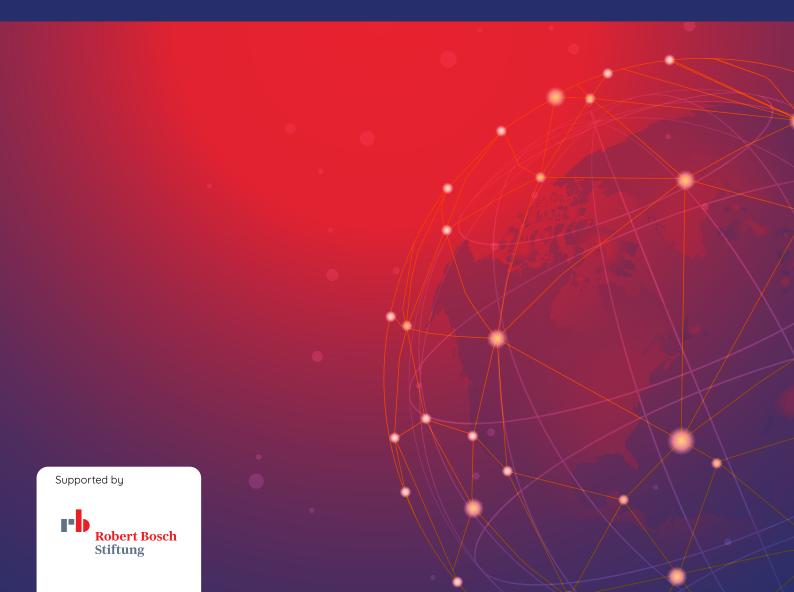# Exploring Worldwide Democratic Innovations

A Series of Case Studies

The European Democracy Hub is a joint initiative of Carnegie Europe and the European Partnership for Democracy. It acts as a focal point for work on democracy, bringing together analysts and policymakers engaged with EU democracy support and democratic challenges in Europe.

This report is a compilation of the case studies created in the framework of the Exploring Worldwide Democratic Innovations project carried out by the European Democracy Hub. All case studies have been previously published individually and are available via our website.

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Democratic Innovations from Around the World: Lessons for the West

Ken Godfrey and Richard Youngs

Recent initiatives for fostering citizen participation in Europe, Australia, and Canada have attracted much attention, especially selection-based "mini-publics"—of which one form, citizens' assemblies, has become increasingly popular. Yet new forms of participation have also emerged in other countries and regions around the world. Like the innovations in Western democracies, these are far from perfect, but they offer valuable insights for those concerned with widening the pathways to democratic participation within Western states. The European Democracy Hub ran a project on democratic innovations outside the West in order to explore these lessons. This article synthesises findings from the project by categorising distinctive types of citizen participation from examples around the world and teasing out their policy implications.

A Wider Lens on Democratic Innovation

With citizens' frustration with and alienation from political elites becoming more widespread and severe around the world, as manifested in a rising number of significant anti-government protests globally, the need for innovative channels of citizen participation has become more pressing. Despite the powerful global dynamics of democratic regression, many positive forms of such participation have taken shape in the last several years. Indeed, many analysts detect that a new ethos of citizen participation is defining efforts to push back against democratic decay.

Selection-based mini-publics are establishing an especially impressive track record as one form of citizen participation. These forums choose citizens by lot to deliberate on certain policy issues. In the West, this sortition template—now routinely implemented with highly sophisticated techniques of stratified selection to ensure representation from diverse sectors of society— is seen as the gold standard of participation, as it gives all citizens an equal chance to participate and ensures debates are highly structured around preset remits or elaborate formal institutional processes.

While the expansion of sortition initiatives is extremely positive for democratic renewal, the heavy focus on the growth of this particular participative template risks drawing attention away from other democratic innovations. Citizen assemblies are not unique to the West, but most have been clustered in a relatively small group of Western states. Deliberative participation also needs more variety in its forms.[1] This makes it important to study promising kinds of citizen participation being tried around the world and ask whether Western countries might benefit from drawing on such alternative innovations.

A critical debate has gathered steam about the need to decolonise deliberation and to take participative forms developed outside the West more seriously. The decolonisation approach argues that Western deliberative forms carry historical baggage and identities that limit their true democratic value. The European Democracy Hub's project was premised on a similar sentiment, although it did not quite use the same framing or explicitly weigh in on the question of whether or not sortition assemblies are appropriate to all regions or cultures around the world. Rather, its focus was exploratory, bringing in local experts to report with their contextual knowledge on different kinds of innovations outside the Western world.

The project tried to take these critical debates a step further. Decolonisation accounts focus overwhelmingly on critiquing Western forms and often end at the point of insisting that other ones need to be encouraged and examined. We started from the point where these accounts tend to finish. We took as given that Western innovations reflect interests and embedded identities from those places and that it is equally valid and interesting to examine efforts from all regions, and went straight into looking at other forms of democratic innovation outside the West.

The project made no a priori assumption that these alternative innovations are superior—the aim was to ask what they might contribute to Western debates about citizen participation, while also examining their limitations. Neither does it make any sweeping claims about major differences between regions: many countries are experimenting with the same kind of participation used in Western countries. But some approaches outside the West are different and they merit more sustained attention. The project, therefore, looked at how diverse countries and societies are seeking to bring citizens into policy-making in ways that might not fit the formats used in the West.

1   Ian O'Flynn, Deliberative Democracy (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2022).

The project uncovers differences from existing Western approaches that can be grouped into three clusters: first, efforts to extend democratic participation within existing consultative processes; second, more open forms of participation that involve relatively large numbers of citizens; and third, attempts to connect citizen participation to other political actors.

Participation Through Consultation

First, many public authorities have focused on building participative components into public consultation mechanisms.

A large number of governments around the world offer consultative mechanisms that allow citizens and organised interests to have input into new legislative proposals. Most also have some form of online petition process through which citizens can call on governments to take action in specific areas of policy. Such forms of consultation and petitioning have expanded dramatically but do not involve democratic deliberation as such. While they offer citizens the chance to connect to public authorities and to place or raise a certain issue on the policy agenda, they do not provide democratically representative participation and decision-making in the same way as citizen assemblies and panels.

The project's case studies show that many countries are striving to build deliberation and wider participation into public consultations, and that in some places this is preferred to creating many separate citizen assemblies. A leading form of such efforts is the attempt to move beyond standard to more participative online petitions.

In South Korea, authorities have created online petition platforms that facilitate iterative discussion between citizens as well as between them and policy-makers. These platforms are also structured to help link different issues together so that citizens do not focus on their demands on one issue without understanding the implications for other policy issues. The aim is to encourage citizens to make constructive suggestions rather than simply lodge general demands for action. Some authorities have fashioned competitions to foment participation: for example, one municipal government actively sought ideas for dealing with the coronavirus pandemic, in a move beyond the standard passive form of petitioning platforms.

In Georgia, local authorities have created participative bodies that involve citizens and deliberation within formal municipal processes, including by selecting "civil advisers" and through citizen monitoring of officials' performance. In Nigeria, some authorities have pioneered a platform for citizens to monitor and give their opinions on local government projects as well as to engage in open debate on these with each other and representatives of local planning authorities.

In North Macedonia, the mCommunity initiative enables a two-way interaction between citizens and authorities. Authorities often take the initiative to invite citizens to participate in decisions and plans. Citizens can make their own suggestions rather than just reacting to official plans, officials then respond, and there is a back-and-forth. There is thus iterative participation with votes and online deliberation throughout the process.

Participatory planning processes in most Latin American countries involve online petitioning processes that feed into multi-round deliberation on local public-policy priorities. These processes have been fine-tuned through several iterations with an aim of building back-and-forth co-governance between citizens and officials. Such innovations are not entirely absent from Western countries, but the non-Western case studies show examples of authorities pushing them harder and in a more systemic way. While not structured as rigorously as sortition, these forms of consultation-plus harness mechanisms already exist, are familiar to many citizens, and are tightly embedded within decision-making cycles. They have the advantage of convenience, speed, and modest costs. And several seem to have fostered better two-way conversations between citizens and policy-makers, while the long lists of recommendations that many citizen assemblies tend to produce can easily disappear into institutional black holes.

Open Participation

The case studies reveal many kinds of what might be termed "open participation," which differs from sortition-based participation. In Western states, controlled forms of sortition have been the core pillar of mini-public deliberation. This has been seen as essential to guarantee fair representation of different types of citizens. It also keeps the number of participants to a predetermined limit. The case studies show that elsewhere in the world a more open form of participation has gained more traction. This does not rest on authorities choosing

citizens by lot but rather on setting up frameworks to facilitate a wider cross-section of actors to participate in public or community decision-making. This denotes a looser and wider concept of participation than that underpinning random-selection assemblies and panels.

Brazil has pioneered many such open forms that include stronger links between individual citizen participation and civil society organisations (CSOs), run over a fairly long time, and result in more continuous participative debates. The approach is seen in national public policy conferences. These are all multilayered in the sense of several rounds and types of forums filtering into a process in which citizens, CSOs, officials, and political parties jointly draft new policies. National dialogues offer another avenue for individual citizens to work with other actors through many more layers of deliberation than standard single-body citizen assemblies. These forms of open participation became widespread in the 2010s but have been curtailed by the government of President Jair Bolsonaro.

Similar processes have been a fixture of participation across the rest of Latin America too. They have been perfected over many years in Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, Peru, and Uruguay. While different countries adopt variations in open participation, their efforts have common features. They offer several cumulative rounds of participation through different levels of decision-making, and typically mix formally facilitated deliberation with more informal open citizen debate.

In India, Gram Sabhas—all-inclusive village parliaments—have gradually taken on more deliberative features and often manage sizeable budgets (which might explain why they are sometimes captured by vested interests). Social audits have also become popular; they involve a participative public hearing in which a large number of citizens have a fairly structured opportunity to evaluate local officials.

Nigeria's Osun State has adopted a similar joint deliberation open forum, based on traditional village discussion forums. This has moved beyond its original status as a standard petitioning and information service to become a more participative debating forum for inclusive decision-making.

Proponents of sortition would undoubtedly point out that these forms of open participation cannot meet sortition's standard of delivering truly representative samples of citizens. Yet these arguably have strengths relative to Western experiences with citizen assemblies, as they involve a larger number of citizens.

Connected Participation

The case studies outline countries' effort to develop more connected forms of participation. A perennial concern about mini-public deliberative forums in the West is that they are frequently disconnected from other channels of democratic participation, and often appear to be set up as an alternative to the latter (even if their supporters insist this is not the intention). The case studies suggest that other countries may have advanced further in connecting direct citizen participation to other democratic actors and other sites of accountability.

In Taiwan, participatory civic tech in the form of the Taiwan g0v initiative was integrally embedded within the 2014 Sunflower protest movement, and from that also inherently linked to the push for more governmental transparency. The worlds of hacking and of organising protest fused to create more participatory online forums that involved large numbers of citizens in correcting government errors and monitoring budgets and campaign finance. Gradually, the renowned vTaiwan program has become more focused on fostering more systematic interaction between online citizenship and public-authority decision-making.

In South Korea, a randomly selected assembly on nuclear policy led to a formal direct-democratic vote that connected the process to the wider policy cycle and determined a key change in policy directly against the government's preference.

The open forms of participation in Latin America outlined above typically become more structured in their latter stages, closer to final decisions being taken, and bring in selected delegates from local public policy conferences together with elected representatives and social partners in a process of nominally joint decision-making. In this way, hundreds of community-level deliberative dialogues feed into a single national process with multiple actors engaged on a particular reform topic.

In Nigeria, the authorities in Kaduna State have used the Open Government Partnership as a platform from which to build collective participation over local questions, connecting officials with CSOs and in turn with citizens.

In Malawi, very small citizen juries emerged and were organised on a bottom-up basis outside formal structures, and they then worked with local parliamentarians responsible for spending decisions under a development fund. Participatory local governance assessments have also been run that combine random selection of

individual citizens and stakeholder groups, and use a mix of methods that includes iterative questioning and feedback and direct voting.

Some of the linkages are focused on political parties. In Ghana, much effort to enhance participation has been channelled through the local forums of parties. The specific circumstances of Ghana's democratic development mean that the grassroots civic presence of the country's two main parties has proved the most effective way of getting citizens politically engaged. In Nigeria, the Electoral Commission's Option A4 initiative aimed to get citizens directly involved in parties' selection of candidates as a way of fusing the political and civic spheres in a way that sacrificed the secrecy of votes but was more participative than standard open primaries. In Georgia, a small political party that does not seek state funding introduced a process that enables individuals to stand for election on its list on the basis of how many funds they have raised from donations. The party also entered citizens into a lottery if they voted (even if they voted for another party.)

The Green Human City in Skopje, North Macedonia, combines all these different levels and actors. It was set up by a coalition of CSOs to enable them to tap individual citizens and protest movements to fine-tune civil society's proposals. Members of local authorities are included too and the ideas with the most support are then put to a vote in the local council. Crucially, the initiative has gotten citizens to stand for elections under a Green Human City party ticket. This initiative brings together multiple forms of participation, from standard digital petition to organised CSO involvement, protest movements, and elected representatives. It was driven initially by civil society in a country where public authorities were reluctant to explore new forms of participation.

In some countries, connections are most notable at the level of CSOs. This is the case in the many countries where governments are not especially supportive of formal citizen initiatives and where participative efforts emerge in a more bottom-up fashion independently of the authorities. This is the case, for example, in the Arab world, where fairly confrontational civil society activism is still needed to push for more democratic space. Here the approach has been to build participative deliberation into standard civil society campaigns. The case study of Lebanon demonstrates how CSOs have tried to incorporate the use of participatory spaces for ordinary citizens into their traditional advocacy tools. This is a far cry from the participatory processes run by public authorities in some Western democracies, but it is an approach that may offer some scope for participation where governments are less open to such innovation.

Conclusion

These innovations in non-Western countries should not be idealised. Many of them have struggled to gain traction or sometimes been hijacked by political interests. Champions of sortition assemblies would be right to note these innovations are usually not as methodologically robust as methods that select representatives of society by lot.

These innovations have pros and cons, and sometimes sacrifice one democratic dimension (for example, equality of voice or the secrecy of a vote) in order to strengthen another (for example, more widespread input or greater deliberation). But, even if they are far from being panaceas, the very range of these participative forms makes them interesting and something to be factored into debates about democratic renewal in the West.

One thread running through these different pathways is a communitarian ethos. The different initiatives in various regions seek essentially to use citizen participation to bring together different sites of political action and often do this by developing already existing structures. They seem often to reflect and use rooted political identities. This is quite different to the way that sortition assemblies expressly focus on selecting individuals outside any mediated or community structures. Another key theme is that digital tools are not really creating new forms of participation on their own, but rather contribute toward making participatory processes more effective. This can be through expanding the reach of an initiative, improving the collection of input, or helping embed processes in government structures more easily.

Ultimately, the success of these innovations is hard to measure on any one fixed set of criteria. Success can mean different things in different places. Typically, changes in policy are the key hallmark of a successful process, but these innovations cannot change policy on their own. Some, like deliberative forums, can only be truly effective in influencing policy making if repeated on a large scale, meaning their institutionalisation is vital. In some cases, the mere fact of engaging in open discussion and planning can have repercussions for democratic engagement more generally. At the other end of the scale, any form of open consultation can be of particular value as a counter to democratic backsliding. For those striving for democratic innovation in Europe, a key element of success is to ask whether these examples are replicable in different contexts across the continent.

The cases presented in this article and in the project it stems from are part of a growing movement to try to reinvigorate democratic participation. Much more will need to be done in the coming years for democracies to effectively tackle the myriad challenges on the horizon. The range of different innovations suggests that several institutional mechanisms for finding answers are out there. The cases demonstrate that across the world, citizens and governments are turning to more democracy rather than less and seeking new ways of meeting this goal.

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Exploring Worldwide Democratic Innovations - A case study of Georgia

Levan Kakhishvili

Introduction

Georgia is a hybrid regime, which means that the political system in Georgia has a combination of features characteristic of both democracies and autocracies.[1] In such contexts, space for democratic innovation is limited. However, a close examination of Georgia's case reveals insightful developments in participation that can be used as learning experiences.

Encouraging citizens to participate is among the primary challenges for Georgia's democratic consolidation. According to the V-Dem Institute, Georgia's lowest score on their index is on participatory democracy, while on other indices such as deliberative, egalitarian, electoral, and liberal democracies, its scores are between 7 and 23 percentage points higher.[2] This context is exacerbated by the fact that the public in Georgia is not well-informed about what democracy is, how it functions and what benefits it brings to ordinary citizens.[3] Consequently, Georgia is in dire need of democratic innovation in the area of citizen participation.

This report discusses three cases. The first two cases involve the analysis of the efforts of the government of Georgia and its international partners, aimed at engaging citizens through deliberative practices and online tools. The third case is an investigation of a Georgian party seeking to decentralise candidate selection processes and increase voter turnout in pursuit of its share of the vote.

Deliberative practices

In 2014, Georgia adopted a new local self-government code, which was innovative for Georgia as it was the first time when regulations specifically targeted citizen participation.[4] Dedicating a whole chapter to citizen participation, the new code introduced five forms of participation to ensure that citizens exercise the power of local self-government. Two new bodies were introduced:

a deliberative body called the General Assembly of a Settlement, and a consultative body called the Council of Civil Advisors.[5] Additionally, three other mechanisms give citizens tools for advocacy, monitoring and ensuring accountability of local officials. These include a petition, participation in the sessions of local self-government bodies and the right to hear reports on the performance of local officials.[6] Two of these mechanisms, in particular, are significant bodies for deliberation and consultancy. The General Assembly of a Settlement, for example, has the power to discuss "the projects to be implemented in the settlement before they are included in the municipal budget, and submit reasonable remarks and proposals to the municipal bodies."[7] The municipal bodies, in turn, are obliged to discuss these proposals and provide a "reasoned response" to the general assembly.[8] The self-government code has been positively evaluated as a formal mechanism for encouraging citizen participation but it has been criticised for its implementation.[9] There is significant variation in terms of how citizens use opportunities for participation across Georgia. A report in 2017 found that over the course of about two years, 20 municipalities had no general assembly meetings, whilst the Rustavi municipality, which is one of the largest cities in Georgia with a population of over 100,000, had 466 meetings of its general assembly.[10] The average number of general assembly meetings held across 53 municipalities, for which data was available, was less than 21.[11] Moreover, the share of settlements in all municipalities where a general assembly meeting had been held has not exceeded 10 percent,[12] whereas the procedure stating that a general assembly can only be

1   Mike Smeltzer and Noah Buyon, "Nations in Transit 2022: From Democratic Decline to Authoritarian Aggression" (Freedom House, 2022),
    https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2022-04/NIT_2022_final_digital.pdf.
2   "Democracy at Dusk? V-Dem Annual Report 2017," Annual Report (V-Dem Institute, 2017), https://www.v-dem.net/static/website/files/dr/dr_2017.pdf.
3   Levan Kakhishvili and Elene Panchulidze, "Democratization and Europeanization in Georgia: How to Lead the Process?," Georgian Institute of Politics (blog),
    September 27, 2018, https://gip.ge/democratization-and-europeanization-in-georgia-how-to-lead-the-process/.
4   "Organic Law of Georgia: Local Self-Government Code," Pub. L. No. 1958- IIb (2014), https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/download/2244429/15/en/pdf.
5   Organic Law of Georgia: Local Self-Government Code.
6   Organic Law of Georgia: Local Self-Government Code.
7   Organic Law of Georgia: Local Self-Government Code.
8   Organic Law of Georgia: Local Self-Government Code.
9   Saba Buadze, "Assessment of Citizen Engagement Practices in the Municipalities of Batumi, Kutaisi and Akhaltsikhe" (Institute for Development of Freedom of
    Information, 2017), 7-8, https://idfi.ge/public/upload/IDFI_Photos_2017/idfi_general/Engagement_Practice_Assessment_in_Municipalites_of_Georgia_Final_ENG.pdf.
10 Nino Tvaltvadze, "Georgia. Institutionalised Citizen Participation: Assessment of Existing Mechanisms" (Council of Europe, 2017), https://rm.coe.int/1680784817.
11 Tvaltvadze.

convened by at least 5 percent of the population of the settlement has repeatedly been violated.[13]

Disparities in how deliberation is practised in local self-government in Georgia are also demonstrated by qualitative data. A recent piece of research, which studied how citizens engaged in deliberative mini-publics (participatory forums) in the framework of the State's Rural Support Program, found that "citizens still refuse to participate in public deliberation."[14] Sultanishvili and Panchulidze divide shortfalls of deliberative practices into two areas: (1) challenges arising during engagement and (2) causes for non-participation.[15] The former is argued to be a result of a range of factors: a lack of awareness about opportunities for participation; the absence of active dialogue, discussions and listening during deliberation; the exclusion of vulnerable groups and their opinions; a lack of information and learning

during the deliberation; unclear procedures for decision-making; and varied implementation of decisions made during deliberation.[16] For non-participation, however, primary factors include a culture of informal decision-making; feelings of powerlessness and exclusion; a lack of diversity at meetings; decisions being changed after meetings without any reasoning provided to the public; and people's perception of participation being an elite-driven form of manipulation.[17] How citizens perceive participation, their ability to participate and the benefits of such activity are key to understanding their motivations. As the majority of Georgians believe they are not qualified enough to participate in politics (see Figure 1), low levels of engagement are unsurprising.
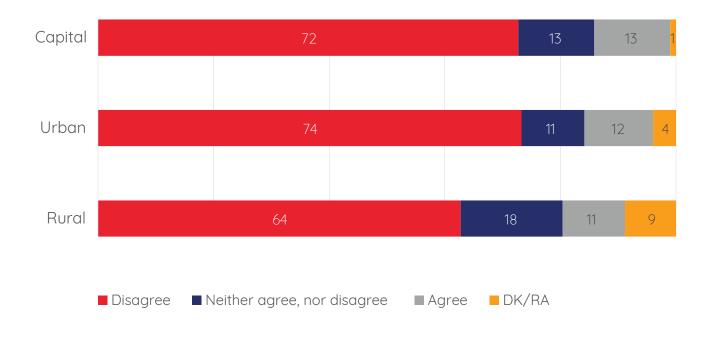

Figure 1. Percentages of responses to the question: 'To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? "I consider myself well qualified to participate in politics if I want to do so",' by settlement type.
Adapted from "Caucasus Barometer 2021 Georgia," The Caucasus Research Resource Centers, 2022,
https://caucasusbarometer.org/en/cb2021ge/QUALIF-by-SETTYPE/.

12 Giorgi Toklikishvili et al., "Local Self-Government Index: Key Findings and Recommendations" (Institute for Development of Freedom of Information, 2019), https://idfi.ge/public/upload/IDFI_2019/General/LSGINDEX_Report_ENG_WEB3.pdf.
13 Tvaltvadze, "Institutionalised Citizen Participation."
14 Tengiz Sultanishvili and Elene Panchulidze, "Shortfalls of Deliberative Democracy in Rural Georgia: Analysis of the General Assembly of a Settlement in Mestia Municipality," Research report (PMC Research Center, 2020), https://pmcresearch.org/policypapers_file/106d5fe1ab0495c42.pdf.
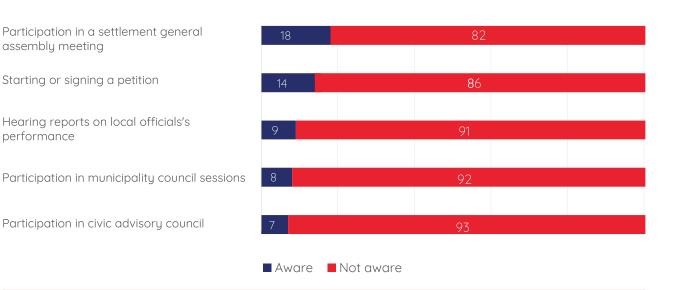15 Sultanishvili and Panchulidze.
16 Sultanishvili and Panchulidze.
17 Sultanishvili and Panchulidze.

Figure 2. Awareness of the five forms of citizen participation. Adapted from "Study on Citizens' Satisfaction with Public Services in Georgia," Study Report (UNDP Georgia, 2017), https://www1.undp.org/content/dam/georgia/docs/publications/DG/UNDP_GE_DG_citizen_views_public_services_2017_eng.pdf.

