

INTERNAL WORK SESSION

Members of the International Observatory of Participative Democracy

10th Conference of the OIDP. Mexico City, 17th November 2010.

The annual internal session of OIDP associate and collaborative members took place within the framework of the 10th International Conference of the OIDP, held this year in Mexico City on 17th, 18th and 19th November (in parallel with the UCLG World Congress, and the meetings of other international local authorities' networks) for the purpose of validating the activities of the previous year, as well as approving other tasks and initiatives of interest to the network in the future.

1. Welcome

Alberto Martínez, as the Coordinator of the Secretariat of Social Development's Community Programme for Neighbourhood Improvement, for the Government of Mexico DF, acting on behalf of the OIDP Presidency, outlined the contents of the Conference.

Rocío Lombera, President of COPEVI (Operational Centre for Housing and Population) and on behalf of Mexican organised civil society, stressed the collaboration between the different kinds of actors with regard to the design and organisation of the Conference, and raised a number of methodological questions relative to the development of the sessions.

Ramon Nicolau, member of the Barcelona City Council and maximum representative of the OIDP Technical Secretariat, underlined the interest of the theme that had been chosen due to its immense topicality and because of the possibility that it allows for providing the participating cities with elements that will allow them to overcome the challenges that they face daily at the present time. Despite expressing his regret that many of the towns and cities had not been able to come due to the reduction in costs of the public administrations, he also encouraged participation in the present work session, taking advantage of the possibility of the physical encounter between the members of the network offered by the annual assembly and urged all of those present to work with a view to the next two years.

2. OIDP 2010 Management Report

Ramon Nicolau presented the Management Report, drawn up by the Technical Secretariat. This document contains a succinct description of the activities carried out at the 9th OIDP Conference held in Reggio Emilia (Italy) in 2009 and incorporates a retrospective view of the work done by the network so that it be known, debated and approved. The network's member towns and cities also participated in this Report and were co-responsible for, and sharing a leading role in, all that has been achieved throughout the year as an exercise and democratic practice.

As a question to be stressed, with regard to management within the framework of the Technical Secretariat, Ramon Nicolau indicated that, in the line with the austerity policies affecting European administrations, Barcelona City Council had been obliged to reduce costs during the present financial year and that this had meant that the staff of the Technical Secretariat had been reduced from two people, to just one, in April, and that there had also been a reduction of the municipality's technical presence at preparatory meetings and at the Conference itself. He then went on to stress that these measures had not been at the cost of the presence of a representative of the city's associative movement and the maintenance of the economic provision for the activities programme.

This report can be read online at our web. You will find it in the section "Documents" in the private members' area, to which access can be gained by entering your password and assigned user name.

After the presentation of the Report had concluded, Antonio Aniesa –Head of International Relations for the Nanterre City Hall– emphasised that the existence of candidate towns and cities to take over the presidency of the network (and consequently also to host the annual conference) in 2012 and 2013 is a demonstration of the interest in and need for the OIDP. He also commented that it was necessary to construct a network that was of use to local authorities, beyond the Conferences themselves, and that bilateral exchanges between the towns and cities in the network can help them to become more efficient in their projects and local policies. He then added that the situation of participatory democracy was more difficult now than it had been 10 years ago and that, although we cannot talk about regression, in the present context there are a number of important challenges that the OIDP must contribute to overcoming. As an example he mentioned the policy position document on which work is being done at the CISDP (Committee on Social Inclusion and Participative Democracy) or in the FAL (Local Authorities Forum) and the tackling of metropolitan questions by the FALP (Forum of Peripheral Local Authorities) as elements of work that are currently useful for towns and cities. Finally he concluded by saying that, while the subject matter of the present Conference was of great interest, that he did not believe that it would generate any useful tools for local governments, insofar that it was necessary to work in an overall sense (from a metropolitan perspective yet also bearing the periphery in mind) rather than a strictly local sense. He thanked the Technical Secretariat for their presence at the II FALP Conference in Getafe (June 2010) as a first attempt to bring the two networks closer together, and stressed that the OIDP must start to work on participation from the perspective of the metropolis.

