



# IZTAPALAPA • MÉXICO

# 2019 CONFERENCIA ODP

CIUDADES PARTICIPATIVAS CON DERECHOS PLENOS  
democracia participativa y derecho a la ciudad

## I. Opening Session

*"We are facing a historical juncture that implies a deep peaceful transformation of institutions and society. You arrive in Mexico and you find, for the first time, the left governing the country"*  
(Clara Brugada at the 19th IOPD Conference).

*"A big hug to all local governments that are resisting these (recent) setbacks to democracy... the answer to this has to be more democracy... now that the ghost of the ultra-right and neo-liberalism is threatening governments, it is necessary to radicalize and defend the right to the city"* (Marc Serra at the 19th IOPD Conference)

*"We seek social justice from the government and from below, we come from social movements, we seek to reduce inequalities... generating great rights, because, for us, education is not a commodity, it is a right; housing is not a commodity, it is a right; water is not a commodity, it is a right; the sustainable community is not a commodity, it is a right"*  
(Claudia Sheinbaum at the 19th IOPD Conference).



## Introduction

With the presence of local leaders from various cities around the world, the 19th IOPD Conference formally began in Iztapalapa, Mexico, on 8 December 2019, at 9.30am in the Fausto Vega Theatre of the Iztapalapa Town Hall. The Head of Government of Mexico City, Claudia Sheinbaum Pardo, presided over the event.

### Clara Brugada, Mayor of Iztapalapa and President of the IOPD

Clara Brugada, Mayor of Iztapalapa 2018-2021 and President of IOPD in 2019 welcomed the representatives of local, national and international governments, citizen networks, activists, organizations, academics and other actors linked to participatory democracy who were present and accompanied the event.

The mayor shared a brief context on the characteristics of Iztapalapa, the venue of the Conference, as a peripheral city with notorious social problems linked to marginality and the violation of rights, and stressed that Iztapalapa has also been a social laboratory and a place of popular struggle for the construction of citizenship and the exercise of rights.

She pointed out that Mexico is now facing a historic situation that points to the consolidation of public policy tools for participatory democracy, and that allows for the evidence of new ways to solve the major problems facing the country: the democratization of the economy and the fight against social inequality, ending exclusion and promoting a social state based on the rule of law that privileges public interest over private interest.

She also highlighted the achievements of the new Constitution of Mexico City, which strengthens democracy as a way of life and social coexistence, effective suffrage, direct democracy and the power of the people to overturn their governments. She pointed out that it is the first constitution to recognize the right to the city, and is a good starting point for the construction of a democratic city of freedoms, which the city claims for the people.

The mayor indicated that Iztapalapa is the most participatory delegation because its people have organized and mobilized to build and improve their neighborhoods. This is where the first participatory budget exercise was promoted ten years ago, and it is a space where different public policies are being developed.

She also stressed that Iztapalapa is hosting this meeting to learn from international experiences and what is happening worldwide on the right to the city and participatory democracy. She hopes that it will serve to reflect on what is done every day by the

government, to define the strategies of struggle of the social movements and to make cities become full cities with full rights.

She concluded by pointing out the two main themes of the conference: participatory democracy and the right to the city, and said that there will be more than 70 simultaneous experiences to be shared during the three days, which have to do with deepening the transformations that can be made from governments. This is how she closed her speech:

*"Long live the people of the world, local governments, activists and the people who struggle every day to transform their environment"*

### **Marc Serra, Secretary General of the IOPD, Councillor for Citizenship Rights and Participation of Barcelona City Council**

In his speech, Serra stressed the importance of local government action in the field of participatory governance, and pointed out that this event is to claim the autonomy the local level, because it is there that life is developed; it is a space for proximity, because states without the local could not build effective public policies. He also highlighted how, in recent years, cities have taken the lead in improving and innovating the quality of democracy, from the participatory budgets of Porto Alegre (Brazil) more than 30 years ago, to the creation of channels, forums, and citizen initiatives that have been built from the cities.

However, in his message he referred to setbacks that have been seen in democracy, international interference in internal democratic procedures, lack of respect for election results, self-proclamation of non-elected presidents, candidates who appeal to hate speech... He wanted to send "a big hug to all the local governments that are resisting these setbacks to democracy". He continued: "the answer to this has to be more democracy [...]". Now that the spectre of far right and neo-liberalism is threatening governments, it is necessary to radicalise and defend the right to the city".

He said he hopes that the Conference will serve to share different policies that are being promoted by local governments and to learn from the experiences of various parts of the world, and that this is a space for cooperation and sharing of public policies, for working for citizenship and improving society, but not for competition.

The Secretary General of the IOPD highlighted the fact that Barcelona, like Iztapalapa and Mexico City, has a woman at the head of government and highlighted the work of the Barcelona government, whose mayor is promoting community management of common goods.

He pointed out that we are not starting from scratch, since in 2018 the [Agenda for Local Democracy](#) was approved within the framework of the IOPD, providing a common framework for cities to play this role. In this agenda, it is conceived that democracy is not simply a formal value, but something to be constantly analysed and reformed to guarantee equality and participation for all citizens. This 19th edition of the IOPD conference represents a space for this reflection, he said, and closed his speech with a "thank you very much for being here, and may local governments live".

### **Speech by Claudia Sheinbaum, Head of Government of Mexico City, Mexico**

Claudia Sheinbaum welcomed the participants and dedicated the beginning of her speech to a reflection on key aspects of the history and the present of Mexico City, emphasizing the reception of different migrants and political refugees during the Spanish Civil War, as well as in the face of coups d'état in Latin American countries and recently Evo Morales.

She pointed out that Mexico City is also a city with problems caused by neoliberalism, which led to the great violence in the country. She stressed that what characterises the vision of the new leaders of the country is the search for social justice to fight against this inequality, and there are two ways to address this: one is through great rights, and the other is by investing in those sectors that have been lagging behind.

The intervention highlighted that the large investment in Mexico City is concentrated, among other areas, in Iztapalapa, pointing out that here investment is made in the best parks and in new public transport systems to reduce the enormous inequalities that still persist. She stressed that "education is not a commodity, it is a right; housing is not a commodity, it is a right; water is not a commodity, it is a right and the sustainable community is not a commodity, it is a right.

She mentioned that the cities represent a fundamental place where changes take place, pointing out that, as a government, they are building electoral but also participatory democracy. They believe in change from below in order to build shared prosperity. The speaker said: "We do not forget where we come from... and we talk about the revolution of consciences because we want a people with a conscience".

She ended by saying that Mexico is an example to the world today, with a government that seeks freedom, democracy and justice, and said: "Welcome to one of the most beautiful cities in the world. She finally proceeded to read the formal opening ceremony of the 19th IOPD Conference, at 10:40am on 8 December 2019.