

Parallel session 2

Innovative democracy and open government: driving active and inclusive citizenship

Date & Time

Tuesday, 12 June, 11:30 – 13:30

Room

A1

Description

As the closest level of government to citizens, local and regional authorities need to continue innovating in the way they engage with them through new modes of service provision, as well as ensuring inclusiveness, openness and good governance. The aim is very simple: preserve representative democracies by testing new tools, methods and approaches to enhance direct and indirect participation, stimulate democratic innovation, as well as strengthen open government/data with the aim of achieving higher levels of transparency and accountability.

Since the economic crisis hit the world economy around a decade ago, the legitimacy of liberal and representative democracies and their ability to provide the right answers to current challenges have been put in question. The harsh economic backlash, together with increasing inequalities, has resulted in the rise of populism, authoritarian and nationalistic discourses which aim at questioning the values of diversity, pluralism and democracy itself. The consequences of this complex context take on an urban dimension in aspects such as inequalities, exclusion, segregation, participation, etc. In this respect, and in a context of growing urbanisation, local authorities (metropolitan areas, towns, intermediate authorities, regions, etc.) have been at the frontline of openness, political leadership and transparency. They will certainly continue to play a crucial role for human well-being in the future.

Technology is already playing a central role in redefining the world in the fourth industrial revolution. The cosmopolitan nature of urban areas in general is an opportunity to show central governments and the international community how local and regional governments use political leadership to advance democratic innovation, transparency and accountability.

We need to continue innovating in the way we engage with citizens, provide services and ensure inclusiveness. The aim is very simple: preserve representative democracies and social cohesion by enhancing participation, as well as by innovating the tools and methods we use to provide services and discuss with citizens. Not only online, through deepening our understanding, commitment and exchange on e-democracy tools and open data, but also enhancing the offline pillar of local democracy by assessing new forms of participation such as participative-budgeting or co-creation.

Fighting the causes of current threats to our democracies and values require the reinforcement of our efforts in involving more all citizens in decision-making as well as opening our windows so to enhance transparency. Not only by strengthening traditional structured (offline) processes of citizen-participation and representation, but also by reinforcing e-democracy tools (apps, participative budgeting instruments, etc.) and open data/government at the local level.

The aim of this session is to exchange on good practices, assess the state of play of all the above-mentioned issues and point out the challenges ahead.

Questions to be addressed:

- Which are the most innovative methods of participatory democracy (direct and indirect, as well as online and offline) at the local and regional levels and how they could be implemented in other cities/towns and levels of government? Which are the main risks in this respect?
- How can we find the right balance between direct mechanisms and traditional mechanisms of representative democracies at the local level?
- What does open government and data means at the local and regional levels from an accountability perspective and how we can mainstream it? Which are the most successful examples?
- Which balance between offline and online democratic tools to strengthen active participation and civic engagement?

Format

Debate, panel

Languages foreseen

Basque, English, French, German, Spanish

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