SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA) EASTERN EUROPE

SOUTHEAST ASTA

LATIN AHERICA

(INDIA)

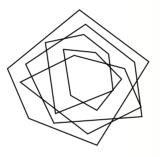
*GLOBAL SOUTH



Resetting *Democracy:

The South Side of Global Deliberation.





Resetting *Democracy

The South Side of Global Deliberation.

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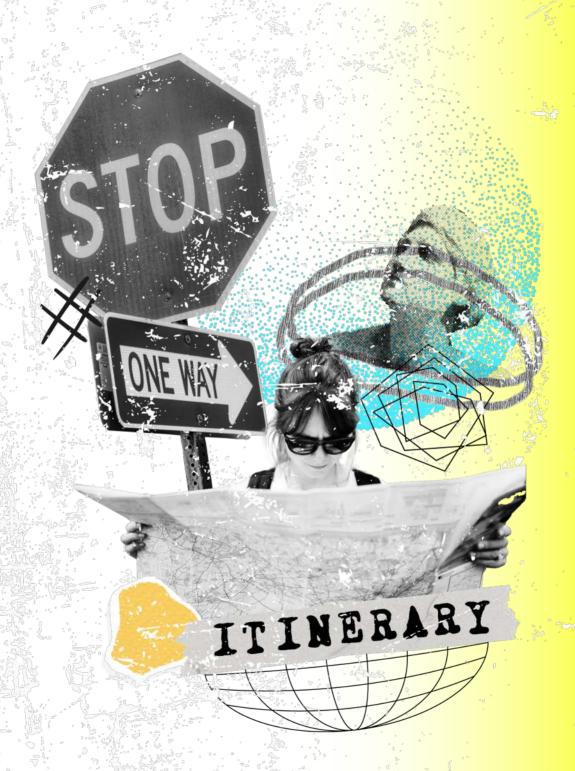
from Alternative Communities
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This publication was developed through the cooperation between the Global Office of the National Endowment for Democracy Foundation (NED), Extituto de Política Abierta, allied organizations, and stakeholders working for deliberative democracy in the Global South.

This publication brings together the insights learned in the first years of the project **Demo.Reset**, Deliberation in the Global South, and invites seven authors from different countries to investigate the particularities of deliberation in Southeast Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, Eastern Europe, and Latin America.

We are grateful for the collaboration of all **Demo.Reset team members**, the authors of each chapter, and the partner organizations that have contributed to his creation: ActHub Africa, Africa's Voices Foundation, Pulang Kampong Foundation, Taiwan Reach-Out Association for Democracy, Instituto del Sur Urbano, Delibera Brasil, Participation Factory and Alternative Communities Foundation. Learning about their visions, challenges, and experiences inspires other deliberative democracy and citizen participation initiatives that want to strengthen governance in their local contexts.

Finally, we thank the project's Advisory Committee and the partner organizations with whom we have been able to reflect and create together. Thank you for your commitment to deliberation and for joining us in shaping greater spaces for participation and advocacy in the Global South.



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Demo.Reset: An Introduction to OUR

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Graduated in philosophy from the University of Antioquia and visual anthropologist from the University of Barcelona. Interested in the analysis and representation of information and knowledge in multiple forms: chronicles, audiovisuals, information systems, maps, graphics. Faithfully believes that one learns by doing and that thinking is doing violence to oneself and getting out of one's comfort zone to find unexpected solutions to complex problems. She loves dancing to electronic music and the eternal clash of bodies.

From Occupying POLITICS

to Inhabiting Politics:
Looking through our window

Through the window of Extituto's office, we hear the sound of cars and people coming and going, drawing the streets and filling them with the everyday life and chaos of this central point of the city. Located on the third floor of a small building in the Chapinero neighborhood, we discover from that window that parks, stores, and buildings extend across the width of the savannah until they crash into the eastern mountains, which impose themselves on the landscape to remind us that we are in Bogota, the capital of Colombia.

