



**REPORT OF THE MEETING**

**Preparatory workshop for the 18th IOPD Conference**  
**“Citizen Initiative and citizen vote”**

**Hôtel de Ville de Grenoble**

**22nd May 2018**

**Foreign citizen initiative and citizen vote experiences:**

- ***Barcelona’s mechanism*** (Fernando PINDADO, Commissioner for the Management of Citizen Participation and Active Democracy, city of Barcelona)  
[ANNEX 2](#)
- ***The referendum’s practice in the Swiss popular initiative: Which effects did it have at the local level?*** (Reto LINDEGGER, Chief of the Association des Communes Suisses).  
[ANNEX 3](#)

**Undergraduate perspectives of the citizen initiative in France:**

- ***Direct democracy and balance of the Grenoble’s mechanism***, Raul MAGNI-BERTON, political scientist, Science-Po Grenoble.  
[ANNEX 4](#)
- ***Citizen initiative and direct democracy: legal framework***, Camille MORIO, PhD student in public law, Université Grenoble Alpes  
[ANNEX 5](#)

**Time of presentation and exchange of citizen initiative mechanisms developed by municipalities**

Exchange of experiences in citizen initiative carried out by the municipalities of Rennes, Strasbourg, Lyon, Grenoble, Hazebrouck, Grenoble Alpes Métropole, Paris and Nancy.

- ***Stage in which Grenoble is in its citizen initiative and citizen vote mechanism***  
[ANNEX 6](#)

## **Share thoughts about breaks, incentives and problems in the development of these kinds of democratic mechanisms at the local level in France**

### ***Synthesis:***

#### **Strengths of these citizen initiative and citizen vote mechanisms**

- It strengthens the legitimacy of the decision.
- It allows to respond to the growing expectations of the citizens.
- It strengthens the confidence towards elected representatives, which shows that they can give in spaces of power to citizens and they are not inside an authoritarian centralist logic.
- It strengthens deliberative democracy through debates which precede voting, as well as the level of political consciousness of citizens who are involved in the local debate.
- It offers a recognition to citizens: "We inspire confidence"
- Citizens are no longer just consumers of public local services, but local policy actors.
- It strengthens citizen participation because studies show that citizens mobilize specially when the problem is real and concrete (decisional vote).
- It allows local democracy to live between two elections and it introduces to the local political agenda topics which "encourage" discussions in the city without waiting for next elections.
- These initiative mechanisms allow to propose a clear, transparent and equal path of implementation of new problems in the local political agenda. Indeed, without these kinds of official mechanisms, initiatives before the elected representatives would be real but they would often remain "off" and they would create inequalities depending on the strength of concrete networks. Therefore, it allows to fight against cronyism.
- It allows to structure, intercede and advertise the conflict. It allows to avoid evasion strategies and see the appease of conflicts.
- It allows to move from opposition to construction through negotiation.
- It allows a more equal participation in participatory democracy, which has a direct and positive impact on citizens who possess an important cultural capital.
- It allows to broaden local citizenship by opening the initiative and decision power to people under age and foreigners.
- It allows to limit corruption.
- These mechanisms are quite inexpensive in terms of human resources and functioning.

### **Breaks to development of these kinds of mechanisms in France:**

- These mechanisms are nowadays poorly developed. Therefore, this leads to uncertainty for elected representatives of unconnected territories.
- It's unthinkable to build an inner debate within the majority before using these kinds of mechanisms in order to reach a "hard" consensus about the mechanisms and rules to take into account, because their implementation can create inner tensions.
- The fear of losing powers by certain elected representatives, but also the fear of the manipulation of these mechanisms by the opposition.
- The implementation of these kinds of mechanisms need a change of position by elected representatives. Indeed, they are no longer the ones to decide but the ones to guarantee a decision process for citizens.
- It requires exclusive usage rights by organized collectives and it doesn't allow the rise of new actors. How can we guarantee inclusion?
- How can we overcome the conflictive claim stage, usual starting point of petitions, in order to go to a negotiation stage?
- The legal framework is quite unfavorable to the development of these kinds of mechanisms and nowadays it doesn't exist the right to experiment inside this domain.
- Is it desirable to set a limit to guarantee the legitimacy of a decision? It's necessary for these limits to be tangible in order to ensure the legitimacy of mechanisms.
- The communication difficulties to ensure a broad participation.
- The poor autonomy of local governments vis-a-vis with the central state and a vertical conception of general interest in France.
- The fragmentation of competences between different government levels.
- The impact of the petition must be enough for citizens to consider that it's useful to get involved in an initiative process which often requires a lot of energy to get ahead.
- The risk of misunderstanding by citizens if the mechanism is very complex.
- The need to find an equilibrium among a mechanism which must be flexible and easy enough to enable the inclusion of the greatest number of citizens possible but, at the same time, with functioning rules which are rigorous enough to ensure the credibility, and therefore legitimacy, of the mechanism.
- These kinds of mechanisms inevitably create tensions between direct democracy and representative democracy.
- Difficulty to articulate a logic of a multiannual financial program of the communities and a citizen initiative mechanism.