

# CIDADANIA PARA A SUSTENTABILIDADE

2-5 JULHO'13 . CASCAIS . PORTUGAL  
CENTRO DE CONGRESSOS DO ESTORIL



CASCAIS  
Elevada às Pessoas



O I D P



CATÓLICA PORTO  
BIOTECNOLOGIA



*Citizens for Sustainability  
2-5 July 2013 – Cascais - Portugal  
Palace of Congresses Estoril*

## CASCAIS DECLARATION

The 13<sup>th</sup> Conference of the International Observatory on Participatory Democracy was held in Cascais, from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> July 2013, under the title “Citizenry for Sustainability”.

The problems that were dealt with during the Conference served to highlight both the challenges facing democracy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the paradoxical situation in which it finds itself.

The universalisation of democracy’s principles and procedures has gone hand in hand with the crisis of political representativeness that has arisen in numerous countries with this form of government. This is a complex and unsettling situation that obliges us to place emphasis on the quality of the different forms of government that exist in states in which democracy has become consolidated.

The concentration of power in supranational spheres, such as the IMF, the WTO and the United Nations constitutes one of the most fragile aspects of the sovereignty of the state and of democracy itself. To this we must also add the absolute power exercised by the top international banks and the rating agencies, which in many countries determine the direction that public policies must take and the governing models. The so called “austerity policies” are nothing more than a direct consequence of this reality.

The existence of this concentration of powers, beyond the sphere or control of elected governments and the citizens renders rather surprising, to say the least, the affirmation that the demands of democracy are being met, due to the mere fact that a government is elected by its people and is, in principle, responsible.

It is a situation that has generated waves of “democratic discontent” around the world and a diffuse sense of unease that affects very different sectors of the social fabric, adopting different forms, including massive public demonstrations, high levels of electoral abstention and an endemic lack of trust in public institutions.

Surprisingly, a series of extremely important social demonstrations have taken place in recent years that have brought together different groups, age bands and professional sectors, to demand more democracy, more participation and more transparency.

In endless countries electoral processes have to face up to very high levels of abstention, which is an evident sign that representative democracy is losing its energy and is no longer a mobilising force for a great many people. The vote is a historical right, which in its day was the basis of an immense social and political struggle, but in many countries it is currently undergoing a rapid process of devaluation. Many ordinary citizens now consider the vote to be a fictitious power, the exercise of which serves no purpose, given that the true centres of influence and decision making lie beyond the scope of elections.

The growing distrust of the political class and institutions is intimately related to the above questions. Most likely this is one of the main fissures that exists in the democratic systems and should be grounds for widespread concern. Trust is the driving force of democracy, the delegation of power through the vote, and as a result the deployment of all of the necessary forces to change the present situation is paramount.

In view of the above, traditional representative democracy appears to be incapable of dealing with the new challenges facing society and of mobilising the hearts and minds of the people.

From Cascais, brought together here at the 13<sup>th</sup> IOPD Conference, we declare our determination to oppose these tendencies and we challenge all local governments and social stakeholders to follow our lead. And to this end we shall give priority to three fronts of action:

#### **I. Democratising Planning**

Planning cannot continue to take place behind closed doors at the hands of a reduced group of representatives and the technicians that assess them. The design of public policies for a territory must count on the active commitment of the citizens that live or work there.

In the same way, planning must be responsible and base itself on a correct and sustainable use of natural resources. To this end, *citizenship* and *sustainability* are two sides of the same coin. And so, we acknowledge the importance of certain planning instruments, such as Agenda 21, at a local level and the groups

of citizens and local governments that are committed to the initiatives of transition.

## **II. Democratising Democracy**

From Cascais we defend a new wave of democratisation, but this time of democracy itself. We commit ourselves to do all that is possible to ensure the emergence of a new democracy that is based on the primacy of participation, representation and citizenship. We refer to democracy with a renewed spirit, capable of rebuilding trust both between governments and the governed and among the governed themselves; a humanist democracy that places citizens at the centre of all political activity; a new democracy that transposes the principles of human ecology onto politics. At the end of the day, a true democracy is one that is built by the citizens, for the citizens and with the citizens.

For all of these reasons, from Cascais we commit ourselves to setting in motion mechanisms of co-decision making with regard to public resources, such as the Participatory Budget. We refer to *participatory budgets* that are binding, that will transform the relationship between governments and the governed and that will promote justice and social cohesion. Likewise, we also defend all measures that favour the concept of “open government” and transparency, a government that is capable of generating useful information that will contribute to the active participation of the citizens.

## **III. Democratising the Economy**

The markets cannot continue to ride roughshod over humanist values and the citizens. We cannot tolerate the fact that the economy and the financial system have wrestled primacy from politics and from social life. We cannot accept that economic results take preference of place over democracy.

The creation and distribution of wealth must not be based on financial and speculative systems, insofar as these systems have amply shown what they are capable of. For all of these reasons, from Cascais we declare our commitment to the creation of new economic and financial systems that reinforce the creation of local wealth, increase the value of the products and competences of each territory and guarantee a greater distribution of the benefits of development.

We undertake to bring all necessary forces into play in this respect, in order to create local currencies, the purpose of which is to benefit economies of proximity and increase the value of productive activities, in detriment to those that are speculative. We seek an economy that is more democratic and that

favours very diverse forms for the production and acquisition of goods and services; we seek an economy that is based on the primacy of trust and on the citizens.

From Cascais, meeting together at this Conference, we challenge everyone that is here, along with all local governments and social groups around the world, to take this path, along with us. A fascinating journey awaits us, by way of innovation, creativity, equality and fraternity.

Cascais, 5<sup>th</sup> July 2013