

CASE STUDY (1,350 words)

Canoas, Brazil – System of Participatory Management of Canoas

Context and rationale



Canoas is one of the most important industrial poles of Brazil, with the second highest GDP of the Rio Grande do Sul State.

It belongs to the metropolitan region of Porto Alegre, the state capital, and is located 20 km north of Porto Alegre, by road and train. The city has developed along a national road and railway, and is literally “divided” by the railway and a six-lane national highway.

The city covers an area of 131,097 km² concentrating 338,531 inhabitants (IBG 2013). Its entire population is considered “urban” with a density of 2,584.2 (urban inhabitants/urban km²).

Being emancipated for 75 years, in 2009, the current administration began an innovative project within the city management department, based on transparency, citizen participation, social inclusion and qualification of public services. The city has advanced in the process of citizen participation, with the creation of means of communication and interaction with the population. It currently holds 13 tools organized into five different areas.

It has developed **tools for collective demands, tools for individual demands, tools for strategic elaboration, one collaborative tool, and tools for consultation.**

Process and solutions

The current municipal administration initiated the implementation of an innovative management project, guided by transparency, participation and social inclusion. The Popular and Citizen Participation System is a set of projects that contribute to a more decentralized, systemic and democratic management, with closer relations between public authorities and civil society. Canoas has developed 13 innovative instruments of citizen participation, recognized nationally and internationally.

The tools are explained below:

Tools for collective demands

COMPANY POLYGONS

Industrial or Company Polygons are defined as areas that gather together industries of a given territory with the objective of potentiating local development, providing better cooperation and growing the enterprises. The public government holds meetings to present their demands to the region's workers.



PLENARY OF PUBLIC SERVICES

Accountability of municipal administrations and increasing the proximity between the population and managers of Canoas are actions proposed in the Plenary of Public Services. This is when citizens bring forward their criticisms and suggestions in a forum with the Mayor and Secretaries, where they can express their demands verbally or in writing. The Plenary Sessions are held every semester in each quadrant of the city and the administration examines the accountability of the reached goals.



PARTICIPATORY BUDGET

An important tool for popular participation, widely used across the world. In Canoas, the population defines the priority works and services for their neighborhood and city, electing them in an annual vote. Thus, 117 works were chosen by the people of Canoas in 2009, involving 86,000 participants. These figures make Canoas the city with the largest participation rate in Brazil, with 10% of city voters voting in the PB.



BETTER NEIGHBORHOOD

This program provides for the approval of development projects for the community through public bidding, in which citizens can donate 50% of the IPTU (Tax on Urban Building and Property) for projects of interest. The municipal administration provides 80% of the necessary resources to implement the project and the applicant community, as counterparts, must provide the remaining 20%.



MAYOR IN THE STATION

Since the subway system connects neighborhoods, the public administration sets up a space for conversation between the Mayor and the population once a week, in the Mayor in the Station. Open and accessible to all employees and other users of the subway, the Mayor dialogues every Tuesday from 6:30 am to 8:30 am in the Canoas stations. During the dialogues, citizens can submit demands and present ideas, claims and criticisms.

Collaborative tools

AGORA IN NETWORK



A virtual tool that allows online dialog between people and managers. More than that, the Agora allows open forums for discussion, chat spaces, video access, among other possibilities for multimedia interaction, regarding issues involving the city.

Tools for individual demands



Each week, public spaces become the stage for the exchange of ideas and debates; an action that brings the population closer to the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Municipal Secretaries. Every Saturday, managers go to streets and squares in each quadrant of the city, aiming to receive the demands of the population and refer them for resolution. The City Hall on the Street has changed the political culture in Canoas. The project received an international recognition award for “Active Cities, Healthy Cities” in 2011, in Mexico.



In a participatory democracy model, the opening of spaces giving power to the people is central. Thus, aiming for a better understanding of the demands of citizens, the Mayor meets 20 people on a one-to-one basis in his office each week. The face-to-face communication held in the Public Audience is essential for a broader popular participation in municipal issues.

Tools for strategic elaboration



The idealized desires for the near future were defined by the Canoas population in the 1st Congress of the City, an event that consolidated debates over the course of a year so citizens could present their dreams for the city. 104 strategic actions were defined, shaping the City Strategy for the next 10 years.



Chosen by the population of Canoas to improve the city, the Multiannual Plan is a tool created to implement programs and strategies that population deems necessary. In each locality, open community meetings were held to hear what people wanted to be invested in the city. The result is the implementation of the Multiannual Plan and its goal indicators, which seeks to align the strategic vision by identifying the issues that must be addressed to achieve the indicators.



The strategic Sector Plans enable public participation in the collective construction of public policies in the areas of public administration, such as health, safety and education. This tool holds thematic forums to list the priorities and goals of the population for a particular service delivery to citizens, which are constituted in a final conference on a certain government theme.

Tools for consultation



ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

Different views, together with a transparent dialogue and inclusion policy, are the proposals of the Council for Social and Economic Development to extend the debate on Canoas society and its interests. To do this, 50 professionals from different practices gather (educators, religious leaders, doctors, technicians, politicians) in collaborative dialogue to review and think about the public policies of the municipality.



HOUSE OF COUNCILS

Disseminating democratic and autonomous structures is one of the ways to strengthen popular participation in cities. Considering this, the city of Canoas developed the House of Councils in 2010, a space that holds 30 municipal councils in one place. The House offers human resources and materials to effectively enable the council members' work.



Results and impacts

The system of popular participation was developed and implemented in Canoas, significantly impacting not only public planning but the overall management system. Between 2009 and 2011, more than 95,000 citizens have made use of many interaction spaces in town. This confirms that participation is now part of the everyday life of the people of Canoas.

The Participatory Budget (OP) reached the involvement of 60,946 people, relying on organization by region in the city, and voting directly through electronic voting machines or on the internet – a national innovation. The Participatory Budget in 2013 and 2016 has begun to increase the voting options and the degree of impact on the total investments of the municipality.

The Plenary Sessions of Public Services gathered 5,850 participants in 7 editions. The City Hall on the Street event with 150 editions, one every week since 2009, is emblematic of this effort. 15,000 attendances were counted. In Public Audiences, 2,247 attendances were counted in 140 editions. The innovative Virtual Agora has had 13,098 online participants and 66,224 views.

Canoas is a dynamic member of the [UCLG Committee of Peripheral Cities](#). The Mayor of Canoas is aware of the need and benefit of sharing experiences and to evaluate them politically. Canoas is also an active member of the [International Observatory of Participatory Democracy](#) (OIDP) and hosted its [14th Conference in 2014](#). Since 2010, the city has been involved in a [Decentralized Cooperation project](#) with

the city of Matola, along with other cities in Mozambique and Brazil, which is [focused on planning, management and Participatory Democracy](#).

Further information on the Canoas and UCLG websites:

<http://www.canoas.rs.gov.br/site/home/pagina/idDep/1/id/110>

<http://divulgacand2012.tse.jus.br/divulgacand2012/mostrarPropostaGoverno.action?sqCand=210000000759&codigoMunicipio=85898>

<http://www.uclg.org/en/media/news/south-south-cooperation-field-participatory-democracy>