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## Civil Participation in slum development projects

– A case study of the civil participation in project *Viva Lago Soldati*, in Buenos Aires

Medborgardeltagande i utvecklingsprojekt för slumområden

– En fallstudie av medborgardeltagande i projektet *Viva Lago Soldati*, i Buenos Aires

Laura Kristine Marianne Grace Bergman

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## Abstract

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Both the United Nations and the World Bank consider participatory slum improvement to be the current best practice for dealing with slum challenges.

10% of the population in Buenos Aires live in slum areas. Many of the residents work informally and are therefore unable to get the documents needed to get a house contract outside the Slums. *Lago Soldati* is a Lake next to *Los Piletones*, a slum in the southern outskirts of Buenos Aires. The city has an ongoing project for restoration of the lake and environmental and spatial improvements in the area. The city describes the project as a good example for other slum upgrading projects.

The thesis deals with participatory aspects of the project together with theories regarding civil participation in slum development. Researchers describe desirable levels of participation of slum dwellers in the different stages of a project together with facts about which groups that should be involved. The chosen project is analysed according to levels of participation, the groups that participated and also how the participation plan was done and the result of the used participatory approach.

The project has been influenced by the political landscape in the country, which has contributed in making the project possible, but the political landscape has also influenced the participatory work in the project and caused conflicts with different groups. The project shows the World Bank's power in influencing the participatory projects. They are an important financier with demands regarding the degree of civil participation.

## Sammanfattning

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Enligt både FN och Världsbanken är arbetet med aktiv delaktighet i slumförbättringsprojekt det bästa sättet att hantera slumproblematik idag.

10% av befolkningen i Buenos Aires bor i slumområden. Många av invånarna arbetar informellt och kan därför inte få de handlingar som behövs för att få ett kontrakt utanför slummen. Sjön *Lago Soldati* är belägen bredvid slumområdet *Los Piletones*, som ligger i södra utkanten av Buenos Aires. Staden har ett pågående projekt med att restaurera sjön samt förbättra miljön och närområdet kring sjön. Staden beskriver projektet som ett gott exempel för andra projekt för slumuppgradering.

Uppsatsen behandlar aspekter kring delaktighet i projektet tillsammans med teorier om slumutveckling och medborgardialog. Forskare beskriver önskvärda nivåer av deltagande i de olika stegen av ett projekt tillsammans med vilka grupper som bör vara involverade. Det valda projektet analyseras utifrån nivå av deltagande, grupper som deltagit och hur planerna för medborgardialogen sett ut.

Projektet har påverkats av det politiska landskapet i landet, vilket både har bidragit till att göra projektet möjligt, men också påverkat medborgardialogen negativt och orsakat konflikter med olika grupper. Projektet visar på Världsbankens makt att påverka slummens utveckling och delaktighet inom projekt för slumuppgradering, eftersom de är en viktig finansiär som ställer krav vad gäller dialog.

# Preface

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This bachelor thesis was conducted in the summer of 2016. It was made through a Minor Field Study (MFS) scholarship from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA). The aim of MFS is to prepare Swedish students to work globally through gaining knowledge about developing countries but also to integrate developing issues in the education (Universitets- och högskolerådet, u.d.). I am very grateful for the scholarship and would like to thank SIDA for the knowledge they gave me during the preparation course, for the funding that made my case study possible and for the support in managing challenges in my field work.

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# Background

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## Slum, a problem to deal with

The latest report from UN-Habitat in 2013 shows that the absolute number of people living in the slum are growing. From the 1990s, the slum population has grown from 650 million people, to an estimated figure of 863 million slum dwellers in 2009 (UN-Habitat, 2013 p. 126). UN-HABITAT believes that we are today facing a housing crisis that is without a historical counterpart. The increasing number of slum dwellers must be understood together with the high rate of urbanisation and the increasing world population. The rural areas have already reached their population peak and the cities will have to absorb the growing population. The urbanisation of developing countries is rapid in proportion to their economic resources, and therefore cities cannot meet the slum dwellers needs in housing, services and work opportunities. Thus, people are forced to search for informal solutions, creating informal settlements and slum areas (UN-HABITAT, 2003, p. 5).

Latin America has since the 20th century gone through the world's largest and rapid urbanisation. Today over 70 percent of the population lives in urban areas. (Arcila, 2008, p. 7). Argentina has one of the biggest class divides in the world. The capital, Buenos Aires, is characterised by large differences in economic status between the residents and their division into large urban settlements. An estimated 10% of the city's population live in slums.

## Millennium development goals

In September 2000, world leaders met at the Millennium Summit, arranged by the United Nation. The purpose was to address the challenges and goals for humanity in the 21 century. The Millennium declaration submits the goals and also outlines commitments in human rights, good governance and democracy. The declaration outlines 8 specific goals for poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, environmental degradation and discrimination against women. These goals have 32 measurement targets and UN-HABITAT is responsible for the measurements of these targets. All of the goals are somehow connected with slum areas, but target 11 is of special interest for the work of better place of living (UN- Habitat 2003, s.7).

“Target 11: By 2020, to have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers, which builds upon the Cities Alliance's Cities Without Slums initiative.” (UN- Habitat 2003, s.7)

The UN considers that Slum must be seen as a result of failure of housing policies, national policies and laws. UN considers genuine political will be the key to success in working with slum problematics (UN-Habitat, 2003, p. 5). Both the UN and the World Bank consider the current best practice for dealing with slums challenges to be participatory slum improvement (UN-Habitat, 2003, pp. 132,190) (Imparato & Ruster, 2003, p. 18).

To be able to reach the development goals it is important to work successfully with civil participation to involve the dwellers in the development. I have during my bachelor studies and earlier, in works with young refugees arriving in Sweden and in the organization Amnesty international, gained an interest for human rights, development issues and the democratic aspect of city planning. As we live in an increasingly globalized world in which problems are becoming more interconnected, these questions are becoming ever more relevant. I think it is increasingly important to have a global perspective in my future work and I therefore in this thesis study a context far from my own reality.

## Definitions

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### **Community:**

“A group of people living in the same place or having a particular characteristic in common.” (Oxford University Press, 2014)

This thesis talks about communities as geographical communities, communities defined by the specific areas. It is important to state that the residents of slums do not need to have the same interests, needs or a strong social connection (Arcila, 2008, p. 23). There can be special groups inside the geographical communities that form social communities but in this text they are referred to as groups.

### **Civil dialogue:**

Civil dialogue refers to the dialogue between residents and authorities, but also the dialogue amongst dwellers inside the community.

### **Civil Participation:**

This thesis uses the term civil participation or just participation when referring to the involvement of the community, groups or individual dwellers in the development of the slums in a development project.

### **Developing country:**

Developing countries, also called “less developed” countries, is a term describing the economic status of a country. The World Bank mainly classifies countries according to Gross National Income (GNI). The economic structure, the official opinion of the government, social indicators and other criteria play a role as well. The World Bank defines 152 countries in the world as developing countries where 5 of them are high-income developing economies (The Library of Congress, 2008).



*Figure 1 Restoration of Lake Soldati next to the slum area Los Piletones.(SECHI).*

### **Slum:**

An international operational definition of slum was adopted by the UN in Nairobi 2002. This definition is restricted to the physical and legal characteristics of the settlement. It defines slum as an area that combines, to various extents, the following characteristics:

- inadequate access to safe water
  - inadequate access to sanitation and other infrastructure
  - poor structural quality of housing
  - overcrowding
  - insecure residential status
- (UN-Habitat, 2003, p. 12)

This definition is used in the thesis but social and cultural characteristics have also been taken to account.

### **Villa miseria, Villa:**

“Villa miseria” or just “Villa” is the Argentinian word for a slum area or shantytown. It is a phrase meaning “misery village” from the Spanish words Villa (Village or small town) and miseria (misery) (Bastia, 2010, pp. 7-8). This text uses Villa miseria or just Villa as the word for slum in Argentina.

### **Participatory planning:**

Participatory planning is a concept that emphasizes the involvement of the community in the process of urban planning. It is often considered as a part of community development and a way to give the projects a bottom-up approach (Lefevre, et al., 2000).