Although there are numerous challenges to the implementation of the provisions guaranteeing citizen participation in local self-government, one successful case can be identified. Georgia's Decentralization Strategy 2020-2025 identifies transparency and accountability as one of three strategic objectives, and it sets a target of achieving an average score of 55 percent in Georgia's local self-government index by 2025, which in 2019 was 28 percent – up from 21 percent in 2017.[18] This is an ambitious goal but not impossible, because the four urban municipalities of Batumi, Rustavi, Lagodekhi and Zugdidi had already achieved this score by 2019.[19] The index has revealed that in 11 out of 64 municipalities, a council of civil advisors had not been created even though it is mandatory to do so according to the law, and most of the councils which have been created are not fully functional.[20] However, the case of the city of Batumi stands out. It registered the biggest improvement with an increase of 34 percentage points between 2017 and 2019 and has a highly active council of advisors.[21] The members of the council include nineteen advisors who represent non-governmental organisations, media organisations, businesses, and the 13 districts that make up the Batumi city municipality.[22] In these 13 districts, the council has established individual public halls, heads

of which are represented in the council. The public halls are, in turn, made up of residents of respective districts. The council actively works on citizen engagement in the local policy process; reviews initiatives, legal acts and policy proposals; and informs the public about the work of the municipality through its website.[23] As a result, in 2019 the Batumi municipality was the only municipality that had introduced a budgetary programme to support citizen participation.[24] In 2019, Zugdidi municipality followed Batumi's lead and successfully implemented a participatory budgeting programme allocating GEL 1 million (over EUR 300,000) for civic initiatives from the 2020 municipal budget.[25] This amounted to about 2.9 percent of the total planned expenditure of the municipality.[26]

Overall, deliberative practices in Georgia are not as successful as they could be. Not only is it necessary to ensure that citizens feel confident enough to be able to engage with decision-makers and influence them to make decisions that serve the interests of the population, but they also need to be informed about what mechanisms they have for doing so.

18 "Decentralization Strategy 2020-2025" (Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure, 2020),
    https://mrdi.gov.ge/pdf/5e468e292b317.pdf/Decentralization-strategy-ENG.pdf.
19 Toklikishvili et al., "Local Self-Government Index."
20 Toklikishvili et al.
21 Toklikishvili et al.
22 "სტრუქტურა [Structure]," მართე შენი ქალაქი [Govern your city], No date, http://marte.ge/ge/sabcho/struqtura.
23 "Georgia Handbook on Open Local Government and Public Ethics," Georgia Handbook (Council of Europe, 2021),
    https://rm.coe.int/2021-12-06-handbook-open-government-and-public-ethics-georgia-eng/1680a53f06.
24 Toklikishvili et al., "Local Self-Government Index."
25 "Georgia Handbook on Open Local Government and Public Ethics."
26 "ზუგდიდის მუნიციპალიტეტის 2020 წლის ბიუჯეტის დამტკიცების შესახებ [On Approving the 2020 Budget of the Municipality of Zugdidi]," Pub. L. No. Order #51 (2019),
    https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/4760966.

Online participation and advocacy

In the increasingly digitalised world, online forms of citizen participation are becoming more important than ever. Georgia joined the Open Government Partnership (OGP) in 2012 and since then various reforms have been introduced. Proactive publishing of public information and data has become a common practice for Georgian state institutions. For example, in 2021, Georgia has topped the 120-country list in terms of budget transparency evaluated through "online availability, timeliness, and comprehensiveness of eight key budget documents."[27] In line with the OGP goals, Georgia has launched several websites to create digital infrastructure to ensure transparency, accountability, participation and accessibility of public services.

One instance of this can be seen on the portal MY.GOV. GE, where it is possible to receive over 400 public services from more than 100 state institutions, which cover 1,139 units and regional representations.[28] The launch of the Unified Portal of E-Services has simplified the provision of services to citizens, who can use biometric ID cards. It has been reported that about 75 percent of Georgians have such ID cards but only a fraction of them, namely 16 percent of those who own one (i.e., 12 percent of the total adult population of Georgia), have used them for electronic operations.[29] One reason for this low share of ID users may be the lack of access to the Internet in Georgia.

Lack of access to the Internet can also contribute to the low number of signatures for online petitions on the ICHANGE.GOV.GE portal. The Institute for Development of Freedom of Information reported that the most successful petition had only secured 556 signatures, whereas the required threshold is 10,000 signatures within a one-month period of starting a petition.[30] Only one petition on gambling has managed to gather the required number of signatures, which triggered the mechanism for consideration, following which a response by a special commission recommended that the Ministry of Finance adopt two changes: preventive measures against gambling and regulations on advertising.[31]

On December 20, 2021, the Georgian parliament passed a law which introduced a whole host of regulations for gambling businesses including the imposition of a 10 percent tax on gambling revenue, banning gambling advertisements and banning Georgia-issued bankcards from being used for gambling services registered outside Georgia.[32] This was not an easy decision as there was mounting pressure from gambling businesses, sports teams and media agencies, all of which opposed the bill for fear of losing a significant portion of their revenue. Gambling had been a thriving business in Georgia, and even during the pandemic, gambling business turnover increased by 24 percent.[33] The industry has created about 10,000 jobs in the Georgian economy and generates GEL 300 million (EUR 95 million) in tax revenues for the Georgian budget annually.[34] However, the social problems it has caused have been significant. For example, according to some estimates, between 9 and 15 percent of Georgia's population consists of problem gamblers, meaning they engage in problematic behaviour because of gambling.[35] Even among high school students in Georgia, 20 percent are "excessive" gamblers and 12 percent are "problem" gamblers; this is 5 and 7 percentage points higher, respectively, than the average figures for 35 European countries.[36]

As a result, the petition, its review and recommendations were successful: the government of Georgia amended the legislation even though gambling businesses campaigned against these amendments. This means that the digital infrastructure the government of Georgia is creating is useful for promoting citizen participation. The success story of the anti-gambling petition, however, remains a solitary case, which indicates that Georgia still has a long way ahead in its efforts to improve online participation among its citizens.

Promoting electoral turnout

Voter turnout has been gradually decreasing in Georgian elections over the last three decades. Encouraging the electorate to vote is a challenging endeavour. In an attempt to address this problem, Girchi (which literally translates as pinecone), a small libertarian party, managed to come up with a creative way to promote voter turnout.[37] Advocating for small

30 "IDFI Will Monitor the Consideration Process of the E-Petition against Gambling," Institute for Development of Freedom of Information, December 9, 2019, https://idfi.ge:443/en/petition_on_gambling.

31 "კამპანია აზარტული თამაშების წინააღმდეგ [Campaign against Gambling]," ichange.gov.ge, accessed June 3, 2022, https://ichange.gov.ge/12340.

32 Shota Khincha, "Georgia Passes Sweeping Gambling Restrictions," OC Media (blog), December 22, 2021, https://oc-media.org/georgia-passes-sweeping-gambling-restrictions/.

33 Khincha.

34 Tornike Mandaria, "Georgian Government Moves to Rein in Gambling," Eurasianet, January 27, 2022, https://eurasianet.org/georgian-government-moves-to-rein-in-gambling.

35 Mandaria.

36 ESPAD Group, "ESPAD Report 2019: Results from the European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs" (European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction, 2020), http://www.espad.org/sites/espad.org/files/2020.3878_EN_04.pdf.

37 In December 2020, the party split into two factions "Girchi" and "Girchi – More Liberty" emerged. This report follows the latter.

government and a limited state, Girchi does not seek state funding.Instead, individual candidates from Girchi can run their own fundraising campaigns before elections, and whoever receives the most donations will be included in the party list or as a candidate in a single-mandate district. For example, in the 2021 local elections, four opposition parties including Girchi – More Liberty, another party with a similar name, agreed on a common mayoral candidate. Girchi – More Liberty was afforded the opportunity to offer a candidate for a vice mayoral position. For this purpose, the party organised online primaries.[38] Anyone could register on the party website and pay a monthly membership fee of GEL 5 (less than EUR 2). For each monthly membership fee paid, the person received 100 votes; the party calls these votes "democratic" votes. Additionally, the same person could donate any amount of money they wished. The party calls these votes "meritocratic" votes.[39] For every GEL 1 donated, the person would receive about 33 votes, i.e., the same number of votes as GEL 1 could buy at the time of donation.[40] Donations did not have to be directed towards the favoured candidate.[41] Instead, it was possible to fund various activities of the party including educational or advocacy campaigns, website maintenance, etc. Consequently, a person could vote for one or more candidates by splitting the votes available to them. The system counted "democratic" and "meritocratic" votes separately and calculated the average of the two shares of votes each candidate received; the live feed was available to everyone who entered the website even without registration. A 24-year-old man, who was virtually unknown to Georgian voters, received the highest average share of votes and won the primaries. This young activist, consequently, was picked as the candidate to be the vice mayor.[42]

Furthermore, the pool of candidates was also democratically drawn. Any registered user of the party website who had paid the membership fee could become a "politician" by clicking a button labelled "I want to be a politician".[43] As a "politician," each member is eligible to receive direct funding or support, i.e., votes.[44] By receiving votes, a "politician" can become a member of the political council and/or run in primaries.[45]As a result of this innovative scheme of fundraising, in 2020, Girchi decided to "return" its state funding to the taxpayers, using it to encourage them to participate in the elections. For this purpose, they created a lottery, which any voter could register for on the website of the party by election day.[46] They then could go and vote for a party and a candidate of their choice and all they had to do was to publish a selfie taken in front of the polling station with the number of the station visible in the photo. Following this, they needed to post the photo on Facebook with the hashtag "I was at the elections" and this would constitute valid entrance to the lottery.[47] Girchi held a live broadcast of the lottery, and one voter won a brand-new Porsche car worth GEL 100,000 (EUR 30,000), which was purchased with the state funding the party received.

This case shows an innovative way of promoting electoral participation, especially among young people who are more likely to be using the Internet.[48] Approximately 3,800 people participated in the lottery,[49] while according to Facebook, about 9.1 thousand people have posted on the social network using Girchi's proposed hashtag. Although these numbers may not seem high, they are respectively 0.2 and 0.5 percent of all voters who participated in the 2020 elections. Alternatively, the figures can be put into a different perspective. Although it is impossible to know for which party these people voted, these numbers would represent 6.8 percent and 16.4 percent of those who voted for Girchi.

Obviously, Girchi's motivation is self-centred and comes from the goal of gaining more votes and promoting their political agenda. The monetization of participatory mechanisms raises difficult questions. Yet, this is an example of innovative thinking that has increased participation among young people and got them to vote.

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38 Girchi - მეტი თავისუფლება [More Liberty], ხმის მიცემა [Voting], 2021, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BZoxD34N3UQ.

39 Girchi - მეტი თავისუფლება [More Liberty].

40 Girchi - მეტი თავისუფლება [More Liberty].

41 Girchi - მეტი თავისუფლება [More Liberty].

42 "Four Opposition Parties Name Joint Tbilisi Majoritarian Candidates," Civil Georgia, August 17, 2021, https://civil.ge/archives/436922.

43 "გირჩის პორტალი [Girchi's Webpage]," YouTube, August 11, 2021, https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLVhk-jGhO26_SoD0Scj_5bvOz2s4wz95x.

44 "გირჩის პორტალი [Girchi's Webpage]."

45 "გირჩის პორტალი [Girchi's Webpage]."

46 "'გირჩი' მათთვის, ვინც საპარლამენტო არჩევნებში მონაწილეობას მიიღებს, 'Tesla'-ს ავტომობილებს გაათამაშებს [For those who participates in the parliamentary elections, Girchi will hold a lottery and give away Tesla cars]," Girchi, 2020, https://www.girchi.com/ge/media/news/3730-girchi-mattvis-vints-saparlamento-archevnebshi-monacileobas-miighebs-tesla-s.

47 "'გირჩი' 'Tesla'-ს ავტომობილებს გაათამაშებს [Girchi will give away Tesla]."

48 According to the GeoStat data, in 2020 Georgians aged between 15-29 were three times more likely to have used the Internet during the past three months than those aged 60 or above. See "მოსახლეობის განაწილება, ინტერნეტის ბოლოს გამოყენების მიხედვით [Population distribution according to the time of the last usage of the Internet]," GeoStat, 2021, https://geostat.ge/media/40382/02_internetis_gamoyenebis_periodi.xlsx.

49 "'გირჩის' PORSCHE გაათამაშა - ვინ გახდა ავტომობილის მფლობელი [Girchi gave away a PORSCHE – who became the owner of the car]," Rustavi2, 2021, https://rustavi2.ge/ka/news/210652.

Conclusion

Georgia's experience and its attempts to encourage citizen participation in innovative ways have their failures and success stories. The primary lessons to be learnt are four-fold. First, civic education of the public is important. In Georgia, only a fraction of voters believe they are qualified to participate in politics. This needs to change. Citizens need to be informed about how policies are made, and they should feel confident that they know their needs better than anyone else. This is the key to representation and accountability. Unless citizens have a clear understanding of their preferences and are aware of how to pursue them or hold decision-makers accountable in case they fail to deliver on their promises, participatory and deliberative practices are likely to remain essentially flawed.

Second, even if there can be well-written laws, it is necessary to ensure that there is no difference between formal and informal practices. If informal practices diverge from the formal rules and take precedence over formal procedures, then laws and regulations become irrelevant. In contexts such as Georgia, which has a strong Soviet legacy of informality and bypassing formal rules, it is important to understand why citizens might feel frustrated when they see informal dealings or exertion of influence.

Third, small and niche political parties can sometimes find creative ways of promoting voter turnout or ensuring that their supporters feel they have control over the candidate selection process. However, the Georgian experience shows that this is largely ideologically driven and spreads a particular set of values. Therefore, it is necessary to have balance and alternative options to ensure voters have their agency in politics at all levels.

Finally, although the digitalisation of services and participation are important steps forward for promoting the accessibility of services and ensuring transparency and accountability of public officials, the persistence of problems in terms of digital literacy and access to the Internet should not be underestimated. Therefore, digitalisation will not realise its full potential unless the public is ready to utilise its benefits.

Overall, the challenges Georgia faces are of course not exclusive to itself. Comparative studies could demonstrate similarities and differences as well as best practices for dealing with such challenges. At the same time, innovations applied in Georgia to promote citizen participation may be valuable for other countries. Such exchanges of experience are likely the optimal way to move forward and learn.

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Exploring Worldwide Democratic Innovations - A case study of Ghana

Jasper Abembia Ayelazuno and Hardi Shahadu

Introduction

Ghana's steadily improving democracy is an exception to the democratic backsliding trend in Africa. Signficantly, the role of political parties has been important in this progress. Ghana is a de facto two-party democracy: only the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP) have won elections and formed governments that served their full term, and they are also the only two parties that have served as credible opposition parties.[1]

A key Ghanian democratic innovation has been the attempt to increase citizen participation through these parties. The two main parties have decentralized their organisational structures to involve citizens in deliberation at the grassroots level. This organisational capacity is rare in Africa where "political parties are organizationally weak, with little grassroots presence, and thus limited capacity to engage citizens, represent their views, or mobilize voters."[2] Thanks to the decentralised party structures of the NDC and the NPP, their grassroots presence has created a politically active and engaged electorate.

This is not a typical democratic innovation in the orthodox sense but meets w ider definition of ideas for increasing citizen participation in democratic processes.[3] It has pushed participation "from below".[4] Decentralisation has generated enthusiasm for electoral politics in Ghanaians of every demographic, including the youth, resulting in electoral democracy becoming the "only game in town". Still, this Ghanaian democratic innovation has its drawbacks as it can fuel political patronage and crowd out alternative forms of civic activism and engagement, such as non-partisan and class-based forms of mobilisation and collective action.[5]

Grassroots Party Organisation and Active Civic Engagement in Ghana

The NDC and the NPP have, through their organisational structures,[6] brought into being what Robert Dahl describes as the "establishment of highly developed grass-roots party organizations".[6] The two parties have a strong organisational presence across all levels, from the national level through to the regional, constituency and grassroots levels; in Ghana's case the grassroots level of political parties are the branch/polling station units of their organisational structures.[7] They have established executive committees across all of these levels, with various positions open for interested members to contest in party elections at party conferences, congresses, and meetings of either ordinary members or elected representatives, as specified by each parties' constitution.[8]

1   Minion K.C. Morrison, "Political Parties in Ghana through Four Republics: A path to Democratic Consolidation," Comparative Politics (2004): 421-442, doi:10.2307/4150169; Lindsay Whitfield, "'Change for a better Ghana': Party competition, institutionalization and alternation in Ghana's 2008 elections," African Affairs 108, no. 433 (2009): 621-641, doi:10.1093/afraf/adp056; Anja Osei, "Political Parties in Ghana: Agents Of Democracy?," Journal Of Contemporary African Studies 31, no. 4 (2013): 543-563, doi:10.1080/02589001.2013.839227.
2   Matthias Krönke, Sarah J. Lockwood, and Robert Mattes, "Party footprints in Africa: Measuring local party presence across the continent," Party Politics 28, no. 2 (2022): 208-222, https://doi.org/10.1177/13540688211008352.
3   Stephen Elstub and Oliver Escobar, "Introduction to The Handbook of Democratic Innovation and Governance: the field of democratic innovation," in Handbook of Democratic Innovation and Governance, eds. Stephen Elstub and Oliver Escobar, 1-10, (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2019).
4   Lindsay Whitfield, "'Change for a better Ghana"; George M. Bob-Milliar, "Political party activism in Ghana: factors influencing the decision of the politically active to join a political party," Democratization 19, no. 4 (2012): 668-689, https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2011.605998; George M. Bob-Milliar, "Place and party organizations: party activism inside party-branded sheds at the grassroots in northern Ghana," Territory, Politics, Governance 7, no. 4 (2019): 474-493, https://doi.org/10.1080/21622671.2018.1503091; Osei. "Formal party organisation."
5   Staffan I. Lindberg, "'It's Our Time to" Chop"': Do Elections in Africa Feed Neo-Patrimonialism rather than Counter-Act It?" Democratization 10, no. 2 (2003): 121-140. https://doi.org/10.1080/714000118; Barry Driscoll, "Democratization, party systems, and the endogenous roots of Ghanaian clientelism." Democratization 27, no. 1 (2020): 119-136, https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2019.1666265; Sarah Brierley and Noah L. Nathan, "The Connections of Party Brokers: Which Brokers Do Parties Select?." The Journal of Politics 83, no. 3 (2021): 884-901, https://doi.org/10.1086/710783; Ghana Center for Democratic Development, "Rising Cost of Politics in Ghana Attracting Illicit Funding from Organized Crime – CDD-Ghana/ASI Study," press release, February 2, 2022, https://cddgh.org/rising-cost-of-politics-in-ghana-attracting-illicit-funding-from-organized-crime-cdd-ghana-asi-study/.
6   Martin P. Wattenberg, "The decline of party mobilization," in Parties without partisans: Political change in advanced industrial democracies, eds. Dalton, J. Russell, and Martin P. Wattenberg, 64-76, (Oxford University Press 2000).
7   National Democratic Congress (NDC), "Constitution," accessed February 12, 2022, https://ndcgh.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/NDC-Constitution-mini.pdf; New Patriotic Party, "Constitution," accessed February 09, 2022, https://newpatrioticparty.org/constitution/.
8   NPP, "New Patriotic Party discusses upcoming internal elections," press release, January 28, 2022,   https://newpatrioticparty.org/press-conference-addressed-by-the-npp-general-secretary-john-boadu-on-the-partys-upcoming-internal-elections/.

Reflecting internal democracy within the NDC and the NPP, inclusiveness and diversity measures have been integrated into their organisational structures in order to address structural barriers to broad-based internal participatory democracy, barriers such as gender, ethnic and age hierarchies. For example, gender parity is promoted by carving out special positions for women: women organisers and deputy women organisers. These women-only positions are created across all levels of the parties' organisational structures. Similarly, the inclusion of the youth is promoted by designating special positions which are contested and occupied specifically by the youth.

Aiming to become more inclusive, both major parties identified the Zongos – squalid suburbs of Ghanaian cities, usually inhabited by Muslims, migrants, and people from northern Ghana – as a constituency of interest. As such the two parties have both created party wings that aim to mobilise new members from within Zongo's. The NPP created the NASARA wing and NASARA Coordinators to achieve this goal. The NASARA Coordinators are also made members of the national and regional executive committees.[9] The NDC created the Zongo Caucus to fulfil a similar role to NASARA.

Furthermore, the two parties have devised internal democratic processes which are oriented towards promoting grassroots democracy. They have given local members more say in selecting leadership candidates. The internal democratic process of primary elections has ignited intense competition within the NDC and the NPP, a development that has promoted party activism across all levels of the organisational structures of these parties. Driven by the competitive nature of primary elections, the political elites of both parties are compelled to campaign at the grassroots level, going to remote villages across the country to canvass for votes.

The crucial point is that these internal processes have gone hand in hand with efforts to strengthen civic engagement and participation. There has been a surge of interest and participation in politics at the grassroots level, as well as an increase in the amount of party activism and the number of party activists.[10] This is evidenced by our focus group discussions with grassroots members of the two parties. Most participants expressed strong loyalty to their parties, linking this to their enthusiasm for and participation in party activities, such as party meetings, rallies, elections for executive positions, electoral campaigning, and getting the vote out for

their parties in national elections. Most Ghanaians are active in party politics and frame national discourse on development issues through a partisan lens. This was also seen amongst our participants, with one noting that "political party activism has become the only tool for self-expression because when you speak as a social activist, your views are seen as either being sponsored by the government or opposition".[11] Party activism is not limited to election years, as one participant said, "we always held meetings upon meetings just to keep our members intact and also get more people to join the party".[12]

This means that much citizen participation and deliberation in Ghana is carried out through forums within the parties, not separate from them. The strength and importance of party-level activism in Ghana is demonstrated by the broad range of civic groups engaged in grassroots party activism. One regional party executive told us, "when you get to the communities, they have various meeting groups or fun clubs that meet on a regular basis".[13] The clearest example of these "meeting groups" is the proliferation of "party sheds" across Ghana. These are painted in party colours or hoist the flag of a political party. These party sheds, as George Bob-Milliar demonstrates, are places where grassroots party members, especially the youth, meet to engage in civic activities and debates.[14] Some of the civic activities that take place in these sheds include discussions on important political issues that either concern the country or community. They have been the route for large numbers of citizens to participate in agenda setting at the local level.

A recent example of the link between the grassroots organisational structure of parties, civic activism in Ghana and rising demands for accountability can be seen in the internal elections of the NPP that took place in early 2022. The NPP organized elections for executive positions across all of its organisational levels, starting with the elections for polling station executives. The competitive and participatory dynamics described above were reported vividly in mass media coverage. Enthusiastic participation in the polling station elections was demonstrated by the high number of grassroots members who tried to buy application forms to run for these positions. Additionally, the internal elections also showcased a high level of involvement from grassroots communities in different forms of protest against leading party figures.

9   Fobih, "Dynamics of political parties", 33.
10 Bob-Milliar, "Political party activism in Ghana," 668-89; Bob-Milliar, "Place and party organizations,"; Isaac Owusu Nsiah, "Who said we are politically inactive?":
      A reappraisal of the youth and political party activism in Ghana 2004–2012 (A Case of the Kumasi Metropolis)," Journal of Asian and African studies 54, no. 1 (2019):
      118-135, https://doi.org/10.1177/0021909618791210.
11 FGD Participant, Tolon Female youth, February 14, 2022.
12 FGD participant, Sagnarigu Constituency February 21, 2022.
13 Interview with NDC regional executive, February 16, 2022.
14 Bob-Milliar, "Place and party organizations," 16.

Assessing the Ghanaian Democratic Innovation

A key implication of the Ghanaian democratic innovation concerns "the party government model of democracy, in which political parties provide a linkage between citizens, government, and policy outputs", a linkage through which political parties serve as "the key in ensuring representative democracy really represents and is really democratic".[15] The huge organisational capacity of the NDC and NPP, especially their organisational presence "on the ground" act as a driving force behind Ghana's active civic culture and democratic consolidation.

Credit should be given to the NDC and the NPP for providing Ghana's democracy with this quality, a feature produced by the decentralised organisational structures discussed above. Over the last three decades (between 1992 and 2022), Ghana has held eight sets of four-yearly competitive presidential and parliamentary elections, keenly contested by the candidates of the NDC and the NPP. Three of these elections have led to the peaceful handover of power from the incumbent party to the opposition; namely, the 2000, 2008 and 2016 elections. All three were strongly contested, relatively free and fair, with the opposition winning despite all the advantages of incumbency enjoyed by the party in government.

