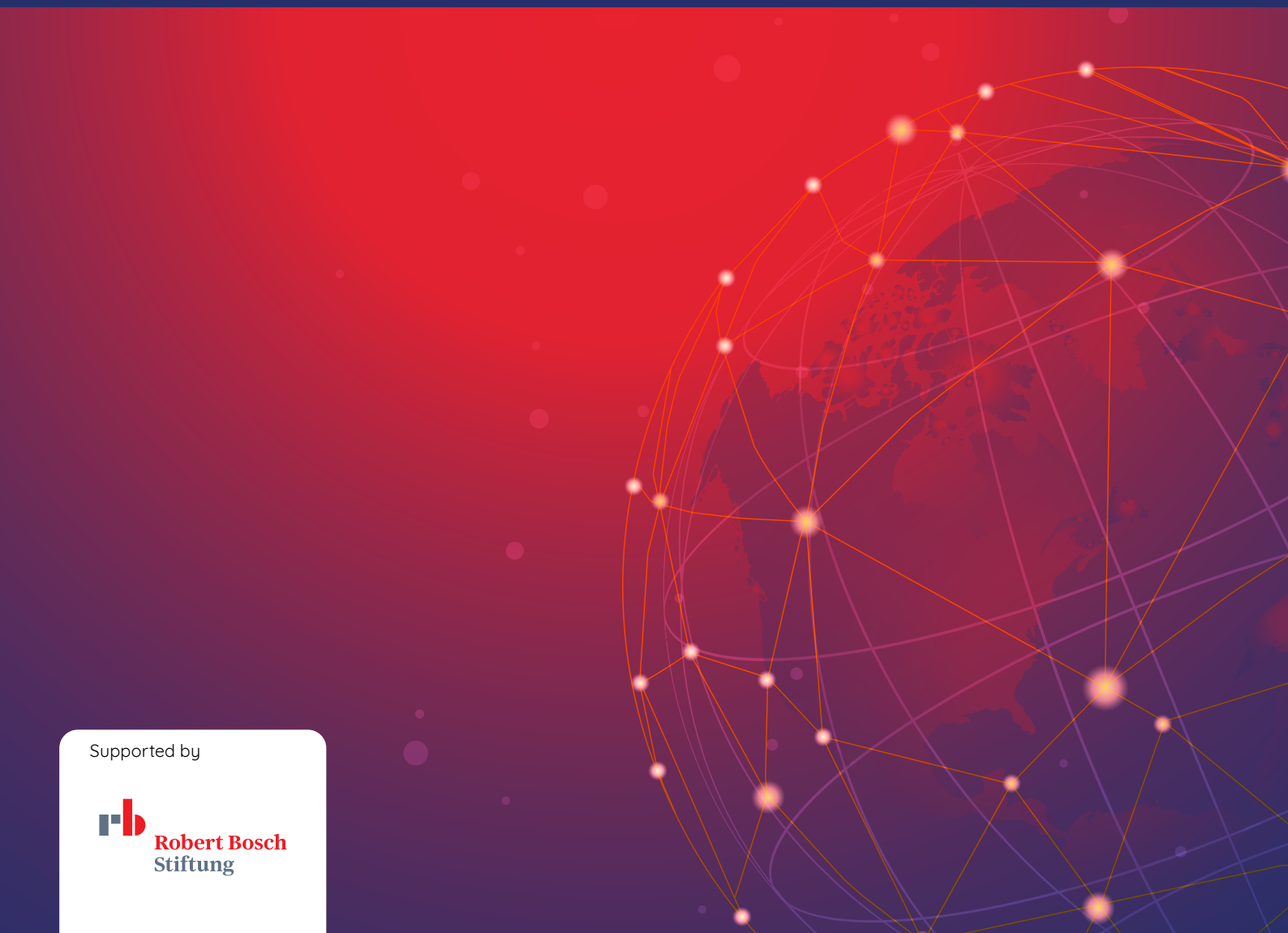
European Democracy Hub

Exploring Worldwide Democratic Innovations - A Regional Case Study of Latin America

Thamy Pogrebinschi



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Introduction

While a "deliberative wave" has been gaining momentum in Europe, Latin America has already been experimenting with deliberation for three decades.[1] Since 1990, deliberation has been the primary means of democratic innovation in Latin America.[2] Unlike in the Global North, deliberative innovations in Latin America are not characterised by features such as random selection and informed facilitated deliberation.

Instead of focusing on the promotion of citizens' assemblies and other deliberative mini-publics that involve a very small number of citizens, the region has produced thousands of designs that have enabled millions of citizens to discuss their common concerns, voice their demands, and agree on solutions to problems.[3] Existing political institutions have been reconfigured to create spaces where civil society organizations (CSOs) debate the shape of new policies together with government officials. New policymaking processes have been adopted to compel public officials to hear the voices of ordinary citizens and underrepresented minorities. Novel practices have been institutionalised to enable the expression of political preferences by those who do not feel represented by political parties, to voice the opinions and demands of those who do not feel included in the political system, and to enable agreement among actors situated in civil society and government. Following Latin America's transition from authoritarian rule, democracy has been redesigned in ways to make political institutions and processes more participatory and deliberative.[4]

Democratic innovation in Latin America is both deliberative and widely institutionalized. As much as 43% of all the democratic innovations created in the region between 1990 and 2020 have relied on deliberation to enhance democracy through citizen participation.[5] Using data from the LATINNO dataset, it can be identified that out of the 3,744 participatory institutions, processes, and mechanisms examined across the 18 countries, 1,602 of them rely primarily on deliberation. Many of these democratic innovations have been replicated hundreds or even thousands of times at sub-national level since the 1990s, therefore the spread and institutionalization of deliberation is not a novel phenomenon in Latin America.

