the *Declaration of Rio* or *The Earth Letter* with 27 Principles assumed an advance of great relevance in generating a climate of consensus and collaboration that was applauded by all the state representatives present here. Among the agreements reached we also highlighted *Program 21*, also called *Plan of Action for century XXI*, as a planning instrument for the new century in the search for sustainable development by means of the coordination and cooperation that allows us to stop the effects of environmental degradation on a global scale. Today this has evolved, becoming an instrument available to all citizens in order to reach sustainability, whose global success can only be obtained through local success, due to the existing interrelation between the global processes and the local actions (Echevarria and Aguado, 2004: 71). To answer Chapter 28 called «Initiatives of the local authorities in support of the Program 21» whose purpose was to insist that the municipal governments work in the application of a Program 21 on a local scale starting an ample consultation with the citizen, Local Agenda 21 was created.

Within the European framework the publication in 1990 of *The Green Book on Urban Environment*, great transcendence in the analysis of environmental problems stands out, as well as *The Environmental Action Programme*, in particular *The Fifth (1992-2000)* whose motto is, precisely, *Towards Sustainability*, in which the theory of sustainability of Rio'92 is incorporated. With special attention towards the main environmental problems, some of them linked to urban environment such as the deterioration of this environment, the heritage and public places as a result of pollution, a strategy in environmental matter was created which managed to transform the model of growth of the Community, in order to promote the sustainable development. This program was followed by *The Sixth Environmental Action Programme (2000-2010)* also called *Environment 2010: the future is in our hands*, effective at the present moment. Given the difficulties in reaching sustainable development, in this program environmental priorities and objectives for the new century are established, emphasizing four high-priority scopes of action: tackling climate change, nature and biodiversity, environment and health, and sustainable use of natural resources and management of waste.

The European Sustainable Cities and Towns Campaign that is linked directly to the publication of *The Green Book on Urban Environment* (1990) and begins with the *I European Conference of Sustainable Cities* which was held in the Danish city of Aalborg (24-27 of

May of 1994), has special relevance. At this conference the key document of this campaign, *The Aalborg Charter* or *The Charter of the European Cities towards to the Sustainability*, was approved (<http://agenda.fempclm.com/carta.html>), an essential document in order to understand the future of the environment in the cities, which have a determining function in the process of change of the ways of life, the production, the consumption and the guidelines of distribution of space. This document includes three parts: 1. *Consensus Declaration: European Cities and Towns Towards Sustainability*; 2. *The Beginning of The European Sustainable Cities and Towns Campaign* in which the local administrations are invited simultaneously to participate in sustainability which at the same time eases the support to elaborate policies, compile and spread information about «good practices» and to formulate recommendations; and 3. *Engaging in The Local Agenda 21 processes: Local Action Plans Towards Sustainability*, which is especially important in order to understand the elaboration of the Local Agendas 21.

After Aalborg' 94 diverse international gatherings such as *Summits of Río+5* (New York, 1997), *Río+10* (Johannesburg, 2002) and *Río+15* (Jakarta, 2007) took place in which the slowness of the environmental advances were demonstrated, or the Conference *Habitat II* (Istanbul, 1996) where «code of good environmental practices» appeared. Within the UE *The European Sustainable Cities and Towns Campaign* had several meetings such as The II Conference held in Lisbon (1996) and in which *The Plan of Lisbon Action: of The Charter to the Action* was approved; The III Conference organized in Hannover (2000) in which *The Declaration of Hannover* was signed; The IV Conference held again in Aalborg (2004), also called *Aalborg+10*, and from that another excellent document emerged: *The Aalborg Commitments*; and the last one in Seville (2007), whose contributions are collected in *The Spirit of Seville*.

III. FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE: THE ELABORATION OF LOCAL AGENDA 21 IN CASTILLA-LA MANCHA

Finally, in the study of the theoretical bases of Local Agenda 21 we reach its application in Castile-La Mancha, and the work of the regional administration through *The Network of Sustainable Cities and Towns of Castile-La Mancha* (Environment Council and Rural, Regional Delegation of Castile-La Mancha) in which today 660 municipalities (more than 88% of the total of the regional population) are integrated (Table 1). This grouping is defined as «the set of local organizations which, being members of the Federation of Municipalities and Provinces of Castile-La Mancha have agreed or will agree to work together and coordinated in the implantation and development of their Local Agenda 21» (<http://agenda.fempclm.com>). Its specific objectives are «facilitating and promoting the cooperation of the Local Organizations of Castile-La Mancha, which each other, and with other public administrations and private organizations not only on an autonomous scope, but also on a national, European and international one, to obtain a complete sustainable development of the cities and towns of Castile-La Mancha» (<http://agenda.fempclm.com>), the reason for which we considered their work fundamental in facilitating the implantation of Local Agenda 21.