The idea of EX-TITUTO, with the prefix "-EX," was set out from the name itself as an organization that seeks to open the doors of politics to the needs of the "outside" with processes of hacking and institutional openness. That is why it is an "EXtitute of open politics" and not an INstitute. Here, at an altitude of 2600 meters above sea level, in the middle of the Andes mountain range that runs through all of South America, a team of young lawyers, political scientists, and creatives have been working since 2019 to strengthen a democracy that from our equatorial window we could observe broken down, not only in Colombia but throughout the globe.

Contemporary democracies are in crisis for multiple reasons, among which we find the lack of credibility of representatives, the numerous corruption scandals, and the fact that citizens do not feel heard or taken into account in the implementation of public policies, among many other problems. Thus, to work for democracy is also to get closer to its defects, challenges, and frustrations.

We took our first steps with projects such as "Nosotras ahora" (Us Now) and "Ocupar la política" (Occupy Politics), with which we supported the candidacies of what we call "transformative people" (i.e., activists, social leaders, representatives of civil

sectors, among others) who were committed to strengthening collective leadership through their trajectories and experiences. The support for these candidacies was built as a bet for new faces and life experiences to occupy decision-making scenarios.

This experience led us to take our second step, which was inspired by the idea of "inhabiting politics." Once these "transformative people" reached the decision-making scenarios, they had to continue building spaces of institutional openness. The process of inhabiting politics does not end when people or agendas enter decision-making scenarios. Once they do, they must team up with more organizations, citizens, and representatives so that a process of hacking the institutions is generated from within and initiatives that seek institutional openness in terms of "open government" -through initiatives of transparency, participation, accountability and innovations in the institutions- continue to be implemented.

There are multiple mechanisms for democratic innovation (i.e., civic technologies, citizen assemblies, open data initiatives, etc.) to connect people already part of political institutions with new people who want to join in transforming democracy. Among these mechanisms, Extituto has supported and strengthened, for example, exercises in which organizations invite institutions to open their data to let people know what is happening with State contracting, statistics, and the results of its achieved goals or its attempts to redesign the language with which politics is communicated so that citizens can understand what is happening within the institution. In exploring channels of dialogue and exchange, we came across the power of citizen assemblies and deliberative democracy. This finding catapulted us to our next step.



The idea of fostering the possibility of reaching agreements through dialogue -especially in countries of the Global South or with internal conflicts such as Colombia- allows us to understand how consensus building involves understanding the other's point of view. Transforming the tendency of "eliminating those who think differently" for "seeking consensus with those who think differently" leads us to understand that living together in the same space means we must all be able to fit in.

Something that deeply motivated us was the peace process in Colombia. We were able to observe that deliberative democracy is very similar to transitional justice, for it requires justice and truth, even if it does not entail reparation and non-repetition scenarios. Constructing dialogue spaces demands joint efforts to seek consensus. However, these efforts can not depend only on politicians, representatives, or people in power; they require an active citizenry that shares its point of view and knowledge. That is the only way to build spaces for dialogue that truly strengthen democratic openness and listening.

The challenges that democracy is facing today are not limited to one country or region. Instead, they reflect broader global trends and forces that are shaping the political landscape around the world. While it is true that some democracies face more immediate and acute challenges than others, the ones we find in specific places within Colombia's borders (such as lack of funding for the participation of organized civil society, absence of a culture of recognition of diverse positions, political

hermeticism within institutions with nepotistic logics, little appropriation of deliberation and advocacy mechanisms, among others) are also present in many places around the world.

This idea means that local events such as the Arab Spring (2010-2011), Brexit (2016), or Russian interference in Donald Trump's presidential election (2016) can be read as symptoms of a greater evil with common characteristics: the resurgence of violent repression of social protest, the insufficiency of existing democratic entities to address global emergencies such as migration, the weakness of electoral systems in the face of the power of social networks in shaping public opinion political discourses and the impossibility of impermeabilizing democratic structures from the agendas and interests of private economic forces. These characteristics are visible and present worldwide.

The COVID-19 pandemic (2019-2021) is perhaps the most recent global phenomenon that brought to the fore the systemic aspect of the challenges facing democracy. While some democracies may be more resilient or adaptable, the crisis is not limited to those countries currently experiencing democratic backsliding or erosion. Rather, it reflects a broader problem that requires collective action and cooperation at the global level.

