



E S T U D I S

IDENTITY AND SENSE AS A BASIS OF A NEW CITIZENSHIP PARTICIPATION

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ABSTRACT

THE HISTORY OF CONTEMPORARY SOCIETIES CAN BE CONSIDERED AS THAT OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS. MANY AUTHORS HAVE ARGUED, SINCE THE BEGINNING OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, THAT EACH GENERATION OF CITIZEN RIGHTS IS ACCOMPANIED BY A SET OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS WHICH ARE ARTICULATED THROUGH CITIZENS ASSOCIATIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS WHICH CLAIM WHAT THEY CONSIDER TO BE CITIZENS' RIGHTS AT THAT MOMENT. BY ANALYSING A PARTICULAR NEIGHBOURS' ASSOCIATION WE STUDY CITIZENS' MOBILIZATIONS TO DEFEND THEIR QUALITY OF LIFE, TERRITORY AND HERITAGE.

KEYWORDS:

CITIZENSHIP, ASSOCIACIONISM, SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

INTRODUCTION

Citizenship implies a set of legal rules which give a number of political, civil and social rights to those who obtain it, either by birth or by acquisition at a later date. Citizenship is given by the State, but citizens, who share a set of values and behaviour rules, are those who make it real. Citizenship has acquired a new content and sense during the 20th century: the social one. Nowadays, being a citizen implies having access to education, health, social services, work, insurance and, maybe most importantly, being part of those who work in the process of achieving these rights... (Petrus, 2003:59). In this sense, Alguacil, (2002) highlights the new perspectives in citizenship underlining, among them, a fourth generation of rights¹ which appeared in the last two decades of the 20th century: the right to heritage, cultural diversity, historical heritage, economic heritage and to a society without violence. Given the deterioration social and economic rights have undergone since

the Welfare state was questioned and new proposals like the universalization of citizenship minimum income were incorporated, a permanent defence of social and economic rights should also be added to these new rights.

None of the citizenship rights is guaranteed without the others. Each generation of rights cannot be understood or developed by itself as there is a network of influences between them. Citizens can only achieve quality of life and human dignity if synergies between all the rights are taken into account.

The origin of these new citizenship rights is linked to new social mobilisations caused by numerous social factors. These new social movements are characterised by their complexity, diversity, permeability and, especially, action, that is to say, that citizenship is put into practice. As confirmed by A. Ariño (dir.) the civil society expresses maturity of a sense of citizenship² which intends to build a universal welfare state. Moreover, a radical interpreta-

¹ These are called "public goods" or "republican rights" depending on the author.

² Rafael Cruz (2000) stresses that like any other collective identity, citizenship does not always exist and can not be considered as established. It is created and expressed around conflict, when governors and governees interact with the aim of mutually influencing their share of power. Citizenship rights are not a theory or a fixed contracted formula, but a part of a relationship and social process which interrelates governors and governees expected horizons and practices. Citizenship interrelates two parts and it can not exist without any of them.

tion of citizenship would need temperamental and determined people (individualisation) who are part of solid networks, watchful of the bureaucratic and formal participation systems and capable of carrying out their own new initiatives (2001:421).

The associative boom of this last 20 years in the entire planet is a good indicator of these new ways of participating and conceiving citizenship. However, to deeply understand this phenomenon some specific examples should be analysed. The city of Valencia, in Spain, has become an excellent place to develop fieldwork as many different types of associative participation showing this new way of conceiving citizenship, are present. Later in the paper, the analysis done of a particular association will be put forward.

This diversity is the cause and the consequence of the great variety of associations³ which boomed in the 1990's and continue developing at present. However, special attention should be given to a new type of associations, which did practically not exist in Spain until the 1980's, and which are specifically dedicated to very current issues, associations which in the Valencian case, are integrated in *mobilizations of Patraix*. This paper will focus on a particular neighbours' association of the Patraix district. It is a paradigmatic case in which this new type of participation is taking place in three different ways at the same time and space. On one hand, as a neighbours' association it is part of the citizens' movements, however as an association defending the natural and urban environments under the quality of life principles and in front of the dangers that "risk society" presents it should also be considered an ecological movement. Finally, it is also part of the conservational movement defending cultural goods, natural spaces and even territory.