Table 1
MUNICIPALITIES AND POPULATION INCLUDED IN THE NETWORK OF SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND TOWNS OF CASTILE-LA MANCHA BY PROVINCES (2008)

	Municipalities in The Network	Total Municipalities	% in Total Population
CASTILE-LA MANCHA	660 + 5 Provincial Delegation (P.D.)	919	87,5 %
Albacete	83 + 1 P.D.	87	99,23
Ciudad Real	81 + 1 P.D.	102	95,70
Cuenca	224 + 1 P.D.	238	96,90
Guadalajara	172 + 1 P.D.	288	93,60
Toledo	100 + 1 P.D.	204	70,00

Source: The Network of Sustainable Cities and Towns of Castile-La Mancha. (Regional Delegation of Castile-La Mancha). Update to 31-12-08. Population I.N.E. (2007)

Almost three quarters of the municipalities of Castile-La Mancha (72%) make up *The Regional Network of Sustainable Cities and Towns*, but above all the total number of people (88% of the total), who make up the denominated «inhabitants in process towards the sustainability» according to what The Network calls then is high. All the municipalities have signed the Marco Document: «Pact Sustainable Municipality», that must be approved by all authorities, assuming that it fills the requirements of *The Aalborg Charter* and *The Aalborg Commitments*, assuring that «all their policies are specified by sustainability» (RED, 2008: 8). Following *The Practical Guide for the Implantation and Development of the Local Agendas 21* (<http://agenda.fempclm.com>), the Network itself is elevated as «the suitable frame of reference for the development of the Local Agendas 21» in the cities and towns of this region that therefore consider it necessary (integrated in the Network), marking therefore the movement of the theory to practice, of theoretical expositions in environmental matter to the elaboration of the Diagnoses of Sustainability, the Plans of Action and the Plans of Pursuit, phases of the elaboration of Local Agenda 21.

The number of municipalities that are following the Local Action Plan is particularly significant as a total of 54 at that moment (or 8.7 % of the total number of municipalities in the Network) which a third of the population of the Network (31.4 %), is a considerable demographic volume. The investments made (Table 3), exclusively considering the direct investment in the processes of Agenda, come to more than four million euros, of which the contribution of the regional administration has been 44.45%, and that of the local administrations, mainly from the Provincial Delegations, 55.55%, during the period 2002-2007.

Table 2
THE STATE OF THE LOCAL AGENDA 21 IN THE MUNICIPALITIES OF CASTILE-LA MANCHA

THE STAGE OF PROCESS	N° MUN	% TOTAL NETWORK	POPULATION Hb.	% TOTAL NETWORK
LOCAL ACTION PLAN IN EXECUTION	54	8,70 %	537.559	31,40
FINALIZED LOCAL ACTION PLAN	66	10,70	85.393	5,00
LOCAL ACTION PLAN IN ELABORATION	84	13,60	397.531	23,20
MUNICIPAL DIAGNOSE IN ELABORATION	319	51,50	498.3952	29,10
PROCESS INITIATE	50	8,10	73.856	4,30
They have only signed Marco Document	46	7,40	120.675	7,00
TOTAL	619	100,00	1.713.409	100,00

Source: The Network of Sustainable Cities and Towns of Castile-La Mancha (2008)

Table 3
THE INVESTMENTS MADE IN THE LOCAL AGENDA 21 IN CASTILE-LA MANCHA

PROVINCE	TOTAL INVESTMENT €	% CONTRIBUTION REGIONAL DELEGATION	% CONTRIBUTION PROVINCIAL DELEGATION	PERIOD
ALBACETE	922.319,30	49,00	51,00	2002-2007
CIUDAD REAL	808.540,00	46,40	55,40	2004-2007
CUENCA	658.560,00	55,56	44,44	2004-2007
GUADALAJARA	977.921,54	34,80	65,20	2002-2007
TOLEDO	824.619,65	40,00	60,00*	2004-2007
TOTAL NETWORK	4.191.960,40	44,45	55, 55	2002-2007

Source: The Network of Sustainable Cities and Towns of Castile-La Mancha (2008)

IV. CONCLUSION

Local Agenda 21 is considered to be a planning instrument designed to make sustainable local development effective, serving the municipal management that grants special relevance to public participation to find out what the main environmental problems detected by the

population are and the possible causes of these problems, as well as the necessities and interests of the citizens. As well, it allows the coordination of several elements such as political commitment, the development of specific strategic lines, the definition of integral policies, and the intensification of municipal relations. The assessment in Castile-La Mancha is very positive considering that the process towards sustainability has begun with certain delay in comparison with other Spanish regions, and within the region not all the provinces have started at the same time: Albacete in 2002, Guadalajara in 2003, and Ciudad Real, Cuenca and Toledo in 2004. The municipalities that are taking part in the Local Action Plan are numerous, although it is still too soon to discover their application and the concrete results in the diverse urban nuclei, a question that we will approach in our next studies.

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