Participative forums inside the parties has helped underpin this strong democratic performance of the two main political parties. They have helped generate interest and enthusiasm in politics amongst ordinary Ghanaians. The grassroots organisational structures of the NDC and the NPP have created high levels of participation in party politics, leading to high levels of voter turnout in presidential and parliamentary elections. This is illustrated by recent voter turnout figures: 85% in 2004, 73% in 2008, 80% in 2012, 69% in 2016 and 79% in 2020.[16] In the background, Ghana has seen a consistent upsurge in interest in party politics. This interest in democracy is reflective of broader African trends, where demand for and participation in democracy is comparatively high to other regions.[17]

15 Russell J. Dalton, David M. Farrell, and Ian McAllister, "Political Parties and Democratic Linkage: How Parties Organize democracy," in Parties without partisans: Political change in advanced industrial democracies, eds. Dalton J. Russell, and Martin P. Wattenberg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

16 "Voter Turnout by Election Type," International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance [IDEA], https://www.idea.int/data-tools/country-view/111/40.

17 Gyimah-Boadi, Logan, and Sanny, "Africans' Durable Demand for Democracy."

Conclusion

The democratic innovation studied in this paper may not accord with citizen assemblies and the like, but it is connected to a successful consolidation of representative democracy in Ghana. Although located in mainstream politics, the Ghanaian democratic innovation is important for three reasons.

Firstly, it illustrates a rare case of the institutionalisation of political parties and a party system in Africa. This is a political development critical to the establishment of representative government in new electoral democracies. Unlike the advanced Western industrialised democracies where political parties and party systems had been institutionalised for a century or more before beginning the practise of electoral democracy,[18] political parties are relatively new in Africa and are faced with various challenges to their institutionalisation. Secondly, the innovation illustrates the importance of specificity of context – political, cultural, economic, and historical – in the shaping of a political phenomenon as a democratic practice;[19] in this case, the dynamics of democratic innovation across time and space. Thirdly, and intricately connected to the specificity of context, democratic innovation in Ghana is shaped by the specific historical conjuncture of democratization and its social structures.

The field of democratic innovation is still emerging, and its subject matter is yet to be clearly defined.[20] The Ghanaian case is associated with the body of work that looks beyond deliberative and participatory forms of democratic innovation such as mini-publics, citizens' juries, participatory budgeting, and in-person and online deliberative polling. Influential scholars of the field, like Albert W. Dzura and Carolyn M. Hendriks, have begun to point to new directions for democratic innovation within conventional politics and representative governance; namely, atypical forms of democratic innovation which hold the promise to reinvent democracy, and thereby cure its malaise.

The Ghanaian case illustrates this potential and opens new avenues of research into how representative democracy may be reinvented with innovative institutions and processes that promote the participation of ordinary citizens in conventional democratic politics. The enthusiasm for party politics and the spirit of civic engagement the Ghanaian innovation has created within Ghana has the potential of holding the political class accountable "from below", and in so doing, "making democracy work", in Robert Putnam's phrase.

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18   Dalton, Farrell, and McAllister. Political Parties and Democratic Linkage.

19   Sidney Verba and Gabriel Almond, The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963); Michel Crozier, Samuel P. Huntington, and Joji Watanuki, The Crisis of Democracy (New York: New York University Press, 1975); Pippa Norris, Democratic Phoenix: Reinventing Political Activism. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

20   Stephen Elstub and Oliver Escobar, "Defining and Typologising Democratic Innovations," in Handbook of Democratic Innovation and Governance, eds. Stephen Elstub and Oliver Escobar, 11-31, (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2019).

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Exploring Worldwide Democratic Innovations - A case study of India

Niranjan Sahoo

Introduction

With more than 900 million voters, India is a very large federal and competitive multiparty electoral democracy with an independent judiciary, a relatively free press and a vibrant civil society. Except for a brief period (1975-77) in which democracy was suspended, India has held free and fair elections for over 75 years. In terms of the overall health of India's democracy, the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance's (IDEA) Global State of Democracy (GSoD) report from 2021 classed India as a "backsliding democracy." [1]

While the report credits India for having free and fair elections, the country ranks poorly on safeguarding civil liberties, as well as checks against executive overreach. Similarly, Freedom House downgraded India from "free" to "partly free" in 2021 in its Freedom in the World 2021 report, a status which remained the same in the newer 2022 version of the report.[2] In other words, democracy in India is passing through a great period of stress and turbulence due to growing polarisation, authoritarian tendencies, the rapid erosion of individual freedoms and the ongoing decline of key democratic institutions.[3]

Despite these issues, there are numerous positive examples of democratic resilience and innovation found in India that offer hope for its democratic revival. One of the most inspiring examples of democratic resilience is India's capacity to hold free and fair elections with over 900 million voters, mostly using electronic voting machines. It has also done well in terms of rolling out comprehensive affirmative action policies (mandatory quotas or reservation policies), the success in affirmative action policies has been seen as a beacon of hope for the representation of historically marginalised communities. Affirmative action, in many instances, has opened up political spaces for Dalits and Adivasis in the democratic process, thus increasing inclusivity in India's deeply hierarchical society.[4]

Although India's impressive democratic journey has seen the country overcome many important milestones in the face of grinding poverty, mass illiteracy and other similar nation-building challenges, the crucial deliberative aspects of democracy have not yet taken deep roots. Like many democracies in the Global South, democratic practice in India is mostly limited to periodic elections at the federal, state and local levels. Aside from a few notable exceptions, there are barely any deliberative forums or tools for citizens to use to regularly interface with their elected representatives and state officials, consequently limiting citizens' capacity to demand accountability and responsiveness.[5] Accountability is something that only comes once every five years or so when political parties are compelled to approach voters. The power elites in India have systematically reduced politics to administration and it rarely answers the voters be it in parliament, assemblies or on the streets.[6] Often, individuals with the least socio-political and economic capital, such as the Dalits and tribal people end up, excluded from politics as they have no agency or ability to collectivise or push for their demands. Thus, there is widespread disillusionment within large sections of India's population about the efficacy of the democratic process, these frustrations are often expressed in street protests and acts of mobilisation on issues the general public deems important.

Since the early 1990s, India has been trying to address its democratic deficit in deliberative activity through a series of decentralisation programmes, which aim to provide ordinary citizens with a voice in day-to-day democratic governance. This was a response to years of failed top-down centralised forms of governance. The legal

1 IDEA, The Global State of Democracy Report, 2021, 6-14, https://www.idea.int/gsod/

2 Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2021, 26, https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2021/democracy-under-siege; Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2022, 16, https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2022/global-expansion-authoritarian-rule.

3 Niranjan Sahoo, "Mounting Majoritarianism and Political Polarization in India," in Political Polarization in South and Southeast Asia: Old Divisions, New Dangers, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2020. https://carnegieendowment.org/2020/08/18/mounting-majoritarianism-and-political-polarization-in-india-pub-82434.

4 Niraja Gopal Jayal, "Engendering Local Democracy: the impact of quotas for women in India's Panchayats," Democratization 13, August 9, 2006, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13510340500378225.

5 Arun Maira, "The next step in democratic evolution is overdue," The Hindu, updated December 4, 2021, https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/the-next-step-in-democratic-evolution-is-overdue/article62105553.ece.

6 Neera Chandhoke, "We need to build a deliberative democracy," The Tribune, February 21, 2022, https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/comment/we-need-to-build-a-deliberative-democracy-371079.

and constitutional foundation for these decentralised governance programmes was created when the Parliament of India passed the 73rd Amendment in 1992.[7] At the time, it was considered the largest experiment ever held on democratic decentralisation in the world. The new legislation rolled out a three-tier governance structure aimed at the country's vast rural population, who until that point had possessed little or no agency to represent their concerns and grievances.[8] The 73rd Amendment is intricately linked to both democratic innovations discussed within this report, since they are both tools for achieving decentralisation and self-governance.

Case Study 1: Gram Sabhas (the Little Parliaments)

The first democratic innovation discussed in this report is the introduction of Gram Sabhas (village parliaments). The Gram Sabha was designed to be the legislative body for village councils, they are often called village parliaments and are one of the pioneering initiatives taken by India to make democratic governance deliberative and participatory. Breaking away from hierarchical, top-down forms of governance which rarely entrust citizens with important decision-making processes, Gram Sabhas are vested with the power to approve village plans and programmes for social and economic development, audit panchayat accounts (village council accounts) and select beneficiaries for all kinds of government programmes.[9] In line with the 73rd Amendment Act, all rural Indian villages are now governed by a Gram Sabha. The composition of every Gram Sabha includes the entire adult population of a village on the electoral roll.[10]

Gram Sabhas play a pivotal role in India's efforts towards deliberative democracy as they have been made the base unit in India's new system for the local self-governance of villages.[11] Gram Sabhas are intended to be the main forums for village communities to debate and discuss their problems in a face-to-face setting with their elected representatives.[12] In every Gram Sabha, villagers' demands are conveyed to an executive body called a Gram Panchayat. Furthermore, decisions taken by a Gram Sabha cannot be annulled by any other body except itself. Therefore, in every sense, a Gram Sabha is analogous to a village parliament. A Gram Panchayat, the executive body of a Gram Sabha, consists of 10-15 members directly elected by a Gram Sabha's members. Gram Sabah is responsible for approving all plans and programmes for social and economic development within a village, the auditing of panchayat accounts (village council accounts) and selecting a range of beneficiaries for government programmes. In short, Gram Sabhas are the nuclei of India's new local governance structure. This affects more than 840 million people living in approximately one million villages in rural India.[13] According to the most recent figures, there are more than 3.1 million elected representatives at the rural level, out of which 1.3 million are women.

Among the Indian states, Kerala has the best record in realising the vision of Gram Sabhas enshrined in the 73rd Amendment. In Kerela, Gram Sabhas have been functioning as local governance structures since the late 1990s.[14] Understanding why Kerela has become a pioneer in effectively implementing Gram Sabhas requires a brief overview of the state's history and demographic features. With the highest literacy rate in India (96.2%) and the best development indicators among all the Indian states, Kerala is notable for having a long history of progressive politics.[15] It initiated India's most radical programme of participatory decentralisation in the 1990s (popularly named the People's Campaign for Decentralised Planning); within this programme, the Gram Sabha became the underlying structure for rural self-governance.[16] It is the only state in India that has devolved several public services, such as health, education and sanitation to Gram Sabhas, going as far as to allocate 40% of the state's development budget to panchayats.[17] Another contributing factor in Kerala's successful push for decentralisation was the state-wide

7   L.C. Jain, "Cry the Beloved Self-Government," Occasional Paper, Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA), April 2001,
    https://www.pria.org/knowledge_resource/1548311062_Occasional%20paper-%20Cry%20the%20Beloved%20Self%20%E2%80%93Government.pdf.
8   Niranjan Sahoo, "Decentralisation @25: Glass Half Full Yet," ORF Brief, May 5, 2018,
    https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/decentralisation25-glass-half-full-yet/.
9   Kuldeep Mathur, Panchayati Raj, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2013), 32.
10 Ramya Parthasarathy and Vijayendra Rao, "Deliberative Democracy in India," Policy Research Working Paper, No. 7995. The World Bank Group, March, 2017,
    https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/26245.
11 Mathur, Panchayati Raj, 44.
12 Mathur, Panchayati Raj, 44.
13 Parthasarathy and Rao, "Deliberative Democracy,"
14 Mathur, Panchayati Raj, 46.
15 "At 96.2%, Kerala tops literacy rate chart, Andhra Pradesh worst performer with 66.4%," The Times of India, September 08, 2020, https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/
    home/education/news/at-96-2-kerala-tops-literacy-rate-chart-andhra-pradesh-worst-performer-at-66-4/articleshow/77990417.cms; "As Kerala turns 60, here are five
    indicators that set the state apart," The Indian Express, November 01, 2016, https://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/as-kerala-turns-60-here-are-
    five-indicators-that-set-the-state-apart-3732000/.
16 Thomas Issac and Richard Franke, Local Democracy and Development: People's Campaign for Decentralised Panning in Kerala (Delhi: Left-Word Book, 2020).
17 Ministry of Panchayati Raj, the Government of India and Tata Institute of Social Science, Mumbai, "Devolution Report 2015-16: Where Local Democracy and
    Devolution in India is heading towards?," 22, https://www.panchayat.gov.in/documents/448457/0/Devolution+Report+2015-16.pdf/338f86ed-a6da-13ca-719b-
    2d41b467da93?t=1633331634500.

People's Campaign, led by a left-wing government in 1996.[18] This administration successfully raised public awareness about the (then) new Panchayati Raj system, and it sensitised citizens to their rights and entitlements under it.[19] Additionally, Gram Sabhas were made central to the state's village planning processes, especially when it came to preparing development plans for villages. The state formed working committees and organised development seminars around Gram Sabha meetings to make them effective deliberative forums for decision-making and planning.

The organised and concerted effort of Kerala's state leadership to make Gram Sabhas more inclusive has yielded positive results for these self-governing institutions. According to a major study of 72 Gram Sabhas, the People's Campaign had positive bearing on social inclusion of marginalised groups and women in decision-making.[20] Another study by Gibson, in 2012, found the effectiveness of the state's Gram Sabhas can be attributed to the high level of women's participation.[21] Although in most states Gram Sabhas are failing to become proper deliberative bodies, with many of them acting as a "talking shop", in Kerala they have mostly succeeded in this goal and the have taken deeper roots. A similar study, using survey data from 537 villages in the south-Indian states of Karnataka, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, found that with the exception of Kerala, Gram Sabha meetings were not being held regularly.[22] The study reveals that Kerala's Gram Sabhas have "become sites for the joint production of an understanding of what it means to be officially classified as poor" and that "these exchanges foster the future capability of the poor to engage in a critical dialogue with the state on definitional matters".[23]

Kerala's success is a result of impressive progress being made on ensuring Gram Sabhas have regular proceedings, high levels of attendance and the active participation of women and people from lower caste backgrounds, improving distributive politics and accountability.[24] This participation from groups that are usually excluded has not only forced public discussion on

sensitive social issues but has also made Gram Sabhas into key forums for social inclusion and dialogue.[25] However, it is important to note that Kerala's high literacy rate and the state's commitment to devolving power were necessary conditions for making these self-governing bodies tools for democratic transformation. The lack of these features in many Indian states are obstacles that need to be considered when trying to replicate Kerela's success.

Despite the Panchayati Raj System (rural, local self-government) and Gram Sabhas delivering important gains in vital spheres of democratic governance, many hurdles still restrain India's road to deliberative democracy.[26] These grassroots institutions have a long way to go before they can be considered truly 'self-governing' local level institutions. In most of India's states, participation in Gram Sabhas remains low, and meetings and agendas are often hijacked by powerful interest groups, such as landed castes, local mafias or strongmen, the moneyed class and state level leaders.[27]

In this regard, Kerala has remained an outlier among Indian states. Yet, even in Kerala, Gram Sabhas are arguably used too often simply to discuss and select beneficiaries for different government welfare schemes rather than playing a significant role in village planning processes.[28] Despite their impressive record in Kerela for creating visible improvements in democratic participation and the deliberative capacities of villages, the state has also had instances of forums being hijacked by powerful local interest groups. Nonetheless, given the great political capital that the state leadership invested (irrespective of which political parties were in power), Kerala has managed to provide an impressive model, remaining, by far, the largest laboratory test for implementing deliberative democracy in India. Inspired by Kerela's success, many other Indian states are increasingly emulating its model of democratic decentralisation.

18 Anil.S, "People's Planning turns 25: The Way Forward," The New Indian Express, August 17, 2021. https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/kerala/2021/aug/17/peoples-planning-turns-25-the-way-forward-2345656.html.

19 Issac and Franke, Local Democracy.

20 Partick Heller, K.N. Harilal, and Shubham Chaudhuri, "Building Local Democracy: Evaluating the Impact of Decentralization in Kerala, India," World Development 35, no. 4, (2007): 626-648, https://econpapers.repec.org/article/eeewdevel/v_3a35_3ay_3a2007_3ai_3a4_3ap_3a626-648.htm;

21 Christopher Gibson, "Making Redistributive Direct Democracy Matter: Development and Women's Participation in the Gram Sabhas of Kerala, India," American Sociological Review, April 19, 2012, https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0003122412442883.

22 Timothy Besley, Rohini Pande, and Vijayendra Rao, "Political Economy of Panchayats in South India," Economic and Political Weekly 42, no.8 (February 24, 2007), 661-666, https://www.jstor.org/stable/4419281.

23 Vijayendra Rao and Paromita Sanyal, "Dignity through Discourse: Poverty and the Culture of Deliberation in Indian Village Democracies," Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science 629 (2010): 164-172, https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0002716209357402.

24 Issac and Franke, Local Democracy.

25 Paromita Sanyal, Vijayendra Rao and Umang Prabhakar, "Oral Democracy and Women's Oratory Competency in Indian Village Assemblies," World Bank Policy Research Working Paper No. 7416, September 21, 2015, https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2663798.

26 Sahoo, "Decentralisation @25,"

27 Mathur, Panchayati Raj.

28 Raghabendra Chattopadhyay and Esther Duflo, "Women as Policy Makers: Evidence from a Randomised Policy Experiment in India," Econometrica, 72, no.5 (2004): 1409-1443, https://economics.mit.edu/files/792.

Case Study 2: The Social Audit as a tool for improving citizens-state interface

In order to move beyond the electoral form of democratic accountability, which only occurs once every five years, and deepen the stake citizens have in the processes of democratic governance, a group of civil society actors in India have produced an innovative concept called the Social Audit. The Social Audit is a type of audit where citizens organise and mobilise themselves to evaluate and audit the government's performance on a particular infrastructure project or welfare scheme. This is undertaken through a Jan Sunwai (a public hearing) in order to generate high levels of pressure on public officials to respond to the needs and demands of citizens. The innovative element of the social audit is that it reduces the ability of officials to conceal their inefficiencies behind bureaucratic red tape.[29] Analysis has already shown that social auditing has created an enabling environment for citizens to question the government on their management of resources and their efficiency. In addition, the social audit ensures that citizens are more likely to participate in decision-making because they feel it creates a space where their voices are heard and their demands are not dismissed, which is typically the case in India's normal electoral politics as the power dynamics involved minimise the voices of ordinary citizens.

The concept of Social Audit was first pioneered in India by a civil society forum called Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS) based in the northern state of Rajasthan.[30] In the early 1990s, many civil society groups led by MKSS worked hard to ensure that citizens got paid the minimum wage as there were numerous cases of embezzlement within the local contractors-politicians-officials nexus.[31] At the time, MKSS along with other CSOs from Rajasthan campaigned for more transparency in the financing and accounting of government projects, as well as the introduction of a general auditing process and compensation scheme for returning embezzled

public funds. All these demands were put forth in the first public Jan Sunwai in 1994. Jan Sunwais had an unprecedented impact: they produced a space which citizens used to force government officials to return embezzled funds, as well as creating a model for how the public could hold officials accountable.[32]

Recognising its usefulness in enhancing participation and accountability, the MKSS model of social auditing was institutionalised into local bodies, the panchayats, by the federal government in 2006. The government did this by incorporating social audits into new legislation, which aimed to guarantee the right to work; this legislation was known as the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA), later renamed as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA).[33] In line with the (then) new legislation, all Gram Panchayats (elected village councils) were expected to conduct social audits of all projects within their jurisdictions at least twice a year.[34]

Over the past two decades, the social audit processes have evolved, and several Indian states have experimented with it in a variety of ways, which is one reason why it has emerged as an empowering tool for rural citizens. For instance, an offshoot of the social audit process called Jan Soochna (Public Information Portal) was launched by the Government of Rajasthan in 2019. This online portal allows citizens to access information, such as publicly available government documents. Since its creation, the government has been expanding the services the portal offers by including things such as information on pensions, government welfare schemes and utilities, like electricity and water.[35] Since its launch, Jan Soochna has had an average of 300,000 users every month.[36] It has enabled citizens to access information that educates them on the mechanisms and practices institutions use that are detrimental to the public good, such as creating unnecessarily complex bureaucratic processes and employing inefficient and corrupt intermediaries. This claim is supported by the results of an impact study on Jan Soochna conducted by The Hindu newspaper, which shows citizens in Rajasthan have been positively impacted by their use of the portal.[37]

29 Yamini Aiyar and Micheal Walton, "Rights, Accountability and Citizenship: Examining India's Emerging Welfare State," CPR Working Paper, October 22, 2014, https://cprindia.org/workingpapers/rights-accountability-and-citizenship-examining-indias-emerging-welfare-state/.

30 Jeannette Weller, "Social Audits: When People Verify State Actions," Civil Society Academy, accessed August 19, 2022, https://www.civilsocietyacademy.org/post/social-audits; More information on Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan can be found from their website: http://mkssindia.org/.

31 Suchi Pande, "Social Audits in India, Institutionalizing Citizen Oversight," Accountability Research Centre, June 29, 2021, https://accountabilityresearch.org/social-audits-in-india-institutionalizing-citizen-oversight/.

32 Santosh Kumar Biswal and Uttam Chakraborty, "Keep a Close Eye, Social Audits in India," The Telegraph, published November 6, 2020, https://www.telegraphindia.com/opinion/keep-a-close-eye-social-audits-in-india/cid/1796676.

33 Pande, "Social Audits,"

34 Aiyar and Walton, "Rights, Accountability and Citizenship,"

35 "Home page," the Government of Rajasthan, https://jansoochna.rajasthan.gov.in/Home/HomePage.

36 "jansoochna.rajasthan.gov.in," Similar Web, accessed August 17, 2022, https://www.similarweb.com/website/jansoochna.rajasthan.gov.in/#overview.

37 Priscilla Jebaraj, "A lifeline called Jan Soochna: How Rajasthan's public information portal is empowering people," The Hindu, October 26, 2019, https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/a-lifeline-called-jan-soochna/article61970427.ece.

Although Rajasthan was the first state in India to implement social audits, the southern state of Andhra Pradesh (AP) is the one that has become India's major innovator in social auditing. Between 2006, when the MGNREGA was rolled out nationally, and 2012, AP conducted a dozen rounds of social auditing across every one of its gram panchayats. Following this, social auditing was institutionalised through the creation of a state-sponsored body called the Society for Social Audit, Accountability and Transparency (SSAAT).[38]

A closer examination of AP shows why it has invested heavily in social auditing while other Indian states have overlooked the option. Analysts have found the key factor for the institutionalisation of AP's model for social auditing was strong political support.[39] This support began with the unexpected electoral victory of the Congress Party in the 2004 Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly elections. Led by Y.S. Rajashekhar Reddy (YSR), the Congress Party's victory came against the backdrop of a severe agrarian crisis in the state. The party's electoral strategy linked the resolution of the agrarian crisis to the provision of expanded social welfare schemes which addressed the specific concerns of distressed farmers and other affected households. The (then) newly elected Chief Minister, YSR, was keen to quickly consolidate the political gains made in the 2004 elections.[40] In social auditing, he saw a rare opportunity to break the local governance stranglehold created by contractors, politicians and bureaucrats, who were siphoning off a significant portion of the capital allocated for development schemes. Since the social audit scheme enjoyed political support at the highest level, key state officials and local political elites were also invested in its success.

Regarding its value to MGNREGA's jobs creation objective, studies have shown that the social audit process has positively benefitted it by improving the government's capacity for public communication, curtailing poor practices and improving government responsiveness. The social audit has considerably improved the level of public awareness about the job creation scheme among the rural population, and it has helped to reduce forms of malpractice, such as contractors manipulating the muster rolls for workers.[41] Most notably, surveys show

that 85% of village respondents felt social auditing had given them the confidence to demand answers from government officials on key welfare schemes, increasing government responsiveness.[42]

Andhra Pradesh's success story has encouraged many other Indian states to embrace social auditing. Telangana (a new state branched out of Andhra Pradesh in 2014), Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Jharkhand and most recently Meghalaya have also taken steps to initiate social auditing.[43] However, the implementation of the social audit has not been uniformly applied at the national level, nor has it been institutionalised in participative democratic processes over the last 10 years. Unfortunately, in Rajasthan, the state where the social audit was first used, it continues to face resistance from vested political interest groups and officials who perceive it to be a major threat to their monopoly on power.[44]

While civil society groups and gram panchayats have not given up and are continuing the fight, the political class of Rajasthan is now much less interested in social auditing. In 2015, the Controller and Auditor General (CAG) observed that several state governments were diluting and violating the provisions that upheld the spirit of the social audit.[45] Following the CAG's findings, the Union Ministry of Rural Development set up a task force to tackle these failings. Based on the task force's recommendations, the ministry adopted a social audit action plan, and it instructed state governments to begin monthly social audits on MGNREGA. The social auditing process has now been expanded in its scope and covers multiple other central acts, particularly the National Food Security Act.[46] Despite enhancing participation and accountability in democratic governance, the number of social audits has decreased significantly in the last few years. Nevertheless, Andhra Pradesh has demonstrated that social audits have a future in India's expanding deliberative democratic space.