By focusing our gaze on other windows, we wanted to venture on a journey to expand our exchange networks. We then asked ourselves how other countries were using deliberative democracy and discovered that people are becoming aware that traditional democracy may not be sufficient to solve complex problems and that the way we make decisions affects the outcomes we reach.

New technologies are also facilitating and transforming how people participate in decision-making. One of the problems with innovations in democracy is that these processes often remain at a symbolic level, with no possibility of being implemented in public policy or providing an effective institutional response to citizens. Deliberative democracy can create fairer and more equitable outcomes by helping people learn from each other, agree on solutions and generate new ideas to solve problems. With all this in mind, we began researching deliberative democracy and why it was gaining popularity worldwide.

The first thing we found was a general identification of these types of processes being done by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). We also found that different organizations and initiatives around the world were increasingly interested in mapping these processes (e.g., MacMaster University's Participedia or the Centre for Deliberative Democracy and Global Governance at the University of Canberra).

The mapping exercise stemmed from the need to describe and analyze cases that were implementing strategies to institutionalize mechanisms of deliberative democracy in decision-making processes at the state level in different parts of the world. An example of this is the experience of Citizen Assemblies in France and the United Kingdom, which allowed for direct dialogue with institutional decision-makers and the implementation of policies built together with the citizenry.

Similarly, the Global Assembly initiative -led by several organizations such as the Innovation for Policy Foundation-created a Citizens' Assembly with 100 participants worldwide to build and present a citizens' declaration at COP26.

These first references we found had faced immense challenges in bringing citizens closer to public decision-making, but the results were worth it! That is why we decided that Extituto should join the global wave of deliberative democracy.



Organizations from the Global South that, like Extituto, decide to confront the local crisis and contribute to the global conversation often find that theories and manuals fall short and are rarely compatible with the characteristics of most places. Just look at the case of cities such as Buenaventura, Colombia, and its experience during the civic strike and the effects of an initiative that, despite having positively deployed purely deliberative elements, faced structural obstacles of political violence.

What is globally known as deliberative democracy originates in some conditions commonly found in societies of the Global North: a more inclusive economy with effective channels for accessing institutional information and in which the right of citizens to exercise democracy is respected. However, these characteristics are only evident in a handful of countries. The rest, including Colombia, seem to have "unsuitable" features or extreme difficulties for deliberation, public participation, and advocacy.

This situation led us to ask ourselves about the need for characteristics such as economic and political stability to be able to work for democracy at a global level. In other words, does this mean it is impossible to apply deliberative democracy in other countries? While Colombia was already answering this question with all that was happening, it was thanks to a project with activists in Cuba that we were able to confirm our hunches.

In Cuba, we worked with collectives and activists to implement a citizens' assembly to suggest changes to the Cuban constitution. In the process, we realized that it would be difficult to comply with

many of the precepts established for citizens' assemblies, as we were in a context without democratic quarantees or quarantees for free association. And this difficulty was not because we were following a theoretical or academic handbook, which would allow us to understand the gap between the material and the reality we were facing (as is often the case with such material). Instead, we were using implementation guides from citizens' assemblies around the world, such as those of Extinction Rebellion. Even so, several starting points for implementing citizens' assemblies -such as a previous training phase with the participation of people selected (sometimes randomly) and experts on the topic to be deliberated- were unfeasible in Cuba due to the absence of democratic quarantees to discuss constitutional issues. On the other hand, a face-to-face deliberation with the participation of citizens, experts, and institutional decision-makers was simply impossible due to the citizen restrictions contemplated for this type of initiative in Cuba.

Were Havana and Santiago unsuitable places for deliberative democracy? Despite the restrictions on free association, the Cuban activists we worked with constantly met to deliberate and create a critical vision of citizenship capable of influencing instances of power. This group of activists showed us that deliberative democracy is possible in Cuba.

If a country with these participation obstacles was able to carry out meaningful and transformative citizen processes, perhaps other countries that in theory would be considered "unsuitable for deliberative democracy" –such as those part of the "Global South" – could also have successful processes.

