

*Application Form submitted by the initiatives to participate in the Transformative Cities People`s Choice Award*

<b>GENERAL INFORMATION</b>	
<b>Location:</b>	Terrassa, Catalunya (España)
<b>Title of the Transformative Initiative:</b>	Observatorio del Agua de Terrassa (OAT)
<b>Name of organization:</b>	Observatorio del Agua de Terrassa
<b>Type of organization:</b>	The Terrassa Water Observatory is part of the local government.
<b>Website:</b>	<a href="https://www.oat.cat/">https://www.oat.cat/</a>
<b>Category and Edition:</b>	WATER. Transformative Cities Award 3er edition (2020).
<b>STORYTELLING</b>	
<b>Summary</b>	
<p>The Terrassa Water Observatory (OAT) is an entity that is part of the city's governance of urban water service. It is the result of the debates held during the process of re-municipalization on the need to change the water management model.</p> <p>Not only should direct management be recovered, but also this should serve to change the model.</p>	
<b>Context and problem definition</b>	
<p>Within the framework of re-municipalization of water in the city of Terrassa, its promoters (the Taula de l'Aigua) proposed to reconvert the ways of doing politics – to promote projects and social processes of empowerment, to build networks of complicity, to define the municipalities as spaces under construction.</p>	

Terrassa is one of the largest cities in Catalonia with a population of 217,000 inhabitants and the water has been managed by a private company since 1842.

The recovery of water was a change path in how water is managed, changing from a business and market model to one based on water as common, because the challenge of sustainability demanded profound changes (scale of values, conception of nature and model of life). To do this, it was important not only to recover the public management of the service, but also to create new mechanisms for public policy development and decision-making in basic services such as water, which is essential for life.

As a result of the work done along these lines, the process initiated in 2014 culminated in the creation of the Water Observatory (OAT in Spanish). This marks the beginning of a new stage in the process of transforming the city and its relationship with water.

An instrument / space to guarantee the rights associated with water, such as the right to water and sanitation, or the right to a healthy environment, among others, focused on caring for life for all strata of the population.

OAT functions through the continuous work of the Working Groups (WG) that are composed of those people in the city who want to contribute to the collaborative work and the co-development of public policy.

## **Design and Implementation**

During the re-municipalization process, issues of management and governance were debated. This made it possible to establish the separation of the functions and scope of the managerial part (company) from the field of public policy (institutions and citizenship). This contributed to advances in defining in a more concrete way how the new instrument/ space should be created.

The process was promoted by the Taula de l'Aigua, which had already been working since 2016 on the need to incorporate substantial changes (model). To this end, the Taula de l'Aigua worked to strengthen and develop networks with social actors in the water sector (AeV, RAP or EWM) and in other fields (PAH, OCM, Consell Entitats, etc.). It also looked for a way to be able to articulate work with city parties that were in favor of re-municipalization of water. A Citizen's Parliament was convened, from which two motions were presented to the city council and which included the principles and objectives of the future service (already recovered). In this way, it was the citizens of Terrassa who urged the City Council, and not a specific stakeholder.

The work was difficult because the company that managed the water in Terrassa was the first one that had existed in all Spain and it was from 1842. The vision that the city has of its relationship with water is explained through this company (Mina Pública de Aguas de Terrassa S.A.), linking the progress and importance of the city with the strategic role of this company. Changing this positive image of the company associated with the city was difficult and unleashed many tensions, threats and conflicts.

Networking with social actors, working with political parties related to the remunicipalization, and making specific plans in a more complex context of institutional, political and economic crisis, after 2008, contributed in being able to advance in the creation of the current OAT.

There are still great difficulties to be solved, mainly: the balance between autonomy and being part of the public administration, different conceptions of work and leadership (collaborative work vs. hierarchical organization), interest in controlling OAT and reducing it to a typical space of participation in the face of an arduous task of consolidating it as an innovative project and an experience of more community and cross-cutting forms of government. The main issue is that OAT is promoted, thought and worked from the citizenry with a desire for emancipation and democratic radicalism and this is something that weighs on the administration and political parties because it raises many uncertainties.

## **Results achieved and Evaluation**

The most relevant results at this time are its own existence and the work being carried out by the different Working Groups (WGs) in the area of human rights, social control, and indicators and transparency. Also in the area of technology and work with the University of Catalonia (UPC) in Terrassa on aspects related to water quality.

The WGs are also collaborating with the UPC through the University Master's Degree in Science and Technology of Sustainability as coaches of the Research-Action Workshop's group work on Science and Technology of Sustainability. These projects contribute to deepening and generating knowledge about water, associated problems, and how to find solutions to solve these aspects from the proposal and co-production of public policy. They are also a way of establishing networks with city actors and promoting a new water culture.

OAT is very young and many of its results are being consolidated in the line of co-production and co-governance, and other advances in the different lines of work opened (Indicators and transparency, Social Control, human right to water and sanitation, and water quality), which in a short time have already been quite fruitful.

## Political Strategies

The following are the political strategies that have led to the present moment, which is the existence of OAT. Mobilization, communications and advocacy strategies have been implemented as shown below.

