

PARTICIPATORY KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION AND THEIR TRANSFORMATIVE POTENTIAL FOR ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE:

The case of Matanza-Riachuelo river basin

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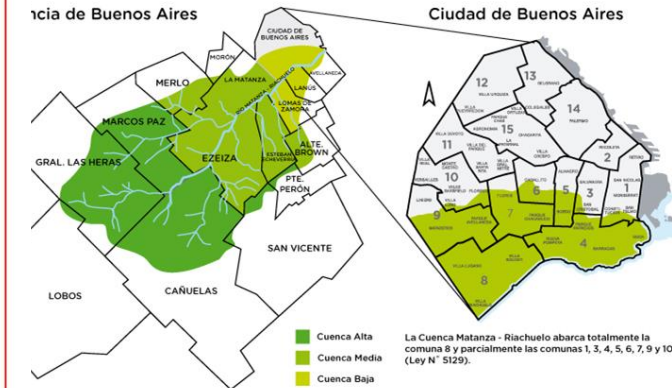
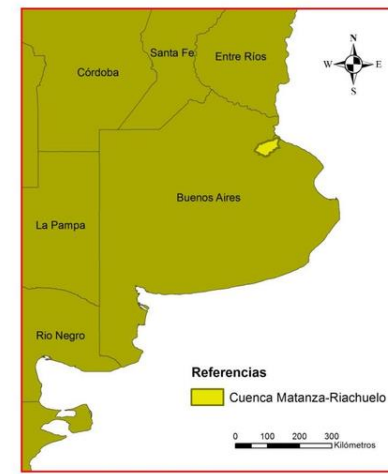
BUENOS AIRES RESEARCH AND INNOVATION ACTION

Matanza-Riachuelo basin communities are affected by:

- Environmental problems
- Social vulnerability
- Top-down policy

R&I Action goal: to promote citizen social science tools for environmental justice

Collaborative design of a platform of citizen generated information about socio-environmental risks



CENIT-UNSAM & FARN

design and coordination of participatory activities (workshops, hackaton, datathons)

KNOWLEDGE COALITION

assistance in the platform's design and with the project's participatory issues throughout its development

Co-researchers and Citizen Scientists

participation in collective activities of the platform's design and data analysis

CoAct Riachuelo Platform - QPR re-Open-source and open citizen generated data platform



BUILDING A KNOWLEDGE COALITION: ACTORS AND CHALLENGES

To promote transformation towards sustainable development :

- Diversity of participation in knowledge production (Bäckstrand, 2003; Gallopín & Vessuri, 2006; Stirling et al., 2007, Vessuri 2004)
- Four challenges in citizen science projects (Den Broeder et al., 2018; Heiss & Matthes, 2017; Kythreotis et al., 2019; Sauermann et al., 2020)
 - Participation
 - Sustainability
 - Academic/Institutional tensions
 - Results (data and knowledge) validation



Paper goal: review challenges and strategies of previous participatory knowledge production initiatives around socio-environmental issues of the Matanza-Riachuelo basin

THE HYDRIC FORUM IN LOMAS DE ZAMORA: A bottom-up counter-expert knowledge experience

([Merlinsky, 2013, 2017](#); [Pereira & Tobías, 2014](#); [Tobias, 2017](#))

Years: 2000 (2013) - to date

Addressed issue: consequences of flooding and lack of access to water and sewage

Type of actor boosting/leading the initiative: local neighbors

Methodology of involvement/engagement: popular epidemiology

Challenges

- Participation
 - heterogeneity of participating actors
 - urgency of the issues affecting vulnerable population
 - episodic character, required the commitment and leadership of a few actors promoting the alliances to carry forward the campaigns
- Sustainability
 - dependance on coordinating neighbors initiative
- Academic or Institutional tensions: authorities (both local and national) denial of the situation
- Results (data/information) validation:
 - technical viability
 - evidence had to be accompanied by direct action for its consideration



QUÉ PASA RIACHUELO: A CITIZEN DATA PLATFORM

(Ferro, 2017; Fressoli & Arza, 2016; Mira, 2016; Rosas & Mangini, 2013)

Years: 2011 (2013) - 2015

Addressed issue: lack of public participation in the implementation of the basin's sanitation policy