On the other hand, Giovanni Allegretti –Investigator at the Centre for Social Studies of the University of Coimbra– added another event to the OIDP 2011 calendar, inviting all of the members of the network to attend:

- The PARLOCAL Project: an attendance training course for technical participation processes personnel, to be held in Malaga from 17th to 22nd January.

Summarising these two interventions, Ramón Nicolau thanked the members of the OIDP for the trust that they had shown and the Management Report presented was approved. In continuation the contents of the 11th Conference were presented by the City of Lleida, as the future holder of the OIDP Presidency, in 2011.

3. Presentation of the contents of the 11th OIDP Conference: “New Technologies and Citizens’ Participation. Civil Society and Instruments of Communication”. Lleida (Catalonia-Spain) 6th, 7th and 8th April 2011.

Joan Gómez, Participation Councillor of the Lleida City Council, started his intervention by referring to the change in the usual dates for the holding of the annual Conference, with the mention of climatologic factors and also referred to the agreement reached with the Comú d’Andorra la Vella (Andorra la Vella Town Hall) with regard to the organisation of the 11th Conference, underlining the leisure possibilities that this independent state can offer, and which will allow for a complementary day to be added to the holding of the Conference, following three days of intense work.

He mentioned the fact that the City of Lleida will preside the NICT Commission of the FEMP (Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces) and that within the framework of the municipal action policies which are being carried out, that cohesion and proximity have priority (Lleida, City of People). In this context he defined the choice of this subject matter for the 11th Conference and went on to describe the 3 work axes that make it up. He also associated the location (the Llotja) with this context, as it is a space that offers multiple possibilities.

Having dealt with this aspect he then went on to explain the questions of logistics regarding the location of the city and its infrastructures, accommodation and questions of simultaneous translation (confirming that this will be in English, French, Spanish and Catalan for all sessions). He concluded his intervention by handing the floor over to Josep Pons –Head of

Participatory Action for the Lleida City Council– and, finally, informed that the parallel events will be published in brief, along with the definitive program.

Josep Pons continued by explaining, to all of those in attendance, the outline chart for speakers who are going to take part, along with other questions associated with registration.

When the floor had been opened to questions and remarks, Ramon Nicolau mentioned that any suggestion could be sent in writing to the Secretariat of the 11th Conference via the web page for the event. Giovanni Allegretti also intervened, pointing out that the added value that the OIDP could bring to the design of the program was the incorporation of the social inclusion perspective, and proposed Thiago Peixoto (the Brazilian Member of Parliament and World Bank collaborator) as a possible speaker. Alberto Martínez seconded this proposal. Joan Gómez responded that the Presidency has anticipated the spaces for debate as ideal locations in which to deal with question related to the “Digital Divide”.

For his part, Antonio Aniesa added that, given the present context local authorities did not have as many resources for travel and that it was important that towns and cities could be incorporated into the program so that their voices could be heard and to give value to the Conference as a space of useful exchange for them. From his experience as one of the organisers of the 7th OIDP Conference he also mentioned the fact that the more towns, cities and actors there were the greater would be the power to convene.

Josep Pons then added that this question is scheduled to be included in the debate and that he himself would organise this jointly with the towns and cities. He also clarified that somebody is responsible for each axis, with a view to drafting the Final Declaration, and that the conclusions reached would be passed on to all of the cities that are members of the network.

Finally, Paulo Quaresma –President of the Carnide Parish Council– asked whether the design and organisation took into account the involvement of local organisations. Joan Gómez answered that the challenge is to have a person that represents the city’s entities as a speaker in each of the thematic axes. Ramon Nicolau added that Àngel Ros, the Mayor of Lleida, has a long trajectory in the associative local world as the main policy representative in the city.

