

Webinar: Empowering Citizen Participation for Building Caring and Inclusive Cities

Date: April 9 15.00 CET

Organizers: Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG-CSIPDHR) and International Observatory on Participatory Democracy (OIDP)

Format: Online meeting with translation, 1h30.

Background

In recent years, the notion of caring cities has gained momentum as urban spaces increasingly face complex challenges like climate change, social inequality, aging populations, and migration management. A caring city goes beyond traditional governance structures, it prioritizes people and protects their physical, emotional, and social needs. Caring cities emphasize inclusivity, well-being, dignity and autonomy of those receiving care and solidarity. In caring cities, local governments act as carers or caregivers and policies are shaped by a commitment to care for the environment, citizens, and future generations and are grounded in Human Rights. It's important to recognize that, in addition to caring for the citizens, local governments need to care for the caregivers themselves, particularly public workers who play a crucial role in this system of care.

On one hand, citizen engagement plays a central role in ensuring that a city's governance acknowledges, reflects and responds to the diverse needs and priorities of its community members. Effective participation in decision-making fosters trust, collaboration, and collective responsibility, paving the way for the development of policies and services that truly address the real-life needs and priorities of the population. On the other hand, local governments have a mandate and a duty to actively listen to citizens' demands and create better policies for liveable and inclusive cities. This means not only hearing the concerns and needs of the community but also placing the necessary mechanisms for care to be recognized and expanded, and engaging in meaningful and actionable dialogue with diverse groups, including marginalized and underrepresented populations.

In this context, co-governance and participation in decision-making processes can become an essential tool for bridging these two notions and creating caring cities that are inclusive, responsive, and accountable. However, co-governance and participation means not inviting citizens to participate but also recognizing and supporting people and communities' caring initiatives, and the barriers that caregivers face to participate. The path to achieving this vision lies in the shared responsibility of governments, communities and other stakeholders working together in the spirit of mutual care and respect.

Whether it is through inclusive participation platforms, co-creation of policies with beneficiary groups or care-centered urban planning, it is important to recognize the lived

experiences of different individuals and groups, and there are many ways in which the lens of care can help us strengthen public policy and the provision of public services. The webinar will explore the essential role of participatory democracy - and their design - in shaping caring cities where communities are responsive, inclusive, and focused on the well-being of all residents.

The objectives of this webinar are to:

- Examine how the notion of caring cities relates to social inclusion policies
- Identify and examine how the notion of care and caring cities can help us assess challenges and opportunities in participatory democracy and citizen trust
- Explore and discover local initiatives on co-governance, care, inclusivity and accessibility presented in the OIDP Award 2024
- Help institutionalize care frameworks into participatory mechanisms and explore how the design of participatory mechanisms can be more inclusive of caregivers
- Give visibility to the work on care cities and economy being carried out by UCLG, in preparation 7th Global Report on Local Democracy and Decentralization (GOLD VII) on the Economies of Equality and Care

Guiding questions:

- How can the care lens help us strengthen social inclusion in public policies and trust in local governments?
- How can local governments institutionalize care frameworks within participatory mechanisms to create more inclusive, responsive, and accessible cities?
- How can participatory democracy and co-governance mechanisms be designed to better support caregivers?

Speakers/structure:

- Welcome and Opening remarks: UCLG Secretariat
- Setting the scene on care: Background/context, Gold (VI/VII), OIDP Contribution to GOLD VII (Anna Calvete: UCLG's Head of Research)
- Inspiring practices: 4 practices
 - Youth engagement - **Osório, Brasil**
 - Resilient food system - **Amman, Jordan**
 - Accessibility - **Aragón, Spain**
 - Inclusion and Participation - **Maia, Portugal**
- Open floor
- Wrap-up