

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

EASTERN EUROPE

SOUTHEAST ASIA

LATIN AMERICA

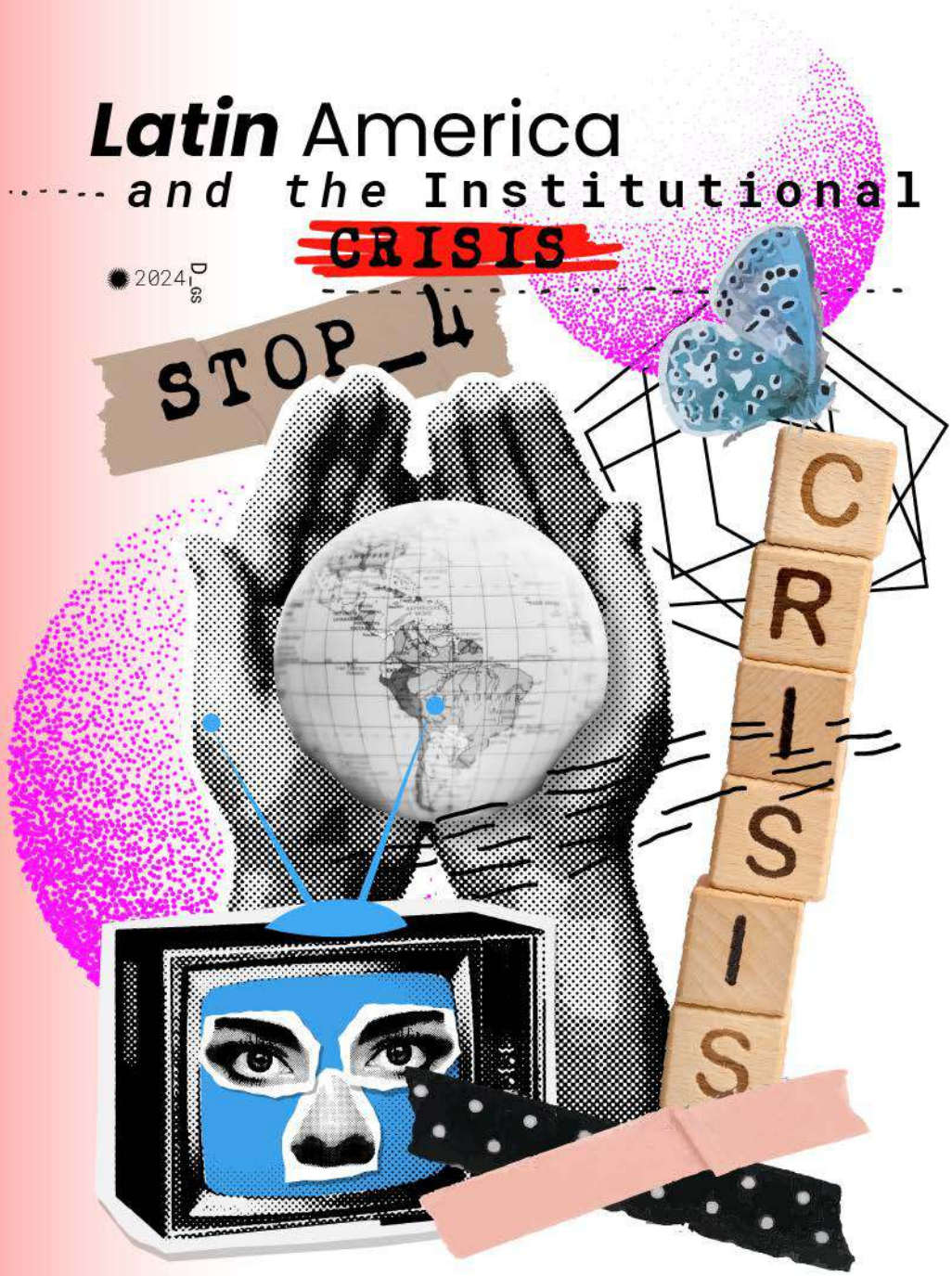
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# **Latin America** ..... and the Institutional **CRISIS**

● 2024<sub>Dis</sub>

STOP\_4



Demo.Reset  
Deliberation in the Global South



Resetting  
➤ **Democracy.**

The South Side of Global Deliberation.