This paper explores, through the case of a specific neighbours' association, how citizens' reasons and conceptions (cultural dimension) are transformed by these news ways of participation. This particular

Patraix (Valencia) neighbours' association was chosen as it took part of the well-known *mobilizations of Patraix* and has also a long history. Founded in the seventies, though before it acted illegally as it could not be legally constituted, it has reappeared in the last decade as a part of the above mentioned new forms of participation and is presently very active. It carries out many actions, programs and activities; has numerous members ... To fulfil our aim, a number of members of this association have been interviewed and the Valencian media (Levante newspaper) has been followed during the last year.

FORMS OF ASSOCIATIVE PARTICIPATION

First of all, and before enumerating the different types of participation, this concept should be defined. What is understood here for participation is the process by which the citizens and the public powers collaborate in political issues concerning people's way of life as a group (Albert & Gadea, 2001). However, according to the mentioned authors, we should differentiate between civic, solidarity and associative⁴ participation, that is to say, that of citizens in the civic associations, from citizens' participation as individuals, understood as the right each person has to exercise its rights and which is regulated by the constitution. Moreover, the political dimension of associative participation should be also underlined. In Barthélemy's words, associative participation is understood as "the voluntary process by which individuals mobilise through a certain set group, which has had certain duration and acts in the public sphere" (2000:13). Therefore it has a political dimension as the space where it acts is the public one.

On the other hand, participation, as De la Torre conceives it, also has an identitarian dimension, as a way of personal and group identification that links collective presence objectives to the current set of values and contributes to consolidate the civic identity of society (2005:12)⁵. Perhaps the main idea on participation is that it gives sense and meaning to

³ Albert Rodrigo, M.(2006): "La explosión asociativa de los 90: causa y consecuencia del cambio social" en Revista *Quaderns d'Investigació Social*, Universitat de Valencia.

⁴ Civic, solidarity and associative participation are considered here as synonymous.

⁵ According to this same author, civic identity is built from the basis of a set of primary networks that generate co-operative, mutual aid, support and personal development pro-social behaviours. They pursue, at a second level of the organisational structure, social recognition, in two

the action that is to be made. Besides, as it has been mentioned, it gives identity, and thus, integration in society as a whole. A sense and meaning that is characterised by the demand to be able to exercise citizenship and be informed, heard and be part of public interest decisions. Summarizing, participation allows people to take part in society.

In the last two decades of the 20th Century, this diverse network of organisations boomed. They formed a plural and heterogeneous group of autonomous organisations focusing on general interest issues and, generally, supporting themselves on voluntary contributions. Late studies on associations underline their present explosive increase and their specialisation. In this sense, it would be necessary to differentiate the diverse types of associative participation that can be found. In line with my previous work⁶ we will differentiate the diverse types of participation by the group to which the actions are driven. In other words, according to the aim it has. Therefore, we will differentiate, among others, between those that, for example, work on the recovery of a protected species (ecological), those that fight to improve infrastructures in their district (civic defence) and those that have set as their task to recover a local dance which is characteristic of a certain town (heritage). All these associations belong to the associative universe that somehow participates in this new conception of citizenship that, as we will see, is part of the discourse and practices that defend identity and sense.

As a kind of conclusion, we can make a typology of associative participation, which would have three big categories: a) associations that existed before the last associative boom of the past two decades, basically dedicated to the sociability, sport, festivities, and culture. b) Associations that have mainly appeared in the last two decades, which try to in-

fluence and change the society. They are basically ecological, civic defence associations (citizens' and human rights, against racism rights) and associations asking for international solidarity (humanitarian aid, development...). c) associations focusing on the basic social needs, which are part of the "welfare society" in which we live (giving social services, community development..).

As it has been mentioned, the association we are studying develops up to three different types of participation, a structure similar to organisations belonging to the *Patraix mobilisations*. This diversification of focuses contrasts with the specialisation of functions that associations presently have. These correspond to the principles generally found in the citizens, ecological and conservationist movements. The principles of the mentioned movements will be described and analysed in the following paragraphs so they can be studied later through the mentioned association.

Citizens' protests have expanded through out the entire world since the times of the Wooblies, pioneers in organising worker's trade unions, those of the Rosa Park, black people who refused to sit at the end of the bus, and many others which have come afterwards. In Spain, citizens' movements began within neighbours' associations. In the late sixties and early seventies with a limited association right (Law of Associations of 1964) citizens started to form associations from which they tried to intervene in public management. In those days, there were not many of them, but those associations that did exist had a great summoning capacity. These were essentially catholic groups, organisations (HOAC, JOC...) and parishes in which the first nuclei of people that considered the possibility of making the first collective claims stated to appear and, within them, the first neighbourhood commissions to fight

ways: a) the identification of groups for different specific actions, inspired in universal principles or precise ones, and b) the mobilisation of specific social groups in places with public projection, either by traditional means or through new communication and information ones, as presently many calls to act in the public sphere come from virtual computer or mobile phone networks. The backbone of this process without the intention of a civic identity is both collective action and citizen's participation both in specific actions of groups or permanent actions of individuals, structured in various organisations which can talk with institutions on political decisions and offer a number of goods and services according to the efficiency objectives set by the market (2005:13-14).