The Global South concept has been widely discussed in academic circles. Following various figures from the social sciences and decolonizing studies, Extituto understands the Global South not as a geographic category but as a way of understanding, addressing, and attending to a series of communities historically and systematically excluded and marginalized by colonialism and capitalism. Thus, the concept of the Global South is instead a call to action that seeks to recognize and resist the assaults of the hegemonic system and the suffering it has caused across the globe.

Thus, we began to look for countries with the following characteristics:multidimensional poverty, insufficient guarantees for public participation and citizen deliberation, corruption, inadequate accountability processes, few institutionalized spaces for citizen participation, deep inequality gaps to access and diversify the participation of communities traditionally underrepresented in decision-making scenarios; among others. These challenges hinder the effective implementation of healthy practices for deliberative democracy.

At some point, we had an internal discussion on whether we should include Eastern European countries in the Global South concept. Many of these countries recognize themselves more with the development ideals of Europe than with a past painted by colonization and inequality like that of the Global South. However, it is crucial to remember that this region has a unique history of new independence processes –many still conflicting– resulting from the collapse of the former Soviet Union. Additionally, this area has recently experienced an accelerated transition to

capitalism and a peace process following the ethnic war of the 1990s. These characteristics made us understand that many of the difficulties and conditions that characterize the Global South are shared by the countries of this region.

Understanding the above opened up the spectrum we had established, as it required including a large number of very diverse territories mainly located in Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa, Southeast Asia, India, and Eastern Europe.

Upon noticing the existence of several countries with precarious conditions for citizen participation and deliberation, we understood that despite the differences, there were also some fundamental characteristics in common. Thus, it was pertinent to stop thinking of our contexts as isolated phenomena resulting from fractured processes. On the contrary, it was imperative to recognize ourselves as part of systemic dynamics that transcend national borders and are patterns that extend throughout the Global South.

If so many countries do not fit within certain standards, perhaps they can constitute a community, so it is necessary to create our own standards to build more inclusive tools that respond to global diversity to strengthen and support the collaboration that the crisis we are going through requires. Thus, we decided to shift our gaze toward an EXPANDED GLOBAL SOUTH and look for new examples, projects, people, and inspirations.



When we attempted to address deliberative democracy and the people committed to deliberative democracy in the Global South, we found that the mappings of organizations mainly came from institutions in the Global North and that access to information was limited.

Upon locating potential organizations, we found that many were isolated, and it was not possible to establish communication channels through, for example, a website, digital social networks, or cell phones. We also found that many of these initiatives did not necessarily use the same technical terminology to describe their procedures, which made it very difficult to compare their effects. Thus, we were motivated to create a conceptual model to articulate common categories to describe and characterize the set of differential practices for participation and deliberation we were encountering.

One of the findings of our little inquiry was that many of the participation and deliberation initiatives we were describing practiced some kind of a collage in their projects. They tended to adopt some procedures and methodologies from the institutionalized deliberative models of the Global North. Still, they gave them an unexpected twist by including "non-traditional" or "non-institutionalized" deliberative practices more aligned with the features and characteristics of their contexts and worldviews.

Among the practices we identified were, for example, experiences from sub-Saharan Africa that focused on orality and the symbolic work -vital for indigenous communities- of women and youth, which were sought

to be included in conversations with the State. Radio and story creation was a central element for this, as it revitalized these communities' ways of naming and sent a profound message to decision-makers. In articulation with civil society organizations—which acted as collaborators in the compilation—and translators, this exercise managed to bring two very different kinds of expression to dialogue with each other. On the one hand, there was the technical rationality of the State with its public policy terms and concepts and, on the other, citizen agendas that were constructed based on their own ways of describing their needs, solutions, and proposals for transformation.

Furthermore, it was possible to recognize that participation and deliberation initiatives in the Global South were not restricted to the traditional structures associated with formalized organizations. As a result, we realized we needed to broaden our understanding of deliberation to include multiple forms of collaboration and partnership. We learned that institutions or NGOs are not frequently behind these initiatives in the Global South but more diverse and informal agents, such as community groups, organized citizens, individuals who have previously worked in politics, community action boards, etc. Initiatives such as Enjambre, from Argentina, are examples of democratic exercises linked to artistic practices and "other languages" that demonstrate that exploration and innovation processes in the Global South are experimenting with different disciplines. Thus, the initiatives do not only respond to formal or official procedures; on the contrary, they are activities that arise from the will or need to create something new for the community.