### **Slum-upgrading:**

“Slum upgrading is a process through which informal areas are gradually improved, formalised and incorporated into the city itself, through extending land, services and citizenship to slum dwellers.” (Cities Alliance - Cities Without Slums, 2016)

This process is a way of urbanising areas by giving the residents the same rights as residents in the formal city. The process aims to improve areas and give dwellers what they lack in basic services, economic resources and social support. Many projects also work on the legalisation of households (Cities Alliance - Cities Without Slums, 2016).



## Purpose and Aim

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The purpose of the thesis is to contribute knowledge to the discussion on the participatory approach in development of slums and in slum-upgrading projects. The thesis contributes knowledge about the topic in the context of Argentinian slum and in the way civil participation is currently handled. The aim is to describe how civil participation works in projects for slum upgrading and the way professionals work with it. A development project in the Buenos Aires slum of *Los Piletones* is investigated to provide knowledge about the reality of working with participatory development in slums. The information from the case study together with theories are discussed to give a deeper understanding of the topic.

## Target questions

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How does civil participation work in slum-upgrading projects regarding public spaces and which purpose does it have?

How has the chosen project *Viva Lago Soldati* used civil participation?

In which ways did the professionals involve the community and what was the purpose of the participatory approach?

To which extent have dwellers been involved in the different phases of the project and which groups have been involved?

# Method

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## Theory

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The theoretical part of the thesis consists of a literature study regarding slum and participation. Hamdi and Goetherts theories on levels of participation, in *Action planning for cities* (1997), constitute an important part of the literature study. The reports of the United Nations and the World Bank are valuable to set the dialogue process in the context of slum, the challenges of slums and tells about the importance of a participatory approach in the development process. The theory part also consists of pictures explaining theories on participation.

## Case study

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A case study is done on a slum upgrading project in Buenos Aires where civil participation is examined in practice. The case study is discussed using existing theories on the subject. The case study was made as a Minor Field Study (MFS) during two months in Buenos Aires, including two weeks of participation in a workshop on slums in Buenos Aires at the architectural faculty of UBA (University of Buenos Aires). It includes interviews with people involved in the slum-upgrading project, and a visit to the studied slum area as well as visits to surrounding slum areas. Literature used for the case study consists of news articles, an application for a competition and the city of Buenos Aires' own reports. Pictures used for the case study consists of drawings made by the children in the area, photographs as well as photographs taken by myself.

The project *Viva Lago Soldati* has been chosen for the case-study partly because it is a project that has been part of a UN competition. The city of Buenos Aires is showing this project as a good example, which makes it interesting as a possible role-model for coming slum-upgrading projects. The project is in the later stages of completion, which makes evaluation and analysis possible.

## Interviews

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The interviews have been important in gaining information about the participatory work in the project *Viva Lago Soldati*. The informants of the formal interviews have been working in the inclusion team inside the project. There have been three informal interviews with one architect, a biologist and a preschool teacher. The interviews have been semi-structured, in the sense that the interviews have been opened with only an interview guide, with a number of main questions or themes without strictly formulated questions. Furthermore, a contact in the government body Secretariat of Habitat and Inclusion (SECHI) has provided important information in spontaneous interviews. A spontaneous interview was made with one key person working in the project and living in *Los Piletones*. Another spontaneous interview was made with a community leader in an adjacent slum area. There has been one walk and talk interview on the site, where the topics of space and participation in the project was discussed. The interviews were conducted anonymously to protect the interviewees from negative consequences.

## Limitations

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The thesis has been limited in scope due to time restraints and difficulties of working in the context of a case study, such as security issues and communication problems. The studied area has high criminality and as an outsider you are seen as a target and cannot walk around without protection from persons living in the area or guards. Therefore, the time spent in the specific slum was limited to one visit with representatives from the area and with people working in the area. Language differences made it more difficult to communicate, (a non-professional translator was used) but there were also cultural differences that are hard to understand as a foreigner. Also the political context and the sensitive topic of the thesis have made some aspects hard to investigate. The slums in Argentina are seen as a political playground where some questions about slum and slum development are seen as sensitive. The country has a new government since 22 November 2015 which make the topic even more sensitive to investigate. Therefore, some conflicts have been hard to investigate in a deeper perspective. Because of this, the thesis mainly addresses the technical teams' work with participation and does not address the citizens' experiences regarding their participation in the process. The thesis only presents the context of slums without presenting underlying issues or solutions to the problems. Theories used regarding participation are restricted to deal with the planning of the participatory process and the practice used today. Special tools used in the process and theories about tools in the participatory approach are not discussed in the thesis.

# The participatory context

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## The characteristics of slum

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One main problem with improving slum is the question of definition. A wide range of definitions have made it hard to measure the amount of slum dwellers, complicating the creation of policies and possibilities for actions in improving the settlements. UN stated an international definition 2002 in Nairobi, which is based on the development goals regarding slum settlements and describes slum with several main characteristics:

- inadequate access to safe water
- inadequate access to sanitation and other infrastructure
- poor structure quality of housing
- overcrowding and insecure residential status (UN-Habitat, 2003, p. 12).

UH-Habitat's updated report from 2010 also describes slums as areas with high social exclusion and poverty. Many slum-dwellers lack necessary documents, which exacerbates segregation and restricts their ability to have the same right as other residents (UH-Habitat, 2010, p. 14). UN's definition from 2003 have been criticised because it only uses the physical and illegal characteristics of slum while lacking the social dimension. International organisations agree that slum is a manifestation of urban poverty, social inequality and social exclusion. It has also however been recognised that all poor in the city do not live in slums, and all the residents of slums are not always poor (Arcila, 2008, p. 22).

No matter the definition, there are large statistical differences between slum dwellers and the rest of the urban population. Statistics show that slum dwellers have higher rates of unemployment, low education, are unhealthier, suffer stigmatisation, isolation and exclusion from social interaction and economic opportunities. They also have little or no political voice regarding their situation and in the searching for solutions. These differences are often amplified as a result of the unequal treatment of different groups in society that create even more discrimination. Such groups can be women, children, minorities and handicapped people (Arcila, 2008, p. 23).

Slum housing is often supplied illegally on the informal market, and there exists many types of ownership relationships between different actors. Some are self-built houses, some are occupied houses, but often the houses are for rent from informal landlords (UN-Habitat, 2003, p. 105).

They are two approaches to slums that often coexist. *Slum of despair* and *Slum of hope*. *Slum of despair* describes the unbearable conditions people are forced to live in, the problem for people living in slums and the problems the areas generate in society. *Slum of Hope* describes the positive aspect of slums. This approach describes slum as providing housing solutions on a large scale to persons with low incomes and to immigrants. They are dwelling places for labour forces in the cities and sometimes places for formal and informal entrepreneurs (UN-Habitat, 2003, p. VI). Slum-areas are also known as multicultural places with a rich artistic and cultural life. (UN-Habitat, 2003, p. XXXI).

## Dealing with slums

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The way countries have handled the problems of slums have differed during the last decades. UN-Habitat has defined some of the dominating approaches of the last 40 years, some of which are still seen in today's practice. Until the 1970s, negligence was the dominant approach to slum in developing countries. Slums were seen as unavoidable but illegal and temporary. The neglecting of slums is therefore a neglecting of the slum dwellers rights as well, leading to more segregation and discrimination. Eviction was common during the 1970's and the 1980's. Dwellers were forced out of their homes and were rarely offered other solutions. Resettlement is still a common way of dealing with slum areas. Dwellers are often being moved from valuable land and relocated to the outskirts of the city. There have been more successful examples, when new houses are built inside the area in question where the residents are part of the process. In the late 1970s slums began to be seen as a part of the solution themselves. There was an increasing focus on providing basic urban services, secure tenure, and the needs of the dwellers and the communities (UN-Habitat, 2003, pp. 129-131).

## Slum upgrading

Slum areas are already a place for ongoing development and already in a process when slum-upgrading projects are implemented. People are seen as resources in building their own houses, neighbourhood and contributing to their community in different ways (Arcila, 2008, p. 25). The process of slum upgrading aims to improve the areas and give dwellers what they lack in basic services, economic resources, and social support. Many projects also work with legalisation of informal households (Cities Alliance - Cities Without Slums, 2016).