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***Latin* America**  
..... *and the Institutional*  
**CRISIS**

BY:  
Gabriela Sisniega





**Resetting democracy:**  
the south side of global deliberation



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With postgraduate studies in Management of Cities and Creative Entrepreneurship from the University of Cordoba, Argentina, and a Masters's in Social Sciences from the Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg in Germany and the University of Cape Town in South Africa. She has worked with different approaches in several countries around the world, from architecture to design and the city to public service, philosophy, poetry, public art, and citizen participation. She wrote her master's thesis on the new social movements in Chihuahua, focusing on their dynamics of knowledge production and their contributions to the configuration of cities and citizenships.

**“We are creating strategies to make deliberative democracy possible, we are innovating from the South to address our own barriers.”**

***Sofía Castillo***

## **\_Introduction**

The following pages share the story of two inspiring examples of citizen deliberation exercises implemented in Latin America. Both cases aim to catalyze deliberation in their territories and seek for specific solutions to make citizen deliberation possible and effective. The Latin American Hub has been named by both people interviewed in this chapter as a region that can be widely benefited from deliberative democracy practices, where people and organizations are opening spaces and implementing initiatives where citizens can actively participate in public decisions.

This chapter will elaborate on two cases: a citizen council in Brazil and a citizen jury in Mexico. The first section introduces the cases with a brief of the organizations and the people involved. The second part elaborates on their motivations, innovations, barriers, and lessons learned from the mechanisms they have implemented. Finally, the third and last section is dedicated to the people behind these initiatives and their personal views on Deliberative Democracy for the Global South and their local contexts.

Social, economic, and political nuances, deep inequalities, historical displacement and plunder, bad governance, and lack of material resources frame the institutional crisis in Latin America. These factors have enabled and strengthened

organized crime, promoted extensive corruption, and disseminated systemic injustice, extreme poverty, and ecological disasters.

In these complex contexts, citizen deliberation brings the opportunity to look for collective solutions to specific problems that affect a given territory and, therefore, the collective inhabiting it. We thus believe that deliberative democracy is the best way to face public problems and decisions through mechanisms that aim for citizen representativity, responsiveness, political inclusion, and social equality.

Of the many<sup>24</sup> citizen initiatives deployed in Latin America, we spoke with the promoters of two recent examples that tackle ecological and corruption issues, respectively:

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In 2019, the Fortaleza Citizens Council (Conselho Cidadão de Fortaleza) in Brasil elaborated 19 recommendations<sup>25</sup> on the issue of solid waste management in collaboration with the city hall.

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In 2020, the Chihuahua Citizen Jury (Jurado Ciudadano de Chihuahua) in México determined 35 actions for the State Anti-Corruption Policy in collaboration with the local anti-corruption authority.

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24. Pogrebinschi, Thamy. *Digital Innovation in Latin America: How Brazil, Colombia, Mexico and Peru have been experimenting with E-participation*. OpenDemocracy. <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/democraciaabierto/digital-innovation-in-latin-america-how-brazil-colombia-mexico-/>. (Accessed May 9, 2023).

25. Conselho Cidadão de Fortaleza. (2019). *Cartilha Relatório de Proposições Democráticas: Vencer o Desafio Do Lixo, Uma Fortaleza Viva e Com Mais Saúde Para Todos. Delibera Brasil!*. <http://deliberabrasil.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Recomendacoes-Conselho-Cidadao-1.pdf>. (Accessed May 9, 2023).