After realizing we were part of a community, we felt the need to talk and exchange more with other experiences. However, existing infrastructures failed to provide the necessary infrastructure conditions for this exchange. To overcome atomization, isolation, and the lack of "custom-made tools," we needed to deepen our research, recognize the solutions created by others, and provide an articulation platform to strengthen action, participation, and collective intelligence on deliberative democracy in the Global South. Thus, a dream was born, and what we now call Demo. Reset was created.

The first step to articulate and strengthen replicable and adapted tools for participation and deliberation in the Global South was to understand what these territories have in common and get to know better the organizations or initiatives working there to characterize them. It was also vital to generate a dialogue between regions and find similarities with other organizations around the Global South through a horizontal exchange of knowledge and experiences based on an understanding of common difficulties.

To carry out successful deliberative processes in the Global South to overcome the multiple difficulties, we had to strengthen the capacity of deliberative professionals and connect them to learn from other processes, experiences, and practices that occur many miles away and propose solutions to common challenges. We decided to take advantage of the fact that we would meet to exchange knowledge and began to ask ourselves what other things we could do during the meeting. It occurred to us that the

best way to take advantage of a scenario in which people and processes that had never met before would have the opportunity to dialogue was to propose that we create something together.

In this way, we could come together around a common challenge to share and create knowledge that would understand and capture the complexity of the Global South. We came up with the idea of building a pedagogical package with master classes and information about the organizations and collecting it on a Web Page. The objective was to channel the information gathered in the process and share it in a compilation of information, along with examples of what has been done in the Global South. In short, we were dreaming of a great laboratory for research, action, and joint participation through the creation of tools and prototypes of deliberation from the Global South.

Dreaming About BRIDGES: Getting to Know Our Problems to Recognize Each Other

In 2021, we were able to get down to work. The project would have four stages, last two years, and, if all went well, would be the first of many more. We no longer went out searching for possibilities; for the first time, we were building these new horizons on a global scale from home!

During the first phase, we collected information to describe 42 participation and deliberation initiatives designed and implemented by 122 civil society organizations participating in the project and located in four regions of the Global South: Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa, Southeast Asia, India and Eastern Europe.

The project was focused on initiatives designed by civil society as bottom-up participation strategies (i.e., led as proposals from organized and unorganized civil society). Among the diversity of actors articulated in the project, a total of 72 initiatives were characterized, of which 27 are in Sub-Saharan Africa, 21 in Latin America, 6 in Southeast Asia, 3 in Eastern Europe, and 3 in India.

In terms of the project's scope, 41 of the 71 initiatives we were working with ranged from 100 to 600 participants, almost all of which addressed citizen training processes with small groups to strengthen access to fundamental rights and control of public policies. In some cases, initiatives that work with this range of participants implement methodologies such as mini-publics, town meetings, or training and capacity-building groups. The scope of these types of initiatives is highly oriented to qualify the processes of participation in populations in conditions of inequality, and there is an emphasis on women and youth (specifically rural populations), ethnic communities, and workers.

Another group of 9 initiatives, ranging between 1,000 and 1,700 participants, focuses on more massive actions such as participatory budgets, citizens' assemblies, or training processes through platforms able to repeat the methodologies cyclically and periodically implement their processes.

As for the topics of interest on which participant initiatives concentrate their actions, we found that most focus on citizen participation, followed by civil society capacity building or training, and civil deliberative democracy as the central axis of their action. In many cases, strengthening these processes involves recognizing different civic, political, economic, social, and fundamental rights, especially among young people, women, and rural populations. Another group of initiatives was more focused on citizen advocacy processes.

The final group comprised initiatives related to transparency and accountability. These initiatives involve specific topics such as participatory budgets, rural development policies, and budget management to implement strategies against climate change, among others. These initiatives are also involved in civic innovation projects to monitor public policies.

