



United Cities and Local Governments
Cités et Gouvernements Locaux Unis
Ciudades y Gobiernos Locales Unidos



CONCLUSIONS OF THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR ON INNOVATIVE LOCAL POLICIES FOR SOCIAL INCLUSION BARCELONA - September 27-28, 2007

Local Policies for Social Inclusion and Participative Democracy Platform

Committee on Social Inclusion and Participative
Democracy of the United Cities and Local Governments organisation

Introduction

1. Local authorities are fundamental players in a globalized world. This is a world of new social, economic, political and cultural complexities, with new and varied challenges and opportunities. Nevertheless, globalization controlled by the conditions of neoliberalism has been increasing poverty and social inequality across the continents since the last third of the 20th century.
2. Social exclusion is the process whereby certain people and groups see access to their basic rights systematically blocked. This exclusion, in the present day, has several dimensions: social, economic, political, cultural and relational.
3. The diverse reality of exclusion manifests itself differently in each city, although it does have several common elements: poverty, precarious work situation, education deficits, disability and dependence, overload of care work in the home, a range of discriminations for reasons of sex or sexual orientation, faith and religion, weakening of community relations, rupture of emotional ties, fractures in ethnic-cultural civic responsibility, amongst other things.
4. The aim of local political action is to create inclusive societies. Local governments from various regions of the world are facing up to a similar set of challenges, focusing their attention on the causes of these problems, by developing innovative social inclusion policies that include creative programmes and projects that are greatly effective.
5. Citizen participation in the generation of inclusion policies, as well as in their implementation and control, is a precondition for short term, tangible improvement of the quality of life of individuals in situations of exclusion or at risk of such, and also for the assertion of their rights.
6. From the point of view of their conception and of administration criteria, public policies in general must guarantee universal access to basic services, thus overcoming both the rigid bureaucratic systems of public administration as well as the neoliberal stage of private administration systems.

7. Social inclusion policies must be in the centre of the political agenda of local governments of this century, along with infrastructural, financial and human resources, required for their development. This is particularly important in order for the fulfilment of the Millennium Development Objectives to become a reality in our cities.

Inclusion policies

8. Social exclusion can be seen in territories. In the degraded historical centres and outskirts of big cities, particularly in their metropolitan expansion; in the extensions of shantytowns, "shacks" and slums. In the urban inadequacy regarding free movement of disabled persons. In the conditions of irregularity and illegality of a great many immigrants. In the unequal and discriminatory treatment towards women. Social inclusion policies must be adapted to the urban context in which they are developed and to the social problems they address.
9. The multiplicity of factors that produce social exclusion means that inclusion policies must tackle a wide range of thematic focal points: they must be generators of employment and income; driving forces of democracy, of a critical and participative civic responsibility; guarantors of civil, political and social rights; revitalizers of social and community networks, democratizers in terms of access to information and training.
10. At their core, inclusion policies contain the material requirements necessary for leading a decent life as well as requirements that concern the social connection; within these requirements social diversity and the right to difference have to be fitted in with the action of fostering egalitarian relations.
11. Owing to the different political powers between various levels of government (local, regional, national, transnational) a multilevel coordination is required that will ensure an appropriate interconnection between local inclusion politics and supralocal policies, according to the basic rights of all citizens. In addition, inclusion policies have to be conceived as a fundamental component of public policies.
12. This is particularly relevant when the local area does not have key inclusion mechanisms, such as policies on occupancy, housing and others. State authorities must be called upon to give greater participation in political powers, a key factor in the development of inclusion policies.
13. This institutional coordination must make way for greater decentralization of resources so that local authorities can uphold such policies. Likewise, it is important to promote integral as well as transverse inclusion policies. This implies having a general view of the problems and dealing with them by means of interdependent action and through a network between various associative and private players in administration.
14. Every social inclusion policy should be constituted as a vehicle for overcoming gender inequalities; it has to promote a cohabitational agreement between men and women; egalitarian and respectful of differences for reasons of gender sex or sexual orientation.

Participative democracy policies.

15. The purpose of citizen participation is to transform societies and generate inclusion within itself. The processes of representative democracy are insufficient for fully incorporating citizens, male and female, in the process of decision taking, and for recovering the value of the collective and promoting the critical capacity of the citizen.
16. Hence the need to produce participative democracy mechanisms in cities. In this way democratic participation is better adapted to social dynamics and change, at the same time as institutional politics is coordinated with popular politics.
17. The promotion of community dynamics, the strengthening of social networks and the implication of new players in the action constitute relation criteria that lead to an

understanding of participation not as mere consultation, but rather as corresponsibility in the decisions and actions to be taken.

18. Pluralism, conflict and diversity must be accepted as inherent elements of social processes. The citizen's consensus enabled by democratic political action arises on more than a few occasions concerning previous disagreements on how to approach one or several social challenges.
19. Efforts must be redoubled to incorporate the voices of the excluded or those at risk of exclusion, into the political process so that they become decisive figures in their own itineraries of inclusion.
20. The wide variety of participation channels and areas of organizations of the civil society, together with the capacity of local governments to create 'bridges' with these players, constitute key elements for testing new areas of political participation. It should be borne in mind that the public area of political participation is now more diverse and that it must be understood from the diversity of times and places that define daily life.
21. Local governments must establish channels of effective participation aimed at attaining progress objectives wherever necessary, considering the territorial context and the thematic starting points, such as housing, the provision of public services or the creation of employment, for example.
22. Citizen participation, with effective and real involvement of civil society, makes social inclusion policies effective and lasting.

Policy strategy and sustainability

23. Local authorities must anticipate problems. This means tackling the set of factors that produce situations of risk or exclusion from a structural perspective. They must support the action they are carrying out, establishing specific action criteria for the diagnosis of needs, the implementation of policies and their assessment.
24. Administrative reforms (relational government) and the ongoing training of all the players involved in political action are essential for taking on the challenges presented by the implementation of social inclusion policies and by a system of participative democracy.
25. Sustainability entails considering the durability of the policies with the passing of time, from a political and financial perspective, as well as the generation of social action networks beyond municipal involvement in inclusive action.

According to that stated, the Committee on Social Inclusion and Participative Democracy of the United Cities and Local Governments organisation has a fundamental role: to disseminate reference experiences among local governments regarding matters of local policies of social inclusion and participative democracy, as well as encourage exchange between cities and local governments. Likewise, it must carry out a world-wide follow up of processes and results achieved, of lessons learned, in accordance with the objective of publicising existing experiences in the UCLG and in international agencies and organisations.

Barcelona, 28th September, 2007.