This report will discuss two types of large-scale deliberative designs that have taken root in several countries in Latin America. The two types of democratic innovations are multilevel policymaking and participatory planning. Both of these are deliberative processes that are mostly open to all citizens or CSOs and are designed to bring together a large number of participants and enable their input on the formulation of policies at the macro level. While advancing a more minimalist notion of deliberation, those innovations show that citizen participation is feasible on the large scale.[6] Deliberation follows a sequential process, which enables citizens' preferences and ideas to be refined throughout several rounds of discussion. The two deliberative designs advance a form of co-governance which brings together the state and civil society, allowing citizens to interact among themselves and with government officials. They can operate on the sub-national and the national levels and are designed to enable the deliberation of concrete policies to be adopted by governments, often on a long-term basis.

1 OECD, Innovative Citizen Participation and New Democratic Institutions: Catching the Deliberative Wave, 2020, https://www.oecd.org/gov/open-government/innovative-citizen-participation-new-democratic-institutions-catching-the-deliberative-wave-highlights.pdf.
2 Thamy Pogrebinschi, Thirty Years of Democratic Innovations in Latin America (Berlin: WZB - Berlin Social Science Center, 2021), 26, http://hdl.handle.net/10419/235143.
3 Thamy Pogrebinschi, Innovating Democracy? The Means and Ends of Citizen Participation in Latin America (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).
4 Thamy Pogrebinschi, "Experimenting with Participation and Deliberation: Is Democracy Turning Pragmatic?," in Latin America Since the Left Turn, eds., Tulia G. Falleti and Emilio A. Parrado (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018).
5 Pogrebinschi, Innovating Democracy?
6 Jane Mansbridge, "A Minimalist Definition of Deliberation," in Deliberation and Development: Rethinking the Role of Voice and Collective Action in Unequal Societies, eds., Patrick Heller and Rao Vijayendra (Washington DC: World Bank Group, 2015), 27-49; Pogrebinschi, Innovating Democracy?

This report will begin with a brief explanation of how deliberation has taken root in Latin America since 1990, providing a succinct understanding of the overall Latin American context. Secondly, it will broadly discuss multilevel policymaking outlining its diverse forms, its historical development, and highlighting its key features and advantages. Thirdly, this broad overview will then be complemented by a specific and detailed exploration of multilevel policymaking's implementation in four Latin American countries. The fourth section of the report will move on to explore the second innovation, participatory planning, and explain its distinctive features, the subsequent section will then be complemented with an exploration of four cases of participatory planning in Latin America. The final part of this report will offer a conclusion on the impacts of both of these democratic innovations in Latin America. The statistics used throughout this report are based on the author's analysis of data drawn from the LATINNO dataset, which comprises data on 3,744 democratic innovations in 18 countries in Latin America over a period of thirty years.[7]

The Deliberative Turn of Democracy in Latin America

Since the early 1990s, deliberation has been used in many countries in Latin America as a means to address public problems, set policy priorities, to include a plurality of voices in governmental action, reach agreements between conflicting stakeholders, and arrive at more inclusive political decisions. Deliberation cannot be dissociated from the processes of democratization, constitutionalisation, decentralisation, and the so called "left turn", all are aspects that contributed to creating the right context for the adoption of new participatory institutions throughout the region.[8]

Democratisation is the initial impulse that led to the creation and institutionalisation of new spaces of citizen participation in the 1990s. In most transitional countries, popular uprisings against authoritarian regimes were preceded by a strong surge of new grassroots movements, which first created new forms of association and later were crucial for the institutionalisation of new deliberative practices, to ensure that post-transition political institutions were redesigned to include civil society, and that new constitutions promote citizen participation.[9]

As a result of their transitions, most Latin American countries underwent a process of constitutional reform, and some enacted new constitutions. Participation has been inscribed as a principle or as an institutional design feature of several legal orders. Claims for more citizen participation became a legal mandate in several countries starting in the early 2000s.[10] Countries as varied as Brazil, Bolivia, Colombia, Honduras, El Salvador, Ecuador, and Peru have enacted legislation promoting citizen participation and creating participatory institutions.[11]

Decentralisation processes boosted citizen participation in the 1900s and early 2000s. Several decentralisation laws endorsed participation or were followed by specific legislation promoting participation. Decentralisation enabled citizen participation at the local level and prompted the design of new, participatory institutions. Mayors and political parties emerged as key actors of an intense process of democratic innovation.[12] International development organizations have also been major players who invested billions of dollars in the promotion of participation at the local level.[13]

At the turn of the new century, a left turn in Latin America's political governance, also known as the Pink Tide, triggered the expansion of citizen participation in the 2000s and the first half of the 2010s. The left-leaning parties that from 1998 onwards slowly gained power in two-thirds of national governments in Latin America brought participation to the national scale, incorporating it into the decision-making process. A handful of new participatory institutions were created at the national level, and many existing institutions were reformed to include citizens in the policy process.[14]

7 For more information on the dataset, see: Thamy Pogrebinschi "Codebook for the LATINNO Dataset: Technical report", WZB Discussion Paper, No. SP V 2021-101, (Berlin: WZB – Berlin Social Science Center, 2021). More information about the project and the dataset are available at: www.latinno.net
8 Pogrebinschi, Innovating Democracy?
9 Enrique Peruzzotti and Catalina Smulovitz, eds., Enforcing the Rule of Law: Social Accountability in the new Latin American democracies (Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh University Press, 2006); Evelina Dagnino, Alberto J. Olvera, and Aldo Panfichi, "Democratic innovation in Latin America: A first look at the Democratic Participatory Project," in Democratic Innovation in the South (Buenos Aires: Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales, 2008), 30-36.
10 Stephanie L. McNulty, Democracy from Above? The Unfulfilled Promise of Nationally Mandated Participatory Reforms (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019).
11 Pogrebinschi, Innovating Democracy?
12 Benjamin Goldfrank, Deepening Local Democracy in Latin America (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2011).
13 Benjamin Goldfrank, "The World Bank and the globalization of participatory budgeting," Journal of Public Deliberation 8, no. 2 (December 2012), 8, http://dx.doi.org/10.16997/jdd.143.
14 Pogrebinschi, Innovating Democracy?