Characterizing participant initiatives allowed us to identify that most initiatives aim to strengthen civil society capacities and gain greater understanding and collective intelligence on public problems. A significant learning from the analyzed experiences is that in these countries of the Global South, civil society organizations leading bottom-up processes of participation and deliberation recognize the need to empower citizens and mitigate cultural asymmetries and social capital to build more equitable opportunities for participation. The initiatives purposes and

approaches are consistent with the contexts of inequality and inequity that constitute the Global South. At this point, a strategy of empowerment and resilience that civil society sets in motion to build conditions of possibility that make the ground fertile for more equitable and effective participation begins to become evident. Without this reinforced enabler, accessing decision-making scenarios is much more challenging.

After compiling all these lessons learned from the initiatives' characterization, we could better understand the difficulties shared by civil society actors trying to carry out participation and deliberation processes in regions of the Global South. We called these difficulties "participation and deliberation barriers in the Global South."

We understood that there were "structural barriers" related to the contextual conditions that make it possible or not to carry out assertive and effective participation and deliberation practices in the differential contexts of the Global South. On the other hand, we understood that there were "functional barriers" faced by the organizations in the design, implementation, and evaluation of their projects, experiences, and participation/deliberation processes. Both structural and functional barriers began to give us tools to understand the visible local dynamics that we could synthesize in the following set of lessons learned.

First, regarding local political contexts, we observe that there are often insufficient financial and technological resources, which prevents citizens from having a voice in important decisions. These countries often have burdensome bureaucracy and, at

times, are prone to corruption. Thus, it is difficult for citizens to improve things by speaking out about what needs to be changed. This situation can make people feel that they are wasting their time, that no one is listening to them, and that they may stop trying to participate in these discussions altogether because their opinions don't really matter.

Secondly, there are barriers to local participation practices. We found that people don't want to participate in important decisions because they don't see any good reason to do so, and unfortunately, this happens in many places. In Sub-Saharan Africa, for example, women may need help with transportation and childcare to participate in discussions. They may also want to be paid for their time and have their basic needs met, and men may be more interested in getting a job through participation. In Latin America, people are often reminded that being informed and participating in discussions is important, but this is not always enough to get people excited.

Third, there are barriers within organizations working at the local level. As we have seen, they tend to have problems managing money and the technology they need to carry out their projects. They may have good ideas and plans, but they don't always know how to assess whether their ideas are really making a difference. Another problem is that they may not have the right skills or knowledge to use digital tools or new methods. Finding experts to help can be difficult and expensive, and getting them on board takes a lot of time. Even if they get help, ensuring everyone is on the same page and following the proper procedures can be challenging. Therefore, there can be problems when organizations try to implement their plans in the real world.

Barriers are also a product of the internal workings of the organizations in the different phases of project execution, such as design and implementation. At the design stage, the main challenges were ensuring fair and representative participation, finding ways to reach and involve traditionally underrepresented groups, and ensuring that participants remained involved and committed over the long term. Often organizations do not have enough money or resources to help everyone in need. In addition, organizations often lack adequate knowledge or experience to understand the different economic, social, and cultural conditions that affect people's ability to participate. Thus, meeting the challenge of including people who are often excluded and ensuring they remain involved throughout the process can be even more complex.

During the implementation stage, a common problem is information management, which is sometimes one-sided and favors a particular political or economic position as a product of partisan, clientelistic, or private interests. Thus, organizations must address the specific inequalities of different regions to ensure everyone has access to information. It is also important to provide citizens with the information they need to make informed decisions rather than just asking for their opinions without giving them context. It is difficult to find out what information people need to form an opinion on every issue that is discussed in public. In addition, it is difficult to organize and sort through all the ideas and opinions shared during discussions because it requires a lot of technical and financial resources, as well as specific knowledge and tools to ensure everyone's ideas are heard and disagreements are resolved. Furthermore, explaining technical

information to participants in a way that is easy to understand based on their level of education, culture, social status, and economic situation is challenging for organizations. The difficulty lies in finding the right balance and ensuring effective and timely communication, and it is a significant challenge in improving the quality of deliberation and participation.

Another problem during the implementation stage is the execution process. People involved in public policy initiatives often do not know the specific steps in the decision-making process in which they can effectively participate and make a difference. It may be unclear whether the process is just to gather information and discuss an issue or whether a decision will actually be made. Methods used to gather feedback, such as public meetings or short workshops, often do not provide enough time for people to provide input. It can also be difficult to determine when to use voting versus analyzing and comparing different arguments to make a decision.