⁶ For a rigorous classification of the diverse kinds of associative participation in L'Horta Sud (Valencia) please see Albert Rodrigo, M. (2004): *La eclosión asociativa en el tránsito hacia una nueva era. Un estudio del tercer sector en el ámbito comarcal de L'Horta Sud (Valencia)*. Universitat de València.

against specific problems. These groups were basically located at the outskirts of big cities, and asked for inexistent or better services. Therefore, as the first attempts of improvements in Spain, coincide with the end of Franco's dictatorship, the struggles for neighbours' rights and for democracy were undertaken by the same organisations and this reinforced the power of citizens organisations at the end of Franco's regime and the beginning of the democratic transition.

The ecological movement responds to the need to redefine our relationship with the environment and combine standard of life and quality of life. Environmental problems have not much to do with the surroundings, but they are basically, in their source and in their consequences, social problems, belonging to human beings, to their history, their living conditions, their references on the world and its reality, their cultural, economic and political system (Beck, 1998b:89-90). As a response to the "risk society" a new sensitivity, a new conscience of danger has come out, and has been widely spread by the media that informs on the ecological disasters which have occurred throughout the planet. This is the context in which an associative network dedicated to protecting natural spaces and species appeared and in which the social movement with ecological concerns, developed. As explained by Castells (1998b), the ecological movement has a diverse composition and its expressions vary from country to country and between cultures. Therefore, a typology should include the both extremes: on the one end the defence of the own space (NIMB) and on the other the anti-cultural ecology.

The mobilisation of the local communities in defence of their own space, against undesired uses, is the form of ecological action which is developing quicker and perhaps, the one that links more rapidly people's immediate concerns of with environmental issues. This movement has been called "NOT IN MY

BACKYARD" and it appeared in 1978 in the United States as a movement against hazardous waste, in an incident in *Love Canal* about wastes in *Niagara Falls* (New York)⁷. With time, communities also got involved against building motorways or the excessive development of dangerous installations which were located near the places where they lived. Even though the movement is local, it is not necessarily locally based, since it usually stresses resident's rights to a better quality of life opposing enterprise interests and bureaucracies. Undoubtedly, life in society is a balance between diverse interests; that of residents, workers, consumers, commuters and other travellers.

On the other hand, mobilisations of residents in middle class suburbs were basically centred on preserving their "status quo" against undesired development. However, independently from class, all forms of protest aspire to establish control over the environment on behalf of the local community. Therefore, the local defence mobilisations are, in a wide sense, an important part of the ecological movement⁸ (Castells, 1998b). The source of such ecological associations has to be searched in the limited spaces and natural resources that the industry, consumption and opulence have left to other uses of space. They all have put in danger our existence and they are part of the indicators that have woken up the environmental conscience. Thus, when introducing environmental quality into their values, these associations criticise the logic based on the mere increase of the standard of living (Inglehart, 1998).

Finally, the principles of the conservationist movement are going to be studied. These principles are basically articulated by associations dedicated to the defence of cultural goods, natural spaces and even the territory. Modernity, with all the interrelated processes of acceleration, production and destruction, arose environmental and cultural social concern and in consequence conservationist movements started to appear

⁷ Lois Gibbs is the housewife who became famous for defending her son's health and her home's value in the place where the Citizens Clearinghouse for Hazardous Waste eventually established in 1981. According to Clearinghouse, in 1984 there were 600 local groups which were fighting against hazardous waste in the United States. Numbers increased up to 4687 in 1988.

⁸ The anti-cultural side of ecology has also fed some of the anti-cultures that arose from the sixties and seventies movements. For anti-culture it is meant the intention to live according to different rules, and up to some point opposed to those established by society and institutions, through alternative beliefs and principles.

(Ballart, 1997). The conscience of loss, originated by the modern world acceleration, provoked a retrospective look on the past leading to a heritage revival and one of the major sources of modern identity. Thus, according to Lowenthal (1998), past constitutes a basic instrument to build an identity.