In addition to those general trends, specific contextual factors also explain why some countries have adopted a larger or smaller number of deliberative innovations in comparison to their neighbours. For example, in 1988, Brazil overcame its dictatorship by ratifying a new constitution with a number of participatory features, which resulted in many deliberative innovations being implemented at the national, regional, and local levels. Brazil also saw a significant increase in the number of deliberative innovations and cultivated channels of communication with civil society during the 13 years that the left-leaning Workers' Party (PT) was in power.[15] Chile, on the other hand, has neither fully embraced civil society nor created strong participatory institutions. After the end of military rule in Chile, governmental attempts to institutionalise channels for citizen participation adversely only had the impact of sweeping civil society aside, resulting in its participatory institutions being merely informative and consultative bodies.[16] However, after the 2019-2020 social uprising in Chile, civil society regained a central role and implemented various democratic innovations alongside the recent constitutional process.[17]

15 Brian Wampler, Natasha Borges Sugiyama, and Michael Touchton, Democracy at Work: Pathways to Well-Being in Brazil (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2019).
16 John Paul Paredes, "Ciudadanía, participación y democracia: Deuda y déficit en los 20 años de "democracia" en Chile," Polis, Revista de la Universidad Bolivariana 10, no. 20. (April 2011), http://dx.doi.org/10.4067/S0718-65682011000100022.
17 Pogrebinschi, Innovating Democracy?
18 Thamy Pogrebinschi, "The Squared Circle of Participatory Democracy: Scaling up Deliberation to the National Level," Critical Policy Studies 7, no. 3 (November 2013), .

Multilevel policymaking: Scaling up participation

Multilevel policymaking is a type of democratic innovation that brings citizens and CSOs together with government representatives in a process of formulating policies or setting priorities to the policy agenda. What distinguishes this large-scale democratic innovation is its multilevel nature, i.e., the scaling up of deliberation based on cumulative layers of participation.

Multilevel policymaking involves participatory processes with at least two levels of deliberation, which can take place simultaneously or subsequently. Deliberation is sequenced in more than space or moment, so as to produce a final output that reflects the diversity of input given in the previous rounds of discussion.

Multilevel policymaking processes enables greater consideration of local and regional demands in policies that will be applied to an entire region or country. Typically, deliberation in multilevel policymaking scales up through a country's administrative levels. Multilevel policymaking can either be done in two stages, scaling up from the local to the regional level, or done in three stages, scaling up from the local to the regional and finally the national level. In both cases, the aim is to include input from citizens at each level, ensuring the preferences of citizens from different municipalities are taken into consideration while drafting a national or regional policy. This is especially relevant in countries with more regional diversity, where regions and cities may differ substantially from each other in terms of their social, economic, cultural and political contexts.[18]

Multilevel policymaking processes can take a diverse array of forms and names. Nonetheless, the two most common types are conferências (policy conferences) and diálogos (national dialogues). Policy conferences usually comprise the typical vertical scaling up deliberative process, while national dialogues mostly encompass sequential and horizontal processes of deliberation. Using the LATINNO dataset, it can be seen that every country in Latin America has implemented at least one type of multilevel policymaking process. A total of 128 different institutional designs can be identified across the region, although most are concentrated within a few countries. With 47 cases of multilevel policymaking, Brazil is the Latin American country with the strongest tradition of implementing multilevel deliberative policymaking processes.

In the vast majority of cases, multilevel policymaking is exclusively initiated by governments, and they almost always have a national scope, despite sometimes taking place at the local and regional levels. Although 70% of multilevel policymaking cases are limited to agenda-setting and do not engage citizens in the actual decision-making stage of the policy cycle, 81% of all processes are concluded with some form of decision, however, they are typically non-binding. Moreover, 98% of cases for which there is accessible data have had some sort of output, such as a set of recommendations, if not a policy itself. Out of those cases resulting in a policy, 60% have seen them enacted, indicating that participatory multilevel deliberation has a positive impact on policymaking.

The next section will provide four specific examples of multilevel policymaking processes that have taken place across different Latin America between 1990 and 2020, offering an insight into what it looks like in practice in different national contexts.

18 Thamy Pogrebinschi, "The Squared Circle of Participatory Democracy: Scaling up Deliberation to the National Level," Critical Policy Studies 7, no. 3 (November 2013), .

Four case studies of Multilevel policymaking in Latin America

Brazil: National Public Policy Conferences

Brazil's National Public Policy Conferences (NPPCs) are the largest participatory and deliberative innovation developed in Latin America. They consist of simultaneous and subsequent stages of deliberation at the local, regional, and national levels that are designed to elicit recommendations for the formulation of public policies at the national (federal) level. These multilevel deliberative processes gather together ordinary citizens, CSOs, private stakeholders, elected representatives, public administrators, and other social and political actors. They are entirely open to participation at the local level, where delegates are elected to join state-level conferences and, from there on, to a singular national one. This final stage brings together delegates from the previous stages to deliberate proposals that have been scaled-up from the preceding levels. The process concludes with the drafting of a final set of recommendations for national policies.

Although the NPPCs are convened by Brazil's federal government, they have mostly been a joint endeavour with civil society since their earliest inception. The NPPCs were first created in the early 1940s as a government response to the demands of the then-influential health movements, when President Getúlio Vargas introduced a scaled-up consulting structure so the federal government could receive feedback about health service delivery at the local level.[19] They were reactivated in 1990 and their scope was expanded to areas beyond health policy. It was only from this point onwards that the NPPCs became proper participatory and deliberative processes. In the 2000s, when the Workers' Party was in government, the NPPCs grew enormously in size and scope and were integrated to decision making at the national level. Between 2003 and 2010, an average of ten NPPCs on diverse policy issues took place every year in Brazil. Official data estimates that around 7 million people participated in the 82 NPPCs that took place in Brazil between 2003 and 2011.[20] Considering that each NPCC comprised hundreds or thousands of municipal conferences (in which many hundreds or thousands of people participate), participation in policymaking became a truly large-scale phenomenon in Brazil during the 13 years in which the Workers' Party was in power (2003-2016). As the NPPCs increased in size, number and frequency during President Lula's government (2003-2010), the role of civil society in proposing, organising and participating in the NPPCs increased.[21]