After identifying these common barriers, we embarked on the second phase. The information gathered made it easier to discover, through exchanges, those innovative initiatives that had been able to respond to the challenges in their particular context and scale. We held a series of virtual meetings to discuss design strategies to build: deliberative democracy mechanisms; decision-making methods beyond voting; inclusive calls to consolidate a sufficiently representative sample of citizens to participate in deliberative mechanisms; and communication strategies for citizen involvement. We learned a great deal from these meetings and exchanges, in which best practices were shared so people from around the Global South could have starting points, examples, and case studies to implement in their countries.



By October 2022, we were finally ready for stage 3: the prototype design labs. We managed to gather people from all corners of the world, and for 14 days, we met at the Cinemateca Distrital in Bogota. It is extraordinary to remember such precise moments of life through smells and for a scent to become part of the collective memory. For Extituto, that October will always be jasmine-scented.

The meeting was attended by people like Dú Pente from Brazil, who works in Juventude Negra Política (Black Youth Politics) on projects to include Afro-youth in political participation. His energy invaded the spaces, and he had a very authentic personality. He was loud and created intimate and cooperative spaces very easily. We also had the chance to meet people like Gabriela Simonetti from the Sociedad Civil por la Acción Climática de Magallanes (Civil Society for Climate Action in Magallanes), an environmental rights activist in southern Chile who manages to infect anyone with her passion for the environment and environmental politics. Besides captivating us every time she spoke, thanks to her theater background, Gabriela was always willing to get to know other places in Bogota, go to theater shows, and get out of the little bubble we had created in the labs. We also remember people like Amitabh Paude, from India, who was working on a project to engage rural people in developing public policy solutions to redistribute land to farmers and mitigate the effects of climate change in India.

During the first day, Amitabh shared with us small jars of jasmine oil and explained that they use the oil to harmonize spaces in India. He said he wanted to give us this gift so we would take it back home and harmonize other places.

Resetting democracy: the south side of global deliberation

Many people kept their jars in their backpacks, so in the days that followed, there was always a time when the venue was filled with the smell of jasmine. Amitabh also earned everyone's sympathy for his willingness to teach, learn and listen and for sharing stories of his community and family every time he spoke about his work. Thanks to these and all the people who attended the labs, this social workspace quickly became a very intimate and personal space.

In a collective communication effort, we put aside our different languages (Hindi, Spanish, Turkish, and Swahili, among others) and committed to attempting to communicate in English. Six working groups were formed, each with five people, and the following projects emerged:

- 1) Creating a citizens assembly capable of incorporating small farmers in the decision-making process regarding the development of agriculture.
- 2) Building a participatory diagnosis and an advocacy proposal with solutions to recover confidence in environmental conflicts.
- 3) Developing a multimedia platform (digital platform + community radio stations) to ensure effective participation in public finance management processes.
- 4) Creating a citizen feedback application with open data standards to provide citizens with adequate information related to participatory budget projects and to strengthen accountability mechanisms.
- 5) Developing an advocacy and incentive strategy to strengthen public institutions' understanding, compliance, and commitment to deliberative democracy mechanisms.
- 6) Co-designing and developing a matching platform that allows users to associate their knowledge or support needs with the resources and expertise of other users.

It was a very intense experience, but deliberation accompanied us every step of the way. After a lot of quantitative data, reports, and counting tables, being able to put names and faces to the people

behind these ideas and initiatives, to know about their families, hobbies, and how their pasts had inspired them to do the work they do today, was leaving us with another lesson on something we had not contemplated in our methodology: the place of empathy and affection has in collective creation. A special bond now unites everyone we met during those 14 days.

To share the richness of these exchanges with more people, we invited writers from different regions to take us inside each territory through their unique perspectives. Through interviews with leaders of the initiatives that stood out for their effectiveness, the invited writers reflect on the possibilities and challenges of deliberative democracy in Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa, Southeast Asia, India and Eastern Europe. The journey is just beginning!

