

Porto Alegre in Cannes – Speech

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I come from a Brazilian city with a very nice history to tell.

Porto Alegre was born out of a small settlement of Azorian immigrants in 1752. At that time, the locality was called Couples' Port. The city is made up of descendants from 25 different ethnic groups. Most of the population is made up of migrants from the 466 municipalities in other parts of the State of Rio Grande do Sul. Families from immigrants from several parts of Europe live in these cities, particularly of Portuguese, Italian and German descent. But among its inhabitants there are people from Syrian, Lebanese, Portuguese, Jewish, Japanese, African, Chinese, Polish, Russian, Belgian, Swedish descent, among others. This might explain the capacity of tolerating and working together for the construction of a city for everyone. Over these two centuries after its foundation, Porto Alegre is known worldwide for providing a space for so many voices for another world that is possible. Porto Alegre is the city of the World Social Forum. But it is also the city of the Participatory Budget, an open, direct and solidary way whereby citizens choose their priorities and, why not say, turn their future dreams into reality. And indicators in Porto Alegre allow us to say that the city has a different reality when compared to that found in other capital cities in Latin America, a status that has been confirmed by the UN Human Development Index survey. The city with 1 million 286 thousand 251 inhabitants has 100% of its garbage collected and is the city in Brazil with more green areas. Life expectancy is 71.4 years and literacy rate is 91%. Electricity supply covers 98% of the population.

In the area of water supply and sanitation the indices are also exemplary. In the last decade, the results achieved by the City Water and Sewage Department, DMAE, has to do with the future of us all. The universalization of water supply, serving 99.5% of the population is a reality that enables us to make a lot of progress with even more sophisticated investments. Due to the characteristics of the urban growth, the greatest need became the sewage issue. The boldest dream in the city is to recover the swimability of Guaíba Lake

(470 km² of surface area). This is the aim of the City Administration. Today, 84% of households have waste collection and out of these, 27% are treated. There are 1,406 kilometers of sewers, 12 pumping stations and nine treatment plants, six of them constructed from 1990 to 2002. The Integrated Socioenvironmental Program is a project for the future designed to expand sewage treatment to 77% in the capital city. With this initiative the waters of Guaíba Lake will be swimmable virtually along the whole city. This is a demonstration of responsibility and strategic action not only to Porto Alegre, but to Brazil and the world. The measures taken here impact everyone, since 27% of water resources of the planet are located in Brazilian territory. In order to preserve such a wealth, Brazil has the guarantee of advanced and stringent regulations. Federal and State laws regulate and protect this heritage. In this regard, Porto Alegre is an example among Brazilian capital cities. Dmae is a model of public water and sanitation company that has been internationally recognized. The set of initiatives developed over the last decade in Porto Alegre is a concrete example for those who advocate the idea that water is not a commodity, but an asset that is essential to life that belongs to all.

This World Cannes Award on "Water and Cities" is reason for pride and celebration. The international recognition granted to Dmae was possible due to a reality constructed over 41 years of history. It is the participation in choosing priorities and the social control that enable the Department to be well-known as an efficient public water and sanitation company. The Rio Grande do Sul state capital city is one of the few metropolises in Brazil and in the world where citizens can drink water straight from the tap, with an excellent standard and within a stringent, round-the-clock quality control

Additionally, the award also recognizes the Participatory Budget and the Deliberative Council as instruments of social control for an open administration of the public management of water and sanitation services. In the Participatory Budget, the Porto Alegre community decides on investments in works and services and supervises their execution. The DMAE Deliberative Council, which is made up of several civil society organizations represents business, union and

community organizations, being in charge of approving the strategic decisions made in the Department.

We should also underline the quality and dedication of each of the over 2,500 employees who work in the Department who are fundamental for the achievement of the high management efficiency rates. The excellence of the technical staff enables us to continuously improve our work and ability to innovate taking into account constant technology changes and growing social demands facing the public sector in metropolises like Porto Alegre.

This social control has enabled DMAE to become an international counterpoint to the privatization process in the water and sanitation sector. This was shown at the 3rd World Water Forum held in March this year in Japan. In this event, the Department was a highlight in the workshops of the Public Services International (ISP), an organization that gathers over 20 million water and sanitation workers all over the world and of International Water Association (IWA), which analyzed public water and sanitation companies in developing countries. The Porto Alegre model was also presented at the international workshop "Advanced Alternatives to Water Privatization" attended by over 10 thousand people among government officials, representatives of international agencies such as the World Bank, UNESCO and UNEP, experts, NGO's and the media.

The Porto Alegre City Administration is proud of these achievements constructed with each and every citizen of the city and of the fact that this work performed by everyone is relevant and meaningful beyond our borders. Today in Brazil, with the worker Luis Inácio Lula da Silva as the president, we are experiencing a historical time, one of hope, collective construction of new paths and of our own image before the international community. We have many issues to state. If we are to have a dialogue among nations to discuss suggestions to end hunger, we also have the commitment to ensure that water is a common good accessible to all. Privatization that was advocated in the previous administration and did not happen just because society got organized and resisted is out of the agenda now due to the commitments taken by the Lula administration. But we have a constant struggle and the best way to argue

against the commoditization of water is to present concrete achievements: a public company with social control that serves each and every inhabitant of our Porto Alegre. There, everyone that drinks Dmae tap water is also drinking health.