- 1.- Promoting the Social Pact for Public Water in the city. To urge the political forces that were running for the elections to sign it and ratify it publicly.
- 2.- To draw up a Charter for Water in the City, inspired by the experience of Berlin.
- 3.- Organization of public debates (a) with the political parties during the campaign. And (b) Organization of on-going debates and activities during to promote and open the debate on water management to the entire city. Promotion of the public debate with a double objective: (a) to make information available to the entire population (b) to provide training (the Taula de l'Aigua) and to train the rest of the people who live in the city. Promoting the new water culture as the axis that articulates the proposal and the work.
- 4.- as part of the on-going work:
  - rounds of bilateral meetings with the parties of the Municipal Plenary
  - periodic meetings with the three opposition parties that were close to the remunicipalization.
- 5.- Press articles presenting the elements of the debate, pointing out the bad practices of the company, providing elements for training and reflection on water and the need to take advantage of the recovery of the service to implement a model that comes from the commons.
- 6.- Articulating with actors, such as RAP, AeV or EWM to learn, share, weave alliances, share strategies, public presence and mobilization such as the demonstration in March 2017.

At present, a lot of energy is focused on having OAT website ready, pressuring the city council and the municipal company (Taigua) for transparency, as well as on advocacy and implementation of public policy proposals such as indicators and responses to address the human rights to water and sanitation (especially in the face of the COVID-19 crisis).

One of the strong points of work and advocacy is education at all levels in the various schools of the city, from basic levels to university with materials, content and work proposals for the various courses.

Work continues in the area of communications, with press articles, dissemination and outreach, such as participation in workshops and seminars to publicize the work done. Work takes place at the city level through coordination with actors promoting the new water culture to bring water closer to the city as a whole.

### **Communication and Cultural Strategies**

OAT website has an important role. It contains all the documents that OAT works on, as well as documentation of the work already done - during both its creation and the first results of the experience of collaboration with the Master.

The different activities of the WGs generate the debate in the city, to bring information closer or to train the people of the city, are also part of the communications strategy.

One of the strong communications points is the work carried out with schools and training centers throughout the city and at all levels.

Finally, articles continue to be published in the press informing about the situation and the progress of OAT.

### **Resources, Financing and Transformative Economy**

As stated earlier, OAT is part of the city council, so its resources come from the city council's annual budget. This point, although complicated, has to do with the interest on the part of the Taula de l'Aigua (and of OAT now) of not giving excuses to the administration to externalize responsibilities and save resources. OAT's goal is that people (the citizens) form part of the decision-making spaces, but that this does not imply an externalization by the administration. In this sense, the other objective is that the administration acknowledges that carrying out its responsibilities requires resources.

Although its resources come from the town council, OAT is committed to the social solidarity economy and the commons and believes that the recovery of direct management should serve to feed and consolidate a circuit of proximity economy in the secondary service contracts that the supply service needs in order to improve the general conditions of the population and inhabitants of Terrassa, and leave the large multinationals aside.

### **Related legislations**

OAT has been made possible above all by the struggle and collective work sustained over the years. The result of this work and its strategy was the inclusion of the principles and objectives in the documentation that regulates the service today. Part of these contents are those included in the preamble of OAT's Regulations and in the functioning of this instrument /space and the scope of these functions and objectives.

New literature has been generated and the impetus given to a new regulation of the service which already includes mechanisms and spaces for participation like the observatories.

OAT, an observatory with scope for the co-production of public policy from collaborative and cross-cutting lenses, is currently serving as a model to follow by other water services as well as in more complex initiatives such as the city of Girona with a vision of transforming the city model from the perspective of ecological transition.

### **Ecological Transitions**

The principles and objectives on which OAT is based, its reason for existence, and its desires arise and work to guarantee people's rights, with special interest in guaranteeing the human right to water in all its aspects (quality, quantity, affordability and access) from the organizational perspective of democratic radicalism, putting people at the center. At the same time, it also seeks to manage the service through the circular economy with special attention to the water footprint and impacts on the territory. An important reason for creating an instrument /space of this nature was precisely ecological sustainability, always understood as its relationship with rights, both social and environmental. During the process of remunicipalization, respect and care for the guarantee of the quality of the people's work linked to the service was always present, for this reason they are part of the Permanent Commission and the Plenary as key people who should also have their role and recognition.

The initial goal was to re-municipalize in order to manage water as a common. This objective was always present guiding the steps followed and takes a concrete form in OAT with the purpose of opening the door and then consolidating other ways of providing a service that includes people and a healthy environment.

OAT makes it possible to work the socio-environmental relations from an inclusive and cross-cutting perspective, beyond the competences of the municipality. This instrument / space makes it possible to work in the interstices between institutions improving the ecosystem relations.

## **Lessons learned**

There has been a lot of learning, and a lot more to come. Perhaps one of the central lessons is that in spite of the power that certain actors accumulate (such as large companies and their pressure lobbies) or how difficult it is for a city council to be flexible in order to incorporate citizens as a proactive and important actor, if one works hard, has clear objectives and has a clear proposal, one can achieve things such as re-municipalizing when it seems that it is impossible. Or creating something like OAT, a very novel proposal that neither the city council nor the politicians understood too much what it was and why it was important that it should be like that.

The importance of incorporating people and being part of the people, which is what gives consistency, a base, legitimacy and strength. If this connection and articulation as part of a whole is lost, the isolation sets in and weakens everything.

## **Conclusion**

OAT had its first year of active life. A lot of work remains to be done. But to see and be aware of all that remains to be done is a sign of how much has already been done and allows one to see the long road that remains to be travelled.

There is much to be done and much to be learned, by all. Both from all of us who are part of OAT and the town council, as well as the political parties and other agents.

We are encouraged to see that other initiatives are emerging, inspired by the work done so far.