The World Bank has played an important role in the establishment of slum-upgrading policies in the world and was one of the strongest advocates for the implementation (Davis, 2006, p. 82). After an investigation and report from the World Bank 1999-2001, there has been a strong support for this approach. The World Bank writes about the significant advantages with upgrading slums compared to the alternative, which according to them is "clearance and relocation". Other methods are much more expensive but slum upgrading, in comparison, minimizes the disruption for the community. There are good results from upgrading which are immediate and makes a great difference for the dwellers in the areas (The World Bank, 2011).

## Actors in the process

The challenge, in dealing with slums, is partly because many developing countries have seen significant change from new governments. New local governments take more direct responsibility in providing the needs of the populations and are able to work with more efficient policies. Also slum communities, social groups and NGOs dealing with slum issues have become politically mature and more common in the debate, which gives them a voice and new ways to participate in the development (Arcila, 2008, p. 27). New forms of civil participation are emerging with governances cooperating, instead of serving the community and the citizen starting and enabling development instead of just providing recourses. The power distribution as well as the connections and links between the different actors are important in the developing process (Hamdi, 2004, pp. 107-112).

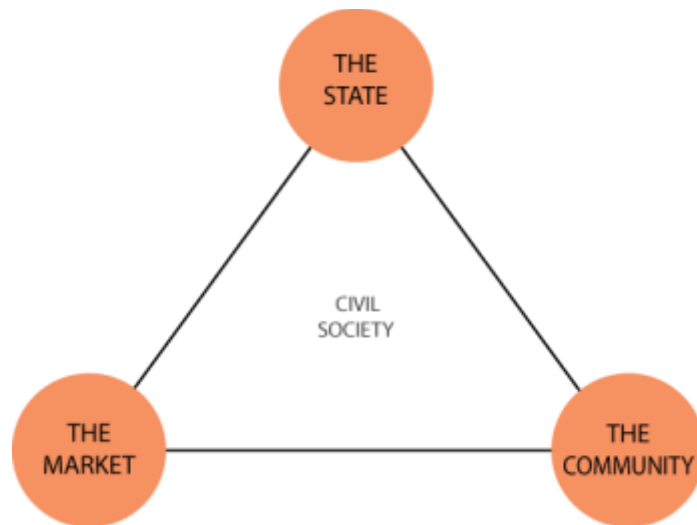


Figure 2 Idealized picture showing equal power and strong links between actors (Hamdi 2004).

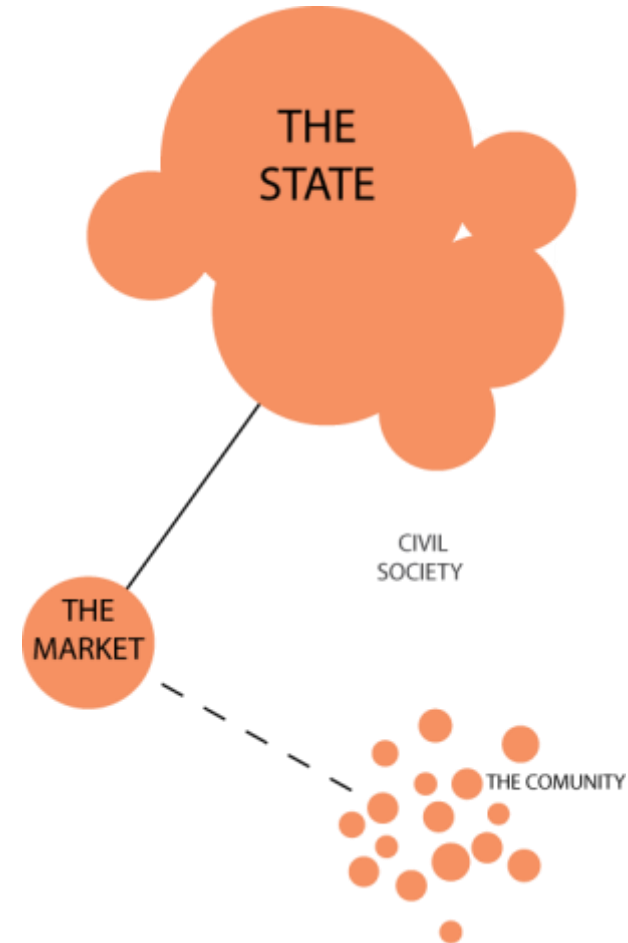


Figure 3 Reality picture, with unequal powers, unsymmetrical weak links and fragmented community and state (Hamdi 2004).

## Participation “the best practice”

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UN considers the current best practice for dealing with the challenges of slums to be participatory slum improvement. However, this approach has so far mostly been adopted on a limited scale or in demonstration projects. The best result is seen when a holistic approach is used for neighbourhood improvement, taking into account health, education, housing, livelihood and gender (UN- Habitat 2003, p. 132). The World Bank had, together with SIDA (Swedish development cooperation), a project between 1991- 1997 to evaluate positive and negative outcomes of citizen participation in slum-upgrading projects. The overall conclusion was that civil participation improved projects and gave better results and more sustainable solutions seen over time (Imparato & Ruster 2003, p. 18). There are many positive aspects of working actively with civil participation in slum-upgrading projects. It improves the design and success of the project through organising needs and demands in the community. Participation also contributes with local knowledge and relevant facts to the project. It also makes the project more sustainable by enhancing the residents' feeling of responsibility towards facilities and services. It can strengthen local ownership over the project and through demand responsiveness. Overarching goals such as a good governance, more democracy and poverty reduction can also be improved through participation in the project (Imparato & Ruster 2003, p.16).

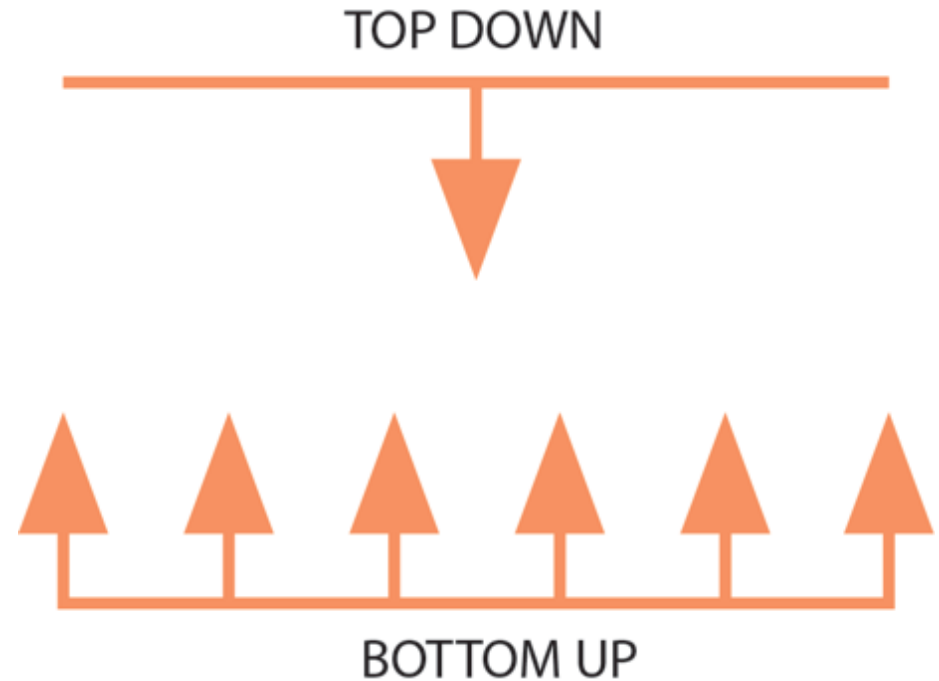
## Risks and costs in the process of participation

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The risk of participation is often associated with poorly managed or ill-conceived participation initiatives in a project. In projects without the right competence and with poor management, conflicts can paralyse the process. Long delays or changes of approaches due to participation can destroy the relationships towards the stakeholders. This is unfortunately a common situation and leads to a loss of trust. There is also a risk of loss of focus due to discussions about issues that are outside the project frame. The biggest cost associated with participation is the time and effort in creating the participatory mechanisms, procurement of specialised service needed in the participation and more staff time needed in the formulation and preparation of the project phases. These costs are on the other hand shown to be compensated when a project is successful (Imparato & Ruster 2003, p.16).