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## **\_Organization's Work, Conformation & Know-hows**

On the one hand, we spoke with Silvia from Delibera Brasil!, an independent, non-profit organization that promotes citizen deliberation founded in 2017. Delibera was created by an interdisciplinary community of former colleagues from the field of social and public opinion research; social scientists, journalists, and economists who started searching for consensus with enthusiasm on these three pillars of public affairs: representativity, information, and deliberation. Silvia told us about the Fortaleza Citizens Council project from ***Delibera Brasil!***

On the other hand, we spoke with Sofía, who has now co-funded ***SUR***, a multidisciplinary organization focused on creating cities with climate justice, social justice, fiscal justice, territorial justice, and strengthening democracy as a tool for the people. ***SUR*** seeks that public decision-making puts people at the center. Sofía told us about the Chihuahua Citizen Jury, a project promoted collectively by people working on citizen participation and anti-corruption institutional spaces in Chihuahua.

Both cases were initiated with an encouraging commitment from local authorities. In this sense, the mere fact that they have been created already makes them successful exercises, as they are evidence of public interest, the need for ordinary people's participation, and the collective shaping of capacities, skills, and knowledge at the local level.



However, this has not been enough to materialize the resulting citizen recommendations and policies obtained from their respective deliberative processes. It is important to note how, in both cases, the institutional crisis continues to affect regional issues and local citizen participation efforts. Nonetheless, we consider it a public priority to ensure collective deliberation in Latin American democracies.

2019 and 2020 were crucial years of deliberative democracy in Latin America. These years were also marked by strong socio-political turns due to new local and regional administrations and Covid-19 measures.

The following section will dive deeper into each mentioned initiative's motivations, innovations, and learnings.

## **\_Context of the Organizations**

### **Delibera Brasil! - Conselho Cidadão de Fortaleza - Citizens' Council of Fortaleza**

Silvia Cervellini co-founded Delibera Brasil<sup>26</sup> as a way to deal with her personal concern about the ways that democracy was going, especially given the problems that Brasil faced in 2017. She emphasizes a lack of good answers from politics, and that Brazilian people were making choices without having the whole

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26. For more information on Delibera Brasil! please visit: <http://delibera-brasil.org/>.

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picture of huge problems like sustainability, public budget, or inequality, all of which required informed and hard choices.

**“My work is to make it possible for people to be part of the solutions for the problems that affect our lives.”**

*Delibera Brasil's* work is mainly based on an action methodology known as mini-publics, also called Citizen Jury or Citizen Assembly. This methodology is a democratic innovation that enables citizen deliberation by recruiting a small but representative group of people from a community (from a neighborhood, city, state, or even the country). A team of facilitators supports this group of citizens that is comprehensively informed by a team of experts on the specific issue that is important to the whole community. The final objective is that citizens make recommendations on that issue through deliberation.

## **\_ Initial Motivations: How to Make Fortaleza Cleaner and Healthier**

**“We went to the citizen assembly with the main focus of thinking about solutions for solid waste management in the city.”**

*Delibera Brasil!* started working with an urge to make a case for Deliberative Democracy in Brazil. They first reached out to Fortaleza municipality because they were already taking steps towards citizen participation through public

consultations and inviting organizations into the process of a vital city planning project for 2040.

*Delibera* found in Fortaleza's municipality a planning department open for discussion. They started a conversation about the political problems they faced at that moment, in which they thought citizen deliberation could help most.

Eventually, this team co-coordinated the Fortaleza Citizens Council. Together, they decided that the solid waste management problem was the most urgent and adequate and called it: The Challenge of Garbage. Solid waste management is a prominent issue in Fortaleza. Despite a lot of investment, pilot policies, and initiatives in the last years and previous mandates, many irregular waste disposal points in the city are still very visible.<sup>27</sup>

### First steps

A proponent brings the target problem to the table and establishes the mini-public with *Delibera Brasil*. In this case, the Mayor and the staff of Fortaleza municipality were the official proponents and were in charge of calling for citizen deliberation at the Fortaleza Citizen Assembly.

