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Dr Danny Sriskandarajah

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Stories of innovative democracy at local level: enhancing participation, activism and social change across the world



Dr Danny Sriskandarajah

Secretary-General
CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation
info@civicus.org

I am very pleased to present to you the *FACTS Reports* special issue on local democratic innovations. I am proud that CIVICUS is involved in such an innovative initiative, supporting our core beliefs. At CIVICUS, we believe that in a healthy society people have multiple opportunities to come together, discuss and deliberate, and act for the common good.

This collection of essays is both welcome and timely. It highlights the creativity and necessity of civil society as the heart of healthy, just and inclusive communities. Despite the well documented deteriorating conditions in which civil society operates all over the world, democratic innovations are still happening, with ingenious and creative solutions facilitated by civil society.

It was the desire to showcase and celebrate this vibrancy of civil society that became the motivation for CIVICUS and *FACTS Reports* to join forces and collaborate on this special issue of the Journal. It is our hope that this work will spark interest and further development of innovative practices around citizen engagement, citizen participation and active citizenship on the ground.

Through publications like this and our activities more generally, CIVICUS will continue to explore the role of civil society, through the dual lens of local experiences and global perspectives. Since 2006, our Participatory Governance project has also been compiling and sharing good practice around inclusive governance processes; more resources can be found at www.pgexchange.org.

CIVICUS is the only global network of civil society organisations and activists dedicated to strengthening citizen action and civil society. We speak out when civic space is threatened, and we try to find new ways of helping civil society around the world do its job better. If you are not already part of the CIVICUS family, I urge you to join us.

I would like to warmly thank all of the authors for sharing their inspiring stories and for all the collaboration over the last year. Many thanks to Henri Rouillé d'Orfeuil for his determination in developing a vision into such an enlightening and useful publication. Thanks to our partners and the Institut de recherche et débat sur la gouvernance who took time to peer-review the following articles. Finally, thanks to the CIVICUS and *FACTS Reports* teams, which produced this insightful publication with enthusiasm and energy.

For all CIVICUS members and those engaged in democratic governance, this *FACTS Reports* will provide great examples of ways to govern ourselves with processes that are inclusive, transparent, accountable, and citizen powered. May the innovation and inspiration continue.