4. Presentation of the Candidacy of the City of Porto Alegre to hold the 12th Conference and to be the seat of the Presidency in 2012.

The Mayor, José Fortunati, made a presentation of the city to those attending and explained the long tradition of Porto Alegre in the world of participatory democracy and also within the OIDP. He also stressed the international projection of the city at the present time, through the organisation of a number of mega-events, such as the World Social Forum, in January this year, and part of the Football World Cup in 2014, as well as a new edition of the World Conference on the Development of Cities, making it evident that Porto Alegre has taken a great interest in tackling urban transformation and how the holding of these kinds of mega-events can contribute towards that end.

César Busatto, Municipal Secretary of Local Policy and Governance Coordination for the Porto Alegre City Council, then continued by adding that the current urban reality is far removed from classical conceptions, explaining that towns and cities are changing and that this context of transformation has also brought with it changes in local policy, which have generated new challenges for local authorities. He went on to talk about ObservaPOA (the Porto Alegre Observatory) and the city’s OLDP (Local Observatory of Participatory Democracy), and mentioned that at the present time the city of Porto Alegre is facing up to the challenge of democratising information. He also pointed out that, normally, participation in Porto Alegre is highly technocratic and that they believe it is necessary to incorporate the potential of the society so that they can develop their own participatory assets, as well as participating in the usual ways.

Within this framework, Mr. Busatto then announced the main theme of the Conference – Democracy in the City and Major Urban Transformations– along with the main goal –to reflect on the intense transformations being experienced by towns and cities, as well as the necessary guarantee of citizens’ participation– before moving on to discuss the 3 thematic axes anticipated in order take a detailed look at the central theme:

1. Urban Planning and Participation: How to ensure the transition of communities of vindication to communities of planning and projects.
2. Participation of the Population in the Construction of “Mega-Events” - Impacts and Popular Participation: How to obtain social inclusion and local development results, and how to generate cooperative and solidary environments.
3. Innovative Democratic Management and Participation Experiences: What have towns and cities produced in terms of management innovation and the participation of towns and cities?

He also discussed methodological questions, such as that the 12th OIDP Conference will include an opening conference and various central panels as a kind of framework and starting points for the debates regarding the different axes, and that after the intervention of the corresponding panel, each axis will hold sessions for the presentation of selected practices and studies, and that the conference will include a call for papers for these sessions.

Finally he indicated the creation of a Coordinating Committee as the maximum deliberative body for the Conference; a Scientific Committee, as the consultative body responsible for the content and taking charge of the selection of works received; and an Organising Committee, in charge of the operational organisation of the Conference. The first of these, as well as the 2012 Presidency and the OIDP Technical Secretariat, will include representatives of the academic world and the city’s social participation network; the second will be made up of intellectuals and academics; while the last will be made up of representatives of the 2012 Presidency and the OIDP Technical Secretariat.

He concluded by announcing the dates for April 2012 in the line of maintaining the proposals for the 2011 Presidency.

Following the Porto Alegre intervention Yves Cabannes, as the coordinator of a UNO work group concerned with the question of evictions, discussed the fact that, while urban renovation processes do take place during “mega-events” it is also necessary to take into account that, at one and the same time, there are also evictions, like two sides of the same coin. As a result, Yves Cabannes suggested that this perspective be incorporated into the Conference. C ezar Busatto accepted the pertinence of the observation and undertook to incorporate this aspect.

With this consideration the candidacy of the City of Porto Alegre as the 2012 Presidency was approved.

5. Presentation of the Candidacy of the Carnide Parish Council (Lisbon) to host the 13th Conference and to hold the 2013 Presidency.

Ramon Nicolau points out that, according to the OIDP dynamic, the formal presentation of the candidacy must take place within the framework of the 11th Conference, next April, in Lleida. Nevertheless, he handed over the floor to Paulo Quaresma –President of the Carnide Parish Council– so that he could inform the member towns and cities in attendance of their intention to host the 13th Conference.