The first call was to the actors involved in the issue to form what was called the "reference group," made up of around 30 local organizations of experts and workers in the field

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27. Prefeitura de Fortaleza, *Delibera Brasil! & New Democracy*. (2019). *Cartilha de Gerenciamento de Resíduos Sólidos*. Prefeitura de Fortaleza. [https://drive.google.com/file/d/13509mDPnET-3FVzhdRFe0FojKX1\\_BAxk/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/13509mDPnET-3FVzhdRFe0FojKX1_BAxk/view). (Accessed May 9, 2023).

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coming from the public sphere but especially from social organizations of students and activists that constantly work and promote public policies on the subject. The stakeholders came from the recycling industry, waste pickers' associations, and the concessionary companies that provide the cleaning service for the municipality.

The first meeting of the reference group was the starting signal for the citizens' assembly. Their knowledge and experience enriched the nuanced perception of the problem and identified the issues that would later be raised at the citizens' assembly to resolve them.

All the information provided by the reference group was consolidated in an information folder. Creating the folder was the first challenge because the information came from such varied sources and points of view that it could even seem contradictory. However, the municipality's planning team managed to put together what was called the "cartilha."

A "cartilha" is a guide to learn the basics of doing something. The connotation of this beautiful word followed its pedagogical objective: to learn about a subject from all possible perspectives in a didactic, unbiased, and visually appealing way. The construction of the "cartilha" materials took a lot of meetings and office work. At the same time, the recruitment and selection process was carried out.

A visual identity for the project was designed and used for all printed materials, including the "cartilha" and other written materials.

These information kits were physically sent to the citizen council members before the start of the project.

## **\_Innovations to Tackle the Barriers**

When asked about the project's achievements, Silvia first mentioned the 19 recommendations made by the citizens who participated in the citizens' council. That same year, a public devolution was held by Fortaleza Mayor with an implementation plan.

**“The recommendations came out really great, the Mayor and the planning department held a public devolution in a big event on public policies in Fortaleza.”**

Even though Delibera continues to innovate from their projects' ongoing challenges and learnings (more about these can be found in the next section), important innovations were born from their very first project in Fortaleza: (i) the construction of a diverse and well-informed reference group, (ii) active recruitment of a representative group of citizen council participants, (iii) speed dialogue for transparency of interests and possible conflicts between stakeholders.

### **Innovation/solution 1:**

#### **Building a reference group that can also become a political group**

The reference group brought expertise, scientific and field knowledge to the citizens' council without expenses and with the advantage that once people are part of the reference group, they are engaged with



the initiative and the political commitment made in the citizen deliberation process.

**“It is very important (for the Global South, or at least Brazil) to open and engage organized civil society, to show that [...] we are adding up our force, so this is our contribution to organizational barriers.”**

### **Innovation/solution 2:**

#### **An active recruitment that takes representativeness and sortition seriously**

This represents an innovation, especially for countries lacking a public list of households. Delibera conducted a random selection of census tracts and a systematic sampling procedure to select homes and invited them to participate in the citizens' assembly. Profile information was required to register an accepted invitation, which made it possible to control the profile of participants.

**“Active recruitment is very good for breaking access barriers for people who never participate, or are not in the streets, or social media.**

The goal of civic sortition<sup>28</sup> is to actively recruit a representative sample of the population to participate with people who are part of a specific demographic group that does not have a particular interest in the subject of deliberation. This differs from what is commonly understood as citizen participation, in which an open call is made, which generally results in biased or stakeholder participation given the interest or affinity of the

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28. To learn more about this process, please visit:  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VwVEMSTJ40w&ab\\_channel=ExtitutoPol%C3%ADticaAbierta](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VwVEMSTJ40w&ab_channel=ExtitutoPol%C3%ADticaAbierta).