## The participatory approach

It is important that the project is designed with a bottom-up approach, to be able to find and prioritise the specific needs of the community or the group. The strategies must support local solutions and local implementation. Local resources are more appropriate and available in the area (Arcila, 2008, p. 28). It takes a lot of organisation, local goodwill and political will to make these kinds of project work and it still remains to see if they are replicable on a bigger scale (UN- Habitat 2003, p. 132). Slum areas are characterised by the lack of a precise definition of public and private spaces, which is why infrastructure and public spaces can be hard to work with. A first task when upgrading a slum-area is physical planning. Depending of the project, the degree of disruption for the residents will differ. It is important to have a dialogue about the goals, alternative methods, the disruption that the residents will suffer, and ultimately, what benefits the result will have for the residents. Imparato and Ruster state that consensus and collaboration for a complex project is necessary and possible only through participation work (Imparato & Ruster 2003, p.37). Nabel Hamdi professor in architecture, says that consensus sometimes paralyse the debate and give simple solutions on complex phenomena which sometimes leads to average solutions. Therefore, there is sometimes a good idea to challenge the idea of consensus as an ideal (Hamdi, 2004, p. 137). Participation is not only seen as a tool but also as a philosophical approach which benefits all concerned parts. This approach is built on social responsibility, powered by the sense of belonging created through the project (Imparato & Ruster 2003, p. xii).



*Figure 4 Top down and Bottom up approach (Lindholm, Oliveira e Costa, Wiberg 2015).*



## Levels of Participation

Nabeel Hamdi and Reinhard Goethert have identified five levels of participation in their book *Action Planning for Cities*, a model that can be applied to slum-upgrading projects (Hamdi & Goethert, 1997, pp. 66-67). They use a matrix to illustrate the participation situation and plans in a project. It is also used as a tool for programming the suitable level of participation throughout a whole project (Hamdi & Goethert, 1997. p 78).

- *None*: In a project without participation, the outsider is responsible for all aspects in the project and there is no dialogue with the dwellers. A project on this level is of high- risk with low chance of satisfying the communities need and will. It is seen as a fast solution that can be necessary in emergency actions.
- *Indirect*: On this level the civil participation is the same as in *the none* level, but the outsider gains information secondary, about the area, without help from the residents and without being on the sight.
- *Consultative*: With a consultative approach the outsiders do the decisions based on information from the community. This level is useful for getting a general feeling about how the community thinks about specific issues, but less effective when trying to get information and knowledge from dwellers.
- *Shared Control*: On this level, the community and the outsider acts as equals as far as possible. The different actors act as partners on the permits that each have something valuable to contribute with. Shared Control is generally considered to be ideal in participatory planning theory.

- *Full Control*: With full control, the community is in charge for the project and the outsider is seen as a resource. This level is often recognised as an ideal in theory, but there is a great risk that power hierarchies inside the community dominates and discriminate weaker groups or individuals.

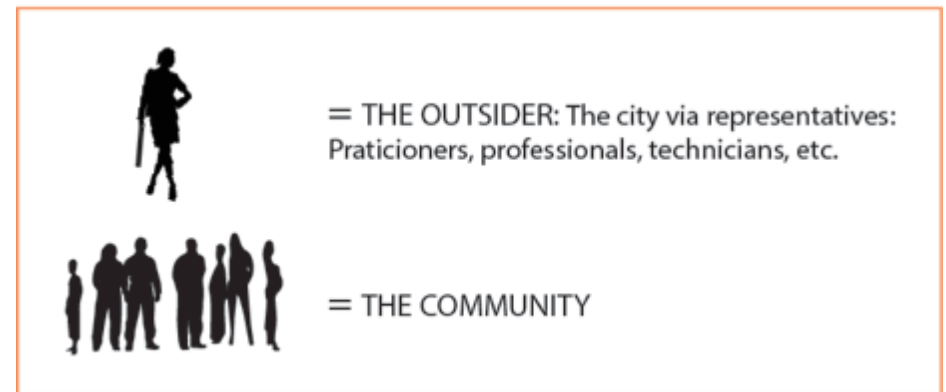


Figure 5 The outsider and the community (Hamdi & Goethert, 1997).

## The appropriate level of participation

Imparato and Ruster 2003 discuss the preferred level of participation in *Slum Upgrading and Participation: Lessons from Latin America*:

“Participation may be limited in some cases to information and consultation in decision making; in others, to consultation on some aspects of the project and shared control over other aspects. There is also the possibility of full control of some aspects of a project by the target group.” (Imparato & Ruster 2003, 16)

Imparato and Rusters work has shown that the circumstances of formulation and implementation of different projects differ very much, and that a high level of participation may not be practical or beneficial. The dwellers in slum-areas have limited time to spend in projects, and sometimes the participatory process takes unnecessary resources that are not beneficial for the result (Imparato & Ruster 2003, p 16). In general, the more marginalised and culturally separated a group, the more participation and partnership is necessary (UN- Habitat 2003, p. 132). Hamdi and Goethert also describe the desirable level of participation in different stages. It can differ depending on the project, but each program needs to involve the communities in a relationship with the city to serve their mutual interest (Hamdi & Goethert 1997. p 77).

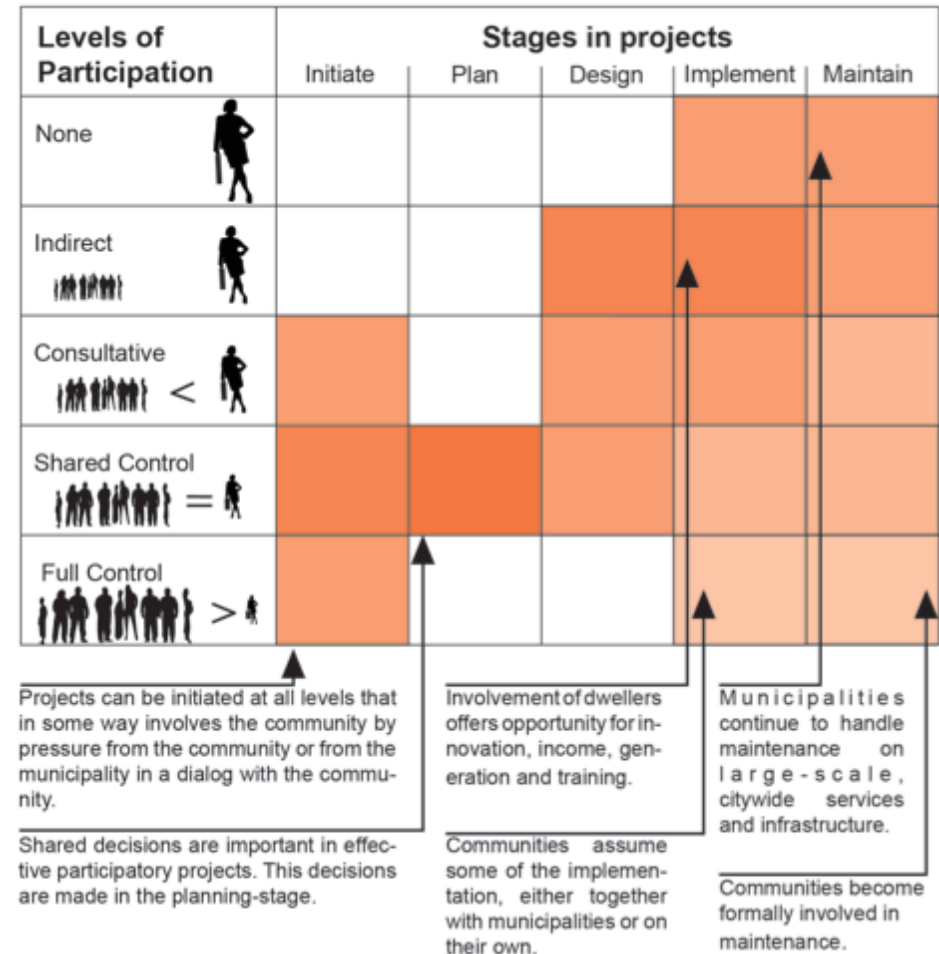


Figure 6 Hamdi and Goetherts desirable levels of participation (Hamdi & Goethert, 1997).