Unprecedented changes can be observed in the main values of wide sectors of the population in the Valencian Community, as in other western world regions. In this sense, we should underline their orientation towards quality of life, maximisation of individual comfort and autonomy, cultural diversity, self-expression and recognition of the importance of aesthetics and a new look at the past, leading to a theoretically paradoxical revalorisation of traditions but understandable as means of searching new equilibriums in the global world (García Ferrando & Ariño, 2001:294). A number of associations have come out expressing a conscience of loss and the existence of a large risk: the treasure identified as tradition or heritage, the main objective of these associations, is at the verge of extinction. The main actors of this new conception are small collectives made up of civic minorities that are, directly or indirectly, very actively defending, restoring and protecting heritage.

Thus, these associations are becoming, together with specialists and experts, one of the main activators of heritage sites. Generally speaking, they are frequently small associations, with big social legitimacy in their actions and proposals. They are committed to recovery, restoration and conservation of local and/or regional heritage. They are part of a true modern social movement with a conservationist nature which focuses on heritage. They are a new social and political voice that expresses a new sensibility on heritage and a way of practicing and understanding citizenship from identity and sense.

Moreover, in the Valencian Community and especially in the city of Valencia, a set of organizations, which have called themselves *Salvem*⁹, have been created in these past years. They are a type of conser-

vationist movement which has developed in modern societies in order to defend, through their platform, a particular cultural site or natural space. They are a global structure which is dedicated to coordinate association, organisation and individual's actions but that allows them to preserve their autonomy and their daily way of functioning.

These platforms appeared with local community mobilizations against aggressions to their quality of life and the way they managed their territory. They are organized around a specific objective and therefore they have a transversal nature. These associations, heterogeneous organisations and individuals act in a coordinated way in only one social space, and they constitute the core of a network which can achieve aims that would be unreachable if each of the groups or individuals acted independently. Generally, they appear with a specific and circumstantial objective. When they achieve them or, with time, they tend to loose strength and eventually disappear¹⁰.

This kind of organizations precisely arose in neighbourhoods which had formerly been independent municipalities and which were forced to be annexed to the city of Valencia in the 19th century. Their inhabitants have not completely assimilated their condition of being citizen of the city. A clear example of this are the *Patraix mobilizations*, in which the association which will be analysing can be inserted. They pick up neighbours' and other social groups' discomfort and their claim for "their" territory and "their" heritage as incommensurable legacy to future generations.

NEIGHBOURS' ASSOCIATIONS NOWADAYS

Globalisation, understood as the contemporary social and historical framework, means both the universalisation of the particularities and the particularization of universalisation, in a way in which the local is included in the global (Hernández-Martí, 2001). This dialectic integration of the local and the global, the universal and the particular, homogeneity and heterogeneity, is crucial to understand

⁹ *Salvem* could be translated as we save. Only in the city of Valencia, nine organizations of this nature were born between 1995 and 2000.

¹⁰ In fact, such tendency is not new in Spain. It was born during the last years of Franco's dictatorship or the first democracy ones. They were popularly called "platajuntas" (Ariño & others, 1999:156).

the new ways of participation and citizenship from identity and sense.

As it was formerly stated, citizens' movements in Spain were basically integrated by neighbours' associations, which, in some cases, as the one we are treating here, acted clandestinely until their situation was legalised during the democratic transition.

"... The citizens association in Patraix, was legalised in 1978 together with the first neighbours' associations that linked the neighbourhood movement with fighting to visibly improve the quality of life in Valencian districts. First it was the houses, and schools, and then the Health, Social Centres, Cultural Centres... The overall intention was to improve the neighbours' quality of life and therefore improve their links with the different civil services..." (Neighbours' Association of Patraix 1) 1.

The first democratic elections took place once the 1978 Constitution could offer a new political framework. Many of the new political representatives had been members of the neighbours' associations, and left them to take up new roles, situation which provoked an important crisis in them (Omeñaca, 1977). On the other hand, democracy meant also many improvements people's life conditions and the regulation of citizens' participation. In general, neighbours' associations and, the example that we are focusing on proves it, after a period of intense activity in which neighbourhood claims went hand in hand with the struggle for democracy, these organisations experienced an important crisis.

"... It is true that citizens are still recruited for citizens' movements, when it did not exist in the political and democratic spheres, that swallowed many representatives, and in fact those sources were not regenerated and all leaders searched power and forgot their association duties..." (Neighbours' Association of Patraix 1) 2.

