




RESEARCH AND PRACTICE FOR EMPOWERING LOCAL DEMOCRACY: *FROM LOCAL INITIATIVES TO GLOBAL TRANSFORMATION*

Lund, Sweden 26-29 of August 2024

In the ever-evolving landscape of global challenges, elected local governments can catalyse transformative change. Join us at the 4th Local Democracy Academy, an action-research conference gathering change-makers dedicated to understanding and harnessing the power of democratic innovations. Participants will engage in thought-provoking discussions, share groundbreaking research, and collaboratively explore instances where local governments have acted as architects of global transformation.

Goals and objectives

-  Identify and analyse challenges experienced by democratic local governments to provide policy recommendations.
-  Assess how local governments can fight anti-democratic trends at the national and global level.
-  Co-design research initiatives to explore and address complex local democratic challenges.

How to apply?

Junior and senior researchers with a strong interest in and knowledge of the field of local democracy and democratic decentralisation are invited to apply! Applicants should send an abstract and full paper (published after 2020 or in draft) that illustrates the quality of their research in relation to the theme of the conference. Moreover, participants should indicate how their research can help address concrete governance challenges. If selected, participation and meals are free of charge. ICLD has a limited number of scholarships to cover the cost of accommodation and travel to/from Lund. **Deadline is 31st of March.**

[APPLY HERE!](#)

What to expect?

The Academy is built around real-world problems and challenges identified by local governments in the IICLD network. At the Academy, researchers will:

- Present their research around the key themes of the conference.
- Participate in Local Democracy Labs and use their expertise to discuss ways of addressing the challenges identified by local governments.
- Build capacity for impact-oriented research.
- Co-create ideas for research proposals and policy briefs.

Outputs

We hope participants will leave the conference **inspired, motivated, with new connections**, and better equipped to apply for grants from IICLD and other organizations.

- Research ideas for after-lab projects, living labs, and literature reviews on key elements of local democracy
- Research ideas for lessons learnt from local democratic innovations and participatory democracy to address complex democratic challenges
- Prize for the best policy-relevant paper and best research ideas

Local Democracy Labs

The Academy's Local Democracy Labs will provide a space for local government officials and politicians to meet researchers and exchange ideas. The aim of these conversations is to contribute to a more informed understanding of the issues at hand and how to address them. Local governments, engaged in IICLD's Municipal Partnership Programme, can participate in the Labs virtually by sending a question they want to discuss with a group of researchers who specialize in the field. Labs are done in thematic groups. Researchers can contribute with their expertise, problematize the issues raised, share relevant cases and provide policy recommendations. The space will provide a friendly environment for sharing ideas and experiences among researchers and practitioners.

Incubator of Research Ideas

Democracy is in decline in many parts of the world, with tangible effects of polarization, violence and climate change. Local governments can and are playing an important role in counteracting this trend by sustaining and advancing democratic principles from below. Against this backdrop, the Local Democracy Academy will cultivate seeds of relevant research ideas to enhance the democratic potential of local governments to sustain democratic principles by addressing the following questions:

1. What can we learn from local democratic innovations?
2. How can we address anti-democratic challenges at the local, national, and global levels by researching local governments' efforts to defend and deepen democracy?
3. How can researchers directly support local governments in their efforts to safeguard democracy?

These will infuse the discussion in the thematic groups, but also be addressed in transversal sessions that include all participants and cut across all topics.

Transversal sessions

Local Solutions, Global Impact

This session will explore innovative democratic initiatives at the local level that have far-reaching implications for global challenges, and examine case studies showcasing how small-scale innovations can lead to significant global transformations. Researchers are invited to reflect on the role of local governments in reversing the negative trend on democracy.

Co-creation and Inclusive Governance

In this session, we will uncover the potential of co-creation in reshaping governance structures by asking how researchers and policy makers can collaborate to address complex democratic challenges and produce change through research. Based on participants experiences and current projects, we will discuss collaborative approaches that involve citizens, stakeholders, and local leaders in the decision-making process.

The Case for Democracy

This stream will highlight policies and practices to address current global crises with democratic means. Here, we will discuss strategies for overcoming challenges to inclusivity and promoting equity during times of polarization, violence and climate change. It is not just about making the democracy resilient, but how societies are made more resilience through democracy.

Thematic groups

Participants will be assigned to transdisciplinary, thematic groups, which correspond to focus areas of ICLD's networks of Municipal Partnerships. Scholars will be asked to specify how their research is relevant to the specific problems of local governments in one or more of these networks.

Climate Action

This thematic group focuses on the role that local governments can and should play in climate change adaptation and mitigation. ICLD is supporting local governments in Kenya, South Africa, Uganda, and Zambia with projects that focus on increasing citizen influence in waste management, water supply, public transport, and urban planning, and on reducing climate-related vulnerabilities.

Gender Equality

This thematic group focuses on the role that local governments play in promoting gender equality. ICLD will soon provide support to local governments in Colombia and Guatemala with projects that focus on maternal health, urban planning, and inclusion of indigenous women in local decision-making.

Democratic Resilience

This thematic group focuses on the role that local governments play in building democratic resilience in the face of crises, polarization, and autocratization. ICLD is supporting local governments in Ukraine, Bosnia & Herzegovina, and Kosovo with projects around peacebuilding, preparedness, and the strengthening of democratic institutions.

Equitable Health

This thematic group focuses on the role that local governments play in promoting and providing for equitable health. ICLD is supporting local governments in Uganda and Kenya with projects on maternal and child health, equitable cancer care, and health governance.

Child and Youth Inclusion

This thematic group focuses on the role that local governments play in including children and youth in decision-making that affects their futures. ICLD is supporting local governments in southern and eastern Africa with projects on youth and children participation, education, and sustainability.

Human Rights Cities

This thematic group focuses on the role that local governments play in safeguarding and advancing human rights within their communities. ICLD is supporting local governments in Botswana, Zambia, and South Africa with projects focusing on gender equality, disability rights, and youth inclusion.

Agenda

Sunday, August 25

Arrival of participants

Monday, August 26

- Opening and Introduction
- World Café - Defining local democracy in the global world
- Paper presentations in Thematic groups
- Panel Debate: Hope and Local Democracy in Times of Crises

Tuesday, August 27

- Co-creation and Inclusive Governance
- Local Democracy Labs
- Poster exhibition
- Local Solutions, Global Impact

Wednesday, August 28

- The Case for Democracy
- Using AI in literature reviews and qualitative research
- Research co-creation
- Historical Dinner

Thursday, August 28

- Research in Practice for Global Transformation
- Prize ceremony
- Wrap-up and Farewell