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people who receive and accept the invitation to participate, which can also incur in conflicts of interest.

### **Innovation/solution 3:**

#### **Transparency of stakeholders' interests through speed dialogue**

Citizen councils can make interest convergence work. The Conselho Cidadão de Fortaleza has shown that using rapid dialogue as a tool made the different interests very clear. It made it possible for citizens to understand the stakeholders, the scenario, and the potential conflicts necessary to have an assertive dialogue and strong and achievable recommendations.

**“When you show the citizens the cards on the table, the interests, requests, and needs, they can help the convergence between the existing interests because they think about what is best for everyone.”**

## **\_Lessons learned from the challenges**

**“Yes! Challenges and learnings are linked! We can only learn from our mistakes.”**

Even though solid waste management continues to be a main issue in Fortaleza, Delibera continues to learn and innovate from unsolved challenges. This section contains the lessons learned from the Fortaleza Citizens' Council and the innovations that address them.

## Learning 1:

### People love to participate

The first clear lesson that Delibera learned from its experience is that, contrary to popular belief, people love to participate if the conditions are right and the objectives are clear and meaningful.

**“We can prove it, we have testimonies, we have committed people participating... but they want to make their time worth it.”**

In this regard, Silvia points out an opportunity to show that this is viable for other organizations that are smaller or perhaps not yet comfortable with their methodologies or projects and invites them to go for it, to present situations in which citizens' assemblies would really make a difference.

## Learning 2:

### The need for strategic planning

The primary purpose for implementing and participating in any citizen deliberation process is to get tangible results. The central problem is expected to be addressed and solved in the near future. In this sense, the Fortaleza case was initially very promising; the Mayor and the Municipality staff were thoroughly engaged throughout the process, and there was political will and a public plan to implement the citizen's recommendations. Still, in reality, very little of it has actually happened:

**“Pandemic came, and then elections came, and then the process stopped, the recommendations are there, and they are not being addressed.”**

The second lesson Delibera learned is to evaluate the aftermath from the beginning by planning three additional moments that can help to show tangible results, one moment before and two moments after the deliberation process:

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1. Design a political strategy to get the authorities' public commitment with a follow-up procedure. This requires understanding the political articulation, locating the actual policymakers, and asking them how a citizen assembly can be helpful and how we can really share the political problem, not just have a nice participation exercise.
  2. Establishing a session with the preliminary recommendations of the citizens where the authorities can complement relevant concerns, with which the citizens' assembly can improve its final recommendations to be less naïve, more effective, and more likely to be implemented.
  3. Formalizing a legally binding follow-up process to ensure continuity across administrations.
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### **Learning 3:**

#### **Information gathering and sharing is a lot of work**

During a citizen deliberation process, a large amount of information and collective knowledge is shared and discussed, so the active management of this knowledge continues to be challenging. One solution to this potential lack of information is to have an implementation diary and a person responsible for recording live group sessions, which are available for future learning and consultation.

Since 2019 Delibera has learned a lot and is reaching another level of experience in terms of citizen deliberation with new cases such as the Citizen Climate Assemblies.

**“We are building a learning process, every new project is based on what we learned in the latter [...] we are really excited about this evolution.”**

## **\_SUR** **Jurado Ciudadano para la Política Estatal** **Anticorrupción de Chihuahua (Citizen Jury for** **the Chihuahua State Anti-Corruption Policy)**

We talked to Sofía Castillo, Co-founder of SUR.<sup>29</sup> Her work was ignited by #YoSoy132, a student mobilization in Mexico that allowed her to understand that democracy was stuck and that it was possible to create cracks to solve local and global problems, such as the inequalities crossed by the pandemic crisis, the climate crisis and other issues that represent great risks for society and the human species.