- *Initiation:* The project should be based on the dwellers' needs and therefore it is important to have community involvement at this stage. Recommended levels of participation is *consultative*, *shared control* or *full control*.
- *Planning:* This is the most crucial stage in the process and community involvement is important, because key decisions are being made and the project is defined. *Shared Control* is considered the appropriate level.
- *Designing:* Involvement from the community is not crucial in the design stage in order for the project to be successful, given that it has worked well in the planning stage. Appropriate levels of participation are *indirect*, *consultative*, or *shared control*.
- *Implementation:* Community involvement is also less crucial in the implementation phase. It can be a part of programs to create income for dwellers, smaller entrepreneurs or organisations inside the slum. However, it is important not to see the residents as cheap labour. All levels of participation are possible in this phase.
- *Maintenance:* All levels of participation are considered good in this phase, depending on the project. The community can take an active role by taking care of their living environment but the capacity of the community must be realistic and the city or the outsider must fulfil their responsibilities in the area.

## Who participates?

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When planning the participatory process, it is crucial to make a plan for whom and how many people that should participate. Inviting everybody would make the process hard to manage. Therefore, it is important to find representatives or key persons inside the community to be able to work with smaller groups (Arcila, 2008, pp. 36-37). Key persons have the important task of informing their group in a way that can implement trust and a shared vision (UN-HABITAT, 2003, p. 145). The community must always be the key actor and target in the project, but the community cannot be seen as homogenous or static. Different groups and people can have different needs and interests which are important to take into account. It is therefore important to have good knowledge about the community, the different actors and organisations involved in the area (Arcila, 2008, pp. 36-37). It is important to avoid discrimination of weak groups inside the slum, such as women, children, unemployed youths, smaller ethnic or religious groups and disabled people. Their voices are of particular importance in the civil participation process (UN-HABITAT, 2003, p. 29).

Imparato and Ruster describes the importance of working with gender issues in the participation process and to address both leaders and women as key players.

“The female population is, in fact, the main human resource in the development of low-income settlements (see box 3-3) and plays the main role in all aspects of a project: community mobilization, project management, monitoring and evaluation, and financial contributions.” (Imparato & Ruster, 2003, p. 134)

Women play an important role in improving infrastructure and shelter and are often leaders in their communities. A project often has a particular impact of the lives of women, making them more interested in the projects. They often take a much greater responsibility for the provision of food, water, sanitation and the care of children and elderly than what the men do. Studies also show that women are contributing with more time and more labour than men (Imparato & Ruster, 2003, pp. 133-136).

# Participation in practice

## Slum in Argentina and Buenos Aires

There are 56 Villas Miserias (Argentine slums) in Buenos Aires and it is estimated that 10% of the city's population live there. (The Economist, 2014). Poverty is often stigmatized and associated to problems in the Villas today such as social segregation. Most non-residents are afraid to venture into the Villas because they are perceived as criminal and dangerous places (Flavio, 2012, p. 34).

The city of Buenos Aires as a whole is built out of migration but the twentieth- century migrants have particularly been associated with the slums (Bastia, 2010, p. 5). The Villas emerged with occupation of urban land starting in the 1930s but grew during the 1940s when many international immigrants arrived. There were two processes that were the consequences of migration in Argentina, namely the economic collapse of the countryside and the process of industrialisation which was a mainly urban phenomenon (Cravino, 2011, p. 2).

Slum residents were evicted by the military governments between 1976-1983. At least 208,783 people were affected by a program with the purpose of getting rid of unwanted people. Racist and stereotyping campaigns followed, and the withdrawal of public services such as water and electricity, the prohibition of all trade and the introduction of identification cards to enter or exit the Villas. After the return of democracy in 1983, the Villas were repopulated (Bastia, 2010, p. 18-19).



*Figure 7 Location of Los Piletones and Comuna 8 in Buenos Aires (Google Maps).*

By the mid-1990s "inquilinos", informal apartments or houses with informal rent, started to be a common way to live in the Villas. It increased as more and more land was occupied, and with the pressure on slums to give more people a cheaper place to live due to the economic crisis and more people immigrating (Cravino, 2011, p. 1).

The economic crisis in 2001 changed the population in the Villas. The population grew from 107,000 persons to 170,000 between 2001 and 2010. Many of the dwellers came from bordering countries, mostly Paraguay, Bolivia and Peru (Cravino, 2011 p 1).



## Dealing with Argentinian slum

Authorities and most NGOs agree that the solution to the slum situation is to “urbanise” and incorporate the areas into the formal fabric of the city. The government body called the Secretariat of Habitat and Inclusion (SECHI) was created 2011, to coordinate and make such efforts possible (The economist, 2014). They work with territorial Presence, social Urbanism and Inclusion (PUI). The purpose of the Secretariat is to generate good relationships between the State and informal neighbourhoods but also to empower local institutions and to develop public spaces for collective participation and decision-making (Buenos Aires Ciudad, n.d. ). The historical absence of the government in the Villas has led to the creation of other power structures. Some Villas have their own democratic system with elections. In others, the most powerful people or groups have taken the roll of “point people” which are leading figures in a community or group. They are considered to be more negative leaders (Interviewed\_2, 2016).

Many of these delegates and “point people” are unhappy with SECHI's presence and their work in the Villas. Several of the centres and public places created by SECHI have been set on fire or been vandalised (The Economist, 2014).

One of the interviewed describes the work of the government in the Villas before SECHI as very populist, giving some people what they wanted to win votes and power in the area. SECHI works against such projects by empowering the community and giving them tools to grow by themselves together with help from the government. This kind of project is more sustainable over time (Interviewed\_2, 2016).



*Figur 8 Los Piletones main public area with yellow SESHI office (Söderstrom 2015).*

## The slum area Los Piletones and Lake Soldati

The project area, *Los Piletones*, is located in the area *Villa Soldati* in the southern outskirts of Buenos Aires in the territorial unit 8. The area is one of the most vulnerable in the city with one of the highest rates of criminality in the city (Buenos Aires Ciudad, 2015). The neighbourhood has suffered from neglect and is located in one of the most contaminated industrial landscapes and waterways on Earth (Nora, 2016).

The area is located in a low zone and next to river Richuel, which is a flooding river which has created problems in the history of the settlement. The dwellers have long worked to raise the level of the land, but many areas are still in risk of flooding. Before the project *Viva Lago Soldati*, 12,000 persons were at risk of flooding (Buenos Aires Ciudad, 2015).

*Lake Soldati* in *Los Piletones* was once a part of the entertainment park *Parque Indoamericano*. The park was neglected in the 1980s because of funding problems. During this period the slum area *Los Piletones* was built next to the lake. The *Lake Soldati* and the surrounding area has been a dump-yard from the 1940s until 1995, causing environmental and health-related problems. The area has also had problems with violence and conflicts. In 2010, people started to occupy neglected parts of *Parque Indoamericano*, next to *Los Piletones*. This led to conflicts with the police and the community and also amongst different groups in the area. The federal military helped with the cleaning of the area (Jastreblasky, 2010).

The people here face high levels of environmental contamination, poverty, unemployment and difficulties in accessing health care and education systems (SECHI, 2016, p. 5). A project started in 2008 and in 2014 the work of charging, managing and controlling urban sanitation, waste treatment and public space enhancement was set in practice (SECHI, 2016, p. 6).



Figure 9 *Lago Soldati* and *Los Piletones* in the beginning of the project. Before the restoration of the lake (Söderström 2015).



