



Cities as ARENAS of Political Innovation in the Strengthening of Deliberative and Participatory Democracy

**EUARENAS is not your
typical academic research project.**

It transcends the boundaries of academic disciplines and professional specialization to develop a more comprehensive focus on social change and social learning. It is also intersectoral, bringing together practitioners, civil society activists and promoters of citizen participation and engaged universities



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Project Overview

EUARENAS responds to a major European challenge – the need to strengthen legitimacy, identification and engagement within the democratic public sphere.

As different forms of citizen participation have started to transform their governance cultures, cities have emerged as vital political arenas and laboratories for the development of European political life and public sphere and the promotion of inclusion, social agendas and active citizenship. Cities have also emerged as promoters of social agendas neglected or marginalised by national and international politics.

Against this background, and departing from a bottom-up and practice-oriented perspective on political innovation, **EUARENAS** investigates the ways in which social movements coupled with local government reform initiatives, manifesting themselves in local-level experiments, create momentum for political change that include more inclusive and participatory forms of governance.

Objectives

- 1 Better understand challenges to democratic cultures and factors influencing local responses to these challenges
- 2 Investigate the ways in which innovative and experimental governance practices emerge as well as the main actors, actor groups and strategies involved
- 3 Assess the potentials of different participatory mechanisms as models for renewing and improving the European public sphere
- 4 Assess and facilitate through design thinking and collaborative methods learning processes involved in developing experimental governance
- 5 Understand how local-level democratic innovation addresses power asymmetries and needs of more vulnerable groups
- 6 Assess the contributions of locally-based procedural and distributive justice to strengthening participatory and inclusive governance
- 7 Contribute to new conceptual and comparative frameworks of participative-deliberative democracy
- 8 Methodological advances, elaboration of methods and tools for transferring governance innovation practices
- 9 Elaborate policy options for strengthening inclusive governance and for bridging discrepancies between participative and deliberative governance modes