And so Paulo Quaresma presented this pre-candidacy, stressing the long and strong associative tradition of Carnide and how the Parish Council have stressed the promotion of the associative movement as a strategy for the promotion of the permanent and active participation of its citizens.

In this sense, he also proposed the organisation of a conference that, as its central theme, would get to grips with the good practices of the associative movement (with all of its potentialities and limitations). To this end, he stated, the main challenge would be to involve all of the associations in the territory in the organisation of the Conference, in order for it to be as participative as possible.

As well as seeking the participation of civil society, Paulo Quaresma also emphasised the involvement of the Lisbon Municipal Chamber, the Lisbon Municipal Assembly, the National Association of Parish Councils, the National Association of Portuguese Municipalities, the National Confederation of Culture and Recreational Collectives, the Association of Collectives of the Lisbon City Council, The Lisbon College of Higher Education and the Social Development Institute.

To conclude his intervention he then indicated that April of 2013 would be a good month to hold the conference, in line with the previous two conferences.

The formal decision however was put off until the Internal Session to be held on 6th April 2011, in Lleida. Ramon Nicolau then brought the discussion of this point to a close, indicating the change in the usual dates for the holding of the next three conferences (all of which will be brought forward to the month of April).

6. Presentation of the Candidacy of the City of Barcelona to occupy the Technical Secretariat during the period November 2010-November 2013.

Ramon Nicolau took the floor to confirm the intention of Barcelona to renew the Technical Secretariat, as indicated at the meeting of the Coordinating Committee (on 22nd March in Rio de Janeiro). While Barcelona initially indicated their intention to continue at that time they also specified that they would only do so if no other town or city presented a candidacy, insofar as, where such to be the case, they would automatically withdraw in favour of the said party. In view of the fact that, since then, no other town or city has presented their candidacy he suggested that perhaps the members of the network should reflect on why this is the case.

He then went on to inform those attending that, given that Barcelona does not consider the continuance of the Technical Secretariat in the same city as a positive aspect, and given that local administrations in Spain presently exist in a context of budget cuts (in particular with regard to expenses arising from international networks), the Barcelona City Council has finally decided to renew their candidacy for just one more year. Once that year has elapsed, and should no other town or city have presented their candidacy, then the deputation of Barcelona (the provincial governing body) would be prepared to take on this responsibility.

However, he emphasised the call for other network towns and cities apart from Barcelona to consider the possibility and to present their candidacy, while putting off any decision in this respect until the Internal Session on 6th April 2011, in the City of Lleida.

7. Presentation and Approval of the OIDP Work Calendar:

On approval of the Management Report, the following calendar was also automatically approved:

- PARLOCAL Project: an attendance training course for technical participation processes personnel, to be held in Malaga from 17th to 22nd January.
- 3rd Local Authorities Forum for Social Inclusion and Participative Democracy. Dakar, February 2011.
- Next meeting of the Coordinating Committee. To be determined within the framework of the 11th Conference (6th, 7th and 8th April 2011).

8. Round Table: 10 years of the OIDP:



Giovanni Allegretti, moderator of the round table, explained that the goal of this work session was to jointly reflect, along with four of the network's founding cities (Nanterre, La Paz, Porto Alegre and Barcelona), what these 10 years of the OIDP have represented on a day-to-day basis from both a local and an international perspective, and also to take a look at how they see the future of the network. To this end he indicated that the Technical Secretariat had been preparing a battery of six questions, which had been passed out previously to the participating towns and cities, and which he would now move on to discuss them, so that they could be enhanced by the contributions, remarks and suggestions of the members present at the Internal Session.

This having been done, Antonio Aniesa suggested that the question regarding the benefits that the OIDP has brought at a local level (to the experience of each individual town and city) could be revised with reference to the benefits, internationally speaking, that being a member of the network represents, arguing that it did not make sense to disassociate local and global perspectives.