**“I believe in deliberative democracy as a tool for equality, emancipation, pedagogy, and social justice. We have to find better ways to make the results viable, but many of the lessons we have learned will take us there.”**

### **Initial motivations**

When Sofía joined the Executive Secretariat of the State Anti-Corruption System in Chihuahua (known in Spanish as SEA), there was

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29. To learn more about SUR, please visit: <https://surinstitute.com/>.

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already an open conversation about Hybrid Democracy and specific ways it could become a reality in the local scenario. The proposal was to construct the new State Anti-Corruption Policy (known in Spanish as PEA) with a citizen jury.

The proposal was approved and implemented in mid-2019, intending to install capacities for citizen deliberation in Chihuahua, especially for public decision-making on anti-corruption policies through a citizen deliberation for a State Anti-Corruption Policy (PEA) proposal.

### **First steps**

The first challenges they faced were access to data, logistics, and limited resources for implementation. However, the deliberation process was carried out to completion. The call for participants worked well: an initial sample of people was convened, and this group reduced itself to the people who confirmed their interest. The consolidated group was then submitted to civic sortition to ensure a random selection of the final citizen jury that included all the groups that inhabit the territory to reduce conflict of interest in the decision-making process.

A private service delivered invitations, and the interested people registered online and confirmed their socio-demographic information, such as age group and whether they belonged to a specific population, gender, or territory. That information allowed them to have a diverse citizen jury.

**“This was the most precious part: a man from his store, on the computer, attending the (virtual) meetings. Medical students, housewives, professionals, it really was very interesting to see that population diversity.”**

This process was implemented during the pandemic closure from a public institution. The facilitation, design, and implementation team was secured. The same team was able to obtain additional resources for the convening, delivery service, and other specialized socio-demographic sampling services.

The jury was organized into thematic tables. Each table comprised the previously selected group of 40 participants –or citizen jury–, a group of experts formed through a public call for proposals, and an official group of people designated by each public institution. The premise was that the citizens –or jury– would decide, the experts would inform, and the institution could lobby its positions.

Two phases of sessions were held. The first stage was devoted to understanding all sides of the issue and learning how to ask questions, debate with the experts, and exercise the role of citizen juror. The second stage was dedicated to solutions. Each table brought five solutions previously prioritized by the popular vote. They voted, gave their opinion on the proposals, brought them to the plenary, and voted again.

## **Innovations to Tackle the Barriers**

The ultimate achievement of this project was the successful deliberation of 35 actions for the State Anti-Corruption Policy, although the local anti-corruption authority has not fulfilled these actions. When asked about the project's achievements, Sofia first mentioned the results she observed in the participating citizens.

**“Today, they are people who can make public decisions on anti-corruption policy [...] For me that was the real goal, and I think it was achieved.”**

Innovations such as convening expert groups, active recruitment, citizen sorting, and transparency were also present in this project. However, other major innovations were: (i) incorporating political confidence in citizens, (ii) a multidisciplinary approach to the methodology, and (iii) designing virtual spaces for deliberation during the pandemic lockdown.

#### **Innovation/solution 4:**

##### **Incorporating political confidence in citizens**

A citizen jury must have all the necessary tools at its disposal. That is why there was an important initial induction space dedicated to critical thinking, first regarding the methodology that was going to be implemented –the hows and whys– and then to help the jury build confidence by preparing for meetings with experts and politicians, people who will argue with them and who know very well how to dissuade a jury.

**“We wanted them to be confident to ask whatever they wanted and be sure they were really there as jurors..”**

During the debriefing phase, in the last public assembly of this project, the jury members shared that they became more capable on technical issues such as anti-corruption. Still, more importantly, they also became more self-confident as citizens, as everyday people who can participate in a public decision-making process.

### **Innovation/solution 5:**

#### **Multidisciplinary drive meets institution and democracy networks**

Despite all the technical challenges, this project had a multidisciplinary team committed to making the deliberation process possible from an institutional space. They sought support and used tools from the available democracy networks. They managed, for example, to do the group sampling and learned how to use the free software of healthy democracy to do the civic sortition.