Once an NPPC is convened, a committee is set up to define the rules and oversee the process, which can take over a year to reach the final, national stage. The organising committee is usually equally composed of representatives of civil society (50%) and government representatives (50%). The allocation of delegates to be elected at the municipal and state stages of the conference process also follows this parity rule. Most of the rules for NPPCs have tried to ensure that representatives from municipal and state governments join the final stage national conference, as well as ensuring representatives from the federal government join the lower levels of the deliberative process. Civil society delegates are always elected from among participants at the local (municipal) level.[22]

The first stage of deliberation at an NPPC is at the local level. Sometimes small cities organise the local stage together. In the local conferences, proposals for local policies are deliberated upon alongside proposals for national policies. The policy recommendations that result from all municipal conferences within each of Brazil's states are compiled in a document, which serves as the basis for deliberation in the respective state conferences. Each state conference will then deliberate on the municipal proposals, introduce new ones, and decide which will move up to be deliberated upon at the national level. After each of the states in the federation has held its own conference, the last stage takes place in the country's capital, Brasília. Before it happens, the policy recommendations produced from each of the 27 states' conferences are compiled in a document that will be the object of the final round of deliberation. At this stage, usually, no new proposals are allowed; only proposals that originated from the municipal and state levels can be deliberated upon. This procedure is meant to ensure that the final outcome is effectively national in scope, i.e., representative of the interests of the entire country.[23]

19 Thamy Pogrebinschi and David Samuels, "The Impact of Participatory Democracy: Evidence from Brazil's National Public Policy Conferences," Comparative Politics 46, no. 3 (April 2014), http://dx.doi.org/10.5129/001041514810943045.
20 Pogrebinschi and Samuels, "The Impact of Participatory Democracy:"
21 Thamy Pogrebinschi and Fabiano Santos, "Where Participation Matters: The impact of a national level democratic innovation on policymaking in Brazil," in The Governance of Large-Scale Projects. Linking Citizens and the State, eds., Andrea Römmele and Henrik Schober (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 2013).
22 Pogrebinschi and Samuels, "The Impact of Participatory Democracy:"
23 Pogrebinschi and Samuels, "The Impact of Participatory Democracy:"

At the local level, no selection method is used to filter participants. Participation in the municipal conferences is entirely open to all citizens within the municipality. Besides deliberating on policy proposals, in this initial stage participants elect the delegates who will participate in the state conferences. Given the fact that anyone can join a municipal conference, in theory, anyone can also be elected as a delegate and participate in the subsequent stages of the NPPCs. At the state level, participation is not entirely open, as only delegates elected at the local level conferences can take part in the state conference of their federal unit. However, new participants join deliberation at this stage, who are mostly officials appointed by state governments. Although governments appoint representatives, they have no influence on who is elected as a delegate and over which delegates can ascend to the next level. At the national level, participation is accordingly restricted; only delegates elected at the state level conferences are allowed to participate, together with the appointed representatives from the national government. In some NPPCs however, depending on the policy issue under deliberation, workers' organisations or CSOs are also able to appoint new participants at the national level.

The NPPCs are structured around specific policy issues, such as health, education, social assistance, environment, human rights, food and nutritional security, science and technology, culture, public security and rural development. Over 40 different policy areas have been the objects of deliberation in the NPPCs held since 1990.[24] Some NPPCs had rules to ensure CSOs concerned with a specific policy issue under deliberation join each stage of the process. For example, in a NPPC on education participants typically include students, teachers, professors, school administrators, university staff, unions for workers in the education sector, as well as government officials who work in governmental bodies responsible for education policy at all levels. Therefore, the policies that result from these particular NPPCs reflect both the theoretical and practical knowledge of people who are directly involved with and affected by those issues in their daily lives and are thus fully informed by such collective expertise.

Some of the most innovative policy issues brought forward at NPPCs are concerned with the interests and rights of social and cultural minorities. Brazil has held NPPCs on policies for women, elderly, indigenous peoples, racial equality, people with disabilities and the LGBT community. Minority groups take advantage of NPPC conferences to shape their demands and frame their identities. Since minority groups have little or no resources for lobbying or advocacy and lack the electoral strength to elect their favoured representatives, they have found that NPCCs are a vehicle for translating their demands into public policies.[25]

Brazil's National Public Policy Conferences offer extensive evidence of how participatory multilevel deliberation can effectively impact policy. Many of the recommendations produced by NPCCs have been turned into national legislation in ground-breaking policy areas[26], including the first ever set of national policies addressing minority groups, and hence expanding their representation.[27] The multilevel deliberative design of national policy conferences has been linked to the effectiveness of its policy results, among which are the enactment of redistributive policies.[28] Research has also shown that citizens have acted as crucial sources of information for decision-makers in these deliberative innovations, providing them with knowledge on specific policy issues and enhancing the multidimensionality of policymaking.[29] These processes of multilevel deliberation have also increased legislative congruence, reduced the informational imbalance between the legislative and executive branches of government, and they have augmented the responsiveness of legislators on policies enacted by both the government and the opposition.[30]

While NPPCs have proven that participation is feasible both across large territorial areas and can include large numbers of participants, they have also shown that democratic innovations face serious risks if they are not properly institutionalised. Proven by the fact that NPPCs have been discontinued after the election of Brazil's current far-right authoritarian president (Jair Bolsonaro) in 2018.