## The project Viva Lago Soldati

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The project *Viva Lago Soldati*, or in English, *Live Soldati Lake*, is ongoing together with other projects in the area surrounding *Lake Soldati*. It is a part of the master plan for territorial unit 8, to manage water floods in the area and to make place for Youth Olympics Games 2018 (Interviewed\_3, 2016). The World Bank is an important financer in the project making demands concerning levels of civil participation and social inclusion in the project (Interviewed\_1, 2016) (Interviewed\_3, 2016) (Interviewed\_4, 2016).

There are several projects and processes connected with each other to make the area a better place to live in. The projects, *Social management of habitat- Los Piletones and Nueva Esperanza Neighbourhoods* together with project *Soldati Lake* aim to change the living conditions in the slum. They aim to urbanise the area by constructing new houses, public spaces, social work together with environmental improvements. The cleaning and restoration of *Lake Soldati* will make the lake useful as a water regulator, preventing flooding for 12,000 dwellers (SECHI, 2016, p. 1). Important parts in the project have been controlling the population of rats in the area and educating about the environment. The project has also relocated some people living in areas with extra high risk of flooding to newly built houses. The move was necessary to make room for public space and to save people from contaminated flooding, but everybody is not happy with the new houses (Interviewed\_1, 2016).



Figur 10 Lake Soldati after resoration 2016-05-11



## Actors in the project

”This Project consists of a comprehensive, multidisciplinary and participative approach which involves the local community and different agencies from the City Government.” (SECHI, 2016, p. 1)

Some of the agencies involved in the work of the project have been/are: The Undersecretariat of Habitat and Inclusion (SECHI), the Southern Buenos Aires Corporation (CBAS), the Ministry of Environment and Public Space (MAYEP), University of Buenos Aires (UBA) School of Exact Science and the World Bank, which has been founding the actual work (SECHI, 2016, pp. 2,3).’

In 2009, a professional team started a dialogue with the residents in *Los Piletones*. They presented the official proposal and incorporated needs and answers expressed by the community (Castro, 2014). SECHI worked with a professional multi-disciplinary group together with five young people, two from the neighborhood, on the implementation of civil participation and inclusion in the project. The young employed from the neighborhood had an important role in making workers from outside the area feel secure in their work. They informed dwellers and groups inside the Villa before meetings and the work on site, to prepare a safe process. (Interviewed\_1, 2016) (Interviewed\_3, 2016).

People from corporations inside the community worked inside the project with easy work such as basic construction work, garbage treatment, and extinction of rats. Professionals had the responsibility of leading the work and performing the technical and more complicated work in the project (Interviewed\_1, 2016).



Figur 11 President Mauricio Macri at one of his visits in *Los Piletones* together with Margarita Barrientos (Macri 2009).

One important leader in neighborhood near *Los Piletones* says that in order to build something together in a self-organised structure, it is important with a strong community to be able to reach consensus. *Los Piletones* is an area with an already strong community which makes it easier and more successful to work in. It is a small community in comparison to the surrounding slums confined between the road and the lake (Interviewed\_6, 2016). They also have a strong leading figure inside the community, Margarita Barrientos founder of Fundación Margarita Barrientos. The foundation has helped many people in the neighborhood and has been a strong media voice for change in the area and played an important role in the project (Interviewed\_3, 2016).

At the same time, there have been conflicts between different groups during the process. The conflicts in the area have been between different groups where some groups have felt disregarded (Interviewed\_1, 2016) (Interviewed\_3, 2016). The project defined 7 groups in the area and started to talk to the leaders inside those groups. The money and the dialogue was later reduced to only two groups and distributed by only two leaders. These leaders do not work together and are described as rivals. Margarita Barrientos group got most of the money and power in the project (Interviewed\_3, 2016). For Mauricio Macri, the president of Argentina, the projects in *Los Piletones* have been important and were used in the election campaign. He supports Margarita with money and gets a positive media picture in return (Interviewed\_3, 2016).

Some dwellers, led by “negative leaders”, have been against the project, showing their refusal to take part by demonstrating and actively working against the project (Interviewed\_1, 2016). One of the interviewed says that it has to do with the criminality and the strong hierarchies in the Villa, where leaders are afraid of losing power. An uneven distribution of power and money to different local leaders in the project is also one of the causes of people working against the project according to another interviewee (Interviewed\_3, 2016).

## Which neighbors participated in the project?

The project worked with group meetings where neighbours discussed the project. Dwellers were invited according to geographical belonging inside the community and the meetings had no special target groups. There have also been workshops in the area. The workshops have not always been directly about the project but a way of building trust through presence in the area (Interviewed\_1, 2016). The project also worked with “positive key persons” or “positive leaders” in the community. They are important for building trust in the area and to link authorities and the community together (Interviewed\_1, 2016) (Interviewed\_3, 2016) (Interviewed\_5, 2016) (Interviewed\_4, 2016).



Figure 12 Picture made by a child living in Piletones during a workshop about the present situation of the lake and the future (SECHI).

In the beginning of the project, the participatory team aimed to work separately with including women in the project, but it was reduced to only one workshop were 10-12 women helped designing the logo for the project (Interviewed\_3, 2016). Women, especially women with children, have been involved in the process anyway. They often show up to activities and workshops and are interested in the process of the project, wanting to help (Interviewed\_4, 2016).

The project has worked especially with children in the area as a target group (Interviewed\_3, 2016). In different ways, they have used the lake project as a way of teaching the children about caring for their environment and about their surroundings. There have also been workshops and community events to involve local children in the project, and to create a positive attitude towards it. In different ways, the children have been involved to express their expectations and thoughts about the project (Interviewed\_1, 2016). Many of the people interviewed describes the work with children in the project as a great success.

One of the interviewed say that teenagers are a group that is always hard to get involved in community activities, which was also the case in this project. Men are also hard to involve in some ways. They rarely show up at workshops and activities but come to more formal meetings and are involved by working inside the project in easy tasks for money (Interviewed\_4, 2016).



*Figure 13 Participation with Children in Los Piletones (SECHI).*



## Participation in the project

The project used different ways of working with civil participation. The employment of dwellers inside the area was one way of being able to build trust and a prerequisite for the security of working in the area. Working with already strong groups and NGOs inside the Villa was a way of reaching out to the people. Workshops, especially those involving children, taught people about the environment and helped building trust for the government (Interviewed\_1, 2016) (Interviewed\_2, 2016). The project also used door-to-door methods to gather and provide information. There were also meetings with the different groups at the start of the project. Information boards were posted in busy public places and information folders with different topics were handed out (Interviewed\_2, 2016) (Interviewed\_1, 2016) (Interviewed\_3, 2016). Another method that was considered successful was the *Wish Box*, where people could submit a piece of paper with ideas for the project. Many of the ideas were things that were already planned but some were used in the design of the area around *Lake Soldati*, such as sports facilities, and parks around the lake (Interviewed\_1, 2016).

One interviewee said that SECHI's work with civil participation in the project empowers people of the slum and strengthens the community. Participation gives the people a chance to contribute and to be a part of the development of their neighbourhood at the same time as the trust for the government improves.



Figure 14 Direct dialogue with the residents in Los Piletones (SEHI).

Another interviewee gives a more critical description. He describes slums as a political playground in Argentina, and that this created problems in the project.

“Nobody want to participate in this landscape of conflict, nobody wants to participate. Why do people have to participate in this?” (Interviewed\_3, 2016)

According to the same interviewee, president Macri's support for Margarita Barrientos, together with the using of the project for Macri's election campaign affected the project and the participation in the project in a negative way. The political landscape of Argentina makes it hard to work with a bottom-up approach especially in *Los Piletones*. He is positive when it comes to working with civil participation, but he also explains that the dwellers' perspectives doesn't always fits in the participatory ideal.

According to him, people living in the Villas do not have the same picture of the city and thus not the same perspective on “urbanisation”. For them the city is a place where they go to work but also a place where they are discriminated and excluded. The people living in *Los Piletones* have bigger problems than people in the city and do not have time to participate. He is positive to participation but at the same time he does not see a solution to the slum problematics in making the dwellers responsible for building their own neighbourhood. They do not have the energy or the education to work with urban dimensions. The government need to take responsibility for urbanising Villas and making housing policies (Interviewed\_3, 2016).