38 Based on the author's interviews with Yamini Aiyar and her colleagues at the Centre for Policy Research, Delhi.
39 Aiyar and Walton, "Rights, Accountability and Citizenship,"
40 Aiyar and Walton, "Rights, Accountability and Citizenship,"
41 Shylashiri Shankar, "Can Social Audits Count?," Working Paper, ASARC, 2010.
42 Yamini Aiyar, Salimah Samji, and Soumya Kapoor-Mehta, "Strengthening Public Accountability: Lessons from Implementing Social Audits in Andhra Pradesh," CPR Working Paper, November 29, 2009, https://cprindia.org/workingpapers/strengthening-public-accountability-lessons-from-implementing-social-audits-in-andhra-pradesh/.
43 Suchi Pande, "Social Audits,"; Divya Singh Kohli, "Manual on Social Accountability: Concepts and Tools," CBGA, 2015, https://www.cbgaindia.org/primers-manual/manual-on-social-accountability-concepts-tools/.
44 Pande, "Social Audits,"
45 Pande, "Social Audits,"
46 Suchi Pande and Rakesh R. Dubbudu, "Improving Social Audits," The Hindu, May 10, 2018, https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/improving-social-audits/article23828790.ece.

Conclusion

A quick review of these two case studies strongly indicates the deepening of deliberative and participative democracy at the grassroots level. While there is a sharp erosion of democracy at the macro-scale, due to growing government authoritarianism and increased political polarisation, democracy at the local level remains somewhat insulated from these phenomena.[47]

For instance, despite some strong expressions of opposition from the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), for example, when Prime Minister Narendra Modi called MGNREGA a "living monument of failure" to attack the Congress Party. Yet, the government still reinvested in MGNREGA and social audits.[48] Therefore, in practice, the Social Audit has a degree of bipartisan support, which might explain its inclusion in the BJP's 2014 election manifesto.

Similarly, the Panchayati Raj System, particularly the Gram Sabhas, have bipartisan support since they have worked successfully in Kerala. While there are many pitfalls and challenges for both of these institutional innovations, they have become popular with citizens, particularly among the poor and marginalised communities of India. Considering their wide applicability, as nearly 65% of India remains rural, and their electoral benefits, there is a great interest in and many incentives for state governments to implement radical decentralised policies. For instance, encouraged by the performance record of women representatives at the panchayat level, in a radical move, the Odisha government reserved 70% of the positions for heads of Zilla Parishads (District Councils) for women.[49]

Measures like this are crucial for improving women's participation in key rural self-governance bodies, offering these enhanced leadership roles may act as incentives for other states to embrace such measures in the near future. In short, while the situation with India's democracy at a macro-level is concerning, at the grassroots level there is great potential for Indian democracy as these democratic experiments in decentralisation have produced deliberative and empowering forms of governance.

47 Sahoo, "Mounting Majoritarianism" and Political Polarisation in India," in Political Polarization in South and Southeast Asia: Old Divisions, New Dangers, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2020. https://carnegieendowment.org/2020/08/18/mounting-majoritarianism-and-political-polarization-in-india-pub-82434.

48 Liz Mathew, "Why the BJP embraced MGNREGA, the living monument of UPA's failures," The Indian Express, February 06, 2016, https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/why-the-bjp-embraced-mgnrega-the-living-monument-of-the-upas-failures/.

49 "In a first, women to head 70 percent of Zilla Parishads in Odisha", Hindustan Times, March 14, 2022. https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/in-a-first-women-to-head-70-per-cent-of-zilla-parishads-in-odisha-101647281439558.html.

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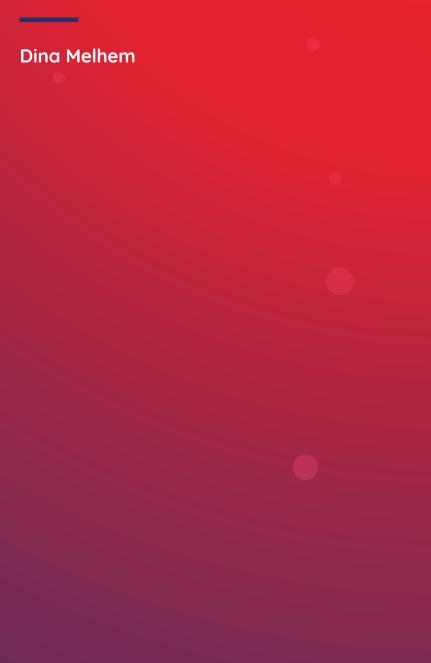
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Exploring Worldwide Democratic Innovations - A case study of Lebanon

Dina Melhem

Introduction

Lebanese politics are shaped by an electoral system based on a sectarian formula for power sharing. This confessional system has contributed to a low-level of citizen participation in policymaking, a lack of cross-confessional vibrancy in political parties, the limited ability and opportunity of civic groups and average citizens to influence political processes, as well as the poor representation of women in political life.[1]

As Lebanon is currently going through one of its most difficult economic and financial crises, coupled with constant political instability, polarisation is growing along sectarian lines whilst prospects for reform remain stagnant.[2] Although many civic movements, including the demonstrations held from 2011 until October 17, 2022, have sought to overcome sectarianism, it remains a key obstacle to achieving meaningful progress in increasing democratic participation.[3] Lebanon's religious consociational power sharing structure has stifled efforts to produce transformative citizenship.

Against this backdrop, it is important to highlight and encourage initiatives that are successful in overcoming sectarian dividing lines and have managed to engage citizens at both the national and local levels, assisting them to advocate for key reforms and increasing the overall level of citizen participation in democratic processes. This case study examines noteworthy examples of democratic innovation that have increased participation in the areas of electoral reform and environmental governance. These are significant for having sought ways in incorporating deliberative participation of ordinary citizens through civil society campaigns.

Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections (LADE)

The first democratic innovator discussed in this report, the Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections (LADE), merits attention for offering two key insights: it shows how a credible non-confessional organisation for promoting democratic practices can be created, and it provides a model for maintaining democratic practices within a civil society organisation.[4] Established in 1996, LADE's explicit focus is to improve the Lebanese electoral system in compliance with international standards and to reinforce fairness and proper democratic practices in Lebanon's parliamentary and municipal elections.[5]

LADE was one of the first public-facing associations in Lebanon established after the civil war on a purely non-confessional basis.[6] It quickly proved itself to be a credible organisation, focused on arguing for electoral integrity, representation and participation. LADE was the first organisation of its kind in the Arab region and remains one of only a few of its type around the world. Since its founding, LADE has been engaged in

1 "Lebanon", BTI 2020 Country Report, p.12-13,
   https://bti-project.org/fileadmin/api/content/en/downloads/reports/country_report_2020_LBN.pdf; "Lebanon," Inter-parliamentary Union, accessed August 23, 2022; "Lebanon," Inter-parliamentary Union, accessed August 23, 2022, https://www.ipu.org/parliament/LB.
2 Samir Makdisi and Razan Amine, "Lebanon's Multifaceted Economic Crisis of October 2019: Causes, Repercussions: A Diagnosis", ERF working papers series, Working Paper No. 1562 (August 2022), p. 8-9.
3 J.A Clark. and B.F Salloukh, "Elite strategies, civil society, and sectarian identities in post-war Lebanon", (2013) 45(4) International Journal of Middle East Studies, pp. 731-749
4 Farid El Khazen, Prospects for Lebanon: Lebanon 's First Postwar Parliamentary Election: An Imposed Choice (Oxford: Centre for Lebanese Studies, 1998)
5 أهداف لادي [LADE Goals], LADE, accessed April 23, 2022, http://www.lade.org.lb/About-the-Association/Organization-s-Goals.aspx.
6 The association included in its membership and among its volunteers a number of researchers, academics, journalists, lawyers, university students and specialists, in addition to a large number of civil society activists.

all electoral framework reforms and procedures for holding elections in Lebanon. They have monitored all national and local elections and have produced evaluation reports on the electoral process. It managed to do this work despite the Ministry of Interior refusing to grant LADE its official CSO registration number for more than a year and delaying its official registration until 2006 (nine years after its establishment) on the pretext that the organisation's objectives overlap with the role of state institutions.[7]

On an organisational level, LADE has created a rare model for upholding internal democratic practices within CSOs in Lebanon. It did this by ensuring it did not have fixed power structures in its leadership. In LADE, there is a regular alternation of power and leadership, it does this by holding internal elections on a regular basis in accordance with its own by-laws which specify the duration of terms for all of its key offices.[8] LADE's independence from politics is also very clear. According to Article 9 of their rulebook, any individual that is a member or an affiliated member has the right to run in the elections of the administrative body, provided that they are not a leading member of a party, organisation or group of a partisan nature and that they are not active in the campaign of a candidate seeking office.[9]

Over its 26 years of existence, LADE has gone through various organisational changes, but it has been consistent in terms of the two features discussed above (non-confessionalism and internal democracy). This consistency has enabled LADE to produce the following key measurable results:

• Expanding the circle of discussion on parliamentary and municipal elections laws to include the widest political and social actors and various groups within civil society;
• Embedding the culture and principles of election observation in all its forms in Lebanon's democratic practices and developing the capacities of a wide range of CSOs and domestic observers;

• Ensuring the inclusion of the Student Bodies Elections Law on the agenda of the administrative and student bodies of a number of Lebanese universities;
• Developing common agreement within Lebanon on key reform principles, promoting them and transforming them into material for public discussion, which forms the basis of electoral reform of parliamentary, municipal and optional election law;
• Enhancing citizen participation in public life and motivating youth groups in cities, towns and villages to engage in public life;

Rally for municipal elections

Focusing on enhancing citizen participation in municipal governance, LADE and its founding members, along with a broader group of CSOs formed a national alliance of civil society actors in 1997, which led a large civil society campaign called Baladi, Baldati, Baladiyyati (My country, my town, my municipality) that eventually drove Lebanon's parliament and government to relent, allowing local elections to be held in 1998.[10] This initiative was the first nationwide popular pressure campaign, which highlighted the importance of local governance and grounded the necessary pathway for decentralisation in Lebanon.[11]

The initiative involved democratic innovation at various levels. In its communication and reach to the general public, the campaign strategically reached out to citizens in both rural and urban areas using advertising campaigns and slogans aimed at encouraging citizens to claim their rights by signing the petition. Some of its success may be attributable to the campaign's attractive slogan, "My country is my town, my municipality", created by journalist and activist Paul Ashkar.[12] The slogan was put in an advertising jingle developed by a prominent

7   Karam Karam. Le mouvement civil au Liban: Revendications, protestations, et mobilisations associatives dans l'apres-guerre, Karthala – Iremam, 2006, pp.105-107.
8   According to Article Eight of LADE's Internal Procedures, every two years, the entire membership of the administrative body is elected for a term of two years, only renewable for one additional term, provided that a full term passes before a member of the administrative body is entitled to run again (with the exception of the Secretary-General, whose term is two years and is not renewable). The election is conducted by an annual "ordinary" general body using a secret ballot and without specifying the positions and tasks of each of the members.
9   Rules of Procedure, amended on December 14, 2019, based on an extraordinary general assembly meeting.
10 Paul Salem, "Lebanon's Government Should Lay the Groundwork for Fairer Representation and Accountability," Middle East Institute, January 2017, https://mei.edu/publications/lebanons-government-should-lay-groundwork-fairer-representation-and-accountability-1.
11 Lebanon is comprised of governorates (muhafazat), which in turn are divided into districts (qada'), each of which contains any number of municipalities (baladiyyat). Municipal governance is thus the third (local) level of public administration in the country. Lebanon's eight governorates are Beirut, 'Akkar, Baalbak-Hermel, Bekaa, Mount Lebanon, Nabatiyya, North Lebanon and South Lebanon. There are 26 districts in total, containing a total of 1,030 municipalities, unevenly spread across the country, see Elisabeth Longuenesse, "Karam Karam, Le mouvement," 179-180.
12 Baladi, Baldati, Baladiyyati

and very popular Lebanese musician called Ziad Rahbani, who later organised a concert in support of the campaign.[13] Furthermore, the Media played a critical role in spreading information about the campaign and mobilising communities in support of it. Two TV stations, two radio stations and seven newspapers, all with varied political and ideological views, supported the campaign for free, and these media outlets ran the advertisement and repeated the slogan on regular basis.[14]

Another potential factor for the campaign's success was its seminars and meetings about electoral laws and municipal elections, these were held in rural areas with the aim of widening the consultation process and raising public awareness of the importance of local elections. In itself, the campaign was professionally managed: meetings and long discussions on the impact of the campaign and its progress took place on weekly basis.[15] The founders of the campaign were very conscious of the challenges ahead, in particular of remaining unified under the same campaign goals, and they were keen to avoid any fragmentation, especially considering the diversity of views and interests that existed among the members and supporters of the campaign, which included different parties, unions, as well as few members of parliament. For this purpose, the rally kept its focus on its original demand, phrased as, "we want election and refuse extension", keeping this as the main common denominator around which all actors agreed was key, along with sustained resistance against any pressure or attempt to add broader demands. The campaign's organisers also committed the campaign to transparency, peaceful means and a commitment to ending itself after its demands were met. The movement was well received by the general public and collected more than 100,000 signatures. As promised, the campaign dissolved itself in June 1998, right after the municipal elections were held, resisting further pressure to continue as an advocacy group and suggestions to become a political force by participating in the municipal elections with a running list under the same slogan.[16]

Baladi, Baldati, Baladiyyati represents a model for successful nationwide collective campaigning. It managed to gather Lebanese people with diverse backgrounds and allegiances around a common point of interest. This was a new phenomenon in Lebanese politics. Its success established faith in civic participation

beyond sectarian and geographic divides. It also contributed to carving out a space for civil society in Lebanon, which was important as the nature and experience of civic engagement was changing after the end of the war, moving away from a humanitarian role to engagement in policymaking and development. The approach adopted in this campaign provides valuable lessons that are crucial and could be of benefit to future civic movements in Lebanon. The rally manoeuvred through difficult circumstances and challenges and kept its unity, focus and peaceful approach.

The National Commission on Parliamentary Electoral Law

This third case offers a view on the effectiveness of electoral commissions and how they can bring about positive change in electoral law. The National Commission on Parliamentary Electoral Law was established by a government decree in 2005 with a specific mandate: to propose means for reforming the electoral system by preparing a new elections' law. The idea of establishing a commission was initiated by key activists and academics from CSOs who managed to persuade the government to adopt this idea and establish such a forum. The founders of this initiative influenced decision makers among the government's members using the positive relations they had with the prime minister's office and the good reputation they had as experts and change leaders in their own field. The committee was comprised of 12 experts and legal representatives from all segments of society and its varied stakeholder groups, including three experts who were founders of the Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections (LADE). The commission was headed by former Deputy Prime Minister Fouad Boutros, who had political capital and credibility.[17]

Establishing the Commission was a clear recognition of the importance and urgency of electoral |framework reform in Lebanon. Its work has been considered innovative, independent, credible, and inclusive.[18] From its establishment in 2005 and until its disbanding in 2015, the commission reviewed and held dialogues on 122 electoral bills that were received from Lebanese parties, individuals, and various bodies from political

13 Hanin Shabshoul, "بلدي بلديتي بلديتي:"لكي لا نتدهور مجددا؟," [Baladi, my town: So that we don't deteriorate again?], Almoden, https://www.almodon.com/print/3f9b540d-4039-45e8-a648-9a4779a0938d/dadd418c-fe37-44c4-bba8-94c43c266e4c.

14 YouTube, Jad Ghosn, Interview with Paul Ashkar.

15 YouTube, Jad Ghosn, Interview with Paul Ashkar

16 LCPS, Municipal elections in Lebanon 1998: The Dangers of Democracy in the Structures of Local Communities (Beirut: LCPS, 1999), 2-20.

17 Mr. Fouad Boutros was a prominent Lebanese politician who took various ministerial and parliamentary positions, especially during the terms of President of the Republic Fouad Chehab from 1958- 1964. This era was known for building efficient public institutions. See: Karim Merhej, "Breaking the curse of corruption in Lebanon," Research paper (Chatham House, June 2021), https://www.chathamhouse.org/2021/06/breaking-curse-corruption-lebanon.

18 Richard Chambers, "Electoral Reform Needs in Lebanon in the light of the Recommendations of the 2005 EU Election Observation Mission," (Paper to the Foreign Affairs Committee of the European Parliament, May 28, 2008), 2, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2004_2009/documents/dv/270/270620/27062008_policypaper1EN.pdf.

and civil society. The committee communicated with the public continuously through the media and various other means of communication, and it published all of its works and made them accessible to the public. Moreover, it received support from several Lebanese civil society actors who established a framework, under the name the "Civil Campaign for Electoral Reform", with the aim to support the committee and provide it with technical assistance.

The commission held 72 public meetings and produced a comprehensively revised draft for electoral law based on the adoption of a composite system, which is, a mixed system that combines two levels of proportional and majoritarian representation, the first on the basis of six governorates and the second on the basis of twenty-seven districts. The heart of the debate revolved around key reforms such as: official pre-printed ballots; partial proportional representation; holding the election on one day in all of Lebanon[19]; a 30% women's quota for parliament; establishing an independent electoral commission; lowering the voting age from 21 to 18; campaign finance and media regulation; enabling Lebanese citizens to vote whilst living abroad; and increasing access for people with special needs.

The Commission, by addressing many of the key problems that affect Lebanese elections, has set a clear benchmark for the reforms that are needed for fair and transparent elections in Lebanon. The commission's final draft law was later submitted to the Parliament by Two members of parliaments who sponsored the final draft.[20] Since 2008, three electoral laws have been reviewed, which have adopted some of the key electoral reforms outlined in the draft commission law. Although political agreement could not be reached on all the recommendations of the Commission, the important reforms that were adopted:

•   Holding elections within one day;
•   Forming a commission to supervise electoral campaigns;
•   Integrating proportional election into the system;
•   Campaign finance and media regulation;
•   Adopting out-of-country voting;

These three laws have contributed to establishing principles of electoral justice and improving electoral management in Lebanon. Lebanese election laws have gone through various reviews since the 1960s. Whilst this work is bringing Lebanon's electoral framework closer in line with international standards, more work is required to adopt a full package of reforms. Whilst there have been, doubtlessly, barriers along the way and various successes in the work of these initiatives, they remain innovative and precedents to learn from. They also embedded the culture of civic mobilisation and opened the space for CSOs and wider civic movements to get involved in shaping political life in Lebanon.

A local participatory environmental initiative

A final innovation is centred on an initiative that addressed a health and environmental crisis at the local level. In contrast to the other cases, this case study offers an example of policy change negotiated at the local level among key actors (formal and informal) on a cross-confessional basis which led to tangible impacts and benefits across the country. This was built on a participatory approach and positive engagement with institutions and relevant ministries as well as with the religious leaders who have influence among citizens.

The project was developed by the Association for Environment Protection and Heritage Preservation, a local CSO operating in Nabatiyeh (a city and governorate) in the South of Lebanon, in response to the complaints from the residents of the city. It was initiated by an advocacy campaign on controlling dioxins and furans and reducing the emissions of persistent organic pollutants as part of a project aimed at decreasing the usage of constant organic pollutants and implementing Stockholm Convention.[21] Lebanon ratified the Stockholm Convention in 2003 by passing Law 432.

This initiative was launched in 2006 and was supported by the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) Global Environment Facility (GEF) Small Grant Programme (SGP) in Lebanon, with the overall objective of improving the environment so that it positively impacts the living conditions of Lebanese communities. The project focused on persistent organic pollution produced from burning tyres and medical waste. As a part of the project's activities, the Association worked to 1) raise awareness of the risks created by pollutants; 2) identify the pollutants' locations; 3) raise awareness on how pollutants can affect a human being and enter their body; 4) show the materials that can be used as alternatives to pollutants, 5) fight pollution caused by

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19 Until 2009, elections were conducted on four consecutive Sundays and often the results of one area affected the campaigning and elections of the forthcoming ones. See Arda Arsenian Ekmekji, "Confessionalism And electoral reform in Lebanon," (Paper for the Aspen Institute, Aspen Institute, July 19, 2012), 17, https://www.aspeninstitute.org/publications/confessionalism-electoral-reform-lebanon/.
20 MP Ghassan Tueni and MP Ghassan Mukheiber submitted the draft law on May 5, 2008.
21 Dioxins and furans are common names for toxic chemicals that are found in very small amounts in the environment, including air, water and soil. They are mostly by-products of burning or various industrial processes, see http://www.popstoolkit.com/about.aspx; The Stockholm Convention on persistent organic pollutants is a global treaty to protect human health and the environment from chemicals that remain intact in the environment for long periods, become widely distributed geographically, accumulate in the fatty tissue of human and wildlife and have harmful impacts in human health or on the environment. The convention entered into force in 2004.

these materials; and to 6) form a special committee and a centre for pollutant detection.[22]

On the issue of open burning of used tyres, the Association started by conducting a study showing that around 2000 Lebanese families (around 500 in Nabatieh) make a living from the business of burning tyres to extract steel wire and sell them. This was a major contributor to dioxin and furans releases in the area. In response, the project was originally designed to develop committees to act as "environmental guards" and expose the people who earn their living from burning tyres haphazardly. At the implementation stage, this policing approach was replaced with further emphasis on awareness and data collection and negotiating with the 500 families a sustainable solution. In collaboration with the municipality, the association built a consensus on the danger of burning tyres and worked to convince families to halt open burning and shift to alternative ways that do not result in as much damage to human health and reduce impacts on the environment as well as the health of surrounding communities.[23]

The project held awareness building events for people who made a living from burning these pollutants. These people acknowledged how harmful the pollutants are to their health as well as to the community's health, however, they didn't have viable alternatives for making a living. The project investigated alternative solutions for them, such as providing a tyre shredding machine, recommended because evidence collected in the study itself shows that the use of such a machine would bring benefits for these families as they could sell the extracted steel wire for a 40% higher price. The project worked with other actors to find a viable way for providing such a machine, as its cost was beyond the project's scope and budget. They lobbied with businesspeople and other international organisations, such as the International Labour Organization (ILO).

In the end, a businessperson opened up a private tyre shredding business in the North of Lebanon, and the project helped to pay for the transportation of the material from the South to the North. This became a very profitable business for its owner and at the same time heavily contributed to reducing the burning of tyres all across the country. This approach was tied with awareness raising at all levels through workshops, working with religious leaders and using their influence

on their followers to lead change and progress in society, including the protection of the environment and communal health. The project worked and held meetings with religious leaders from all communities who participated in awareness raising events and led to issuing of a fatwah to prohibit burning tires for its impact on the environment and people's health by a prominent religious leader.

In terms of Hospital waste, the project examined the effect of the improper incineration of medical waste at Nabatieh Governmental Hospital which contributed to pollution in the City. In response, the association started a petition objecting to the improper incineration of medical waste at the hospital.[24] The petition was signed by 200 people from the city's community and was shared with relevant ministries. The association followed up with ministries and the local council; this resulted in the Minister of Health issuing a decree to all hospitals in Lebanon to use sterilisation practices, rather than medical waste incineration, bringing into implementation the principles stipulated in the Environmental Protection Law No. 444/2002, which is in line with Lebanon's commitment to the Stockholm Convention.[25] The project mobilised the community and engaged key actors inside the hospital as well as with NGOs, associations, municipalities and experts.

This initiative is illustrative of a successful example of fostering active civil society participation at the local level in raising awareness about the health and environmental impacts of persistent organic pollutants and risks to the community, by using tact and building alliances to convince various actors with conflicting interests to work collectively. As such, the association adopted an inclusive approach and partnered with the Municipality of Nabatiyeh and other community-based organisations in the region as well as with governmental bodies and religious leaders to change policy and influence community members responsible for environmental damage. The impact of this collective work went beyond benefiting the community and targeted area as it led to a major enhancement on the national policy level, aligning Lebanon with its international commitments.

