



## **22nd International Observatory Participatory Democracy Conference Rio de Janeiro, November, 6 - 8 2023**

### **Concept Note**

Participatory democracy is a crucial instrument for building a diverse and inclusive city that promotes a better quality of life for all. In order to be democratic, the means of participation must also be accessible to the entire population, encompassing in all steps of the participatory process considerations related to different social, economic, gender, and age groups.

In addition, citizens must access and act in all government activities and projects in order to fully exercise their right to participate. In this sense, government transparency and participatory processes play an extremely important role in a representative democratic government, as it brings the population closer to governmental actions and the decision-making process, strengthening the ideal of popular sovereignty.

For the **2023 IOPD Conference**, Rio de Janeiro proposes to gather national and international representatives from cities, academia, and civil society to debate and exchange practices on participatory democracy, aiming at signing clear commitments and creating an agenda for a diverse, inclusive and transparent city.

Committed to the principles of the International Observatory on Participatory Democracy and aiming at reaching the United Nations 2030 Agenda, the city of Rio has been developing different strategies and approaches to promote participatory democracy by emphasizing social participation in the planning of public policies in order to strengthen the relationship between the government and the population. “Leave no one behind” is both a challenge and an objective of the City.

Moreover, within the scope of the 2030 Agenda, Rio has been dedicated to the articulation between SDG 4 - Education, SDG 11- Sustainable Cities, SDG 16- Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions, and SDG 17- Partnerships for the Goals, by bringing the effective participation of children in the process of transformation of the city, fomenting the full performance of their citizenship rights. This is an expertise that Rio de Janeiro is keen on sharing with the 2023 IOPD cities.

In the child participation proposal, Rio invests in transforming the city through children, as the Municipality defends that public policies must be established with integrated planning, taking into account the role of children and young people in the city's decisions and projects that involve their fundamental rights. By including the active participation of children in city planning they are encouraged to exercise their right to the city. These activities put into practice their right to be heard, as expressed by law. In works involving students from Basic Education and partner Universities, Rio applies the concept that every student must be able to act in the construction of a fair and solidary society.

Rio 2023 IODP Rio Conference will be grounded in 3 fundamental pillars to guarantee the success of democratic participation, smart citizenship, and popular engagement with a special focus on the involvement of children:

**Diversity** - How democratic participation impacts and can help in the recognition of territorial conflicts and the search for solutions, respecting diversity, and working to reduce the various aspects of socio-spatial inequalities. How education and participation can help reduce the inequalities that are so acute nowadays?

By being part of their communities, the population experiences and are conscious of the daily experience of social practices, people, and groups of each location. Thus, local communities have a significant potential to contribute to the knowledge of each social context, especially groups that are not normally heard.

**Inclusion** - How to offer equal participation opportunities to the entire population?; How do schools and universities influence and help build more equitable participatory processes?; How to use participation instruments in favor of social inclusion?

**Transparency** - The credibility and trust of the population are often based not only on the clarity of information but also on how their opinions actually impact public life. How to communicate? What instruments to use? When to communicate? What to communicate? Who needs to be approached? Through questions like these, Rio wants to understand and create strategies to ensure the implementation of an open government agenda, which focuses on access to information, citizen participation (through different participatory instruments), transparency, the collaboration between government and civil society, innovations in the management and formulation of public policies, with the use of new information technologies. Thus, promoting society's empowerment, engagement, improving governance, and providing feedback to the participation chain.

Within this context, another topic to be addressed is **smart participation and tackling disinformation**. With the increasing access to the internet and the popularization of technological devices, it is not possible to discuss participatory democracy without



mentioning smart government. More than providing connected solutions for the public, a smart government is one that responds more effectively and dynamically to the population's needs, improving results, achieving active participation, and promoting smart citizenship, and conscientious citizens, generating a better quality of life for all.

At the end of the event, the City of Rio hopes to develop strategies that improve the processes of social participation, with a view to building fairer, more democratic, and egalitarian cities. Cities where people, especially our children, are active agents in the development and implementation of public policies.

### **About the International Observatory on Participatory Democracy (IOPD)**

The International Observatory on Participatory Democracy (IOPD) is a network of over 1000 cities around the world in which municipalities and other local and regional governments together with civil society organizations and research centers are associated to develop, implement and disseminate experiences on participatory and deliberative democracy at the local level in order to deepen democracy in the government of cities. The IOPD is part of the United Cities and Local Government (UCLG) world organization.

Every year, the IOPD holds an international conference to discuss and reflect on the state of participatory democracy in the world. The IOPD conference is a gathering of local leaders and experts in the field of participation who advocate a more participatory local democracy. It is also an opportunity to promote cooperation between cities and international organisations in the area of democratic innovation.

The IOPD is currently chaired by the City of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, where its 22nd conference will be held, from November 6 to 8, 2023.