Likewise, Oscar Sogliano – Head of the Citizen's Participation Unit in the Municipal Government of La Paz– suggested specifying the introductory part of in one of the questions, insofar as there was some confusion with regard to what the question was actually about.

Finally, Enric Francès –Vice-President of the Municipal Council of Associations of Barcelona– intervened by stressing the contribution of the OIDP in improving the road to democracy and the use and importance of the network as a space for exchange and inspiration for its members.

Summarising these remarks, Giovanni Allegretti undertook to rewrite the questions, which finally ended up as follows:

- 1) The first question is more personal, aimed at tuning guests and public to the same wavelength. In order to get to know their territory and their policies it would be useful for our public to make a rapid and synthetic description of the range of participatory processes that are carried out in their town or city, and how these are coordinated between them.
- 2) Do you think it is necessary and positive to provide more autonomy to civil society in the development of participatory processes, so as to avoid excessive dependence on the institutions that promote them? How have you dealt with the question of potential conflicts between the institutionalisation of participatory processes (with a view to providing them with life beyond the political will that sustains them) and the need to provide the processes with flexibility so that they can evolve in a continuous way and mature along with their participants?
- 3) For many of the towns and cities that play a leading role in the OIDP, the internationalisation and construction of networks have been fundamental moments in their growth, due to the exchange of experiences. What part of the day-to-day life of your town or city has been brought about by this international projection; and what transformations of its policies have contributed to the provision of benefits to the experiences of the other towns and cities with which relationships of cooperation have been established?
- 4) The OIDP acts as a space for debate and "multilateral relationships" between towns and cities, the academic world and civil society. However a certain (European and Latin-American) prevalence still exists in the geographic distribution of members and events. What can be done to ensure that in the future the different, existing "bilateral" relationships between its members and the towns and cities of other continents can enrich the debate with new voices and perspectives, both within and outside the OIDP community? In which direction must the OIDP go in the coming years and what new relationships can they build in order to increase their visibility and their international contribution in order to reinforce participatory democracy?

Having concluded the points listed in the Order of the Day, Ramon Nicolau brings the Session to a close at 11.40 hours, thanking all those attending for their participation, as does Alberto Martínez, in representation of the City of Mexico, also bringing the Session to a close, and informing those in attendance about the logistical questions concerning the 10th Conference.

9. Attended by:

- Alberto Martínez. Coordinator of the Secretariat of Social Development's Community Programme for Neighbourhood Improvement, for the Government of Mexico DF.
- Rocío Lombera. President of COPEVI (Operational Centre for Housing and Settlement).
- Oscar Sogliano. Head of the Citizen's Participation Unit in the Municipal Government of La Paz.
- José Fotunati. Mayor of Porto Alegre.
- César Busatto. Municipal Secretary of Local Policy and Governance Coordination for the Porto Alegre City Council.
- Antonio Aniesa. Head of International Relations for the Nanterre City Hall.
- Paulo Quaresma. President of the Carnide Parish Council (Lisbon)
- João Oliveira. Cultural Coordinator of the Carnide Parish Council (Lisbon).
- Joan Gómez. Participation Councillor of the Lleida City Council.
- Josep Pons. Head of Participatory Action for the Lleida City Council.
- Giovanni Allegretti. Investigator at the Centre for Social Studies of the University of Coimbra.
- Yves Cabannes. Director of the Development Planning Unit, University College London.
- Jorge Elder. General Secretary of the Mayoralty of Rosario.
- Lorena Carvajal. Director of the Municipal Centre of the Western District of the Municipality of Rosario.
- Enric Francès. Vice-President of the Municipal Council of Associations of Barcelona.
- Glòria Meler. Director of the Program of Participation and Associationism of the Barcelona City Council.
- Ramon Nicolau. Councillor of the Barcelona City Council.
- Laia Vilademunt. OIDP Technical Secretariat.