22 "Association For Environment, Protection and Patrimony Conservation," Daleel Madani, last modified November 29, 2018,
    https://daleel-madani.org/civil-society-directory/association-environment-protection-and-patrimony-conservation/project.
23 Interview with Mr. Adnan Melki, National Coordinator of the GEF Small Grants Programme (GSP), UNDP.
24 Interview with Mr. Adnan Melki, National Coordinator of the GEF Small Grants Programme (GSP), UNDP.
25 Especially its environmental principles (precaution, protection and preservation of biodiversity; avoidance of the depletion of natural resources; pollution control;
    and environmental impact assessment), economic principles (the polluter pays principle and adoption of economic incentives), social principles (the importance of
    customary norms in the rural milieu in the absence of statutes), and governance principles (cooperation and partnership), with a view to protecting the environment
    and thus preserving public health.

Conclusion

Lebanon's democratic innovations provide four key lessons. First, capitalising efforts for inclusive civic engagement in electoral reform is of paramount importance for consolidating Lebanon's democracy, and any other democracy, especially in countries adopting forms of power sharing and consociational democracy.[26]

Some of the cases outlined in this report have been successful in generating large debates about Lebanon's electoral frameworks and the gaps within them. They also brought the public, the government and the parliament closer together in the debate on civic engagement and have facilitated ease of communication. These initiatives managed to keep the issue of electoral reform alive and reduced the ambivalence of CSOs and the wider public on this national and complex policy issue. This is critical to strengthen participatory policymaking and advance equality of rights and duties. Although many of the long-awaited reforms have not been adopted yet, the cumulative efforts and persistence from one election to another are building up great momentum towards further sustainable gains.

Second, working to improve participation in policy making and encouraging governance reforms in divided societies is absolutely crucial as it contributes to creating new forms of solidarity and interests that cut across religious, tribal and other identity ties. Additionally, public participation through inclusive and united action is key to resisting political polarisation and ensuring the topic at hand is explored in a context and conflict-sensitive manner. More importantly, this is crucial in post-conflict contexts as it prevents democratic transition in a way that is disconnected from a country's difficult history. In Lebanon, every collective project contributes to political stability and the formation of its national identity and the consolidation of Lebanese citizenship in contrast to the dominant sectarian identities and confessional allegiances. Civil society can contribute to stability and peace by assisting with dialogue and cooperation

in inter-community relations. It is noticeable that initiatives that were established closer to the end of the war period have been more attentive to this conflict-sensitive dimension. It is key for current and future civic engagement initiatives, established decades after the war, to consider this element and to contemplate the learnings from the civic movements in the post-war phase.

Third, the role of civic movements and civil society in articulating the interests and views of citizens is required and more effective when it is facilitated in forums where, in addition to people debating, arguing and advancing different viewpoints, alternatives and solutions are articulated, supported, and advanced. The final case study showed how a constructive approach to discussing alternatives, created trust within the community and led to tangible change and impact.

Finally, the four cases are examples of how to capitalise on the ways CSOs influence policy-making processes by creating alliances and developing constructive relationships between CSOs and decision makers. This, combined with an issue-based approach, represents an effective vehicle for deploying behavioural change techniques to get buy-in from resistant stakeholders. CSOs do this best when they combine together, including different types of CSOs and informal groupings to offer a plurality of routes for citizen participation. These initiatives help create a new type of relationship between the state and civil society, based on national cohesion and equality of rights and duties.

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26 There are more than 24 countries that have adopted a sort of consociational democracy. It has also been argued that the political system of the European Union should be included in the consociational universe. See Rudy B. Andeweg, "Consociational democracy," Annual Review of Political Science 3 (June 2000), 514, https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.3.1.509.

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Exploring Worldwide Democratic Innovations - A case study of Malawi

Edwin Msewa

Introduction

There is growing dissatisfaction with democracy in Malawi which has led to diminishing levels of political support and fluctuating levels of political participation. The optimism and confidence that defined the transition to multiparty democracy have disappeared.[1] In the eyes of most Malawians, the outcome of multi-party politics has fallen short of their expectations. Democracy has failed to bring about a new era of social justice, peace and prosperity, and the legacy of repressed citizen-state relations inherited from the pre-democratic period persists.[2]

In response, government agencies, civil society and citizens have turned to new mechanisms for democratic participation. In Malawi, democratic innovations have taken various forms, including town hall meetings, participatory budget planning, citizen juries, citizen assemblies, deliberative surveys, public forms of collaborative policymaking and alternative dispute resolution structures. Despite some degree of success, these innovations have had limited impact, as they have not been institutionalised and have been mostly project-based.[3] This paper explores two Malawian innovations and assesses their strengths and weaknesses, (1) Citizen Juries and (2) Citizen Participation in Local Governance Assessment using the LGB Process.

Citizen Juries for managing the Constituency Development Fund (CDF)

In 2020, the New Democracy Foundation piloted Malawi's first-ever citizens' juries (CJ) in the Salima District in the east of the country. After receiving a request from citizens, the Salima District Council and the Members of Parliament representing the Salima District allowed local citizens to create five citizen juries to represent each of the five constituencies within the district. Twenty people

from each of the five constituencies in the district were randomly selected to participate in the programme. The scope of the juries' work is to promote the effective implementation of the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) so that it benefits the poor by ensuring that stakeholders reach a consensus on the best ways to implement the fund. The CDF is a funding arrangement that disburses funds from the central government directly or indirectly to electoral constituencies for local infrastructure projects.

The CDF is a funding source made available to Members of Parliament (MPs) for the facilitation and implementation of minor projects within their constituencies. Problems with the implementation of the CDF and its management were both seen as persistent issues of national importance.[4] Hence, there were widespread calls from citizens and civil society organisations for the CDF to be discontinued. President Mutharika challenged MPs to become more accountable to citizens, since they had made similar demands to government ministries and departments to become more transparent with the use of public funds.[5]

In tackling the CDF's problems, the CJs opted to concentrate on goals that could be achieved locally as they did not want to get involved in complicated and highly political CDF policy adjustment processes, given the high stakes involved. Firstly, the CJs realised that despite the influence MPs exert on the CDF, it is

1 Boniface Dulani, "Progress or Stagnation? Twenty Years of Democracy," in Political Transition and Inclusive Development in Malawi:
   The Democratic Dividend, ed. Dan Banik and Blessings Chinsinga (Oxon: Routledge, 2016)
2 Chasukwa, "Multiple Faces of Democrats," 19
4 Maureen Kawerama, "Parliamentarians Establish Illegal Structures to Fleece Constituency Development Funds," Platform for Investigative Journalism,
   November 8, 2021, https://www.investigativeplatform-mw.org/2021/11/08/parliamentarians-establish-illegal-structures-to-fleece-constituency-development-funds/.
5 Special Absalom, "Malawi President officially opens the 47th Session of the National Assembly; Says Parliament is not bigger than government,"
   The Maravi Post, November 10 2017,
   https://www.maravipost.com/malawi-president-officially-opens-47th-session-national-assembly-says-parliament-not-bigger-government/.

the only source of funding currently available which can be made easily accessible to citizens. Secondly, they recognised that it is possible to influence the way CDF projects are implemented locally. Thirdly, the CJs offered learning opportunities as they provided access to informative resources, such as the CDF guidelines and information on the performance of previous CDF projects in their areas. After a series of meetings and a thorough analysis of the information collected from consultations, the CJs reached a consensus and agreed on a course of action – focusing on CDF management and implementation, formulating recommendations to address the issues in this area. The CJs presented the following critical recommendations:

- The district council should facilitate the identification of CDF projects based on the village action plans for the area or the district development plan;
- The projects to be implemented under the CDF should pass through a normal project appraisal process;
- Each project should have a project management committee (PMC) which is independently elected and trained;
- In collaboration with the Area Development Committee (ADC), the council should monitor the implementation of projects and provide technical advice at regular intervals;
- The council should use the 5% it deducts from the CDF's funds to monitor the implementation of projects and provide technical advice at regular intervals;
- Procurement and storage of goods through the CDF should be in accordance with the rules and procedures laid down in the Public Procurement Act;
- The council should conduct rigorous audits on a project and constituency basis, and they should make the audits' findings public;
- CSOs should include in their community awareness, advocacy and training programmes issues related to the CDF in order to empower communities;

These proposals were subsequently submitted for action to the Members of Parliament who represented the same constituencies as the CJs and the Salima District Council. The MPs and the Salima District Council found the recommendations proposed by the CJs to be reasonable and therefore committed themselves to the recommendations.[6]

An evaluation of the impact and efficacy of the CJs' efforts shows some degree of success, especially concerning CDF sub-projects that are currently being implemented. An interview with several CJ members indicated that some projects are abiding by the procedures outlined in the CDF guidelines as advised by the citizens.[7] Generally, there has been a noticeable improvement in consultations during project identification as well as increased transparency during the disbursement of funds and procurement processes. The members stated that the CJs revealed the inherent policy design and implementation flaws of past CDF projects, and they produced insightful public discussions about the effectiveness of past projects. The CJ participants also observed that members gained knowledge and understanding about issues that affect CDF projects, as well as an increased sense of common purpose and greater motivation to participate in civic endeavours. The CJs also built the capacity of various stakeholders, one example is the specialist training provided to the council extension workers responsible for setting up the operating environment of the juries. Equally, peer-support networks were set up to combine the efforts of the citizen juries not only to facilitate the transfer of skills and knowledge but also to carefully monitor funds disbursement, CDF project implementation progress and provide feedback to the council and citizens.[8]

Overall, the citizen juries appear to be an innovative tool for enabling people with varied demographic, socio-economic and political profiles to participate in policymaking. The democratic innovation of citizen juries is that they put very small groups of citizens at the centre of the policymaking process and in some cases, they offer citizens the opportunity to set the agenda specifically in tandem with local MPs' decisions over local spending projects. Moreover, the selection of the participants for citizen juries through lottery ensures that nearly every person has an equal chance of being invited to participate in a citizens' jury and that the final group is a representative sample of the wider society. By doing this, it shields the process from being influenced by powerful individuals, ensuring that citizens truly representative and inclusive.

6 Louis Majamanda, "Salima MPs and district officials accused of abusing CDF," The Independent Digest, May 27, 2022,
   https://independentmw.com/salima-mps-and-district-officials-accused-of-abusing-cdf/.
7 Majamanda, "Salima MPs and district officials accused of abusing CDF."
8 All CJs are connected through a common network anchored by the Chisomo Community Radio Station located in the district, where they air programmes on CDF. MPs and District Council Staff are invited to answer questions and clarify some issues related to CDF.

Citizen Participation in Local Governance Assessment in District Councils using the Local Government Barometer (LGB)

Another interesting innovation in Malawi is found in citizen participation within a select few district councils in Malawi using the Local Government Barometer (LGB) Process. The LGB was first created in 2005 by a consortium of partners comprising the Impact Alliance, Pact, and SNV in South Africa.[9] The LGB has been implemented in more than ten countries, including Malawi.

In Malawi, between 2011 and 2018, five rounds of participatory local governance assessment were conducted, comprising of 21 district councils and three city councils involving 2,676 participants. The National Initiative for Civic Education (NICE) in collaboration with the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development pioneered the current format for participatory local governance assessment in Malawi. The current process enables citizens to participate in assessing the performance of the council using five governance indicators: transparency and the rule of law, accountability, efficiency and effectiveness, participation, and equity. Citizens make their assessment through scores, providing detailed reasons citing practical examples and incidents to justify their scores. The LGB Process entails holding six separate successive town hall meetings with six different citizen groups.[10]

The stakeholders will vary depending on the sector being assessed or the local context where the exercise is conducted. For example, when the LGB Process is used to assess the governance of a particular sector, stakeholders are more likely to reflect associated industries and policymakers, whereas when the LGB Process is used to assess the state of local governance, a wider range of stakeholders is likely to be found. In every case, a minimum of six critical stakeholder groups are identified and invited to participate in the process. Each of these citizen groups builds consensus on the state of local governance on each of the designated local governance indicators. A specially designed computer-based local governance diagnostic tool, the Local Governance Barometer (LGB), is then used to capture the data from the deliberations.[11] The data is then analysed, and the results are shared between all the stakeholders in a town hall meeting where all of the citizen groups come together and consolidate their views. Apart from the citizen groups, also in attendance are individuals and representatives of organisations whose actions or inactions are alleged to be negatively affecting the local governance process or service delivery, giving them a space to be heard and to respond to critique. A thorough capacity development programme is then designed, informed by the results of the LGB exercise, targeting the specific areas where the stakeholders were found to be weak in the promotion of good local governance. For instance, with political representatives, their main problem identified by the LGB exercise tends to be weak political oversight of the district council, while a common problem with district council staff is the limited level of accountability concerning how they discharge their duties. After identifying the areas where stakeholders can improve, a plan of action that includes a monitoring process is then drawn up. In its original form, the selection of participants was based on the relevance of the stakeholder groups to the activities or operations of the entity to be assessed.[12] Following this, invitations would be given to the leaders of that particular stakeholder group to identify eventual participants. However, in the LGB exercise mentioned in this paper, NICE aimed to increase representativeness by randomly selecting the participants from predefined lists of stakeholder groups.

The LGB Process is adaptable to different contexts and can be adjusted by stakeholders to meet their specific needs. This was exemplified by its use in 2014 to assess the state of multisector HIV and AIDS governance in the Mchinji District Council.[13] The LGB can also evaluate the difference in levels of good governance between two periods if an assessment has already been completed, or between two separate locations if each location uses the same evaluation indicators. It can also be repeatedly applied to the same entity or sector in intervals to judge the progress of whatever is being assessed, this was done in the Ntchisi, Zomba and Mangochi district councils, to appraise the progress being made in local governance.

9 Evan Bloom, Amy Sunseri, and Aaron Leonard, Measuring and Strengthening Local Governance Capacity, Pact, March 20, 2007, https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/Pnadk250.pdf.

10 At the local government level in Malawi, citizen stakeholder groups include civil society organisations, traditional leaders, elected officials, council staff, business community and area development committee members.

11 Bloom, Sunseri, and Leonard, "Measuring and Strengthening Local Governance Capacity."

12 See footnote 17

13 Justin Steyn, "The state of HIV sector local governance in Malawi and Zambia: Evidence from five districts," Commonwealth Journal of Local Governance, no. 15 (June 2014), https://doi.org/10.5130/cjlg.v0i0.4066.

Findings from the LGB Process and the influence of citizens have led to several positive policy changes in district councils. In the Ntchisi district, the council changed policies regarding the issuing of drugs at the hospital when it was revealed that there was rampant drug pilfering at the hospital.[14] To prevent this, the Ntchisi District Council issued an instruction to hospital gatekeepers to search every person carrying a bag in and out of the hospital. While in the Zomba district, the council was forced to review some of its policies in the procurement of public goods when the LGB exercise exposed serious procurement issues regarding the construction of a bridge, as the bridge's quality was not reflective of the capital invested.[15]

Advantages and limitations

These two case studies highlight several innovative elements that can improve democratic participation. The deliberative processes of the CJs and the LGB forced public authorities to make tough decisions on complex and politically controversial policy issues that seemingly had no feasible solutions. The CJs and the LGB Process demonstrated to district councils and MPs that people who are normally outside the political process can participate in policymaking and propose workable solutions for controversial policy issues such as the correct implementation of CDF projects. If institutionalised, the CJs and the LGB Process could assist in curtailing democratic decline, giving a voice and agency to a much wider range of citizens. As such, these innovations are also useful in rebuilding trust in local councils and for generating more legitimate and effective public decision-making.

In particular, the LGB Process reinvigorates policymaking and democratic processes at the district and city council levels, which were previously closed and inaccessible to citizens. By reaching a collective decision on what should be done to improve several facets of local governance, the LGB exercise provides the opportunity for district councils to redeem themselves when they have lost public trust. This approach emphasises the significance of enhancing and deepening participation to legitimise council decisions and to get better and more consensual results. Crucially, the innovative aspect of the LGB Process is that it uses a combination of democratic innovation methods in the various stages of the exercise, namely: deliberation, consultation, direct voting (in this case direct scoring) and town hall meetings.

The advantage of using the LGB method is that it allows citizens to discuss the abstract concept of local governance in a ordinary people can understand, increasing their participation in the policy process. Importantly, the LGB exercise brings together a cross-section of the population that is representative of major groups within the district so that deliberations reflect the opinions and sentiments of these critical stakeholders. The exercise creates a rare interface between high-level council management staff, the Ministry of Local Government, and important stakeholder groups. These broad stakeholder interactions have promoted increased citizen participation in council decision-making processes. In principle, all citizens have an equal chance of participating in the LGB exercise, since the LGB Process is run by independent organisations to ensure fairness. The robustness of this methodology is reinforced by the use of computer software, which makes it easy to quantitatively store all the responses from every participant involved in the process. The package generates an index (an overall average) which sums up the status of local governance in any locality where the LGB exercise has been carried out. This allows the results to be compared across districts, cities and councils.

Despite these advantages, there are several limitations that can be identified. These include limited institutionalisation of the innovations because they are capital intensive, project-based and inherently donor-dependent. In addition, implementation of both innovations is dependent on the approval of entities dominated by vested interests. For instance, despite the effectiveness of the LGB Process, some district and city councils are reluctant to assess themselves, and when scoring themselves, they tend to score themselves highly, and they are generally defensive about their performance. The scope for the success of follow-up activities is also dependent on the political will and commitment of the council or the entity that is being assessed. It is important to note that the LGB Process is relatively easy with a literate audience as it reduces the time necessary for translation and writing; conversely, it becomes more difficult with less literate audiences. Unfortunately, the LGB Process inherits the existing problems associated with town hall meetings, where some individuals tend to dominate discussions, especially during plenary sessions.

14 Zuzgo Khunga, "Ntchisi man fined for selling drugs," The Nation, January 10, 2012.
15 "Zomba's K2 million timber bridge," Sunday Times, December 11, 2011.

Conclusion

Despite these weaknesses, successes have been achieved through applying these innovations due to some prevailing contextual factors. More specifically, the introduction of devolution, which, albeit superficially, has transferred both administrative and political powers to district and city councils. Citizens have seized the opportunities presented by devolution to negotiate with local governments to get the best out of the policies being introduced.

They have engaged in this also out of a realisation that increasingly funds are being transferred to local authorities for the delivery of social services. Increased citizen participation is also prompted by citizens' disillusionment with the central government, which they fear wields tremendous oppressive power and is usually seen as being predatory. Both examples show that citizens yearn for increased participation in local policymaking, evidenced by the increase in social accountability initiatives and mechanisms for holding the government to account. Citizens possess enormous power, ingenuity, energy, talent and local knowledge that can be offered to the government to create policies that are more informed and improve service delivery. The innovations in both case studies are concerned with citizens engaging the state or public authorities. The case study on CJs is more informal as it takes a bottom-up approach, originating from outside of the governmental sector, whereas the local governance assessment case can be seen as both formal and informal, depending on the agent sanctioning the exercise. In some cases, the process is sanctioned by the government itself to generate feedback from the citizens or consumers of its services; in other cases, it is pushed by citizens. However, the case studies presented in this report are both indirect in their connection to macro-scale democracy as their scope was limited, focusing only on district councils.

These case studies show that it is possible for a diverse range of citizens to come together, deliberate and make recommendations on intricate public policy issues. This is made possible with good coordination, regardless of the social, economic and political status of a given combination of citizens. The participants in these cases, especially those in the CJs, were randomly selected; random selection offers all citizens an equal opportunity to participate in these processes, ensuring no social group is methodically excluded. In the case of the LGB Process, it has been relatively easy to achieve a consensus between and among stakeholder groups. The results also indicate that citizens can discuss issues associated with local governance in a way that is understood by the wider public, thereby increasing knowledge of the subject matter and participation in the process. In the

same vein, this case study revealed that participation in the LGB Process empowers citizens as the exercise deals with all the fundamental aspects of district or city council management, such as finance, administration, political and administrative oversight, citizen participation, procurement processes etc. Like the CJs, the LGB Process brings together a cross-section of the population that constitutes major groups within the district or city council so that deliberations reflect the opinions and sentiments of these critical stakeholders. It was also noted that the application of this method offers a rare opportunity to create an interface between high-level council management staff, the Ministry of Local Government, and stakeholder groups that constitute the council in their various capacities and roles and thus promote increased citizen participation in council decision-making processes.

However, it is important to understand the context under which these innovations can successfully be applied. There has to be a political environment that allows for popular participation. There is always a range of policy issues that could be tackled using deliberative processes, especially those that have a direct impact on the everyday lives of citizens and those where citizens can easily contribute their personal opinions and experiences. Once such spaces are created by local or central government, citizens may be eager to participate in them. However, another political factor that drives citizens' desires for alternative forms of political participation is the faltering trust in government. Trends show that the number of citizens who are unhappy with the present state of democracy is increasing, but they are eager about all the alternative forms of political participation, which are more dynamic and deliberative.[16] This is in line with citizens demanding more openness and the growth of innovative practices that give people more agency in shaping public decisions. This reignites the debate about the proposition that the failure of contemporary governance schemes to curb unrelenting challenges is partly attributable to democratic processes and institutions that are archaic and not appropriate for dealing with twenty-first century challenges.[17]

16 Chasukwa, "Multiple Faces of Democrats."
17 OECD, Beyond Growth: Towards a New Economic Approach, Report of the Secretary General's Advisory Group on a New Growth Narrative, September 11, 2020,
    https://www.oecd.org/governance/beyond-growth-33a25ba3-en.htm.

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Exploring Worldwide Democratic Innovations - A case study of Nigeria

Lanre Ikuteyijo

Introduction

Democracy returned to Nigeria in 1999 after a prolonged period of military rule. Since then, the country's democratic experience has been uninterrupted and the democratic process has seen a number of innovations. Although the current democratic climate in Nigeria is fragile, the practice of democracy in Nigeria is becoming more innovative. Several forms of participatory practice are being introduced at various levels, three of which are discussed in this report. These aim to counter political apathy, enhance citizen participation and make government more responsive.

As Nigeria prepares for another round of general elections in 2023, engaging citizens more effectively will be at the forefront of the campaign. Innovations already put in place to enhance citizen participation include the Not Too Young to Run bill in 2018, which encourages young people to seek elected positions and reduces the age limit for various posts. Consistent with the overall project, this paper focuses on most direct forms of participatory innovation: the Open Forum (Apero) used by the Osun State Government, the Open Government Partnership implemented by the Kaduna State Government and Option A4, introduced by the Electoral Commission.[1]

Open Forum (Apero)

The Open Forum (Apero in the Yoruba language translates to Joint Consultation) is a citizen engagement programme practised in Osun State, in southwest Nigeria. The state has entrenched the Open Forum platform into governance since the return of democracy in Nigeria in 1999. Successive administrations have sustained this innovation despite the fact that different political parties have administered the state since 1999. This is a rarity in Nigeria's political history, which is often characterised by drastic policy changes and inconsistency. The aim of the Open Forum is to make governance open and accessible to the general public of Osun State.

The forum begun as an initiative of the Chief Bisi Akande-led administration, which came to power in 1999. At its inception, the forum aimed at informing citizens about government programmes and mobilising participation in governance processes. The programme continues in the present political climate, albeit under another administration and nomenclature. The programme was initially called "Labe Odan" under the Bisi Akande administration, the name was chosen for its association with the historical evolution of the Yoruba people.[2] The ancient people in the southwestern part of the country, the Yoruba people, used the Odan tree (because of its umbrella structure) as a meeting place to discuss critical issues relating to governance as well as pathways for addressing the socio-political issues arising in their communities. Similarly, this forum allows all the state's citizens to contribute to issues of governance, irrespective of their socio-economic and political standing.

The programme assists the Governor of Osun State and his team to engage with the entire state and interact with citizens without any intermediary or spokesperson. Instead, the governor and their team use the Apero programme to directly engage with citizens; the programme is conducted as a series of open forum meetings that take place at regular intervals in different parts of the state. In each of these forums, citizens from the local area can present their grievances and concerns to the government as well as receive information from the government, especially on topical issues. The government also uses the programme to inform the public about their civic responsibilities and how to participate in processes that ensure inclusive governance.

There is another branch of the Apero programme called Ogbeni till Day Break, which is transmitted live on both radio and television stations at regular intervals

1　Sam Egburonu, "Nwosu and the Option A4 legacy," The Nation, June 17, 2018, https://thenationonlineng.net/nwosu-and-option-a4-legacy/.

