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## WHAT IS PARTICIPAD? PERSPECTIVES ON PARTICIPATORY ADVERTISING

ParticipAD is the short version of participatory advertising, a concept based on the participatory and interventionist potential of advertising.

Being one of the most influential institutions of our times, advertising has been enduring structural and conceptual changes that open new possibilities for consumer and citizen participation both in the advertising process and in its outputs. Driven by new technologies and a media ecology that is changing how we engage in society, fuelled by consumer awareness and agency on one side and by the advertising industry's unending quest for new and impactful forms of communication on the other, participatory advertising involves co-creation and shared contents. It is driven by discourses of optimism and progress, which sometimes give the impression that participatory advertising is located in an almost cathartic promised land of possibilities. Despite these promises, we should keep in mind there are limits, for instance, given the pervasive economic power held by the players of the advertising industry. They still position themselves, and are frequently perceived as the common answer to the sustainability of projects, a claim that also needs to be qualified and not accepted at face value. Furthermore, the role of advertising as a cultural, social and economic frame of the contemporary conjuncture produces a rich field for research and critical thinking, dealing with the paradoxical and improbable equilibria between private vs public, economic vs cultural, and corporate vs community interests, just to name a few.

The subtitle of this book – a global perspective with a Latin American focus – is inspired on the theme of an IAMCR 2017<sup>1</sup> pre-conference, held

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<sup>1</sup> The IAMCR 2017 conference, "Transforming Culture, Politics & Communication: New media, new territories, new discourses" took place in Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, 16 – 20 July 2017: <http://cartagena2017.iamcr.org/static/>

on the 14<sup>th</sup> July 2017, at the Uniminuto University headquarters, in Bogotá. The Bulletpen case, presented by the advertising agency McCann Colombia, set the tone for an immersive enriching experience, debating the participatory possibilities of advertising. Fascinating cases of the alternative use of advertising, whether as a system, a *modus operandi* or simply as a code for other purposes other than the conventional profit, revenue and economic driver were presented and discussed. Some of those presented cases were further developed for this publication.

Nico Carpentier guides us through this unexplored territory with “Outside the comfort zone: participation, persuasion and consumption”, an article that creates an overview of the structuring elements of participatory theory and critically discusses a series of advertising-related practices and power dynamics, highlighting governmentality and potentially exploitative relations.

In “Advertising as a platform for consumer-citizen’ participation and citizenship” Ana Duarte Melo proposes an alternative approach to advertising that, contrary to the traditional perspective that diabolizes it, as a cornerstone of the capitalist system, readdresses it by emphasizing its participatory potential for active citizenship.

Remaining on the alternative-approach track, Sara Balonas is “Decoding advertising in the social sphere”, and proposes the reconfiguration of advertising’s social role, in particular regarding its contribution to enhancing citizenship and the recognition of advertising’ capital as a social change operator.

Moving from war to peace, from conflict to education, is the essence of “The bulletpen”, a case study presented by Alejandro Bermudez, Executive Creative Director of McCann Colombia. Turning bullets into pens – one of which was used to sign the Peace Treaties – after 50 years of civil war. It helped to change good intentions into tangible results and was recognized by the advertising industry with a remarkable set of prizes.

The Colombian armed conflict and its aftermath are, in fact, at the core of other articles. In “*For the war nothing*: advertising and citizen action in Bogota on the Colombian armed conflict”, Ana Guglielmucci and Carlos Santacruz, present the “iniciativas de memoria, activación del patrimonio y comunicación publicitaria en torno al centro de “Memoria, Paz y Reconciliación (CMPyR) de Bogotá” research project. The authors note the relevance of more inclusive memory initiatives, developed through collaborative and deliberative work, supported by aesthetic devices, in the scope of transitional justice process.

In a study on “Framing and agenda setting within the peace process”, Camilo Perdomo analyses how the media portrayed the different proposals on the reform of the state at the negotiation table between the FARC guerrilla and the Colombian government. The author discusses and raises questions about the interpretation and positioning bias, made visible through the research.

Three authors, Andrés Montoya, Carlos Santacruz and Javier Jiménez, lead the way through a visit to the Virtual Urban Museum of Bogotá (Muvbe.co) and discuss the development of applications for mobile and digital devices in the Bogotá Ephemeral (BE) project. In “Urban memory of Bogotá – application design for digital devices and creation of a virtual urban museum for Bogotá” they address the participatory process that combines technology, culture and curatorial deliberations in order to set a repository of the manifestations and expressions of cultures in the city of Bogotá.

The cultural expression of another particular community in Colombia is exhibited in the “Contemporary gallery of Cartagena de Indias popular art – vernacular advertising”. Javier Jimenez guides us through the streets of Cartagena, reflecting on how popular art and vernacular advertising, namely, the urban posters of “El Runner”, are breakthrough legitimization processes standing out as resilient forms of expression.

The struggle for independence of community media projects in India got the attention, and the participation as an activist, of Siddharth Chadha. The chapter “Re-thinking sustainability in community video – a case against private sector involvement in community video projects in India” argues to set limits to the reach of advertising, and commercial enterprise in general. The author elaborates on the participatory and sustainability challenges such projects face, taking into account the fact they are based on principles of social and political change.

In sum, the present ebook reunites a diversity of insights about one of the most influential and pervasive systems of contemporary societies, combining articles from both academia and the industry. Notwithstanding the different formats used, it offers both theoretical discussion on, and critical questioning of, advertising practices, both traditional and alternative. Highlighting the very particular cases that address a variety of issues, ranging from peace to memory, from social causes to community empowerment, and identity formation, from stereotyping to the support for heterogeneity.

This book is based on a project of the Participatory Communication Research (PCR) section management team of the International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR). It had the indispensable

support of CECS – Communication and Society Research Centre (University of Minho, Portugal), Uniminuto University (Bogotá, Colombia) and IAMCR.

In line with the inclusive values of IAMCR, this project, and the resulting book, provide bilingual content, in English and Spanish. All abstracts and authors' biographies are available in both languages. This also applies to this introductory article and to the Bulletpen case study, which also have been translated. Unfortunately, the resources to translate all chapters in English or Spanish were not available.

The editors and the Participatory Communication Research (PCR) management would like to thank to all those who contributed directly or indirectly to this book and do wish you a fruitful reading.

Quote:

Melo, A. D., Duque, M., Carpentier, N. & Chadha, S. (2018). What is ParticipAD? Perspectives on participatory advertising. In A. D. Melo & M. Duque (Eds.), *ParticipAD – Participatory advertising: a global perspective with a Latin American focus / Publicidad participativa: una perspectiva global con un enfoque latinoamericano* (pp. 5-8). Braga: CECS.