However, the citizens' movement carried on in its fight, changed its nature and meaning continuing

through time with different objectives and activities which focused on current issues.

"... Ten years ago, the neighbours' association of Patraix, suffers an important transformation since it did not only tend to claim new equipment to improve quality of life... the cultural component was also important since Patraix is far from the city centre where all cultural movements used to take place. In 2003, since the statutes had to be changed to be adapted to the new law¹¹, a new component, which was the consumers, was added, since we thought that consumption is a basic component of the present claims, information and fines. Now it is called Neighbours' cultural and consumers Association, of Patraix and it is set on three main pillars: claims, social aid, culture and consumption, even though we do many other activities which could not be strictly placed in any of these areas..." (Neighbours' Association of Patraix 1) 3.

We can clearly distinguish between two periods. In a first moment, neighbours' specially claimed basic services (lighting, paving streets, etc); then, with time, once these objectives were reached, the association gradually transformed its aims towards a strong defence of well-being and quality of life and protecting, in line with the present context, identitarian and cultural components. In a certain way, this association seems to return to its origins in which, the neighbourhood associations were polyvalent and multifunctional; structured in branches that deal with the different issues in hands.

The evolution of this organisation (like in a way, all those that are still active) has followed the social changes ending in an extremely different context. The improvement of families' income, the transformation of the social structure, changes in the different types of political participation, and the increase, not just of the number of associations but also their diversification and specialisation, has lead these associations to a new type of speech and activities. In our case, the speech has clearly changed. The neighbourhood now claims its own identity-*"to claim the image of Patraix, not just for claiming, and going out on the streets with banners, but from a*

¹¹ It refers to the 1/2002 Organic Law of March the 22nd, which rules the associations' rights, repealing that of 1964.

historical and cultural position”-, This is what one of the persons we interviewed told us. The following paragraph is illustrative:

“...the idea was to improve quality of life in the district, to keep offering the infrastructures needed. The idea of recovering the identity of the district, our cultural origins, our history, our past... also came up. Culture and not only just having this despising aspect of Patraix, a small district, disconnected, full of streets closed to the traffic, industries, steam, hazardous waste, lighting, in general... then we had the idea of claiming all this, but not from an ideological point of view. We were part of the big city but we were not going to admit our identity to be absorbed, what we are, those who have been born here and those before us of who only a few remain, but the same as now... as now that we believe that we have a historical debt with those that are now here and those to come, it is not the same a new and established district, this is a town, absorbed, mashed, with a few houses in the historical centre. Oh well, we have been fighting for the archaeological remains which have appeared, with all our forces, the civil services see it as a bunch of stones, but it is much more than that, they belong to our origins that prove it is true that we are a town...” (Neighbours’ Association of Patraix 3) 4.

So, this change towards claiming the neighbourhood’s own identity provoked a change in the association’s schemes, which tries to consolidate its identity from the still existing evidence of its own origins.

“... we can already affirm that the origins of the district are the same ones of those of the city of Valencia, due to the roman remains found, which are as old as those of the city. For this reason and the irrigation ditch with fertile soil, this is the roman settlement which gave birth to our town... after the Muslims this historical area is preserved, which are the small houses we still have placed in the area, so of course... we have our history. Even though to live here, this was a small district, Patraix was destroyed, the industry, the dirty irrigation ditches... all...” (Neighbours’ Association of Patraix 2) 5.

This claim of its own identity should be understood within a globalisation context, as one of the

pillars in which the association is presently based is cultural identity. It currently focuses on carrying out a yearly cultural program with exhibitions, literary competitions poster competitions, historical compilations, concerts, and a magazine of their own called “Patraix Viu”. The association also organises fiestas each year in the district during a week. These have become one of the main and more time-consuming activities of the association.

Searching and trying to recover one’s identity, means working to preserve everything that is part of the district’s personality. In this sense, one of the main steps has been to publish a book showing all the different the cultural aspects that can still be found in it. The association has had an important role in recovering and preserving them, becoming an important creator of new heritage sites which have been added to those coming from public and private initiatives (Nation, social experts and scientists) and therefore becoming part of the conservationist movement, together with a multitude of other organisations dealing with heritage.

One of the main enemies of this movement is what these associations say it is generally understood as “progress”. More specifically, they refer to the urban pressure that some historical monuments and even whole districts are receiving, and which in some cases have not been able to stand. Both the so called progress and time itself enormously affect heritage. These associations are built as resistance groups, fighting from cultural codes based on tradition or in local experience.