24 Pogrebinschi and Samuels, "The Impact of Participatory Democracy:"
25 Thamy Pogrebinschi, "Turning Participation into Representation: Innovative Policymaking for Minority Groups in Brazil," in Varieties of Civic Innovation: Deliberative, Collaborative, Network, and Narrative Approaches, eds., Carmen Sirianni and Jennifer Girouard (Nashville. Tennessee: Vanderbilt University Press, 2014).
26 Pogrebinschi and Samuels, "The Impact of Participatory Democracy:"
27 Pogrebinschi, "Turning Participation into Representation:"
28 Thamy Pogrebinschi and Matt Ryan, "Moving beyond input legitimacy: When do democratic innovations affect policy making?," European Journal of Politica000l Research 57, no. 1 (June 2017), https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6765.12219.
29 Pogrebinschi and Santos, "Where Participation Matters."
30 Thamy Pogrebinschi and Thiago Ventura, "Quando Participação implica em Responsividade: Aumentando a Qualidade da Democracia por meio das Conferências Nacionais de Políticas Públicas," Dados – Revista de Ciências Sociais 60, no. 1 (March 2017), http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/001152582017113.

Ecuador: Plurinational and Intercultural Conference on Food Sovereignty

The Plurinational and Intercultural Conference on Food Sovereignty (COPISA) was created in 2010 to organise broad processes of deliberation for the formulation of bills of law, public policies, and programmes on food sovereignty. COPISA's co-governance design enabled CSOs to shape those policies together with government institutions. More specifically, COPISA was charged with drafting, through a broad-based participatory and deliberative process, nine laws that would supplement Ecuador's 2009 Food Sovereignty Law. Between 2010 and 2012, COPISA held facilitated workshops on the topics of each mandated bill of law, some of which had been promoted or co-sponsored by CSOs. All workshops were open to public participation and organised around roundtables and plenaries. At least 15,000 participants and 5,000 organisations joined the deliberation and collectively constructed the nine bills of law (Peña, 2013).[31] The true participatory character of these processes has, however, been contested, particularly due to COPISA's lack of regularity and interaction with civil society.[32] Not all of the laws drafted by COPISA have been enacted by the Legislature.[33]

Read more: https://latinno.net/en/case/8004/

Uruguay: Youth Action Plans

In Uruguay, Youth Action Plans comprised of two participatory processes that sought to develop strategic guidelines for long-term youth policies. The deliberative process that resulted in the first plan (containing policies for the period 2011 to 2015), included roundtables and workshops with young people voicing their concerns and suggestions. In the second stage, the young participants developed diagnoses and proposals together with the government institutions and ministries responsible for youth policies. In a third stage, workshops were held to discuss the agreed proposals, engaging 2,300 young people from over 130 cities. The deliberative process to formulate the second Youth Action Plan (comprising policies to be implemented between 2015 and 2025), was also carried out in three stages. First, 12 "initial dialogues" were carried out to identify relevant topics that impacted the youth, this involved gathering together young representatives from CSOs and political parties who were tasked with formulating proposals in several areas, such as education and health. The second stage, the "territorial dialogues", were comprised of 32 workshops held throughout the country, these were open to people between the ages of 14 and 29. Over 1,700 young people participated and collaborated in drafting proposals for the second Youth Action Plan. The third and final stage was the "National Youth Conference", which gathered together over 1,400 young people in Montevideo. They were from all over the country and had participated in the first two stages of the process and their roles had scaled-up alongside the demands of the departmental delegations and the results of the local workshops.

Read more: https://latinno.net/en/case/18021/

31 Karla Peña, "Institutionalizing Food Sovereignty in Ecuador" (conference paper, Food Sovereignty: A Critical Dialogue, International Conference Yale University, New Haven, September 14-15, 2013), https://www.iss.nl/en/research/research-networks/initiatives-critical-agrarian-studies/food-sovereignty-critical-dialogue-20132014-conference-papers-series.

32 Erin Fiorini, "COPISA in Ecuador: Participation that Wasn't." (master's thesis. Tucson: Graduate College of Latin American Studies, University of Arizona, 2015).

33 Otilia Vanessa Cordero-Ahiman, "Ley Orgánica del Régimen de la Soberanía Alimentaria de Ecuador," Revista chilena nutrición 49, no. 1 (June 2022), https://www.scielo.cl/scielo.php?pid=S0717-75182022000400034&script=sci_arttext.

Bolivia: National Dialogues

Since the late 90s, national dialogues in Bolivia have served as a space for pacts and negotiations between the State and civil society organisations regarding the design and implementation of long-term public policies. The main purpose of the three dialogues held thus far, held in **1997**, **2000**, and **2004**, has been to develop a strategy to reduce nationwide poverty levels by utilising funding from international donors. In order to gain access to this financial aid, civil society organisations were required to be involved in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of policies the funds were meant to facilitate. The idea behind this strategy was to increase the feeling of ownership of government policies in large parts of the population by fostering deliberation. Ultimately, the objectives of all three were to increase popular satisfaction with the programmes they produced, improve the accountability of government performance, and increase the effectiveness of anti-poverty policies. One of the most obvious achievements of the 1997 National Dialogue was the great success in boosting the participation of civil society organisations in the policymaking process, ultimately, resulting in the involvement of more than 2,000 participants in 300 municipalities in roundtables, conferences and workshops designed to diagnose the needs of citizens and to propose initiatives. In the end, participants managed to influence the final output, and many of the civil society organisations strengthened their capacities during the process.[34] In 1997, a consensus was reached on many subjects and resulted in the creation of several social control mechanisms designed to increase the monitoring of poverty reduction policies during their implementation phases. However, it was the 2004 National Dialogue which showed how the practice can make participation an effective part of policymaking. This National Dialogue successfully engaged more than 40,000 organisations in policy deliberations at the local level.

Read more: **The First National Dialogue (1997)**, **The Second National Dialogue (2000)** and **The Third National Dialogue (2004)**

34 Nadia Molenaers and Renard Robrecht, "The World Bank, participation and PRSP: The Bolivian case revisited," European Journal of Development Research 15, no. 2 (December 2003): 133-161, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09578810312331287515.