2　Professor Olalekan Yinusa (the Commissioner for Budget and Planning, Osun State Government), interview with the author, the State Secretariat in Osogbo, February 11, 2022.

across the state, and it allows for phone-in participation from viewers and listeners at home. The programme is typically broadcast from 8 p.m. until the early hours of the morning. It serves as a bottom-up approach to policy formulation, implementation, and monitoring. Usually, Ogbeni till Day Break lasts for about three to four hours and is broadcast at regular intervals on Friday nights, with the governor leading his entire team comprising of commissioners, other government officials, traditional rulers and religious leaders. The programme is facilitated with the assistance of the state communication team under the Ministry of Information and Civic Orientation.[3]

The Apero forum and its radio-broadcasted version, Ogbeni till Day Break, encourage political participation since it gives citizens a sense of belonging and ownership over the government apparatus, strengthening the relationship between the government and its citizens. The essence of joint deliberation in Apero is exemplified by where the government and citizens deliberate on solutions for pressing issues, especially community-focused priorities. The authorities use the initiative to encourage citizens to fulfil their civic responsibilities to participate in local decisions.

The present administration has also added a civic engagement aspect to Apero, which takes place at the community level. Unlike the main form of Apero, where community members bring their petitions and recommendations to the state government, these consultations are held at the local government level. This form of civic engagement is perceived to hold better prospects for stimulating political engagement at a public level, since many people cannot go to government offices, but all kinds of people are able to attend Apero meetings.[4] According to the Commissioner for Information and Civic Orientation, the programme "ensures that the government is not winking in the dark" as it sheds light on government activities and allows the government to clarify any misconceptions about issues of governance.[5]

Some concerns have arisen with the Apero civil engagement programmes. One comes from attempts of local politicians to politicise civic engagement events, where they try to turn the Apero forum into political rallies.[6] Another challenge is time, as citizens have the

tendency to push the governor to solve all identified problems on the day of visitation.[7] Another issue is crowd management, as massive crowds gather to receive government functionaries led by the state governor. As regularity is also important for the forum's success, the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown measures and social distancing protocols dealt a significant blow to the Apero programme.[8]

The Kaduna State Open Government Initiative

The Kaduna State Open Government Initiative is a subsidiary of the global Open Government Partnership (OGP), which aims to improve transparency, accountability, citizen participation and government responsiveness to citizens through the use of technology and innovation.[9] Although the OGP has been in place at the national level since 2011, the innovative ways in which the Kaduna State Government has adopted the initiative at the state level warrant attention. Kaduna State is the only state in Nigeria to commit to the OGP after the country joined the OGP. The OGP is a multi-phased governance transparency model, which uses essentially the co-created accountability mechanism to facilitate citizens' participation in governance. The idea of a co-created accountability mechanism entails the involvement of both the state government and civil society groups to manage public resources across all sectors of Kaduna State as well as to respond to other issues around service delivery within the state. Residents of the state are empowered to report their observations on service delivery across the country during the quarterly meeting between the government and the civil society groups.[10] The State Steering Committee (SSC) and the Technical Working Groups (TWGs) pilot the implementation of the OGP in Kaduna State. The coordinating agency is the national level Government Budget and Planning Ministry. The government and local civil society figures nominate the members and co-chair for the SSC and TWGs and both of these include civil society organizations together with officials. All of these representatives worked together to co-create the Kaduna Action Plan (KAP) for a two-year period (September 2018 – August 2020).[11]

3   Osun State Ministry of Information and Civic Engagement, "Oyetola to hold civic engagements in nine constituencies," news release, February 19, 2020,
     https://www.osunstate.gov.ng/2020/02/oyetola-to-hold-civic-engagement-in-nine-constituencies/.
4   Osun State Commissioner for Information and Civic Orientation, interview with the author, the State Secretariat in Osogbo, February 17, 2022.
5   Interview with the Osun State Commissioner for Information and Civic Orientation.
6   Interview with the Osun State Commissioner for Information and Civic Orientation
7   Interview with the Osun State Commissioner for Information and Civic Orientation
8   Interview with the Osun State Commissioner for Information and Civic Orientation.
9   Federal Government of Nigeria, Open Government Partnership: Nigeria Action Plan 2019-2022, accessed May 7, 2022,
     https://www.opengovpartnership.org/members/nigeria/.
10 Interview with the Technical Advisor to the Kaduna State Government on the implementation of the OGP via Zoom, interview with the author, February 2022, 2022.
11 Interview the Technical Advisor to the Kaduna State Government.

According to the National Democratic Institute, citizens have a set of rights and responsibilities, including the right to participate in decisions that affect public welfare.[12] In Kaduna State, citizens have taken an active part in the processes of budget preparation and implementation, in providing access to government information and other business associated with governance. For example, the state government runs an open budgeting process where projects in the state are monitored through the active engagement of citizens with the use of the phone-based platform or geotechnical tool known as "Eyes and Ears". Eyes and Ears enables citizens to monitor state projects, which are within a two-kilometre radius of their location. This is made possible through an app, the Citizen Feedback App (CFA), which is available on the Apple and Android App stores. The app provides citizens with information on the government projects nearest to them.[13] The citizens select projects of their choice and give feedback to the government via the app. The app has been extremely successful in giving feedback to the government. For example, it serves as an efficient way of inputting complaints into the Public Expenditure Tracking System (PETS) database, which in turn motivates the government to take action to improve project implementation.[14] The use of the app and the OGP has led to increased government confidence as citizens have praised the government on its use through the toll-free telephone line. According to a planning officer, the OGP has prompted local authorities to become more open to citizens because there is now a better understanding that citizen participation in the development and implementation of government policies, projects and programmes is necessary for sustainable reforms.[15]

In summary, Kaduna state's use of the OGP enhances citizen participation in governance through active engagement in the life cycle of budget planning and implementation, and it also improves fiscal transparency by encouraging public scrutiny of budget performance at the state and local government levels. Furthermore, the government promotes access to information for citizens by publishing documents regarding state laws, budgets, development plans and financial reports among other relevant online documents. Finally, the co-created accountability mechanism promotes a form of ownership over government policies among citizens who have had the opportunity to provide regular feedback to the government on service delivery and budget performance.

Again, there are a number of shortcomings facing the Kaduna State OGP. The government has made some decisions on governance where the CSO members were not adequately engaged in the spirit of the OGP. One of these decisions was the government declaration that Fridays were to become a public holiday.[16] The lack of security in the province is also a concern and complicate full citizen participation in the initiative. Still, there are numerous benefits to the use of the OGP in Kaduna State, including the provision of opportunities for citizens to monitor government operations, especially in terms of budgeting and project monitoring. The OGP has made the government more accountable to citizens through collaboration with CSOs.

Option A4

A more participative form selection process for presidential candidates from the major competing political parties, was introduced as far back as 1993. This practice is known as Option A4. This is a multilevel approach to choosing party leaders as well as candidates for various other political positions. Although this innovation has not been used at the national level since 1993, its benefits should not be overlooked as it still holds promise as a mechanism for ensuring increased participation in electoral contests. Option A4's process is distinct from other open ballot practices in that it ensures representation emerges from a grassroots level. For instance, in 1993, party representatives had to emerge from the ward level (the smallest political unit), to be eligible to compete at the state and then the federal level. Therefore, Option A4 has also come to be known as the grassroots system for selecting candidates.

12 National Democratic Institute, Citizenship Participation, accessed March 9, 2022, https://www.ndi.org/what-we-do/citizen-participation.
13 Open Stories, "Eyes and Ears to Improve Public Services," video, accessed July 13, 2022
14 Kaduna State, Kaduna State Action Plan 2018-2020, accessed May 3, 2022,
     https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/kaduna-state-nigeria-design-report-2018-2020/.
15 Tara Jerimiah (Planning Officer, OGP, Kaduna), informal interview with the author, May 2, 2022.
16 Member of a civil society organisation and the Team-Lead for the Independent Monitoring Body of the OGP in Kaduna State, interview with the author,
     February 4, 2022.

Using Option A4 as a selection process makes it imperative for potential candidates for high office to gain acceptance at the local level. Its use in 1993 averted the challenges experienced in previous elections, mainly concerning electoral fraud and violence. The Option A4 system for selecting flag-bearers was also complemented by the modified open ballot system used in the 1993 election itself, resulting in a massive turnout. These outcomes are why the 1993 elections are generally perceived to be the freest and fairest held in Nigeria, especially when compared to the elections that have been held subsequently. When examining the elections held prior to 1993, it can be seen that they were marred by widespread violence and electoral fraud, which seriously impacted political participation. Although Option A4 is not a part of the normal open ballot system, it is still used today by some smaller parties in their primaries to select political candidates. Its wider application should be considered as its local focus, starting at the ward level, promotes more grassroots involvement.

The chairman of the National Electoral Commission introduced the innovation to serve as a bottom-up approach for selecting presidential candidates from the two main parties, the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the National Republican Convention (NRC).[17] The need for Option A4 in 1993 can be understood by examining the skewed nature of previous elections, which were not reflective of mass opinion. Before Option A4, the opinion of the elites determined elections in Nigeria, irrespective of the preferences of the masses. However, due to the use of Option A4, for the first time in independent Nigeria the major candidates running for president truly reflected the popular choice of the general public.[18]

The historical background of this innovation dates back to an early African political system, whereby popular votes determined who became leaders. The use of an open ballot system had been in practice in Nigeria before the introduction of a secret ballot system by the British colonial administration in 1923.[19] In contrast to the secret ballot system, which was abolished just before the 1993 elections, an open ballot system allows supporters of a candidate to queue up behind the picture of their preferred candidate. Then, electoral umpires take a headcount of votes indicated by the number of people standing behind each candidate's picture. Using Option A4 and an open ballot system together have made electoral victories less contestable as there is less room for rigging or falsifying electoral results. Option A4 is also beneficial in terms of cost-effectiveness as elections in Nigeria are usually quite expensive and this innovation saves the nation a significant amount in state expenditure as ballot printing expenses are eliminated. Furthermore, the logistics of securing ballot papers, which (in the Nigerian context) are susceptible to hijacking and vandalisation by political thugs, are eliminated with the use of Option A4, making elections less violent. Recently, the innovation has seen more interest as political parties, such as the All People's Party (APC), in Ebonyi State, have used Option A4 to conduct their primaries. In 2021, it was used to nominate this party's ward representatives across the 171 electoral wards in the state.[20]

However, the Option A4 innovation has challenges it must overcome, which include the possibility of losing credible candidates that may not have local backing or those who may not be grassroots politicians. This can be seen in the case of the election of the former President Olusegun Obasanjo, who won the 1999 presidential and parliamentary elections, his victory was secured mainly from votes cast outside of his own region, where he performed poorly. Therefore, the use of Option A4 would have eliminated the possibility of Obasanjo being elected if the electoral umpire had resorted to using Option A4. In addition, arising from the open nature of the voting system, the confidentiality which voters enjoy in the secret ballot system is eroded as they publicly queue behind their chosen candidates.

17 Peter M. Lewis, "Endgame in Nigeria? The politics of a failed democratic transition," African Affairs 93, no. 372 (1994): 323-340.
18 Professor Femi Mimiko, interview with the author, Department of Political Science at the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria, January 26, 2022.
19 Egburonu, "Nwosu and Option A4 Legacy,".
20 News Agency of Nigeria, "APC Congress: Ebonyi Adopts Option A4 Voting System," The Guardian, August 1, 2021,
    https://guardian.ng/news/apc-congress-ebonyi-adopts-option-a4-voting-system/.

Conclusion

Several lessons can be derived from Nigeria about democratic innovations. Both the state governments and the federal government have introduced such innovations. Firstly, the Open Forum has engendered responsiveness and public accountability on the part of the government as well as a sense of ownership of governance processes among citizens.

When the government makes deliberate efforts to keep citizens informed on governance developments within the country, the tendency for misconceptions to arise is drastically reduced. Representation is one of the cardinal principles of democracy and the government will make a lot of progress if they continue to demonstrate to citizens that their interests are well represented, thus leading to greater cooperation and trust.

Secondly, the Kaduna State Open Government shows that citizens are capable of monitoring how the government spends taxpayers' money. In addition, quality feedback received from citizens has led to the revitalisation of education and health care provision within Kaduna State. Moreover, as the first state to sign up to the OGP, Kaduna has performed so well that other states have been given a genuine model to emulate. Kaduna State has also become a model for collaboration between state governments and CSOs in Nigeria.

Lastly, the use of Option A4 has been used to enhance the trust of voters in the credibility of elections, and in one important instance, its use may have contributed to popular participation as voter turnout was high during the 1993 elections. However, Option A4 is not just about boosting election turnout, it has encouraged citizens to participate at other levels of the democratic process, including standing for elected office.

Overall, these innovations are helping boost political participation and if developed further could become tools for creating more democratic deliberation among citizens. Democracy is a continuum and not a fixed end point, meaning that there is a need for the progress achieved to be sustained as the country advances in its civil rule. This is possible if the nation continues to guarantee the attainment of the core principles of democracy, which include minority rights, majority rule, popular participation, public accountability, transparency and responsiveness.

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Exploring Worldwide Democratic Innovations - A case study of North Macedonia

Biljana Spasovska

Introduction

North Macedonia's three decades of independence have been tumultuous. Although it seceded peacefully from Yugoslavia and escaped the wars, the country's transition from socialism produced high unemployment, weak rule of law, and ethnocentric policies that resulted in an armed conflict in 2001.[1] Following a period of economic and democratic development, the country applied for EU and NATO membership. It received a green light from the EU Commission to start accession talks in 200; the process was blocked by Greece for nine years, conditioning progress on the country's name being changed[2].

The stalemate was used by successive governments as an excuse for a lack of crucial reforms and the rise of authoritarianism. This culminated in a deep political crisis, which began in 2015 after a wire-tapping scandal revealed the high-level corruption of those in power.[3] Evidence emerged of election tampering and nepotism, instigating public outrage and civic activism never seen before in the country.[4] Massive protests soon ensued under the names "Protestiram'' (I Protest) and "Colourful revolution"; these intensified in 2016, demanding accountability, democracy, and rule of law.[5] The protests, combined with pressure from the international community resulted in early parliamentary elections and a change of government in 2017.[6] After the new government coalition, headed up by the leader of the social democrats (Zoran Zaev), took office in 2017, there was a significant opening of the previously narrowed civic space. The new government pledged to restore and strengthen democracy and rule of law and to get the country back on the path to EU membership, and it introduced several reforms raising citizens' hopes about the country's future[7].
Civil society was invited to contribute to the development

and/or monitoring of a variety of policies, strategies, and laws,[8] and several civil society activists joined the Prime Minister's cabinet as councillors, and few were appointed Ministers.[9] Environmental movements became especially prominent and a few of them even managed to pressure the government to hold a number of local referendums and prevented the opening of three mines in the southeast of the country, mitigating their harmful impact on the environment.[10]
Being a young democracy with a socialist past, civil disobedience, participatory democracy, and organised civil society have not been a significant part of the country's history and culture. Therefore, the success of ousting a well-established regime that significantly narrowed the civic space, was, to many, a testimony to the power of the people.

In 2018, the years-long dispute with Greece was resolved with the signing of the Prespa Agreement and a change in the constitutional name of the country, propelling North Macedonia into NATO in 2020.[11] EU accession, however, was again halted, first by France demanding change in the accession methodology,[12] and later by

1 Encyclopedia Britannica. "North Macedonia - Independence." Accessed June 2, 2022. https://www.britannica.com/place/North-Macedonia/Independence.
2 "End of Macedonia'S Name Dispute Opens Road to EU Talks and NATO Membership", Euractive ,2018,
   https://www.euractiv.com/section/enlargement/news/end-of-macedonias-name-dispute-opens-road-to-eu-talks-and-nato-membership/.
3 "Wire-Tapping Scandal Hits Macedonia", Politico, 2015, https://www.politico.eu/article/wire-tapping-scandal-hits-macedonia/. Accessed June 2, 2022.
4 "Macedonia Government is Blamed for Wiretapping Scandal", New York Times, 2015,
   https://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/22/world/europe/macedonia-government-is-blamed-for-wiretapping-scandal.html, Accessed March 15, 2022
5 Rizankoska Josipa, and Trajkoska Jasmina. "A Social Movement in First Person Singular: The Colours of the "Colourful Revolution" in North Macedonia", Southeastern
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6 Stojadinovic, Sonja. "North Macedonia's Colorful Revolution is Over. What's Next?" International Center on Nonviolent Conflict: Minds of the Movement. June 2019.
   https://www.nonviolent-conflict.org/blog_post/north-macedonias-colorful-revolution-whats-next/
7 International Republican Institute, "Macedonia National Public Opinion Poll.",
   https://www.iri.org/wp-content/uploads/legacy/iri.org/iri_macedonia_july_2018_poll_public_final.pdf.
8 United States Agency for International Development, "2018 Civil Society Organization
   Sustainability Index for Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia", September 2019,
   https://www.fhi360.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/resource-csosi-2018-report-europe-eurasia.pdf
9 "Бројот на „шарените" во Владата се зголемува" [The number of the "colourful" in the Government is increasing] (in Macedonian),
   https://www.mkd.mk/makedonija/politika/brojot-na-sharenite-vo-vladata-se-zgolemuva
10 Popovska Liljana, "Macedonia Is Too Small for the Big Appetites of the Mining Business." ResPublica, July 14, 2021.
   https://respublica.edu.mk/blog-en/environment/macedonia-is-too-small-for-the-big-appetites-of-the-mining-business/?lang=en.
11 "Remarks by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the Ceremony Marking the Accession of North Macedonia to NATO." NATO, March 2020.
   Accessed March 7, 2022. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_174650.htm
12 "Emmanuel Macron's EU Accession Veto Is a Historic Mistake" Financial Times, October, 2019. https://www.ft.com/content/eda39e1e-f3eb-11e9-b018-3ef8794b17c6.

Bulgaria over another bilateral dispute, this one related to Macedonian nationhood and language identity.[13] This resulted in widespread disappointment among the public towards the government, reflected in a massive defeat of the ruling party in the 2022 local elections and a decline in trust in the EU and support for EU membership.[14]

The COVID-19 pandemic made the situation even worse, hitting public health and the economic system hard and further exposing the weaknesses in the country's governance. The pandemic emphasised "the importance of digitalising the public administration and strengthening the provision of online services to citizens and businesses".[15]

Although there has been an improvement in several democracy-related areas since 2017,[16] and increased civil society involvement in policy and decision-making processes,[17] numerous reports point to a persistent authoritarian political culture in the country, ineffective and politicised public administration and a lack of civic participation.[18] E-government tools are not widely used.[19] A 2020 monitoring report even noted a decline in the enabling environment for public participation in law-making processes compared to 2015.[20]

Bridging the gap: Innovative forms enabling civic participation

Given this situation where the authorities are not creating enough space for citizens to actively participate in policy-making, civil society organisations (CSOs) have produced solutions, filling the void. There have been several positive examples of CSOs bridging the gap: from an organisation of nationwide deliberative polling to helping municipalities increase citizen participation in the local budgeting process.[21] However, two examples stand out for their innovative approach to participation. First, the informal initiative "Green Human City", which unites CSOs, activists, and citizens and combines the use of IT tools with traditional participatory mechanisms. Second, the digital platform "mZaednica" (mCommunity) which helps municipalities to increase citizen participation.

Two-way communication via "mZaednica" (mCommunity)

Responding to the need to improve the low level of citizen participation, a local CSO working on social innovation, Blink 172-41, developed the first digital platform in the country that allows for two-way communication between citizens and municipalities.[22] Launched in 2019, the platform named "mZaednica" (mCommunity) allows citizens access to digital services and offers them the ability to submit proposals to their local municipality.It also enables the municipalities to reach out to citizens and encourage them to participate in local decision-making processes. For this reason, mZaednica was awarded the European Youth Award 2019 by the World Summit Awards in the category of Active Citizenship.[23] The mZaednica platform consists of mobile and web applications and was initially developed as a project supported by USAID and offered to municipalities to be implemented free of charge. It was piloted in 2019 in the Municipality of Karposh in the City of Skopje. Following technical upgrades, two other municipalities have started to use mZaednica in 2021 and contracts have been signed with six additional municipalities within the first two months of 2022.[24]

When the platform was presented to local governments, most of these were hesitant at first, expressing concerns over the financial implications, the challenges linked to the digitalisation of local services, data protection and especially the lack of digital skills of their staff.

13 "Bulgaria Blocks EU Membership Talks with North Macedonia." Deutsche Welle, November.2020. Accessed March 7, 2022.
   https://www.dw.com/en/bulgaria-blocks-eu-membership-talks-with-north-macedonia/a-55641332.
14 Velinovska, Nikolovski and Kirchner, "From a poster to a foster child. 2021 public opinion analysis on North Macedonia's EU accession process", Konrad Adenauer
   Foundation in the Republic of North Macedonia and Institute for Democracy "Societas Civilis" – Skopje, February 2022,
   https://idscs.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/A5_From-a-poster-to-a-foster-child-2021-public-opinion-analysis-on-North-Macedonias-EU-accession-processENG-2.pdf
15 European Commission, "North Macedonia 2021 Report", Accessed March 14, 2022, https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/north-macedonia-report-2021_en.
16 Bliznakovski Jovan, North Macedonia: Nations in Transit 2021 Country Report, Freedom House 2022,
   https://freedomhouse.org/country/north-macedonia/nations-transit/2021
17 United States Agency for International Development, "2020 Civil Society Organization
   Sustainability Index for Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia", November 2021,
   https://lt.usembassy.gov/2020-civil-society-organization-sustainability-index-latest-report-published/
18 Kamilovska Trpovska, S., Valentina V., and Jasmina C., "Monitoring Matrix on Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development Country Report for North Macedonia
   2021." Macedonian Center for International Cooperation, September 2021,
   https://mcms.mk/images/docs/2021/Enabling_Environment_for_CS_development_Report_2020.pdf.
19 Cvetanova, G., Pachovski, V., & Bojadzievska, I.," Strengthening Democracy through Citizen e-Participation on Local Level in the Republic of Macedonia". European
   Quarterly of Political Attitudes and Mentalities, 7(2), 1-16., 2018
20 Atanasovska, V., "Огледало на Владата: Учество на јавноста во процесите на подготовка на закони [Mirror to the government: Public participation in law-making processes].
   Macedonian Center for International Communication, 2020, Accessed June 7, 2022, https://rcgo.mk/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/ogledalo-na-vladata-2019-final.pdf
21 "Macedonia Deliberative Poll", 2017, Stanford Center for Deliberative Democracy, Accessed June 7, 2022, https://cdd.stanford.edu/2017/macedonia-deliberative-poll/;
   "Engaging the Community in Planning for the Future", 2020, USAID. Accessed June 7, 2022
   https://www.usaid.gov/north-macedonia/news-information/news/engaging-community-planning-future.22 "About", MZaednica, Accessed June 7, 2022,
   https://mzaednica.mk/about
23 "mCommunity", European Youth Award, last modified November, 2019, Accessed June 7, 2022, https://eu-youthaward.org/winning-project/mcommunity/
24 Zorica Velkovska, Co-founder of Blink 172-41and mZaednica, February 20, 2022, in discussion with the author

Persuasion was needed by the project team to convince the local governments that the platform would not increase their daily workload and would, in fact, make their work more efficient. Once implemented, the local governments saw the benefits of using the platform and promoted it actively on their communication channels. However, they have been reluctant to commit any funds from their annual budgets (between 1-2000 Euros) for using the platform if it is not free of charge.[25]

The most significant challenge around the platform for the project team has been to motivate citizens to participate and use the platform, due to peoples' doubts that local governments would address their concerns. To address this, the project team supported the promotion of the platform via social media campaigns and targeted promotional activities. They also explained the importance of timely responses to the local administration, as well as the importance of maintaining a high success rate in resolving issues.[26] This has proven to be a good strategy based on citizens' comments and feedback on the municipality's official Facebook page. When citizens see their submissions being taken seriously by the local administration, it is likely their willingness to engage and their overall sense of trust increases. This can be done in several ways, such as municipalities presenting proof that they have solved problems raised by citizens. It can also be achieved by putting citizens' initiatives forward for a vote in the municipal councils, or by accepting citizens' proposals for the local budget. Additionally, when citizens provide good feedback on the responsiveness and work of local government departments, it can create a positive relationship and motivate public servants who otherwise feel their work is not recognised or valued.

