Work Plan 2019

International Observatory on Participatory Democracy

Introduction

The Barcelona City Council has held the Technical Secretariat of the International Observatory on Participatory Democracy (IOPD) since 2001, and it has been managed from the Participation Area through a collaboration agreement with United Cities and Local Governments.

The IOPD collaborates with UCLG since 2006 and this work plan aims to reinforce this relationship by framing the action of IOPD more clearly in the domain of the network and aligning their strategies (decision made by the IOPD General Assembly 2016). UCGL is the biggest global network of cities and local governments, it represents these voices in the global context and its main principles are proximity, decentralization and political leadership.

Two of the problems that usually affect organisations such as the IOPD are, on the one hand, that they set aims and actions that remain in the discursive dimension, but there is no explanation of what they concretely mean in practice; and on the other hand, that activities and actions are proposed but the lack of incentives for the destinataries is forgotten. As a response to these problems, this work plan aims to detail, not only general objectives, but also actions and concrete tasks that are doable and evaluable. Additionally, it aims to not only propoe actions that involved actors should ideally implement, but also in many cases consider the dimension of incentives they might have.

The IOPD working plan is divided in three parts:

PART 1. Aims of the work plan

PART 2. IOPD Strategy

PART 3. Tasks

In addition, this plan considers, in each part, the three different dimensions of IOPD:

- As an observatory
- As a network
- As an actor in the framework of UCLG

PART 1. Objectives of the work plan

Objectives:

1. To strengthen the traditional actions of IOPD as an observatory and to adapt them to the strategic priorities
2. To grow the network and improve its usefulness, according to the strategic priorities
3. To frame some of the actions within the UCLG network

PART 2. IOPD strategy

The IOPD strategy is based on two elements:

- Its adequation to the strategies of the UCGL network
- The development of its own strategic priorities

In the following paragraphs there will be a presentation of, in the first place, the priorities of the UCLG network, and in the second place, the proposal of strategic priorities for the IOPD, based on its own current priorities, adapted to the ones set by the UCLG network.

The strategic priorities of the UCLG network for 2016-2019 linked to the localization of the global agenda for development include the following elements:

- Implementation (awareness raising)
- Learning (decentralized cooperation)
- Strengthening of the network (new action tools and new alliances)
- Monitoring and reporting (production of information)
- Advocacy (amplifying the voice of local territories in the global context)

In this framework, the proposal of IOPD's own strategy includes the following priorities:

- ❖ **PRIORITY A: Communication and awareness raising.** Includes, on the one hand, the follow-up and internal IOPD communication, including its organs and its members. Its aim is to improve this kind of communication. On the other hand, it also includes external communication and awareness raising. Here the priority is to make IOPD activities more visible, to raise awareness among the general public about the importance of participatory democracy and to share the existing participatory experiences.

- ❖ **PRIORITY B. Evaluation of practices.** This kind of action has always been present in the IOPD and some activities have been developed along these lines, such as the Best Practice Awards. This kind of action would now be one of the four IOPD priorities as an

observatory. The aim is for it to become not only a repository of experiences and a space for exchange, but also a tool for the promotion of the quality of participatory democracy, through the development of new actions.

❖ **PRIORITY C. Strengthening: growing the network.** This priority includes the identification of criteria to widen the network, like e.g. the kind of organisation/institution, the geographical location, etc. In addition, it includes the inclusion of new types of member, like for example social movements and informal platforms.

❖ **PRIORITY D. Learning: decentralised cooperation.** It is a priority not only to promote the growth of the the network, but also to improve the quality of exchanges between members to incentivise decentralised learning.

There is a description below of the types of action that are included in each of the four priorities, within the framework of the aims of this work plan.

OBJECTIVE 1: To strengthen the traditional actions of the IOPD as an observatory and to adapt them to the strategic priorities

Currently, the actions developed by the IOPD as an observatory are:

- The Annual Conference
- The Best Practice Awards
- The repository of experiences
- The update of its website
- The internal and external communication

In regard to the IOPD strategic priorities as an observatory, the following are the ones that have a special impact in this domain:

❖ PRIORITY A: Communication and awareness raising

This strategic priority includes the following actions:

- The repository of experiences
- The update of the website
- The internal and external communication

In addition, it should include actions such as the publication of useful information about the activity of the observatory, awareness raising about the importance of local participation, the publication of reports (related to priority D about monitoring) and the participation in events.

Moreover, even if this is an action that crosscuts almost every IOPD activity, this priority includes the support to the organisation of the annual conference.

The communication strategy (detailed in the tasks) has as an aim, not only awareness raising, but also the strengthening of the network and learning (PRIORITIES C and D). The working dynamics, especially in relation to the repository of experiences, should tend to involve the members of the network as a way of incentivising their participation.

Finally, the communication and awareness raising also includes two types of activities that will be developed jointly with the UCLG network: the organisation of events and the participation in international summits.