Participatory Planning: Shaping the future collectively

Participatory planning processes are designed to enable a wide range of stakeholders to participate in the formulation of long-term policies and of future strategies and actions to be pursued by governments in the long run. In these innovations, ordinary citizens and CSOs join policymakers in the drafting of policies, plans, or programmes that may affect their lives for a long time.

Deliberation in participatory planning processes usually happens before a concrete policy proposal is formulated but can also happen afterwards, in which case it may lead to the redrafting of an existing proposal if participants express disagreement or propose alternative framings. Participatory planning processes are a form of co-governance in which citizens and CSOs collaborate with the government during at least two stages of the policy process, agenda-setting and policy formulation.

The modus operandi of participatory planning also resembles a process comprising diverse stages. Much like multilevel policymaking, this kind of democratic innovation involves more than one occasions where participants get together to deliberate on policies or policy plans. Unlike multilevel policymaking however, deliberation does not scale up; instead, the process's several stages may combine diverse means and spaces of citizen participation (for example, deliberation in small workshops and digital participation in online platforms). In addition to that, what makes participatory planning different from multilevel policymaking is often the subject of deliberation itself, which is usually the commitment to a long-term policy or plan. A central aim of this kind of democratic innovation is including the opinions of citizens (instead of only that of experts) and reshaping planning processes themselves to produce the meaningful level of deliberation required for the proper weighing of different alternatives for the future. It does this by ensuring several rounds of discussion between participants and policymakers, administrators, and experts.

The most common types of participatory planning processes in Latin America are simply referred to as planificación (planning) or planes estratégicos (strategic plans), in addition to a range of participatory "plans" that includes national plans, annual plans, five-year plans, and development plans. Between 1990 and 2020, a total of 366 different participatory planning processes have taken place across 18 Latin American countries, with the highest number found in Argentina (48), followed by Panama (39), Guatemala (36), Brazil (34), Colombia (31), and Chile (24). Countries like Honduras and Venezuela have undertaken very few participatory planning processes (6, and 2, respectively), and the reason may lie in the political instability within these countries that prevents long-term planning, with or without citizen participation.

While governments are the main initiators of participatory planning and are involved in the great majority of processes, international organisations have also played a crucial role in the development of these democratic innovations. Close to 1/3 of all cases of participatory planning in Latin America, as identified in the LATINNO dataset, had an international organisation involved in the process, usually together with national governments, and the cooperation of CSOs. As the financial aid granted by most international development agencies to Latin American governments extends for several years and targets long-term goals, donations have often been accompanied by the task of planning the achievement of those goals, in particular through the participation of citizens in achieving these goals and by fostering dialogue between citizens and governments.

Although 72% of the cases of participatory planning in Latin America yielded some form of decision, only 13% have yielded binding decisions. Nevertheless, for all participatory planning processes in which the expected outcome was a policy, the ensuing policy has been enacted in exactly 50% of cases. The fact that policies have resulted from participatory planning processes half of the time is a considerable achievement. However, the question of whether the content of a policy truly reflects input from citizens and CSOs remains open for debate in some cases. Below I will provide four insightful examples of participatory planning processes that have taken place across Latin America between 1990 and 2020.

Four cases of participatory planning processes

Chile: Participatory Planning Process for long-term Energy Policy (Energy 2050)

The Participatory Planning Process for Chile's long-term Energy Policy, Energy 2050, was a participatory process through which the Chilean government involved citizens, CSOs, academics, and experts in the elaboration of the country's new energy policy. The process started in 2014 and lasted 18 months. It consisted of various instances of participation, including a strategic advisory committee, a series of technical thematic working groups, regional workshops, and a digital platform to call for broad citizen participation.[35] The Energy 2050 planning process comprised three dimensions of participation (political, technical, and social), each considering diverse types of participants, knowledge, and contributions. The first dimension, participation in the political dimension, was focused around a permanent advisory committee, which was composed of 27 people who were selected for being key stakeholders in the energy sector. The second dimension, participation in the technical dimension, involved experts and representatives of sectors who deal with energy in thematic deliberative roundtables. The third dimension, participation in the social dimension, sought to involve the entire population through a participatory platform, which is discussed in more detail below.[36]

The process for developing the E2050 comprised four stages designed to consider all three dimensions of participation mentioned above. The first stage sought to address short-term and medium-term challenges to energy policy. It was comprised of ten thematic mesas temáticas (thematic tables / working groups), which involved many academics and several universities. These thematic tables were organised around topics such as hydroelectricity, thermoelectricity, efficient heating, gas, innovation, and indigenous issues. The thematic tables organised about 130 workshops across most of the country's regions, where over 3,500 people were given an opportunity to voice their opinions, ideas, and proposals for the new energy policy.[37]

The second stage built on the proposals produced from the ten thematic tables and 130 workshops that took place in the first stage, these proposals were then used to formulate the Hoja de Ruta (roadmap), a 200-page paper that articulates a visión compartida (shared vision) for future energy policy with dozens of goals, principles, guidelines, and proposals. This document was mostly drafted by the 27 members of the Advisory Committee throughout 30 meetings. The Advisory Committee was comprised of representatives from the government (ministries and public institutions at national and regional levels) and representatives of civil society (NGOs, workers' associations, and academics).[38]

The third stage aimed to properly draft the new energy policy. Its starting point was the "roadmap" delivered by the advisory committee. This stage was mostly centred around a digital platform built to include a broad range of citizens in the process. In addition to enabling citizens to generally express their opinions, the platform was used to conduct deliberative polls as a part of a wide ranging process of public consultation. The deliberative polls were designed to enable citizens to engage in informed and facilitated deliberation on the different potential directions for energy policy outlined in the Hoja de Ruta. To implement the deliberative pools, a random representative sample of the population from three provinces was invited to participate in the deliberation; although 1,362 citizens were invited, only 212 did so. Lastly, public consultation sought to enable the entire population to comment on the draft energy policy through the digital platform. The document was open to online scrutiny for an entire month, albeit only receiving about 400 comments. During this period, five workshops also took place involving 420 people across five cities in a facilitated deliberation of the draft of the new energy policy.[39]