In the short period of implementation thus far, the platform has already achieved significant results. Citizens have submitted different types of proposals and every user can track the feedback provided by the municipality.[27] The most frequent suggestions are for the arrangement of public spaces (creating new green areas, dog parks, sports playgrounds, etc.), improvements to the traffic and the street infrastructure (suggestions include one-way streets and signalisation), and improvement to waste management services, such as changing the location for new bins.
The municipality of Karposh utilised the platform for gathering citizens' opinions on the municipal budget for 2021, on a summer cultural programme and on a massive cleaning action in the municipality. Once submitted as proposals by the municipality, citizens were able to discuss and vote on issues and if interested, they got notified about any related follow-up activity. This approach by municipalities to be proactive in requesting citizens' feedback has been much appreciated by the citizens and has generated further citizen engagement. So far, the three municipalities using the platform have requested citizens' feedback via mZaednica for the preparation of their 2022 local budgets. To raise awareness, the mayors of these municipalities have actively promoted the platform among the public, urging citizens to get engaged in the process.

Building on the positive citizen experience in the municipality of Karposh, there was significant interest when mZaednica was introduced in another municipality in the City of Skopje, Aerodrom. In the two weeks following its launch, in March 2022, the platform had more than 1,000 users and more than 115 submissions.

Deliberative Digital Democracy for a Green Human City

Zelen Human Grad (Green Human City or GHC) is another initiative aimed to correct the low level of citizen participation in policy and decision-making at the local level. It does this by relying on three principles: local sovereignty, grassroots participation, and digital community.[28] It was set up in September 2020 as an informal initiative by twelve local CSOs operating in North Macedonia's capital city of Skopje with an aim "to transfer power from the political and business elite to the citizens by uniting and empowering CSOs, activists, and ordinary citizens behind concrete projects that contribute to the public good in a [the] short and medium-term".[29]The initiative deals with issues and projects in six thematic areas, in line with the thematic focus of the founding CSOs: social justice, sustainable development, energy independence, clean environment, animal protection, and urban mobility. The projects are sourced from the expertise of the activist organisations that make up Green Human City; citizens' proposals submitted and voted for via an open online platform "Moj Grad" (My City) created and administered by Green Human City; and the demands of the protest movements in which Green Human City has participated in.[30]

The My City open platform, launched in May 2021, is a key component of Green Human City. Similarly to mZaednica, it enables citizens to participate in local-level

25 Zorica Velkovska
26 Zorica Velkovska
27 https://mzaednica.mk/reports
28 Зелен Хуман Град,[Green Human City], Accessed March 15, 2022. https://zhg.mk/
29 Зелен Хуман Град,[Green Human City]
30 Зелен Хуман Град,[Green Human City]

policy and decision-making. Any citizen, CSO or social movement can use the My City participatory platform if they create their own profile by linking their Facebook account to the platform. Through their profiles, they can submit, discuss and vote for proposals on projects or policies. The three most voted proposals per month are formally submitted as an initiative to the Skopje City Council by the members of the council who are part of the Green Human City coalition. In accordance with the principles defined by the Law of the City of Skopje and the Law on Self-Governance[31], the council may adopt any of the submitted initiatives that fall under its competencies with a majority vote. Before submitting, the proposals are fine-tuned by expert members of Green Human City together with their creators in order to be legally and financially sound.

For establishing a formal link between citizens and the decision-making institutions and for overcoming the lack of transparency and accountability of the city council, Green Human City relies on having its own elected representatives on the Skopje City Council who will represent the My City proposals and the Green Human City positions.[32] Therefore, throughout 2021 significant effort was put into promotion and awareness-raising about Green Human City to ensure their representatives were elected as councillors in the October 2021 local elections. In an effort to provide citizens with more opportunities for participation, Green Human City invited citizens to submit their nominations for candidates to the independent list of the Green Human City coalition for the Skopje City Council.[33]

The desire to engage citizens was the reasoning behind the "My candidate" addition to the "My City" participatory platform, through which citizens could nominate people who they thought were "competent in their profession, have an interest in local topics, are characterised by progressive political visions, and share an aversion to the party-careerist model of political action". Twenty candidates with the most votes from citizens were included in the Green Human City independent list of nominations.

Although it may appear complex to navigate between CSOs, citizens, social movements, officials and politicians, Green Human City seems to be functioning well due to its firm principles of horizontality, inclusivity and transparency and their clear commitment to direct democracy. Because of this, Green Human City has

achieved notable results in the local elections winning more than nine thousand votes, which earned them two out of forty-five seats in the city council.[34] This is especially impressive considering it is a very new initiative operating (for less than a year) in a society dominated by established political parties.

Through their councillors, Green Human City publishes timely information on their platform about council sessions in Skopje, which, thus far, has not been made available on the council's website. All the information published on the Green Human City platform is all material related to the work of the Skopje City Council. These include things such as council recordings, biographies, the status of the proposals submitted by Green Human City and voting outcomes (including how each councillor voted).[35] By making all materials available, the Green Human City's goal is to digitalise and make the work of the Council as transparent as possible, with the hope that the City of Skopje will eventually take over and continue the practice.[36]

The first measurable result of Green Human City has been the number of their submitted and accepted proposals. At the time of writing, 63 proposals have been submitted by citizens via the My City participatory platform, of which 5 have had between 500 and 4500 supporting votes on the platform itself and have received up to 145 comments.[37] So far, 11 proposals have already been submitted to the Skopje City Council. Green Human City's initiatives have also made a significant contribution to the preparation of the annual budget for the city of Skopje, submitting 33 proposals for budget amendments, out of which 5 have been adopted.[38] The adopted proposals refer to:

- Increased budget for improved traffic safety;
- Preparation of a Strategy with an Action Plan for improving the well-being of children;
- Hyper-network of sensors for measuring and location mapping of air pollution;
- Establishing the first organic composting station;

As published on their platform, the focus of Green Human City for the forthcoming period is to increase the use of the participatory platform so citizens are better informed and more engaged, also making it mandatory for Skopje City Council to hear their opinions in this format.

31 Law on Local Self-Governance 'Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia number 5/2002'; Law on the City of Skopje 'Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia number 158/201"

32 Post on the official Facebook Page of Green Human City, https://www.facebook.com/ZelenHumanGrad

33 „Зелен хуман град" ги повикува скопјани да се кандидираат за претстојните избори преку „Мој кандидат" ["Green Humane City" calls on Skopje residents to run in the upcoming elections through "My Candidate"], 360 Степени, 2021, Accessed June 7, 2022, https://360stepeni.mk/zelen-human-grad-gi-povikuva-skopjani-da-se-kandidiraat-za-pretstojnite-izbori-preku-moj-kandidat/

34 "Local Elections 2021 - 31.10.2021," State Election Commission, Accessed June 7, 2022, https://rezultati2021lokalni2krug.sec.mk/en/asmb-sk/r

35 "Совет" [Council], Moj Grad, Last modified June 7, 2022, http://mojgrad.mk/sovet/

36 Facebook post by Gorjan Jovanovski, councilor in the Council of the City of Skopje at the Green Human City Official Facebook Page, https://www.facebook.com/gorjanjovanovski/posts/pfbid0WsMkuWBvR6VjgoGXMj8AF2X412H4SNEVRajNCon7Bhpar7Dd2nfnSr5pMbZbWNNgl

37 "Предлози" [Initiatives], Moj Grad, Last modified June 7, 2022, https://mojgrad.mk/initiatives/

38 "Постигнувања" [Achievments] Moj Grad, Last modified June 7, 2022, https://zhg.mk/postignuvanja/

Conclusion

Two key lessons can be drawn from the mZaednica and Green Human City initiatives. Both initiatives sought new participatory techniques because of an absence of participatory culture, the lack of demand on the side of the citizens and the lack of willingness of institutions to promote and institutionalise citizens' participation in political decision-making.

Two key lessons can be drawn from the mZaednica and Green Human City initiatives. Both initiatives sought new participatory techniques because of an absence of participatory culture, the lack of demand on the side of the citizens and the lack of willingness of institutions to promote and institutionalise citizens' participation in political decision-making.

Therefore, the first conclusion that can be made is that in countries where the participatory culture is low, organised civil society can be a strong driver for promoting citizen participation. The approach taken by mZaednica seeks to institutionalise citizen participation by utilising the possibilities offered by digital technologies, relying mostly on the willingness and the interest of municipalities. On the other hand, Green Human City's strategy is to strengthen participatory culture by creating stronger demand on behalf of citizens and upgrading the traditional tools of representative democracy.

There have been several contextual factors that contributed to this type of democratic innovation, like the strong civil society awakening and the sense of its empowerment after the ousting of a political party that had captured the state. Unfulfilled high expectations about the future reforms in the country and growing dissatisfaction among citizens with public institutions have also inspired civil society to place more pressure on institutions and those in power so they can better serve North Macedonia's citizens. Furthermore, the urgent need for digitalisation of services emphasised amid the COVID-19 pandemic, and the potential of information technologies to respond to citizens' needs more effectively have also been eye-opening for civil society as well as citizens and institutions.

It is still too early to tell whether mZaednica, Green Human City or similar initiatives will achieve their aims to make policy-planning and decision-making at the local level a more participatory process based on citizens' opinions instead of being driven by the interests of those in power. This will depend on whether citizens engage and create pressure on the institutions on the one hand, and whether the municipalities will use the full potential of the platforms to engage citizens, on the other.

The second conclusion that can be drawn is that social trust in institutions is an underlying factor in the success of measures promoting participatory democracy. Currently, low levels of trust are affecting the willingness of citizens to engage with public institutions. The case of mZaednica has shown that the efforts of local governments to engage citizens can contribute to improving citizens' trust in local government. By introducing more initiatives promoting the participation of citizens, taking timely action and providing proof of action, providing adequate feedback to citizens' requests or using data generated via citizen-focused digital platforms when considering municipal strategic planning and development; local governments have the opportunity to show they are worthy of citizens' trust. However, local governments will need to show a sense of ownership over solutions which enable citizen participation and demonstrate accountability and genuine willingness to engage with and listen to the citizenry.

The case of Green Human City and its participatory platform, on the other hand, demonstrates a pathway for empowering citizens themselves and civil society. By enabling citizens to be informed, debate and vote, they create public pressure on the institutions to respect

the needs and opinions of the local communities in the decision-making processes. They also create a demand for more accountability for more competent and professional institutions and the mandatory involvement of citizens and civil society in decision-making. Therefore, a decisive factor determining success for Green Human City in the short run will be to have more citizens engaged with them, giving them adequate leverage in front of the Skopje City Council. In the long run, success would mean Green Human City triggers a cultural shift and will have contributed to increased demand for more direct participation in decision-making that pressures institutions to systematically integrate citizen perspectives. The key challenge for initiatives such as Green Human City is to resist monopolising citizens' participation mechanisms and being perceived as the ones responsible for it, as this can give a free pass to institutions in terms of their own responsibility to develop citizen engagement mechanisms, ultimately endangering rather than institutionalising public participation.

Lastly, as both initiatives target local-level democracy, it might be difficult to replicate them for national-level decision-making processes. However, both rely on the potential of digital solutions to introduce a new culture of participatory democracy that stands out from the traditional political party narratives that can further drive much needed social activism.

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Exploring Worldwide Democratic Innovations - A case study of South Korea

Jinkyung Baek

Introduction

South Koreans have historically been active participants in their democracy. This is evidenced by the high-level protests the country has experienced since its democratic transition in 1987, including the 2016 protests regarding the impeachment of President Park Geun-Hye. Such engagement is as important today as it has ever been. There are a variety of challenges in the country which must be addressed by its democratic institutions.

Beyond its ageing population, lack of affordable housing and job insecurity, South Korea has had to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic. There has also been an increased awareness of social issues, such as gender inequality and the effects of climate change.[1] Elections in March 2022 showcased increased disparity between South Korea's liberal and conservative parties in their campaigning strategies.[2] This election saw a rise in negative campaigning similar to that observed in the United States, with candidates Lee Jae-Myeong and Yoon Seok-Yeol and their family members coming under heavy media scrutiny.[3] This led to growing public dissatisfaction with both candidates, particularly among younger voters. As a country with mandatory military service for male citizens, feminism has also become a hot-button issue in South Korea, with more young men becoming involved in conservative politics as a result.[4] Despite young people being less involved politically, in general, South Koreans are highly motivated in playing a role in their country's political future and are very capable of doing so given South Korea's highly educated and digitalised society.

This paper examines three examples of democratic innovation in South Korea that have sought to improve levels of such participation: active citizen participation in online platforms, citizen participation in pandemic countermeasures, and public participation in nuclear energy policy. These initiatives show that the space for civic engagement is widening and offer several lessons for democratic innovation more generally.

Active citizen participation in online platforms

Created by President Moon Jae-in's administration in 2017, Gwanghwamoon 1st Street provides citizens with an online platform for sharing suggestions, opinions and ideas regarding politics and policies, establishing a direct link between the public and policy-makers.[5] While other online platforms of this kind already exist, South Korea's is arguably unique for a number of reasons: it streamlines all of the national government's online citizen participation platforms, improves accessibility and categorises discussions and policy suggestions on a variety of issues, such as social welfare, education and unification diplomacy/security. This innovative design encourages increased interaction and democratic participation, providing a means for the public to informally engage with authorities on local and national issues. Citizens can post suggestions and ideas on the easy-to-use website; these are then sorted through by experts from research institutions and government officials.[6]

After its launch in May 2017, the Gwanghwamoon 1st Street site garnered 180,705 suggestions in its first 49 days; 99 of these suggestions were reflected in the national agenda and 1,718 are directly reflected in policies that will continue to roll out into 2022.[7] These figures represent a big increase from previous online platforms provided by city halls and government

1   Jun-Young Kim, "66% of Men in their Twenties prefer Eun-hye Kim, 66% of Women in their Twenties prefer Dong-young Kim…the Gap in Gender Perspectives is Increasing," The JoongAng, June 2, 2022 (in Korean). https://n.news.naver.com/article/025/0003199397; Yoon Seok Lee, "Nothing is More Important than Climate Change in the Election!" YWCA, November 12, 2021 (in Korean). https://ywca.or.kr/webzine_content/대선에서-기후보다-더-무엇이-중한디/

2   Jong Bin Ban, "Lee Jae-Myeong and Yoon-Seok Yeol's Pledges on the Economy, Foreign Policy, and Security," Yonhap News, November 7, 2021 (in Korean). https://www.yna.co.kr/view/GYH20211107000200044

3   Soo Kim, "2022 Look Ahead: Mudslinging Dominates South Korea's Election," Nikkei Asia, December 31, 2021. https://asia.nikkei.com/Opinion/2022-look-ahead-Mudslinging-dominates-South-Korea-s-election

4   Ji Sook Kim, "How Will the Younger Generation Vote? Men in their Twenties for Yoon Seok-Yeol, Women in their Twenties for Lee Jae-Myeong," KBS News, March 10, 2022 (in Korean). https://news.kbs.co.kr/news/view.do?ncd=5412212; Young Rim Hong, "Differing Choices Among Young Voters… Men in their Twenties for Yoon Seok-Yeol, Women in their Twenties for Lee Jae-Myeong by a Landslide," Chosun Ilbo, March 10, 2022 (in Korean).

5   "Gwanghwamoon 1st Street (People's Transition Office)," Observatory of Public Sector Innovation, May 22, 2017. https://oecd-opsi.org/innovations/gwanghwamoon-1st-street-peoples-transition-office-2/

6   Observatory of Public Sector Innovation, "Gwanghwamoon 1st Street."

7   Observatory of Public Sector Innovation, "Gwanghwamoon 1st Street."

ministries.[8] According to an official involved with Gwanghwamoon 1st Street, the site has gained 550,000 users in the four and a half years since its creation. Over the past four years, "Gwanghwamoon 1st Street Open Communication Forums" have been held 58 times, with 10,159 citizens participating, resulting in 229 policy proposals being put forward and 176 being reflected in policies.[9] The site has also incorporated features allowing users to search for proposals by keyword and within a set timeframe, as well as a comment section on each proposal to increase interaction.[10] The governance of Gwanghwamoon 1st Street is also unique: it is composed of a staff of young government officials and social innovators.[11] This team is granted an unusual level of autonomy in its decision-making and is independent from its parent organisations.[12]

One area for improvement for the site would be its qualitative performance; Gwanghwamoon 1st Street lacks technical information which would improve the quality of policy suggestions. Additional features that could encourage policy discussion and collaboration between users could also improve the quality of proposals submitted, the comment section feature is a positive step in this direction. There is still room for future growth, including increasing the number of proposals that are actualized in policy. It is likely the Open Communication Forum will also continue to evolve in the future. Expanding offline public participation to increase the probability of suggestions being enacted into policy and diversifying how each theme for a discussion is decided are two ways in which the forum can continue to evolve and improve its communication with the public.[13]

South Korea has a history of active netizen participation in the democratic process. For a population with one of the highest percentages of internet access in the world, a well-designed and functional website has proven to be an effective way to encourage public participation, as demonstrated by the high levels of engagement with Gwanghwamoon 1st Street. As a country accustomed to democracy being supported by the use of the Internet, it is unsurprising that South Korea has been at the cutting edge of such innovation, evidenced by the creation of this online public platform empowering participatory democracy. Gwanghwamoon 1st Street is a prime example of government and civil society working in harmony and building more trust in one another.

Citizen participation in pandemic countermeasures

In August 2020, Icheon City created a contest for citizens to participate in finding COVID-19 countermeasures. The contest challenged citizens to come up with "ideas for daily social distancing", creating awareness of the disease and increasing public participation in social distancing measures. The contest was posted on the city website for ten days, in this time citizens could submit their ideas and suggestions for the municipal administration to consider in the fight against COVID-19. Ten people received awards for their submissions, and their ideas were incorporated into the municipal administration's social distancing policy.[14]

The contest was unique in that it took a grassroots, bottom-up approach, rather than the top-down one generally used for generating and implementing pandemic countermeasures. The contest was held to help prevent the spread of the virus and to increase public participation in generating new ideas. The theme of the contest, "ideas for daily social distancing," was left broad to allow for a range of creative ideas to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. 56 proposals were submitted in total, from which eight were selected, some of which are still in use, while others are still being pushed forward.[15] These included a proposal laying the groundwork for a one-way street for physical exercise which maintains social distancing, as well as social challenges such as "Icheon City, lets social distance together! Stay-At-Home Challenge". Another proposal permitted small businesses to adhere to their own COVID-19 preventative protocols and execute disease prevention measures related to disinfection and ventilation.[16] Icheon City worked to equip businesses and restaurants with the information and tools, such as quarantine documents and a promotion plan to provide education on social distancing measures, in order to prevent the spread of the virus.[17]

Since the contest was conducted at the municipal level, the scope of the policies enacted was limited to the municipal level as well. Due to the power structure of the South Korean government, it could easily override or prevent these policies from being enacted through

8 Observatory of Public Sector Innovation, "Gwanghwamoon 1st Street."
9 Officer from the Ministry of the Interior and Safety, e-mail message to the author, February 14, 2022.
10 "Public Contests," Gwanghwamoon 1st Street. Last modified June 3, 2022. https://www.gwanghwamoon1st.go.kr/front/epilogue/epilogueBbsListPage.do?menu_id=422
11 Observatory of Public Sector Innovation, "Gwanghwamoon 1st Street."
12 Observatory of Public Sector Innovation, "Gwanghwamoon 1st Street."
13 Officer from the Ministry of the Interior and Safety, e-mail message to the author, February 14, 2022.
14 Officer from the Ministry of the Interior and Safety, e-mail message to the author, February 14, 2022.
15 Officer from the Ministry of the Interior and Safety, e-mail message to the author, February 14, 2022.
16 Officer from the Ministry of the Interior and Safety, e-mail message to the author, February 14, 2022.
17 Officer from Icheon City Hall, e-mail to the author, February 10, 2022.

its own decree. This limited the adoption of suggested policies and ideas to the local level. Thus, while this is a successful example of participatory democracy on a smaller scale, the lack of interest in the policies from other areas in the country or the national government is illustrative of the limits of participatory democracy at this scale. On the other hand, the contest was highly successful at finding creative new ideas, engaging the public, and increasing awareness of social distancing measures. It successfully provided citizens with an opportunity to voice their own ideas for COVID-19 prevention and to play an active role, alongside the government, in combating a societal problem.

In sum, the limitations of the municipal government's influence prevented the proposed policies from being widely adopted. However, the bottom-up method was a new way to approach pandemic countermeasures, and the attempt in and of itself was important as it clearly demonstrated that citizens are capable of generating new ideas for practical policy. This example creates a foundation for similar projects moving forward.

Public participation in nuclear energy policy (Shin-Kori Reactors No. 5 and 6)

Following his election in 2017, President Moon Jae-In chose to implement a deliberative, non-binding poll to help decide whether construction on the Shin-Kori nuclear power plants No. 5 and No. 6 should be continued.[18] Moon's administration had advocated for denuclearisation but committed itself to respecting the results of the public poll.[19] The poll followed a debate by 471 members of the public, selected randomly from a representative nationwide survey. 59.5 percent of those polled voted in favour of resuming construction; the government's pledge to the outcome of the poll resulted in the continued construction of Shin-Kori reactors 5 and 6. However, 53.3 percent of the electors also voted to reduce the country's reliance on nuclear power,

35.5 percent voted to maintain the status quo and 9.7 percent voted to expand nuclear power.[20] The science and technology sector is highly technical and has traditionally relied on expert and government decision-making, so it has been relatively undemocratic thus far. Yet, with increasing public awareness and interest in this field, public participation will become necessary as a way to maintain checks on energy procurement and policy-making. The consensus reached on the Shin-Kori nuclear reactors was an important and ground-breaking step in this direction, as the public poll proved that whilst a level of expertise is required in areas such as science and technology, it is possible for the public to be informed and offer constructive discussion. Members of the public who were involved in the debate indicated that they had prepared and increased their understanding of the topic in order to participate. Throughout the process, public understanding of the issue improved.[21]

Online participation, including an e-learning system of video lectures and a "Q&A Room" where group members could have questions answered by experts, were key to the project's success. This was combined with a deliberate process to educate participants, culminating in a final forum to encourage discussion and clear up any misconceptions regarding the topic. This process of using various methods to educate participants was crucial given that the poll was a direct vote, thus requiring a high level of expertise.[22] This combination of participation and direct voting was unprecedented in South Korea, and it provides similar projects in the future with a reference case for how to ensure a high standard of information among participants using modern methods.[23]

The government's choice to implement the final outcome of the poll can be considered another success. At the same time, the Moon administration's control of the process and debate through a nine-member public debate committee should be considered an area for future improvement; due to the high level of control exercised by the committee, the government was able to have a substantial influence on the final outcome. Government control for the sake of efficiency also limited the level of democratic participation.[24] Despite

18 Gillan Chi-Lun Huang, Rung-Yi Chen, and Byung-Bae Park. "Democratic innovations as a party tool: A comparative analysis of nuclear energy public participation in Taiwan and South Korea." Energy Policy 153 (2021): 112251.
19 "Moon Jae-in's Presidential Statement on the Results of the Public Debate on Shin Kori Reactors 5 and 6," Seoul Sinmun, October 22, 2017 (in Korean). https://m.seoul.co.kr/news/newsView.php?cp=seoul&id=20171022500047
20 Huang, Chen, and Park, "Democratic Innovations."
21 Officer from the Shin-Kori Public Debate, e-mail to the author, February 8, 2022.
22 Officer from the Shin-Kori Public Debate, e-mail to the author, February 8, 2022.
23 Officer from the Shin-Kori Public Debate, e-mail to the author, February 8, 2022.
24 Huang, Chen, and Park, "Democratic Innovations."

the government's control over the process, the poll succeeded in building trust with both anti- and pro-nuclear groups, increasing the chance of future public participation in the democratic process. A key detail to consider for the future is the pro-nuclear lobby's ability to receive funding to promote their side of the argument, supplying electors with information prior to the debate. This means the two sides did not start from a level playing field, something that should be rectified in future polls.

The use of a public poll to arrive at a decision was a calculated choice by the Moon administration. It was an opportunity to test the position of the public and avoid making an unpopular decision early into the presidency, as shutting down construction of the Shin-Kori plants would be a difficult and divisive choice for economic and environmental reasons. There was no specific timeframe stating when denuclearisation would be complete, allowing for an opportunity for trust-building via public participation in the decision-making process. This context created an opportunity to attempt a new democratic practice in the field of science and technology.