The conservationist movement carries and tries to spread the message of the need to save those elements that are valued as identity symbols, and, in consequence, specially deserve to be preserved. These elements take us to and link us with our past. Therefore, these movements try to create a conscience of this, and in this case, of a distinct neighbourhood.

“... it has evolved... now there is a district conscience that wasn’t there before, the association has done a lot for this, now there are people proud of living in Patraix, in a neighbourhood like this inside the city of Valencia, there are people who now want to work and preserve the historical centre, they come out onto

the street and say: -it seems as we're not in the big city- even the neighbourhood conscience has been overpassed and now for some people there is a town conscience which is a lot more. . . ." (Neighbours' Association of Patraix 2) 6.

This movement also defends heritage from a more practical point of view. This means that a restoration is not successful unless new uses can be put into place. This association is transforming a factory into a sport complex:

"... the oldest factory, the most symbolic one has been restored and transformed into a sports centre; It was the first factory that used a steam engine in the Community of Valencia, it was a textile factory, it transformed silk, we found out that it was the first one. . . it has been restored and nowadays it is a gym, very symbolic and beautiful, maybe the most beautiful of the city. . ." (Neighbours' Association of Patraix 3) 7.

On the other hand, the association has not forgotten the origins of the neighbours' claims and continues fighting to improve quality of life and create a sustainable city, though, as it can be seen, adapting its speech and practices to the current needs. Beyond claims for basic services (typical demands of the neighbour's movement in their beginnings), and in front of the dangers of the "risk society", they have now also included the discourse and practices of the ecological movement in defence of the environment (both, natural and urban). The peripheral situation of the neighbourhood, in outskirts of the city of Valencia, and the fact that several highly polluting factories had been installed in it has "forced" neighbours to get involved in numerous vindictive acts through time.

"...here in the district we had a wood factory, that transformed tropical trunks into laminated pieces for furniture, and well, through time, I would say many people will remember their early years with the smell

to "Heno de Pravia"¹². We, those living here then, used to smell of steam from the factory, my mother used to say: -run, run, close the windows that that steam comes in- and this has been like that until. . . maybe 5 or 6 years ago that the factory moved away. . ." (Neighbours' Association of Patraix 1) 8.

The principles of the association are clear, -*"we claimed the need for them to go, the industrial use with the resident use is not compatible, we could not have these factories working there, and our proposal was that they went outside the city, out of our neighbourhood"*-. The "NIMB" movement questions two issues. Firstly, it puts forward the risk of locating undesired materials or activities in low-income communities or areas with ethnic minorities, but in the other hand, it also raises the issue of the lack of transparency and co-operation on issues like decision making on the use of spaces. Thus, citizens demand extending local democracy, a responsible urban plan and an egalitarian distribution of the burden urban/industrial development entails, but also a ban on exposure to toxic waste and on any more dangerous installation development (Castells, 1998b).

Since -"the council licensed Iberdrola (Spanish Electrical Company) to build an electrical sub-station in Patraix"- the association is included in what various media have called "the mobilisations of Patraix" as it had opposed such a project. These mobilisations would be part of the numerous citizens' mobilisations that are taking place in the city of Valencia these last years are being organised around the "Salvem. . ." platform as a neighbours' response to the aggressive restoration and space transformation policies. These platforms are lobbies against the local council politics. They organise diverse activities: collecting signatures, press releases, allegations, reports and dossiers, complaints, speeches, etc. . . with the intention to wake up neighbours' consciences and shake the public opinion so they can try to stop the process which they are against¹³.

¹² A well known perfume brand in those years.

¹³ One of the features characterising these platforms is the way they are organised, since independently from the fact that it is spontaneously formed and that it has a horizontal structure, it brings together a stable group of people (affected neighbours) which receives aid from an important number of individuals, associations and institutions: people in general, professionals, associations, left wing extra - parliamentary associations, university supported critical intellectuals, the university itself and other official organisations.

These mobilisations are defensive responses given by those directly or indirectly affected. To some extent, these different *Salvem* were created because the administration does neither inform nor allow the citizens' collaboration in restoration issues nor in those related with the complete transformation of the spaces. The investment budget is not planned with the affected neighbours and, there is obviously no way of carrying out any kind of referendum. All decisions are taken without asking nor taking into account those most affected nor their opinions on the subject and they are not even being informed about them (Albert, 2005).

