

**24th Conference of the International Observatory on Participatory Democracy
(OIDP)**

**“Connect, Integrate and Humanize: Cities facing the challenge of generating
Community”**

CONCEPT NOTE

Session 13

Administrative, operational, and political decentralization of cities

Date: 23 May 2025

Time: 11:00 AM – 12:30 PM

Venue: UNC Auditorium, Córdoba, Argentina

Thematic Area: Political and Operational Decentralization

CONTEXT

The **rapid growth of the population around the world and their expanding urban areas** has led to **complex challenges** for local governments, which must take on **multiple responsibilities** and efficiently manage limited resources to provide adequate services to their populations. In many cities around the globe, **centralized decision-making has proven insufficient** to meet the emerging needs of citizens.

In an increasingly urbanized world with more complex cities, decentralization is a key process in the organization and management of territory, enabling a **better distribution of power and responsibilities among different levels of government**. Decentralization not only involves transferring functions and competencies to subnational levels of government but also signifies a **shift in territorial management**, allowing for **greater autonomy and self-management** at the local level, as well as closer **proximity to**

citizens. It stands in contrast to centralism and empowers local governments as entities capable of **generating their own solutions.** In this regard, it is also essential to reconsider the **distribution of taxes and the capacity of local governments to generate their own resources** in order to meet the needs of their populations.

Decentralization must also be accompanied by a strengthening of **citizen participation** so that the decisions made reflect the true needs and desires of the community. From **participatory budgeting** to Community Participation Centers, various strategies combine self-management, proximity, and participation to advance toward **more just and effective governance.**

Different cities around the world have made progress in this direction over the past thirty years, with varying experiences and diverse approaches to the challenge of bringing services closer to citizens while also improving representation. **This session aims to discuss the different models and advancements that cities and metropolises around the world have made in terms of decentralization, tax distribution, and citizen participation.**

OBJECTIVES

- **To discuss the decentralization process as a key strategy to improve the distribution of power** and responsibilities among different levels of government.
- **To explore international experiences of urban decentralization** and examine various models and advancements implemented by local governments.
- **To promote debate on municipal autonomy and tax distribution,** and the legal and fiscal frameworks necessary for local governments to manage their own resources and take on new responsibilities.
- **To reaffirm decentralization as a tool for participatory governance** and as the foundation for a closer and more **co-responsible model of government.**

METHODOLOGY

This **90-minute panel** will begin with an introduction to establish the foundations of decentralization in different contexts. Following this, **a panel of representatives from local governments will share their perspectives on the role of administrative decentralization in urban governance,** its challenges and opportunities, addressing the issues of resource and responsibility distribution. Speakers will have the opportunity to present their experiences, discuss practices, and explore solutions to advance toward

new models of governance and autonomy. An interactive questions and answers session will follow, encouraging audience participation.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- In what ways can decentralization improve the organization and management of territory in a context of growing urbanization?
- What models of decentralization have been implemented in different cities around the world in recent decades?
- What challenges and opportunities arise in the debate on municipal autonomy and tax distribution?
- How does decentralization complement citizen participation?

SPEAKERS (Preliminary)

- **Ricardo Marques**, President of the Parish Council, Benfica (Portugal)
- **Tatiana Robles**, Deputy Secretary for Sub-mayors of São Paulo (Brazil)