**“This was done because there was a team of people who sought the abilities to do it.”**

A parallel first initial space was dedicated to training the institutional and experts group on citizen participation rules: their role was not to make decisions but to dissuade, show clear information, and answer questions. The whole exercise was suited to the people from the citizen jury. However, the public servants really enjoyed the process as they worked outside their office hours.

### **Innovation/solution 6:**

#### **Designing virtual spaces for deliberation during covid lockdown**

Transparency was necessary for the entire process. To secure it meant learning to use streaming software for social networks and adapting the fishbowl methodology to virtual spaces, which in turn represented a significant cultural challenge and access to technology.

**“I am very fond of the citizen jury because the first part of any process of deliberative democracy and the most important is pedagogy.”**

The first part was an intensive workshop on the use of technology -Zoom and cell phone- and going through the technical steps and needs with each person to facilitate access and use of technology.

## **Lessons learned from the challenges**

Many initial small challenges are significant for the Global South, like not having enough socio-demographic data to make an initial sample, along with limited resources, tools, and local references.

The citizen jury delivered a proposal accompanied by the technical team, who drafted and technically complemented the final proposal. They reviewed the final document with the jury and then delivered it to the authorities.

Nevertheless, a final barrier was the final decision-making phase. After two years, the final mandate of the citizen jury has not been complied with by the local authorities despite their public commitment to the participatory mechanism and their participation throughout the deliberation process.

**“There was constant and open communication with the authorities during the implementation [...], the agreement was delayed at the moment of obtaining the results.”**

The proposal to install anti-corruption deliberative participation mechanisms throughout the State was one of the most problematic for the following instances. It shows the institutional contradiction or simulation of authorities that approve and initiate a deliberative process but are unwilling to install the infrastructure for its continuation.

The case of the Citizen Jury in Chihuahua is a testimony of the institutional crisis. Chihuahua is still one of the few federal entities in Mexico that does not have a PEA. It is serious in a context full of corruption, state capture, cartels, and public decision-making behind closed doors.

#### **Learning 4:**

##### **Participating is –still– a privilege**

Pedagogy represents an area of opportunity for achieving participation, especially in the Global South context, where citizen participation is not yet a secured right. Deliberative democracy recognizes that participation is an effort for most people and offers rewards to make these efforts possible.

**“Recognizing that participating is also a job improves a lot of the interaction.”**

#### **Learning 5:**

##### **Strengthen counterweights to authority**

The implementation team prepared for this scenario because they recognized the power dynamics and knew it was necessary to create a counterweight to authority to implement a citizen participation exercise. They designed the PEA Observatory that followed the entire process. Democracy R&D, the OECD, the United Nations Convention against Corruption, and other agencies joined the process as neutral witnesses but also provided technical advice to the implementation team.



**“Deliberative democracy is very smart in terms of balance of power, but the active commitment and compliance of authorities is crucial because the decisions that are made will involve them.”**

The PEA Observatory was not enough for Chihuahua's case. Still, this innovation did help legitimize the technical aspects, taking care of public media management and reducing the risk of any invalidating strategy of the participation process.

### **Learning 6:**

#### **Legitimacy and transparency mechanisms**

Two documents were submitted: a preliminary proposals ballot and a complete proposal with technical support for viability. The first document was built entirely from the work of the citizen jury; the second document was consolidated by the technical team with the proposals of the citizen jury and complemented with technical information proving the viability of each proposal. The technical viability and absolute transparency of the documents'

deliberative and consolidation process were fundamental to reducing any allegations of unattainability or suspicion of bias that could block the public approval process.

#### **Implementing from within public institutions**

**“Two weeks of intense work were committed to determine how to make the mandate of the citizen jury a reality, how to bring it into line with the laws of Chihuahua and integrate it into the institutional framework.”**

## Learning 7:

Implementing from within a public institution was an important and intense experience. The implementation team was responsible for ensuring the legality of the process and the institution itself. Although the political actors have changed, a monitoring process is still active, and former technical team members continue to push from within the institutions<sup>30</sup> to complete the agreed process.