One interviewee says that political timing was not always in their favour. The timeframe was important and affected the process and the speed of the project. The dialogue was not necessarily effected in a negative way but how the things were made. They needed to complete some parts of the project within a narrow timeframe (Interviewed\_4, 2016).

The meetings were described as chaotic and sometimes with a violent atmosphere. People went to the meetings not to talk about the project, but to express that they wanted jobs inside the project (Interviewed\_3, 2016) (Interviewed\_1, 2016).



*Figure 15 Meeting in Los Piletones regarding the masterplan for the area (SECHI).*

Even though there has been some critique concerning the participatory process several interviewees express that it would be hard to do things differently and most of them are happy with the result:

“The fact is that, in that social and political context it would not work to have another way of way of public participation. And we got that order that they needed the money from the World Bank. And we need it so quick because we are having a political campaign. We decided together, we need to do this like this.” (Interviewed\_3, 2016)

One of the key persons in the area mentioned the challenges of the project, connected with the historical absence or hostility of the government.

“The first challenge was to believe in the government. Because the government used to do very superficial cleaning of the lake. So we did not trust the government was going to do a lake in a slum. I did also not believe that they would take responsibility to the lake.”  
(Interviewed\_5, 2016)

The general view amongst the interviewed is that the participatory part of the project has worked well but one of the interviewees says that it could be done better by giving the community more power and making them a part of the decision-making process. She says that they tried their best but did not have enough staff, or staff with enough education or experience with participatory work.

## Levels of participation in the project

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The participatory process in the project was dynamic without a strict schedule. Despite of this, Hamdi and Goethert's more structured matrix is used to illustrate and analyse the levels of participation in the different phases of the project.

### **Initiating**

The basics of the project was already planned when the work with civil participation started. But the dwellers had a voice in NGOs that had expressed needs of the area in media and in Margarita Barrientos, who worked in the process of the project. The participatory team collected information from the dwellers in different ways to understand the community and their different needs (Interviewed\_3, 2016). This project lives up to a consultative level of participation in the beginning of the project.

### **Planning**

There were discussions during the planning stage with key persons and also in meetings with different groups (Interviewed\_3, 2016) (Interviewed\_1, 2016). The meetings were mostly about work opportunities for dwellers in the project (Interviewed\_3, 2016). Activities were planned together with people living in the area but plans about the physical structure were not discussed. A suggestion box gathered information about people's needs and wishes for the project. Some were incorporated in the late design of the area surrounding the lake. This was made without an open discussion (Interviewed\_3, 2016) (Interviewed\_1, 2016). Thus, the project took place on a consultative or a shared level.

## Design

The mainly physical design was made before civil participation started. Dwellers helped with expressing needs and interest in the area and made the logo for the lake through a workshop (Interviewed\_1, 2016) (Interviewed\_3, 2016). This stage lives up to the none or indirect level.

## Building/Implement

People were involved in the building process together with professionals from outside. Job opportunities within the project was distributed through NGOs and SECHI. (Interviewed\_1, 2016) (Interviewed\_3, 2016) (Interviewed\_2, 2016). The building stage of the process lives up to a shared level.

## Maintenance

It is hard if not impossible to know the future of this project. But there are already some initiatives to include people in the maintenance phase. People are hired to work with collecting garbage in the city, others were involved in the work against the rats or employed as staff on site for SECHI. In the application for the World Habitat award it is written:

“Regarding the social aspect of the Project into the future, we wish to create a group of women neighbours called “Women for the Lake”, in charge of taking care of the surrounding areas, such as squares and football fields. We aim at training them so that they can work as guardians of public spaces and that as a counterpart they get an allowance. (Buenos Aires Ciudad, 2016, p. 3)

The possibility for creating “Women for the lake” is depending on funding which does not exist today (Interviewed\_2, 2016).






Levels of Participation	Stages in projects				
	Initiate	Plan	Design	Implement	Maintain
None 					?
Indirect 					?
Consultative 					?
Shared Control 					?
Full Control 					?

Figure 16 The levels of participation in the projects different phases (Hamdi & Goethert, 1997). The Maintenance stage is not filled in because the project has not been finished yet (Laura Bergman 2016).

# Discussion

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## Dwellers as a driving force

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A slum can be seen as a *slum of hope* and/or *slum of despair*. UN-Habitat clearly states that the positive aspects of slums does not justify their existence, but works as a way of seeing slum as a place of opportunities in the making of policies (UN-Habitat, 2003, p. XXVI). The studied slum area, *Los Piletones*, gives a nuanced picture of the concept of slum. It strengthens both negative and positive aspects of slum. The area has high criminality and large social, environmental and economic problems. At the same time, it provides houses for 12000 people in a relatively central location. Many dwellers are engaged in the cultural and the social life in *Los Piletones*, which creates a lively community. I believe that it is important to see slums from both perspectives: *slum of despair* and *slum of hope*, in the planning for development through participation in slums. The despair is the conditions people are forced to live in, together with the structures in society that creates those conditions. The people in the areas must be seen as a positive driving force and a resource in developing those areas. The people are the *hope of the slum*, because participation with dwellers improves the design and success of the project through organising needs and demands to give people what they want. Dwellers have local knowledge and relevant facts, which can be helpful to the project. Involving local dwellers also make the project more sustainable by enhancing the residents' feeling of responsibility towards facilities which enhance sustainable development (Imparato & Ruster 2003, p.16). It is important also to be able to see the problems, the *despair of slums* which helps to acknowledge rights and obligations to show a clear picture of what needs to be done and help to plan the process.

Arila writes about the importance of designing projects with a bottom-up approach. This makes it possible to find and prioritise the specific needs of the community or the group (Arcila, 2008, p. 28). One of the interviewees talks about the participation in the project as a way of strengthening the community and empowering the people. But according to another interviewee, the project had difficulties working with a bottom-up approach due to the political landscape, where one group had a strong political support which lead to an uneven power distribution. This caused conflicts which made the participation hard to manage. It has been hard for me to understand the problems with the political landscape because Argentina's political landscape differs a lot from Sweden's. I have also felt that it was a sensitive question to investigate. It is clear that the political game affected the project, but it is hard to say how and to what extent. During my research, I have seen it as a deficiency not being able to talk openly about these questions. I think it is important to work for the possibility of an even power distribution and to be able to unite people instead of strengthening conflicts between different groups within the slum areas. Questions about the power distribution and support from politics should be lifted within a broader scale in the society, to take away suspicions of corruption. The local projects may have a hard time dealing with power distribution without creating more conflicts.



Imparato and Ruster write about the risk of loss of focus due to discussions about issues that are outside of the project frame. This happened during the meetings with the habitants in *Los Piletones*. People went to the meetings wanting job opportunities and not for discussing other aspects of the project. The reason for the loss of focus can be, as Imparato and Ruster describes, lack of good management. The dwellers will to discuss job opportunities was seen as a problem, according to the people I interviewed, because it took time and energy from other questions inside the project. At the same time, you can see the dwellers' need and will to discuss jobs as the most important question because it was the most important question to discuss for them. Maybe job opportunities should be a bigger part of the project or incorporated in another way because of the space it got when the dwellers had opportunities to express their voice. The project was not implemented by the community and I think it therefore makes it hard to create an interest for it. The project is mostly about environmental problems, health problems, sanitation problems and flooding problems. All of these issues effects the people living in the area but the lack of trust from the neighbourhood together with a long absence from the government also could have contributed to the difficulties of involving people in the issues.

## Which groups were involved?

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Arcila states that it is crucial to make a plan for whom and how many people that should participate because inviting everybody makes the process hard to manage. Therefore, it is important to find representatives or key persons inside the community, to be able to work with a smaller group (Arcila, 2008, pp. 36-37). The studied project has worked with key persons, which have been leaders for different groups. This has been necessary for building trust, to spread information and to manage all the interests and needs. At the same time, an uneven distribution of power between leaders has led to conflicts in the project. Some of the interviewed talks about negative and positive leaders inside the community which determines who to cooperate and work with. Another interviewee working in the participation project is critical to the uneven distribution of power without criticizing positive and negative leaders in the same way. These power structures are hard for me to fully understand but I believe that a more nuanced picture of the leaders could have made the dialogue easier in the project.