As a result of the planning process, in December 2015 the Ministry of Energy presented the draft bill produced by this participatory process. The bill was named the "Energy 2050" plan and was presented to the (then) President of Chile. The 150-page long document introduces proposals and actions for four main areas of energy policy, and it includes citizen participation in energy policy among its goals. It also states that the inputs received from citizens in all stages of the drafting process (including the comments offered by citizens in the digital public consultation) have been taken into consideration in the policy's final draft.[40]

35 Ministerio de Energía de Chile, Energía 2050: Política Energética de Chile, (2015), https://www.energia.gob.cl/sites/default/files/energia_2050_-_politica_energetica_de_chile.pdf.
36 Ibid.
37 Ibid.
38 Ministerio de Energía de Chile, Hoja de Ruta 2050, September 2015, https://www.energia.gob.cl/sites/default/files/hoja_de_ruta_cc_e2050.pdf.
39 Ministerio de Energía de Chile, Energía 2050: Política Energética de Chile.
40 Ibid.

However, the extent to which the process of drafting the new policy was truly participatory and deliberative is disputed. While some celebrate for the very first time a long-term public policy involving citizen participation has been formulated, others criticise the process for not really engaging the citizenry at large. Critics say that the process was merely consultative and involved a relatively small number of citizens and that mostly the same people participated across the different stages.[41] Indeed, especially in the third stage, the number of participants was quite small. Moreover, the deliberative pools reflected one of the main problems faced by deliberative innovations that rely on random selection: most of the people invited to participate decline the invitation, what may seriously affect the representativeness of the sample. Nonetheless, Chile's planning process for energy policy is relevant as it offers an alternative participatory design to include citizens in the discussion of policies related to environmental and climate issues, which are growing in relevance today and in Europe have been addressed mostly through citizens' assemblies.

Guatemala: Diálogos por el Agua (Water Dialogues)

Diálogos por el Agua were an institutional response to the Marcha por el Agua (the Water March) that took place in Guatemala in April 2016, when hundreds of people walked for 10 days to call attention to the need to solve the problems of water access and provision, such as the lack of potable water in many areas, the changed courses of some rivers, and the privatisation of water services. Following the march, the Comisión de Ley de Aguas (the Water Law Commission), a participatory institution, was created with the task of formulating a law to regulate water, which would then be drafted based on input from citizens and organisations in the Diálogos por el Agua. Between July and August 2016, 24 water dialogues took place in 21 departamentos (states), involving in total 1,881 people from 17 different societal sectors and included participants from the legislature, governmental and non-governmental institutions, the private sector, academia, and local grassroots organisations, along with ordinary citizens. The dialogues followed a process of facilitated deliberation that started with a working document and a presentation aimed at increasing knowledge about water issues, as well as questions aimed at prompting the debate. Deliberation took place in working groups and plenaries organised around three main topics: conflicts, governance, and regulation. The conclusions and recommendations of the water dialogues have been taken into consideration by the Water Law Commission to draft a bill for the Water Law, however, the bill has not yet been made into an official act by parliament.[42]

Read more: https://latinno.net/en/case/10033/ and https://latinno.net/en/case/10148/

41 Beatriz Hernández and Claudio Minoletti, "Participación ciudadana en Políticas Públicas de Energía: reflexiones para un Chile energéticamente sustentable," Polis, Revista Latinoamericana 18, no. 53 (June 2019), http://dx.doi.org/10.32735/s0718-6568/2019-n53-1390.

42 Enrique Canahui, "Por qué Guatemala no tiene una Ley General de Aguas (y la larga línea de tiempo de promesas y desacuerdos)," Prensa Libre, January 31, 2022, https://www.prensalibre.com/guatemala/comunitario/por-que-guatemala-no-tiene-una-ley-de-aguas-y-la-larga-linea-de-tiempo-de-promesas-y-desacuerdos/.

El Salvador: The Participatory Strategic Plan of Santa Tecla

The participatory strategic plan was a deliberative process that enabled citizens of the city of Santa Tecla in El Salvador to propose short-, medium-, and long-term projects to be implemented over a ten-year period. This participatory planning process has taken place twice, in 2002 and 2012, each resulting in a ten-year plan (2002–12 and 2012–22). The 2002 process involved 150 representatives of civil society in a total of 37 roundtables tasked with discussing with public authorities the directions, priorities, projects, and actions to be developed during the following decade. The entire planning process incorporated several participatory bodies and mechanisms, forming a truly deliberative system in Santa Tecla and including the citizens' assembly, the local development committee, sectoral tables, zonal committees, neighbourhood organisations, and participatory budgeting. Until 2010, 378 projects had been implemented, 63% of which had followed the original proposals from the 2002 participatory processes. An external evaluation disclosed that citizens reported increases in responsiveness and representation but also a lack of resources to meet all citizens' demands.

Read more: https://latinno.net/en/case/9015/

Costa Rica: Water Law National Dialogue

Participatory planning processes can also effectively focus on the formulation of one specific policy or the setting of a strategic agenda for one specific policy area. In Costa Rica, both setting a policy and an agenda have been done by incorporating citizens in the deliberation of water policy. The participatory process around the proposal of a new ley de aguas (water law) dates back to 2002, when a national dialogue forum on water brought together 200 representatives from different social and political sectors. This deliberative forum was followed by the installation of a technical water group, also consisting of representatives of government and CSOs, which then organised a broad process of deliberation to draft the text of a new bill of law. This process included talleres de diálogo (dialogue workshops) in all six regions of the country and included 327 participants from civil society, the private sector, and the government. In 2004, a new participatory process devised an environmental agenda for water in Costa Rica by relying on the deliberations of three regional forums that engaged about 400 participants who agreed on the ten main problems in water management and offered possible solutions. However, since 2005, the proposed bill for the water law has not been fully considered by Costa Rica's Legislative Assembly. In 2010, a popular initiative supported by around 170,000 citizens introduced to the legislature a bill of law, likely influenced by these previous deliberative processes. At the end of 2020, Costa Rica did not yet have a new water law, but the legislature had completed a first round of voting on a modified version of the original bill. CSOs and political parties have however disputed how much was retained from the early participatory planning processes.[43]

Read more: https://latinno.net/en/case/6023/

43 "Costa Rica estudia una nueva ley de agua tras 78 años," EFE: Verde, December 11, 2020, https://efeverde.com/agua-ley-costa-rica-78-anos/.