CONCLUSIONS

The long trajectory of the neighbours' associations that has been analysed has allowed us to present a clear example of how organisations have adapted to new citizens' needs and times. Surviving to time is not an easy challenge which all associations can face, especially in this ever-changing society. Their keys to success have been being able to transform the objectives, both from the theoretical and practical points of view, together with a large dose of flexibility and adaptability. The association has transformed the initial neighbours' claims to improve their basic services into demands for a better quality of life (ecological movement) understood as a citizen's right and also into identity claims (conservationist movement) as a new citizenship right.

As Bauman affirms, the concept of "citizenship" has lost a large part of its former meanings, while state-nation institutions which allowed continuing believing it are being dismantled. The state-nation is no longer the natural receiver of the population trust¹⁴ (Bauman, 2005:100). And even though, according to this author "*none of the alternative offers has achieved the strength of the state-nation*", somehow it can be affirmed that associations have become intermediate units that bring not just

identity but sense, since through the association, individuals are able to decide and act in a society with their own principles. This is what Bauman (1999) called *ágora*, recovering its original sense, as the intermediate sphere; one that is able to link the public and private ones, making them depend on one another and intercommunicating them. It played an essential role in maintaining a truly autonomous polis, based on the real autonomy of its members¹⁵.

In the interviews, the speakers appeal to their "personal worries"; "to see that what you do is useful" and to "personal recognition, to collaborate and work for something that is for everybody, and for values that this society does not have". They mention phrases as "nothing else can give you this"; "the day to day, the anonymous work, with a long-term reward"; "to work for the construction of services in the neighbourhood".

How participation is conceived and how it should be, can be clearly seen in the following paragraph:

"... the administration cannot realise the wealth they can obtain with people from each district working voluntarily for the city, *the eyes watching over the city*, anything taking place in the district, either now or in a near future, we will know ... it is a thermometer but one has to invest to obtain it and leave volunteers work with minimum conditions, because we have to be constantly looking for economic resources to be able to survive. The administration, in this moment, the one closest to us, both local and autonomic ones, see it as something that is there, that sounds well but that is not necessary. It appears when elections approach but after that, they might just ask for information from time to time. , They might call you for a meeting, but in the end, they do whatever they want to do, they confuse participation with submission, but beware not to protest. The little I give you, I might take it back. They do not say it clearly but one can realise..." (Neighbours' Association of Patraix 1) 9.

¹⁴ According to this author, "there was a time in which a person's identity was basically determined by his productive role in the social division of labour; when the State responded (if not in practice, with its intentions and promises) with the solidity and duration of this role. Citizens could ask the State for help when they could not keep their promises or responsibilities to their total satisfaction" Bauman, Z. 2005:101)

¹⁵ The *ágora* joined the *okiros* (the place where politics took place, where topics concerning all *polis* members were discussed) with the *polis* (city), and maintained them together. Without the *ágora*, neither the *polis* nor its members could have the freedom of deciding the meaning of common wellbeing and what had to be done to achieve and preserve it.

Citizens seem to shout in a general clamour for their capacity to decide and act in those things with which they identify themselves, find a sense to act and basically conceive as a right to do it.

Notes

1. “La Asociación de Vecinos Patraix, surge legalmente en 1978 junto a las primeras Asociaciones de Vecinos que canalizaban de una forma práctica el movimiento vecinal e intentaban mejorar de un modo notable la calidad de vida de los barrios valencianos. Primero fue la vivienda, los colegios, más tarde los centros de Salud, los centros sociales, los culturales... en síntesis, se intentaba mejorar de un modo notable la vida de los vecinos funcionando como un interlocutor entre ellos y las diferentes Administraciones”

2. “...si que es verdad que existió y existe, coger miembros del movimiento ciudadano, de cuando no existían en el aspecto político y democrático, que succionaron muchos representantes, y bueno, la verdad es que no se recargaron esas fuentes, y la verdad es que todos los líderes se convirtieron al poder y como que ya les sobraba la asociación...”