❖ PRIORITY B. Evaluation of practices

This strategic priority includes, in the first place, the best practice awards as a currently existing action and also the improvement of the quality of the procedures to allocate these prizes.

Additionally, it should include the assignment and coordination of annual reports about the situation of local participatory democracy throughout the world, and special thematic reports about priority contents (tasks 11 and 12). Likewise, it ought to include the coordination of actions of mutual evaluation (between members of the network) with concrete experiences.

We expect that both the production of the reports and the mutual evaluation actions contribute in the future to incentivise the production of local reports about the participatory democracy practices. We also expect them to contribute to promoting the activation of the members of the network (PRIORITY D).

Finally, this priority includes the collaboration with UCGL in the production of the GOLD report and the localisation of the Sustainable Development Goals 11 and 16.

OBJECTIVE 2: To grow the network and improve its usefulness

This goal refers to the actions of the IOPD, not specifically as an observatory, but rather as a network that connects local governments and other actors in the participatory democracy domain. The two strategic priorities C and D are the ones framing these actions.

❖ PRIORITY C. Strengthening: growing the network.

This priority includes both the diagnosis of the current status of the network and the proposal of strategic criteria for the involvement of new members. Some criteria might be thematic, geographical, etc.

It also contemplates articulating the IOPD network with the UCLG network.

- ❖ PRIORITY D. Learning: decentralised cooperation and joint actions

Decentralised cooperation as a learning tool includes keeping the existing cooperation frameworks, the proposal of new cooperation mechanisms and resources, the study of positive and negative incentives that members have for cooperating.

Learning as a strategic priority also includes the implementation of joint actions by members as a tool to activate the network and to incentivise that through general interaction new forms of bilateral cooperation are activated in the network. These actions are oriented according to the priority contents, that are the ones defined by the Agenda for Local Democracy (IOPD Annual Assembly 2018).

In relation to the priority contents, the cooperation actions of the network will be guided by concrete topics determined by the members, but also by priority contents proposed by the Technical Secretariat, with the aim of focusing collaborations in those situations where there's no concrete proposal. These topics will, in turn, be related to the special reports (Task 12).

Finally, the platform PARTICIPATE OIDP will be further developed as a work and exchange space between members.

PART 3: Tasks

PRIORITY A. Communication and awareness raising	
Internal communication	
Task 1	Diagnose of the existing communication mechanisms with members and proposal of new mechanisms in order to maintain permanent channels of exchange with them.
Task 2	Administration of the email account
Task 3	Update on activities and events, both to members and to the political representatives in the internal IOPD organs.
External communication	

Task 4	Repository of experiences
	  a. Establishment of new criteria to systematise information about existing experiences, according to topics (currently, they are only classified by country)
	  b. Reflect upon the added value of this repository, compared to others
	  c. Active search of new experiences, activating the network
	  d. Co-production of the description of experiences, jointly with local actors

Task 5	Study and proposal of general communication strategy

Task 6	Improvement and update of the website
	  a. Organisation of the information
	  b. Update of the website and social networks

Task 7	Publication of reports (related to tasks 11 and 12)
	  a. Publication of the annual report (coinciding with the annual conference)
	  b. Publication of special reports

Task 8	Support to the communication of the annual conference
Task 9	Co-organization (with UCLG) of three international events (according to priority contents, task 20)
Task 10	Participation in international events jointly with UCLG

PRIORITY B. Evaluation of practices	

Task 11	Annual report about the state of participatory democracy in the world
	    a. Fundraising
	    b. Assignment
	    c. Production of the report

Task 12	Special reports
	    d. Fundraising
	    e. Assignment (in relation to the priority contents)
	    f. Production of the report

Task 13	Best Practice Awards
	    a. Review of the criteria and process for the award
	    b. Call for candidacies
	    c. Applications and selection process
	    d. Publication of results

Task 14	Coordination of mutual evaluation mechanisms (between members)

PRIORITY C: Strengthening: widening the network	
Task 15	Clean up of the current list of members (previous contact with inactive members)
Task 16	Identification of strategic criteria for the addition of new members

Task 17	Addition of new members:
	    a. Identification of potential members
	    b. Contact and addition of new members
	    c. Ask for information about their needs
	    d. Ask for an authorization to publish their data
	    e. Ask for contacts

PRIORITY D: Learning: decentralised cooperation and joint actions	

Task 18	Study of the collaboration forms (existing forms, incentives, technical resources and new proposals)
	    a. Assignment of the study
	    b. Production of the study

Task 19	Proposal of new cooperation mechanisms (e.g. workshops, joint evaluation - task 14 -, share virtual offices, etc.)
Task 20	Identification of priority contents (according to the Agenda for Local Democracy)
Task 21	Development of the online platform PARTICIPATE OIDP