Conclusion

This report has explored two distinct large-scale types of deliberative innovations, multilevel policymaking and participatory planning, which have been implemented in a variety of forms and institutional designs across Latin America. Although they are not the region's most ubiquitous participatory institutions grounded in deliberation (such as deliberative councils and participatory budgeting), they are certainly amongst the most successful in terms of including a large number of citizens in participatory processes and impacting policymaking. Some features of their institutional designs may create conditions for successful participatory governance. These will be discussed below.

Co-governance: As seen in the case of Brazil and Chile, multilevel policymaking and participatory planning both emphasise co-governance. Although the two kinds of innovations are mostly implemented by governments, many times they include civil society in its organization and execution. Moreover, both state officials and civil society actors participate in the process and have frequently a chance to deliberate together.

Openness: Both of these innovations are open processes, where any citizen and civil society organizations are entitled to participate. While this cannot ensure equality in participation (as random selection attempts to ensure), it does not exclude citizens from deliberation on matters they consider relevant or on policy areas they feel affect them. This openness also does not exclude CSOs from deliberations on topics for which they have they have amassed immense knowledge and years of practical experience. The absence of selection rules also makes large-scale participation possible, which can increase both the legitimacy of the process and the pressure on governments to effectively consider the results.

Collaborative Expertise: The two kinds of innovations ensure the involvement of common citizens, CSO representatives, members of workers' associations, academics, experts, and government officials in policy processes. This not only strengthens collective intelligence during deliberation but also ensures that decisions are informed by those who really know an issue well and understand what is at stake or are directly affected by the issue being discussed. This may also make recommendations resulting from those processes more reasonable and feasible, and therefore they may increase their chances of being converted into policies.

Policy Goal: The fact that multilevel policymaking and participatory planning are participatory processes designed with the aim to draft either a concrete policy or a specific governmental plan enhances their chances of attracting more participants. Citizens have more reasons to believe that their participation will bring about concrete results and this may work as an incentive for them to engage.

Sequential Deliberation: The design of these two kinds of innovations enable deliberation in multiple (simultaneous or subsequent) stages, enabling a cumulative discussion of inputs within different rounds, places, moments, and groups of participants. This sequential process enables preferences to be transformed through deliberation (as participants have several opportunities to be persuaded by arguments or agree on positions), in addition to increasing the chances that outcomes reflect the inputs of a larger number of participants (as seen in the NPCC in Brazil, where inputs given by participants at hundreds or thousands of cities are further deliberated in subsequent stages and have real chances to be included in the national policy) .

Multichannel design: Although these innovations are primarily deliberative and designed to take place face-to-face, they entail many forms of non-electoral citizen representation (e.g., internal elections of delegates to successive stages, as in the national policy conferences) and have been expanding to combine with digital engagement (adding online deliberative stages or aggregating inputs given on digital policy platforms designed to broaden the process). The combination of diverse means of citizen participation in one same design makes participation more accessible for a great

number of citizens. This has been seen in the Chilean case, where in the last stage of the formulation of the energy policy digital participation (comments to the policy draft in the digital platform) was combined with deliberation (deliberative polls).

Scalability: While both deliberative innovations can be set up at the local and national levels, their design (especially that of multilevel policymaking processes) enable national policies to be discussed at the sub-national level, without disregarding inputs from the local level. The multi-layered deliberation and scaled-up process enable citizens, CSOs and political actors (government officials and elected representatives) from a vast range of cities to have a voice in the drafting of policies that will be applied to the entire country.

Decisiveness: The two kinds of deliberative innovations have been designed to yield decisions such as policy recommendations (Brazil's NPCC) or principles of a governmental plan (Chile's E50 Policy). Although those decisions are not binding, they serve as clear inputs to policymakers, increasing the likelihood that they will take citizens' contributions into consideration.

Although most processes using these two innovations have not yielded binding decisions, they have almost always produced decisions which clearly indicate the preferences of citizens and relevant stakeholders. These decisions contribute to outputs such as policy recommendations or the principles of a governmental plan. Indirectly, the fact that these processes produce clear decisions means policymakers are much more likely to enact them in some fashion even if it is indirectly.

Institutionalisation: Multilevel policymaking and participatory planning processes tend to be institutionalised, either by a governmental program or a law. The institutionalisation of participatory designs increases their chances of impact and hinders their discontinuation, as it has happened with the NPCC in Brazil.

Nonetheless, the aftermath of some of the deliberative processes described in this paper – such as Costa Rica's Water Law National Dialogue, Guatemala's Water Dialogue, and Ecuador's National Conference on Food Security - provides useful illustrations of how citizen participation and deliberation – no matter how extensive and intensive – may not be considered fully (or at all) in the final shaping of a policy. It also shows that participatory and deliberative innovations – regardless of how truly participatory and deliberative they are – may end up being completely ineffective and entirely dependent on the prevailing political will.

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European Democracy Hub

Contact:

European Partnership for Democracy
No. d'entreprise: 0648.708.779
Rue Froissart 123-133B-1040 Brussels, Belgium

info@epd.eu | www.epd.eu

About the project:

'Exploring Worldwide Democratic Innovations' is a research project supported by Robert Bosch Stiftung, which explores emerging innovations in democratic participation around the world and offering an overview of the lessons learned throughout the application of these innovations.The project highlights policy implications and gives a set of recommendations for European policymakers and practitioners working on the EU's internal democratic renewal. The project brings together researchers, practitioners and policymakers to exchange best practices in democratic political innovations.