3. “Hace diez años la Asociación de Vecinos Patraix, sufre una profunda transformación ya que no sólo se tendía a reivindicar los equipamientos para mejorar la calidad de vida... sino que también es importante el componente cultural ya que Patraix se encuentra alejada del centro de la ciudad donde se concentran todos los hechos culturales. En 2003, aprovechando que se tenían que cambiar los estatutos para adaptarlos a la nueva ley¹⁶, se decidió darle otro componente más, el de consumidores, ya que pensamos que el consumo es un componente básico de la reivindicación, información y denuncia. Ahora se llama Asociación de vecinos, cultural y consumidores Patraix y se asienta sobre tres pilares principales: la reivindicación, la ayuda social, la cultura y el consumo, aunque realizamos muchas actividades no enclavadas estrictamente en estas áreas”

4. “...la idea era mejorar la calidad de vida del barrio, seguir dotando de infraestructuras y aparecía

también el tema de recuperar la identidad del barrio, recuperar nuestros orígenes culturales, nuestra historia, nuestro pasado... la cultura, no solamente tener este aspecto despreciativo de Patraix, un barrio marginal, inconexo, lleno de calles cerradas, el tema de las industrias, humos, vertidos, de iluminación, en fin... entonces se paso a decir, vamos a reivindicar pero desde una concepto ideológico, fuimos a decir estamos en la gran ciudad y no vamos a permitir que nos absorba nuestra identidad, los que somos, los que hemos nacido aquí y de los anteriores a nosotros que quedan poquitos, pero igual que ahora... igual que ahora que creemos que tenemos una deuda histórica con los que están ahora y los que pueden venir, no es lo mismo un barrio nuevo y consolidado, es un pueblo, absorbido, machacado, con 4 casas del centro histórico, bueno, nos hemos estado peleando por los restos arqueológicos que han aparecido, con uñas y dientes, la administración lo ve como 4 piedras más, pero son las 4 piedras de nuestro origen que demuestran que es verdad lo que estamos diciendo, somos un pueblo”

5. “...teóricamente, ya podemos constatarlo, que los orígenes del barrio, son los mismos que los de la ciudad de Valencia, por los restos romanos encontrados, son tan antiguos como los de la ciudad de Valencia, pues por eso, por la acequia... la acequia con tierra fértil, pues, eso, asentamiento romano que dio origen al pueblo, luego de la época musulmana se conservan el casco histórico que son las casitas que quedan aquí chiquititas, entonces claro... tenemos nuestra historia. Aunque claro vivir aquí, esto era un barrio marginal, Patraix esta hecho polvo, industria, la acequia sucia, en fin...”

6. “ha evolucionado... ahora hay conciencia de barrio que antes no había... la asociación ha hecho mucho por eso, ahora hay gente que se siente orgullosa de vivir en Patraix, en un barrio como este dentro de la ciudad de Valencia, hay gente que ahora quiere trabajar y conservar el casco histórico, sale a la calle y dice: -parece que no estoy en la gran ciudad- incluso se ha superado la conciencia de barrio y para alguna gente hay conciencia de pueblo que es bastante más”

¹⁶ Se refiere a la ley Orgánica 1/2002, de 22 de marzo, reguladora del derecho de asociación, que por fin deroga la ley de 1964.

7. “la fabrica más antigua, la más emblemática se ha recuperado y transformado como centro deportivo de Patraix, pues fue la primera fabrica que incorporo la máquina de vapor en la Comunidad Valenciana, era una fabrica de hilaturas, de la transformación de la seda, esta recogida que fue la primera... se ha recuperado y hoy en día es un gimnasio, muy emblemático y muy bonito, quizá el más bonito que hay en la ciudad...”

8. “...teníamos aquí en el barrio una fabrica de chapas y maderas, de transformación de los troncos tropicales en chapas, madera para mueble, y bueno, toda la vida, yo lo digo, mucha gente recordara su infancia con olor a “Heno de Pravia”, nosotros, los que vivíamos aquí olíamos a humo, a humo de la fabrica, mi madre decía: -correr, correr cerrad las ventanas que entra el humo- y eso ha sido hasta... pues hace 5 ó 6 años que ya no está la fabrica”

9. “la administración no se da cuenta de la riqueza que puede llegar a tener con gente de cada barrio que trabaja voluntariamente por la ciudad, los ojos vigilantes de la ciudad, cualquier cosa que pasa en el distrito, aquí antes o después lo sabemos... es un termómetro pero para eso tienes que invertir y dejar que la gente voluntaria trabaje con unas mínimas condiciones, porque tenemos que estar constantemente buscando recursos económicos para poder subsistir. La administración, en este momento, lo que nos toca más cerca, la local y autonómica, pues como que la participación es algo que esta, que suena, pero que no lo ve necesario. Esta para cuando se vota y luego, pues sí, te consulta en algunos casos, te reúne, pero luego, muchas veces hacen lo que ellos quieren, ellos confunden la participación con la sumisión, el clientelismo, ojito que como protestes, lo poco que te doy te lo voy a cortar, no te lo dicen así, pero lo notas, lo notas”

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