Different groups and people can have different needs and interests which is important to take into account. It is therefore important to have good knowledge about the community, the different actors inside it and the organisations involved (Arcila, 2008, pp. 36-37). There have been difficulties in treating the groups equally. This may be because of lack of knowledge about different groups inside the community, and conflicts regarding distribution of job opportunities and influence in the area. Criminality is one important factor which decides which groups the project chooses to work with. I would have wanted to see a plan and a discussion about how the project team had dealt with criminality and criminal groups in the participatory part of the project.

It is important to work especially with weaker groups in the community to work against discrimination and to empower weaker groups. Imparato and Ruster talk about the advantages in working particularly with women for a project to be successful (Imparato & Ruster, 2003, pp. 133-136). One of the interviewees says that women are a group that often shows up on happenings and is engaged in their community. Many of the leading figures inside *Los Piletones* are women. The project had plans for working especially with women but they were not implemented. Knowledge existed about the importance of working particularly with women, but I think a lack of implementation of plans in the project caused difficulties to generate such groups.

Many persons I have interviewed and talked to have been positive to the work with children in the community and the project. I see this as very positive, because the children are the future for the area. One of the reasons for the success of working with children may be that this work does not create conflicts in the same way as when working with adults. They are not yet so fixed in groups and separated in social networks. The work with children is also more of a teaching and playing situation, without discussions with risk of creating conflicts.

## Participation - to what extent?

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Hambdi and Goethert's matrix describes the process of planning participation, strict, clearly and in an easy way. The project *Viva Lago Soldati* has many parts and work with participation in different ways which makes the level of participation complicated to analyse. The participatory process was not planned in a linear way and this makes it hard to analyse through Goethert and Hamdis matrix. The dialogue has been diverse and consisted of more than the changing of the physical structure in the area.

The project was already planned before the civil participation started, which was one of the reasons why the civil participation in the project was limited. Moral aspects in handling criminality and criminal groups could also be one of the reasons why the people did not get even more influence in the project. The lack of trust for the government together with a lack of interest from the dwellers also limited the participation. The project clearly shows that the historical handling of slum still is present, and are effecting the relationship between slum dwellers and authorities. One keyperson in *Los Piletones* describes together with another interviewed, one of the bigger challenges in the project to be the lack of trust for the government due to the history of bad treatment or neglecting of the slum from the government.

I recognise some parts in the participation process as distribution of information, where the aim has been to educate the community, to make them care about environmental issues. The nature of the project, which was much about environmental issues, may demand this approach but I believe that this part also could have been done during more creative forms like with invited discussions to involve the dwellers. But also, more participation is not always better for the project (Imparato & Ruster 2003, p 16). I think it is always important to ask the questions about why a specific level is being used in a project together with the questions about which groups you invite and work with.

The general view of participation in the project was positive. However, there were also some more critics to it. One interviewee wished that people could have been more involved in the concrete decision-making. Another meant that there was a low interest by the dwellers to be involved because of the political landscape, which caused conflicts and an unpleasant communication climate. I believe that the project found means, pleasing many people regarding the level of participation which made the project possible. With even more competence and a more open communication climate the project could possibly be even more participatory. I believe it is important to understand the context of the project. Historical mistreatment, uncertain politics and a mistrust against authorities creates lack of trust in projects which is a challenge that I believe is sometimes more important to overcome than the actual involvement in the project.

The project *Viva Lago Soldati* did not reach consensus in the sense of everybody being happy with the project. There have been and are still conflicts. Some of the conflicts could maybe have been handled in other ways, with more people feeling involved in the project. But the outcome of the project is good with many people satisfied. The living conditions in the area are already much better. Imparato and Ruster say that you always should try to reach consensus in a project (Imparato & Ruster, 2003, p. 37). On the other hand, Hamdi says that consensus should not be a goal because it does not always lead to optimal solutions in a project (Hamdi, 2004, p. 137).

## The role of the World Bank in participatory development

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The case study is strengthening Miles Davis picture of the World Bank as an important player in the establishing of slum upgrading policies (Davis, 2006, p. 82). The project studied shows the World Banks power in implementing civil participation in slum upgrading programs through demands for finance. It is affecting the work by giving demands on numbers of people involved, but also demands on how the participation it is being done. I believe that the control from the World Bank, due to their finance improved the project by demands in numbers of dwellers involved and by the press they put on the project by their concern.

## Relevant future studies

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I believe that there will be a lot written about the area comuna 8 and Los *Piletones* because of the Youth Olympic Games in 2018 that will be in the area close to *Los Piletones*. The Olympics will have great effect on the area and it will be interesting to see how that development after the Youth Olympic Games will progress. What impact do people living in the area have regarding large scale plans? Civil participation in slum development is only studied in small scale projects according to Imparato and Ruster (2013). The dialogue in this big project would be interesting to study together with differences in participation and dialogue in the smaller scale.

I ask myself if the same social groups will be living in the area in the future or if the development is going towards a gentrification as one of the interviewed claimed as a possibility. This is possibly something that should be evaluated in the future but maybe also to be looked at today by using already exiting plans and documents. It is important for us to better understand the outcome of different types of participatory projects

I think that there are many topics and angles that had been easier to investigate for a native who understand the underlying tones, the cultural aspects and the people, the politic and the history better. At the same time, as a foreigner, I can get a clearer picture of the topic in the society because I have another possibility to see the structures in other ways because I do not live in them. One of my problems, was my lack of knowledge of the Spanish language. This was a problem when speaking to people, but also when reading the literature. I believe that there is a lot written that I could not obtain knowledge from. Therefore, I think it is important with more research written in English, and also more foreigners looking in to the field with Buenos Aires or Argentina as a case.

Another topic that I found interesting was how the professionals were managing criminality in the community and how the dialog with criminals in the project was undertaken. It would be interesting to see how different methods and tools could be used to have a dialogue with criminal groups. Do they have the same right in the dialog or have they lost it because of their criminality mark? It was hard for me to understand how the project handled these criminals and how they treated the illegal housing markets in slum upgrading projects.

## Concluding remarks

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There is a lot to learn about the nature of civil participation and how it can be used in slum upgrading projects. Slum is already a self-organized and self-built environment and the dwellers often lack trust for the government and other authorities. The purpose of the participatory process in the project *Viva Lago Soldati* was to a great extent about creating trust for the government and to create new ways of working in these areas. Prior projects in surrounding slums had been blackmailed and vandalised. It was therefore, in this project, very important to involve the community and to make them feel responsible for, and a part of, the project. The project had a special group working with participation.

They worked flexible, in many different ways to involve the community. They had meetings, workshops, worked with employed locals, used a wishing box, information papers and information boards. It has been possible to discuss theories about participation together with the case study even if the reality is more diverse and sometimes harder to understand than the theories. The levels of participation have differed during the project and were hard to analyse because different parts of the project were not made in a linear time schedule. However, according to my own analyse using Hamdi and Geotherts matrix there has been a high level of participation, especially in the building stage and there are plans for more participation in the maintenance phase.

Some dwellers and some groups were involved a lot in the project. Children were a group that the professional participatory team worked a lot with and the work was seen as very positive. Women were also engaged in many activities. The distribution of job opportunities inside the project was perceived as uneven by some. A strong leading figure got a lot of power, which to some extent was given from the present President Mauricio Macri. This caused conflicts with other groups which felt mistreated. The political landscape was hard for me as a foreigner to understand and I felt that it was a sensitive topic to investigate.

The project and the participatory part of the project are in general seen as positive and a success despite some conflicts.

The area is already a significantly better place to live in. SECHI is present in the area and are planning more activities to involve people in the process of developing their community. The future looks good for the area if the people living there are seen as the driving force in the development. It is important to keep on working actively with civil participation in similar projects. It is important for the future of the slum areas to analyse and examine how participation can be done in the most successful way.

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## Pictures

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