A transversal innovation throughout this process is networked learning through collaborations, mentoring, and feedback from organizations that helped with the tools, examples, templates, and solutions to specific challenges throughout both projects.

**“We don't want to reinvent what already is working, so if there is something that we can apply to our experience, we do it, and we build up.”**

As a broader transregional achievement, it is important to mention the cooperative exchange of knowledge and experiences between the growing network of organizations striving to implement deliberative mechanisms.

## \_Personal Views & Dreams from the Global South

Silvia knows that people can work together and reach a common ground for the benefit of the collective. She has witnessed this with politicians, citizens, organizers, facilitators, stakeholders, and activists.

**“We can help democracy.”**

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30. To learn more about the work done by the Comité Anticorrupción (CPC), please visit: <https://comiteanticorrupcion.mx/publicaciones>.

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Silvia recognizes the expansion of participatory initiatives in the Global South and points to the need to think better about what is really important in this context and consult the people and participants of that territory. Silvia states there is no other way to know what is best than to have more of these discussions and learn more from real, local experiences.

I asked Silvia what she sees in her local context and what she wants to see when she looks out the window:

**“A lot of buildings and avenues [...] I wish it stays this way, and the mountains behind stay there with no buildings at all, because it is our State Park and it has our water reserves. And if I could, I would like to not see so many people living in the streets. We have to get citizenship to help governments to solve that, because they are not doing a good job.”**

As for Sofia, the Global South is an emancipatory political category, but more importantly, it is a collective subject where systems of inequality have historically been installed: a territory that shares historic dispossession consequences but also solutions to simultaneous crises.

**“We have been brilliant and very creative. We can help to recognize ourselves in terms of self-esteem.”**

There aren't many spaces where we can sit down and conspire (aspire together) with people from the Global South and others who may not consider themselves part of the Global South but face similar barriers in different ways. Sofia perceives that a field of possibility and reflection opened up in Demo.Reset.<sup>31</sup>

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31. To learn more about Demo.Reset, please visit: <https://www.demore-set.org/en/>.

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Sofia invites us to ask ourselves if this political category works, why, and how we want to mobilize it. She points out the risk of establishing political division categories and proposes methodologies for mutual learning between the global North and South. It does not imply omitting inequality, the actors responsible for it, and the pending reparation. We, the people, can still share knowledge and help each other break down these barriers to dismantle the system of power relations established between North and South and even between different parts of the South.

I asked Sofia what she sees in her local context and what she wants to see:

“I see my neighborhood, and I like it, the City of physical proximity, or what we call the gossiping city, where one can be gossiping from the window [...] more trees, that's important, more color for Mexico City.”

For both organizations, Sur and Delibera Brasil!, it is a dream come true to start an exercise of climate citizen assemblies in Latin American cities together with Extituito<sup>32</sup> and Democracia en Red.<sup>33</sup>

Applying justice (social, environmental, or anti-corruption) must be a collective exercise. In this sense, what is really unsustainable is to continue making decisions without deliberation and collective consensus. Deliberation is the only way to understand better the problems and solutions that affect us all, even if they are often differentiated.

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32. To learn more about Extituito, please visit: <https://www.extituito.com/>.

33. To learn more about Democracia en Red, please visit: <https://democraciaenred.org/>.

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Moreover, when decisions are made based on collective consensus, their implementation is not out of place, and their enforceability also becomes a shared responsibility.

Institutional mechanisms for the consolidation of deliberative democracy must be strengthened since, in any case, people will continue to deliberate. The two exercises described in this chapter are real examples of the desired role of citizens in advocacy and public decision-making in an open democracy. The more citizens are able to assume that role, the better we will be able to understand the problems, imagine the solutions, and redistribute the benefits.