Type of actor boosting/leading the initiative: NGO (FARN)

Methodology of involvement/engagement: socio-environmental citizen monitoring

Challenges

● Participation

- lack of previous knowledge of socio-environmental risks from a portion of the targeted population
- lack of access to technology or difficulties for interacting with the platform
- fear of political backlash
- need of alliances with local and territorial organisations (workshops and promotion of the platform)

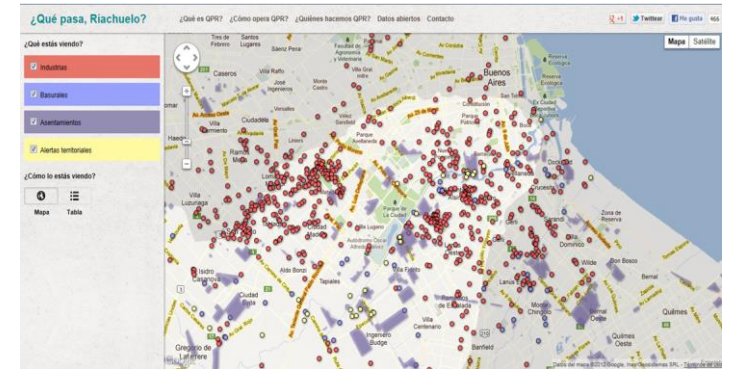
● Institutional tensions: dependence on the public authority's implementation of solutions to the reports

● Sustainability

- dependence on external funding, both for the development, update and maintenance of the platform and capacity building workshops
- some local and territorial organizations committed to political interests faced limits to promote participatory monitoring

● Results (data/information) validation

- outdated data from public authority
- concerns of potential partidiary manipulation of citizens reports



PAR WITH AUDIOVISUAL METHODOLOGIES FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

(Merlinsky, Aizcorbe, Fernández Bouzo, Gil, Ricco & Swistun, 2008; Fernández Bouzo, 2013, 2016)

Years: 2007 - 2008

Addressed issue: Environmental risk reduction

Type of actor boosting/leading the initiative: Researchers

Methodology: audiovisual + qualitative

Challenges



- **Participation**

- innovative character: researchers needed capacitation in audiovisual documentation tools
- gender issues: redistribution of care as a limit to participation
- inclusion of experts' point of view (not used to be recorded)

- **Sustainability:** dependence on external funding: Pro-Vention grant (supported by Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies)

- **Academic or Institutional tensions**

- time demanding methodological training + high cost of video editing process
- lack of support and recognition of the methodological approach (paper supremacy)

- **Results (data/information) validation**

- environmental conflicts documentation for universities courses (environmental humanities)
- appropriation by grassroots organizations to raise awareness and to pressure local government



PROTOCOL FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBLE HUMAN RESETTLEMENT PROCESS

(Swistun, Demoy, Yacovino, Olejarczyk, Campos & Lekerman, 2016; Swistun, 2013)

Years: 2013 - 2015

Addressed issue: lack of planification and understanding of human displacement' impacts

Type of actor boosting/leading the initiative: researchers with multiple memberships (academia, justice and public sector)

Methodology: co-design of a public policy management tool

Challenges

● Participation

- innovative multi stakeholders articulation
- collective and collaborative writing process

● Sustainability

- university and local government special cooperation agreement
- complex legal and administrative framework of financial management

● Academic or Institutional tensions

- lack of explicit evaluation criteria recognizing social impact of research in the tenure and career systems, in tension with an existing tradition of Latin American researchers working in design/implementation of public policy

● Results (data/information) validation

- resettlement processes protocol's approval by the Government and the Authority of the Matanza-Riachuelo River basin
- appropriation by the leaders of the affected communities for monitoring and negotiation of the displacements' conditions



CHALLENGES IN COMMON AND WORK AHEAD

Identified commonalities:

- technological barriers (innovative tools and methodologies): permanent update, maintenance and training
- external funding and lack of experience on interinstitutional agreements -> institutionalization of alliances and participatory initiatives

Next steps:

- further systematization of the initiatives challenges and inquiry about their solution strategies
- KC workshop to discuss specific challenges for our R&I action and potential strategies



THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

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