



The International Observatory of Participatory Democracy

The International Observatory of Participatory Democracy is an open space to all of the world's cities, entities, organizations and research centers that want to learn about, exchange or apply experiences relating to participatory democracy on a local level.

The OIDP was officially created on November 2001 in the 1st OIDP Conference, held in Barcelona.

Nowadays we count on the participation of around 300 members, with 150 experiences available on the web.

OIDP Main Objectives are:

- To build a common space to share the Participatory Democracy experiences that lead towards achieving higher levels of equality empowered citizenship, greater legitimization of and trust on public authorities, and greater efficiency in public policy.
- To promote the co-operation between local governments to face up to the hegemonic pressures of globalization through the creation of new institutions and the construction of new dialogue spaces, exchange and solidarity.
- To advance in the practical implementation of the Participatory Democracy experiences, considering that participation is a privileged instrument to strengthen the democracy and to stimulate the practice of the citizenship protagonist on the discussion, drawing and implementation of public politics.
- To foster the creation of mechanisms and evaluation systems of the participatory experiences at local level that allow to measure and evaluate the development degree and also the quality level of participatory experiences to give opinion on them aiming to a higher level of citizen's protagonism in the government of their towns.

For that we have created a Bank of Experiences so anyone can consult the innovating experiences in the field of participatory democracy carried out by the members. Also, an International Conference is held annually, every year in a different country, to advance in the international debate and exchange on participation in local democracies. Finally, the OIDP's web provides information about the local activities schedule, news, links of interest, studies about participatory democracy and grants and awards for local governments.

From the results of the work made by the OIDP, in 2004 a new project had been promoted: the Local Observatories of Participatory Democracy. The aim of this project is to create local observatories in 10 cities of Europe and Latin America to know and to evaluate the quality of the development of the participatory democracy, and with that generating conditions to orientate the experiences carried out.

The creation process of the 10 local observatories has been really interesting since our



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first objective (to promote tools to evaluate practices) has demonstrated itself much more difficult than we first diagnosed it. Impulsing the creation of shared spaces between university, local governments and citizenship showed us that, politically and methodologically, the challenge was much bigger.

The work of this small group of observatories has always been in a continuous dialogue with the whole collective gathered through OIDP, feeding it with conceptual advances such as:

- Parameters to identify good practices. Based on this work the OIDP has launched a Distinction to provide incentive for those who wish to initiate innovative experiences at the local level and disseminate those practices that facilitate the participation and involvement of citizens in elaborating and implementing public policies. The Distinction OIDP "Best practice in citizen participation" is now on its second edition.
- Qualitative indicators and Methodological tools to evaluate the local participatory practices – "the toolbox to evaluate participative practices", which is the result of the two years of work of the 10 local observatories, and gather in one document different levels of indicators and tools to promote guidelines to improve local practices.
- Guidelines to constitute a local observatory, present on the "Guide to create a local Observatory".

This work has had a good repercussion among those involved with local participatory experiences and policies. The "toolbox" and the local observatory guide are supporting the desire of improvement of some experiences around the world, and the OIDP's Distinction is helping interested people and institutions to meet new methodologies and to divulgate their own experiences.

We would be pleased to receive your visit to our web and we invite you to participate on the OIDP's 2nd distinction "Best Practice in Citizen Participation" and our 7th annually Conference, that will be held in Nanterre during the last days of November, 2007.

Barcelona, March 9th, 2007.