Given that South Korea is one of the world's leaders in nuclear energy, President Moon's stated goal of denuclearisation has proven politically difficult.[25]
South Korea's lack of natural oil, pressure to abandon fossil fuels due to climate change and a growing energy-dependent economy together make nuclear energy an option that must be considered.[26] The source of the country's energy is an increasingly important issue to address and the ability to engage an informed public and receive input on policy is invaluable for South Korea's democracy moving forward.

When asked about future efforts to promote future civic participation in the field of science and technology, a general administrative policy officer who was a part of the Shin-Kori public debate highlighted the importance of well-defined agenda setting and creating a sense of accountability for the results among the public.[27] The officer emphasises a clear, definite agenda should be supported by sufficient studies and debates, and also

stressed the importance of "assigning binding force to the results that the public produced".[28] This was seen in the success of the Shin-Kori public debate, President Moon's acceptance of the outcome meant that the public could feel the impact of their efforts reflected directly in policy.

According to the officer, improving public awareness and expanding citizens' contribution to the policy-making process is important to "let people feel the sense of efficacy brought by participation".[29] Despite previous worries that it would be difficult for the general public to participate in decision-making on complex topics such as science and technology, the Shin-Kori poll proved that it is possible for a citizen to "reach the level of making his [their] approval or opposition [to a policy clear] and be able to discuss about issues as long as he [they] take time".[30]

25 "South Korea Is One of the World's Largest Nuclear Power Producers," US Energy Information Administration, August 27, 2020.
    https://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.php?id=44916.
26 "The Current Status and Tasks Ahead for Our Country's Energy," Korean Ministry of the Environment, December 28, 2017 (in Korean).
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27 Officer from the Shin-Kori Public Debate, e-mail to the author, February 8, 2022.
28 Officer from the Shin-Kori Public Debate, e-mail to the author, February 8, 2022.
29 Officer from the Shin-Kori Public Debate, e-mail to the author, February 8, 2022.
30 Officer from the Shin-Kori Public Debate, e-mail to the author, February 8, 2022.

Conclusion

The country case study of South Korea's democratic innovations provides three key lessons. First, the role of technology in creating new ways to engage citizens is important. As a country with a population who have widespread access to the Internet and mobile phones, South Korea has been able to use technology, such as Gwanghwamoon 1st Street and its mobile phone COVID-19 contact tracing app to draw the public and government closer together and facilitate ease of communication. Many countries in the West also have high levels of access to this type of technology and would be able to utilise similar practices.

Second, given the tools, the public is highly capable of creating inventive and effective policy. This was demonstrated with the adoption and implementation of policy suggestions both on a national level with Gwanghwamoon 1st Street and on a municipal level with the Icheon City social distancing idea contest. The public's ability to make decisions in highly technical sectors, such as nuclear energy, was also evidenced by the Shin-Kori poll. By allowing public participation, citizens will become more aware and informed on important issues, such as social distancing and nuclear policy, as it is their responsibility to come to an informed consensus. Despite some challenges such as quality improvement and increasing the number of policies adopted, South Korea has demonstrated strong action towards improving public participation both on and offline.

The third lesson from South Korea's case is the importance of trust-building between the government and its citizens. The use of an effective online public forum for policy suggestions allows the public to see concrete examples of how their voice can have an impact and encourages further participation. In the case of public participation in the decision on what to do with the Shin-Kori reactors, the Moon administration was able to maintain some level of control with the committee it installed while still granting the public the agency to make the decision. It is also vital that the outcome of the poll was respected and that the will of the people was carried out, despite the fact that no legally binding legislation had been tied to the poll results. While trust was improved through these democratic practices, it was also a crucial pre-existing condition for their success. Countries with excessive political polarisation can suffer from parts of the population having little respect for or belief in the legitimacy of the democratic process, which makes them unlikely to participate. This is something South Korea should remain wary of as the new administration takes office. However, these democratic practices can provide those with alternative views a platform for discussing and debating ideas and policy. It is important for citizens, not just elected officials, to engage in this type of action in order to create a healthy and vibrant democracy.

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Exploring Worldwide Democratic Innovations - A case study of Taiwan

Ming-sho Ho

Introduction

As a newly democratised country, Taiwan has experienced a surge of civic tech initiatives. This case study surveys civic tech's transition from oppositional politics to a more institutionally anchored role in facilitating inclusive decision-making in Taiwan. This paper will foreground the case of g0v (pronounced "gov zero"), a Taiwan-based civic tech community founded in 2012, which has emerged as one of the largest in East Asia. This example shows an ongoing dialogue between data activism and political institutions and how this impacts Taiwan's young democracy.

Taiwan's Civic Tech Movement

After many years of top-down state e-gov initiatives, Taiwanese activists began to develop a more bottom-up civic tech in the 2010s. In 2012, two factors led to the formation of g0v by software engineers as a Taiwanese open-source movement. The first was government failures in e-governance and communication: in October of that year, the government launched an official website to reveal the real transaction prices of housing.

The measure was a campaign promise of the ruling party to address the skyrocketing prices of real estate, and yet the government portal was so poorly designed that it constantly crashed. Four programmers decided to set up a parallel website using the same official data, which turned out to be wildly popular for its usability.[1] In response, the Ministry of the Interior redesigned the official website rendering it impossible to retrieve the data for the independent site. Criticism immediately arose because many netizens were angered by the inability of officials to provide this data themselves and by their obstructionism.[2]

The other formative episode for g0v was a TV commercial that promoted the government's economic recovery plan in the wake of the global financial crisis of 2007-2008. The ambiguous advertisement conveyed nothing about the recovery plan but simply asked citizens to stand with the government, which was widely considered an insult to citizens' intelligence.[3] These two incidents galvanised Taiwan's hacker community into action, resulting in the formation of g0v; its founding statement mentioned that they were "a polycentric community of self-organised contributors" who are committed to "citizen participation" and "collaborating to bring about change".[4]

The g0v's Mandarin Chinese name is linshi zhengfu, which carries the connotation of "digital government" or "provisional government", somehow implying the current authorities are illegitimate. Such a defiant gesture can be considered understandable in the context of Taiwan's reawakened civil society and emerging protest and activism. The oppositional stance of g0v was particularly noteworthy during the 2014 Sunflower Movement, a student-led protest to oppose a free trade agreement with China.[5] Immediately after protesters occupied the national legislature, g0v activists built the communication infrastructure connecting online and offline participants and at the same time introduced many novel digital tools that helped monitor police action, as well as coordinate and distribute donations.[6] Since the Sunflower Movement's occupation of the national legislature was a highly-attended event, the involvement of g0v hackers helped popularise the notion of civic tech in Taiwan.

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4   "G0v Manifesto," g0v.tw, g0v, accessed March 10, 2022, https://g0v.tw/intl/zh-TW/manifesto/en/.
5   Ian Rowen, "Inside Taiwan's Sunflower Movement: Twenty-Four Days in a Student-Occupied Parliament, and the Future of the Region," Journal of Asian Studies 74, no. 1 (February 2015): 5-21.
6   National Taiwan University Graduate Institute of Journalism, ed., I am Citizen and also Media (Taipei: Media and Books, 2015). (In Chinese).

Simplifying Social Problems into Technical Tasks

In Taiwan and elsewhere in the world, transparency and participation are the core values among civic tech enthusiasts, and their programmer background evidences a technological optimism for translating social problems into programmable tasks. As the often used term "keyboard revolution" indicates, major changes are always at our fingertips.[7] This ethos was in sync with the Sunflower Movement in several ways.

First, the movement originated from criticism that the government negotiated the free-trade bill with China in "a black box" fashion because prior consultation with affected stakeholders was nearly nonexistent and the public came to know of the impending trade liberalisation only a few days before the official signing.[8] Second, the unprecedented occupation of the legislature involved massive participation among those who had previously been unconcerned about politics.[9] It was their myriad acts of spontaneous, amateurish, and voluntary contribution that sustained the protest over three weeks. As such, the decentralised pattern of movement participation echoed the cherished creed of horizontal collaboration among civic tech activists. Lastly, the unusual experience of exchanges between hackers and protesters left long-lasting impacts, such as more non-specialists becoming willing to take part in the g0v's bimonthly events called "hackathons", and the more frequent exchanges between tech- and non-tech participants resulted in a flourishing of citizen campaigns, or "projects" in the g0v's parlance.[10]

For instance, the visualisation of Taiwan's central government budget was one of the first of g0v's projects.[11] The campaign proceeded with the goal of lowering the threshold for citizen participation. Its participants believed in a technical solution for tackling the information asymmetry between experts and ordinary members of the public so that citizens could be more informed and more willing to express their preferences on complex technical issues. In the wake of the Sunflower Movement, a nonpartisan candidate Ko Wen-je captured the mayoralty of Taipei City, ending the 16-years of Kuomintang local dominance. Ko invited g0v participants to a task force to make the city budget more accessible.[12] A key outcome of this government-nerd collaboration was the Taipei City Government launching a visualisation website for the municipal budget.[13] After the change of ruling party in 2016, the DPP government also followed suit by offering a new site for budget visualisation. In addition, some official surveys were made more interactive by allowing users to retrieve and compare data for their own purposes.[14]

Another of g0v's projects in reusing and improving governmental data was focused on the Ministry of Education's official dictionary for Mandarin Chinese, which had been perennially criticised for being outdated and prone to error.. In 2013, the g0v launched a "dictionary woodpecker" campaign by recruiting more than five hundred online participants to find problems in the official version. In the end, the crowdsourcing campaign identified that more than four thousand entries were problematic, and the campaign evolved into a new and free digital dictionary called Moedict.[15] Having gained the Ministry of Education's authorisation, g0v participants were able to license Moedict as a Creative Commons project and made it widely available across different digital platforms.[16] Over the years, Moedict has grown to incorporate entries from Taiwan's Minnan and Hakka languages, while providing equivalent translations in English, German, and French.[17]

G0v activists also tackled the issue of transparency in election finance. How politicians received donations and financed their electoral campaigns had been a persistent problem for Taiwan's young democracy, as many citizens had become increasingly upset about the disproportionate influence held by corporate and special interests. In response, Taiwan adopted a major legal reform in 2004 requiring candidates to reveal their financing sources;[18] yet, the information was only made

8   Ho, Challenging Beijing's Mandate of Heaven, 99-101.
9   Ming-sho Ho, "The Road to Mainstream Politics: How Taiwan's Sunflower Movement Activists Became Politicians," in After Protest: Pathways Beyond Mass Mobilization, ed. Richard Youngs (Washington DC: Carnegie Foundation for International Peace, 2019), 61-68.
10 For how g0v works, see https://g0v.tw/intl/en/, accessed June 4, 2022.
11 中央政府總預算 [Total Central Government Budget], g0v.tw, g0v, accessed March 3, 2022, https://budget.g0v.tw/budget.
12 "Ko Wen-je: Visualization of the Budget for Citizen Supervision," Yahoo! Kimo News, September 11, 2015, accessed June 3, 2022, https://tw.news.yahoo.com/news.
13 "Visualization of the municipal budget," Taipei City Government, accessed March 3, 2002, https://budget-tbsv.gov.taipei/Budget.
14 "Accounting, and Statistics, visualization," Directorate-General of Budget Accounting and Statistics Executive Yuan, R.O.C. (Taiwan), accessed March 3, 2002, https://www.dgbas.gov.tw/.
15 Moedict, online dictionary for Mandarin Chinese, "Moedict", accessed March 3, 2022, https://www.moedict.tw/%E8%90%8C.
16 Cheng and Lin, "Keyboard Participation," 36.
17 "From a National Language Dictionary to a Multilingual One," Scientific American, May 1, 2015, accessed June 3, 2022, https://sa.ylib.com/MagArticle.aspx?id=2713. (In Chinese)
18 Po Liang Chen, "Follow the Money: The Buck Stops Where? A Historical Analysis of Transparency and Campaign Finance Law in Taiwan (1935-2004)," National Taiwan University Law Review 14, no. 1 (March 2019): 1-63.

available in printed form. Control Yuan (the supervisory and auditory branch of government) required interested citizens to come into government offices physically during office hours to read documents relevant to candidate financing, which could only be printed and not photographed.[19] This restrictive approach dampened the effort to bring more transparency to Taiwan's politics.

Immediately after the conclusion of the Sunflower Movement, g0v initiated a campaign finance project to "free data from the birdcage". Volunteers went to Control Yuan with the mission of copying all the relevant documents, and then netizens were recruited to manually type in 300,000 records.[20] The result was an impressive revelation of how Taiwanese politicians financed their campaigns, which previously was a largely unknown topic for voters. In 2017, a new media company (Mirror Media) collaborated with g0v to initiate a new round of campaign finance revelation.[21] The media attention brought more public awareness to this hitherto underused source, giving rise to many pieces of investigative journalism on how corporate influences are seen in policymaking. Finally, in 2018, a legal revision made it possible for citizens to access the financing information digitally.[22]

In addition to facilitating citizen participation and governmental responses, Taiwan's civic tech activism empowered advocacy groups. Due to the nation's decentralised pattern of industrialisation, many factories were spatially scattered and often located in farmland areas. These factories outside of designated industrial zones emitted pollution that made agricultural products toxic, and the transportation of their materials and products overburdened countryside roads, posing dangers to many nearby residents. Taiwan's government made a commitment to completely relocate these farmland factories by 2016, but factory owners constituted a powerful lobby group that effectively prevented clampdown action.[23] Exacerbating the issue, victims of these factories were typically reluctant to report for fear of revealing their personal information.[24]

In 2020, an environmental group, Citizens of the Earth, pitched a proposal at a g0v hackathon, which resulted in more than fifty programmers voluntarily joining the campaign to develop an easy-to-use website that facilitated citizen reporting on new factory encroachment in farmland areas. The online platform incorporated an advanced GIS (geographical information system) design that excluded the complication of giving an exact address when providing information.[25] The website also provided feedback on the progress of individual instances of reporting so users could be constantly updated about results. As of June 2022, the project had received more than 4,200 reports.

G0v's Move Towards a More Collaborative Role

G0v is a non-hierarchical and decentralised grouping without a leadership structure. Nevertheless, the post-Sunflower Movement evolution of g0v has seen closer collaboration between Taiwan's civic tech community and the government. The Sunflower Movement dealt a blow to the then ruling Kuomintang government, as the party suffered a major defeat in the 2014 local elections, enabling Taiwan's civic tech community to collaborate more closely with the incoming government. Jaclyn Tsai, then a Minister without Portfolio, attended a g0v hackathon and encouraged the development of a digital tool that could improve communication between citizens and the government. Taiwan's civic tech community eagerly responded to this call, and the result was the vTaiwan platform (v stands for virtual).[26] This platform makes it possible for governmental agencies to propose an ongoing dispute for public deliberation. After being proposed, an issue goes through the process of opinion collecting, reflection, and legislation.[27] The platform incorporated the digital tool of pol.is, a software devised to gather and analyse the opinions of multiple stakeholders to facilitate consensus building.[28]

Designed with g0v participation, vTaiwan was designed to solve emerging controversies related to digital technology. Since its launch in 2014, the platform has been able to solve several internet-related disputes in Taiwan, including the legalisation of Uber (a ridesharing service) and the sale of alcohol online, both of which were considered difficult and complex issues. Taking Uber, for instance, the tech giant's arrival in Taiwan created

19 Cheng and Lin, "Keyboard Participation," 32.
20 Lee, "Free the Data," 1-2.
21 Lee, "Free the Data," 9.
22 "Legislature Approved the Revision to Political Donation," Central News Agency, May 29, 2018, accessed June 3, 2022, https://www.cna.com.tw/news/firstnews/201805290275.aspx. (In Chinese)
23 "There Are More than Seventy Thousand Factories on the Farmland," The News Lens, November 25, 2016, accessed June 3, 2022, https://www.thenewslens.com/article/55046. (In Chinese)
24 "Illegal Farmland Factories Claimed Themselves as Underprivileged," News and Market, March 2, 2002, accessed June 3, 2022, https://www.newsmarket.com.tw/blog/166328/. (In Chinese)
25 "Dismantle Illegal Farmland Factories," Citizens of the Earth, accessed June 3, 2022, https://about.disfactory.tw/.
26 "vTaiwan," Government of the Republic of China (Taiwan), accessed March 3, 2022, https://vtaiwan.tw/. (In Chinese)
27 "What is vTaiwan?" vTaiwan, Government of the Republic of China, accessed March 3, 2022, https://vtaiwan.tw/intro/. (In Chinese)
28 Elizabeth Barry, "vTaiwan: Public participation: Methods on the Cyberpunk Frontier of Democracy," Public Governance Quarterly 4, no. 4 (December 2015): 87.

a whirlpool of controversies: some of the conflicting forces were drivers intending to use the service to earn extra income, existing taxi drivers fearful of losing their income, and consumers eager to reap Uber's technological conveniences.[29] After a six-year deadlock, vTaiwan made it possible for the government to reach a policy consensus by legalising the Uber service with seven conditions.[30] As of 2018, vTaiwan has been able to process 26 digital policy issues, and its website claims to have resulted in "decisive government action" in 80 percent of cases.[31]

In 2015, a government-operated platform, JOIN, was launched under the sponsorship of the National Development Council.[32] The website has made it possible for citizens to submit a policy proposal to the government via the Internet. If an initiative collects more than 5,000 endorsements, the relevant governmental agencies have to respond with a formal explanation.[33] As of June 3, 2022, there have been 13,853 issues proposed on the platform, and 289 proposals met the threshold that automatically initiates a government response, while more seemingly frivolous suggestions, such as banning parsley, were automatically rejected.[34]

Audrey Tang, a retired Silicon Valley entrepreneur as well as a g0v cofounder, played an instrumental role during the Sunflower Movement. In 2016, the DPP government appointed them to a ministerial position (Minister without Portfolio), replacing Jaclyn Tsai. At the age of 36, Tang was Taiwan's youngest minister and the first non-binary person in the cabinet. Prior to their governmental appointment, Tang accepted the invitation of Tsai to work on the vTaiwan project. With their ministerial position, Tang's mission was to further deepen Taiwan's digital economy and open government policies. They played a critical role in persuading more governmental agencies to embrace open-source data and broadening the participation of civic tech communities.[35]

In 2018, under Tang's direction, Taiwan's government launched an annual Presidential Hackathon for Social Innovation.[36] Governmental agencies, NGOs and academics were welcomed to submit their proposals based on the creative use of governmental information, and the winning projects would be implemented. In

practice, events like this have amounted to incorporating the experiences of civic tech communities into the public sector. In 2020, the Director of the American Institute in Taiwan (the de facto United States Ambassador) William Brent Christensen attended its award ceremony and praised the event for demonstrating technology was more than an economic and commercial tool but also capable of creating common values.[37] Audrey Tang has also made possible a number of public-private partnership projects. For instance, in the early months of the COVID-19 epidemic, Taiwan experienced a shortage of face masks and had to resort to a mask rationing measure. Due to Tang's intervention, the Ministry of Health and Welfare released the data of licensed distribution points so that g0v programmers could design smartphone apps to broadcast the real-time information on supply across the nation.[38] In July 2022, Taiwan will establish a new Ministry of Digital Development with Audrey Tang as its first Minister,[39] which is likely to witness even closer collaboration between civic tech activists and the government.

Taiwan's post-Sunflower civic tech movement is seeing a growing acceptance by government leaders. A broad bipartisan understanding of the benefits brought by digital technologies seems to have developed. The evolution from oppositional politics to a more collaborative role, in a sense, began to blur the distinction between civic tech and gov tech. To better understand the trajectory of Taiwan's civic tech movement, we can use John Postill's mapping of nerd politics. According to Postill, worldwide digital activism operates in four major arenas: data activism, digital rights, social protests, and formal institutions.[40] Taiwan's case has demonstrated persistent attention to data activism can lead to a visible transition from social protests to formal institutions, as participants were allowed to reset the policy-making rules from within. While some activists have been concerned about possible "co-optation" there is no indication that the resourcefulness of civic tech participants has been sapped due to their closer relationship with bureaucrats. Even with closer collaboration with the government, g0v programmers have still been involved in a number of projects that have pressured the government for more transparency, such as the farmland factory monitoring action mentioned above.

29 Elizabeth Barry, "vTaiwan," 90-1.
30 Chris Horton, "The Simple but Ingenious System Taiwan uses to Crowdsource its Laws," MIT Technology Review, August 21, 2018, accessed March 13, 2022, https://www.technologyreview.com/2018/08/21/240284/the-simple-but-ingenious-system-taiwan-uses-to-crowdsource-its-laws/.
31 Yu Tang Hsiao et al., "vTaiwan: An Empirical Study of Open Consultation Process in Taiwan," SocArXiv (2018), https://doi.org/10.31219/osf.io/xyhft.
32 "JOIN," Public Policy Online Participation Platform, Government of the Republic of China (Taiwan), accessed March 3, 2022, https://join.gov.tw/. (In Chinese)
33 "Directions For Implementing Online Participation in Public Policy," National Development Council, Government of the Republic of China (Taiwan), accessed June 3, 2022, https://theme.ndc.gov.tw/lawout/EngLawContent.aspx?lan=E&id=62.
34 "Historical Data," JOIN, Government of the Republic of China (Taiwan), accessed June 3, 2022, https://join.gov.tw/history/search.
35 Audrey Tang, "A Strong Democracy is a Digital Democracy," New York Times, October 15, 2019.
36 "Presidents Cup Social Innovation Hackathon," Government of the Republic of China (Taiwan), accessed June 3, 2022, https://presidential-hackathon.mic.org.tw/2018/Default.aspx.
37 "Christensen Attended the 2020 Presidential Hackathon," Radio Taiwan International, September 20, 2020, https://www.rti.org.tw/news/view/id/2079961.
38 Ming-sho Ho, "Watchdogs and Partners: Taiwan's Civil Society Organizations," in Global Civil Society in the Shadow of Coronavirus, ed. Richard Youngs (Washington DC: Carnegie Foundation for International Peace, 2020), 14-5.
39 "Ministry of Digital Development Will Be Established As Soon As July," Liberty Times, June 3, 2022, https://news.ltn.com.tw/news/politics/breakingnews/3948543.
40 Postill, The Rise of Nerd Politics, 4.

Finally, there are also concerns about whether Taiwan's civic tech community is dominated by particular voices; as noted by many observers, computer nerds tend to be young, educated, and solitary men. Does this demographic profile discourage the participation of other people, especially the underprivileged? To address this concern, the activists present their hackathons and summits as a meeting place between specialists and non-specialists, and insist these events are as inclusive and diverse as possible.

A field note for a g0v summit in 2018 provides an example of the organisation's commitment to inclusivity. The three-day event attracted over 600 participants and around 60 percent of them were first timers. Prior to the summit, organisers solicited proposals from civil society in the hope that more social concerns be incorporated. For instance, a workshop on deaf rights was included in the program, and staff made effort to make sure both Taiwanese sign language and Chinese sign language were used. In one case, a mother and her two young daughters with one-sided deafness were among the new participants, and in spite of their unfamiliarity with civic tech, they garnered enough votes to speak in the plenary session. As such, more civic tech participants came to know the particular difficulties for people with one-sided deafness.[41]

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41   Shun-Ling Chen, "Postscript: Two Stories of Inclusion: A Field Report from g0v Summit 2018," East Asian Science, Technology and Society: An International Journal 13, no. 2 (October 2020): 294-7.

Discussion and Conclusion

As a new democracy, Taiwan faces many challenges. Electoral democracy in the one-person-one-vote form only arrived in the mid-1990s. In this century, various schemes of deliberative democracy, including citizen conferences and participatory budgets, have been tried in some communities and policy areas. Starting in 2017, the legal requirements for national referendums were lowered, resulting in an explosion of direct democracy events. In 2018 and 2021, as many as 14 national referendums were held.

In this context, digital interventions by Taiwan's civic tech community represent the new and innovative practices that have been adopted to reinvigorate democratic institutions. In its first decades, the civic tech movement has empowered civil society organisations, made government officials more responsive and their data more accessible and encouraged more informed and inclusive public participation. Yet, despite its remarkable achievements, civic tech or gov tech is no panacea. As noted above, the legislative deadlocks that civic tech has helped resolve were mostly related to the Internet. Despite the best intention to broaden the avenue for participation, the persisting digital divide still prevents some marginalised communities from exerting their democratic rights. Moreover, Taiwan's recent politics has witnessed heated and polarising debates over pension reform, working hours, same-sex marriage, energy policy, and several other issues. For these deeply rooted conflicts entrenched in ideological and partisan differences, there is simply no technical solution to mediate between opposing factions.

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

Thamy Pogrebinschi

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.

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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/

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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/

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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/**

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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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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.