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Sub-Saharan Africa and the Paradox of POLITICAL Development

BY: Evelyn Dan Epelle



Resetting democracy: the south side of global deliberation



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_Introduction

As a student at the School of Politics and Governance (SPPG), I was first introduced to the concept of deliberative democracy in a conversation about Nigeria's political landscape. My study focuses on the state of politics and the factors that hinder the active participation of citizens in the governance of Africa's most densely populated nation. In sub-Saharan Africa, deliberative democracy initiatives take the form of human rights advocacy, whether for personal or political reasons.

Deliberative democracy revolves around deliberation. In a healthy democracy, the open exchange of opinions underscores the power of the people, and decisions made through deliberation are weighed in terms of pros and cons before being carried out. Inevitably, democracy must be understood as something that goes beyond the rituals of elections and party politics to include participation, inclusiveness, and responsiveness to citizens' needs, among others. For many African leaders seeking political relevance in the region, democracy is undermined by its violent and confrontational approach when it comes to ascending to political and public office. From rigged elections to authoritarian

^{1.} Extituto Política Abierta. (August 1, 2022). Demo.Reset: Introducción a la democracia deliberativa por André-Noel Roth | #DemoTALKS [Video]. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kxz9we_9cc4. (Accessed May 13, 2023).

^{2.} Bertelsmann Stiftung. (n.d.). Workshop Theme: Rising above Crisis: Deliberative Democracy and Consolidation of Democracy in Central Africa. www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/fileadmin/files/Projekte/Demokratie_und_Partizipation_in_Europa_/Test-Democracy-R_D-Network-Annual-Meeting/WS_16. pdf. (Accessed May 13, 2023).

approaches to governance, the corrupt practice of clinging to political power and disregarding people's will prevails. These are the most common aspects of democracy as practiced in the region.

In this chapter, I combine my experience as a journalist and communication researcher to reflect on the efforts of individuals and organizations helping to restore democracies through deliberation in sub-Saharan Africa. Thus, this chapter presents the state of democracy in the region and discusses the challenges faced by individuals and organizations whose efforts to sustain democracy are evident in their leadership of deliberative democracy initiatives. To provide context, I interviewed two leaders about their motivations for restoring democracy and how their initiatives have been sustained over time. This paper draws out the shared experiences, obstacles, and specific community experiences gathered in quotes from key people behind ActHub Nigeria and Africa's Voices Kenya.

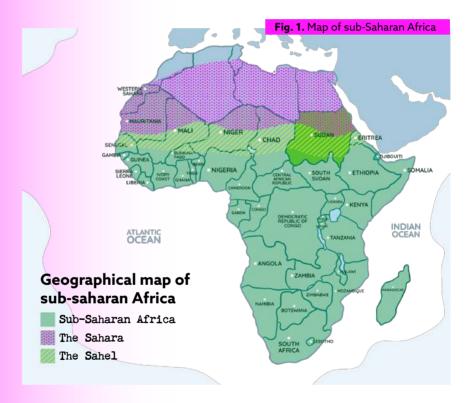
The conversations reveal that the framework for deliberative democracy in sub-Saharan Africa is transforming as a response to the failure of democratic regimes, political structures, and civil societies in the region. However, there are opportunities to spread good development practices that help strengthen deliberative democracy in sub-Saharan Africa.

_Deliberative Democracy in Sub-Saharan Africa

Deliberative democracy is based on the idea that legitimate decisions are reached through inclusive and reasoned public deliberation. Deliberation entails a public consultation of

citizens in which various perspectives are presented, and decisions are then made based on the strength of the arguments.³

Deliberative democracy emphasizes the importance of deliberation as a process and the results it produces through consensual decision-making and majority rule rather than coercion or mere preference aggregation.⁴



^{3.} Cooke, Maeve. (2000). Five Arguments for Deliberative Democracy. Political Studies, 48(5), 947-969. http://www.policy.hu/karimli/FiveArgumentsForDeliberativeDemocracy.pdf. (Accessed May 13, 2023)

^{4.} Gutmann, Amy & Thompson, Dennis. (2004). What Deliberative Democracy Means. In: A. Gutmann & D. Thompson. Why Deliberative Democracy?. Princeton University Press. http://assets.press.princeton.edu/chapters/s7869.pdf. (Accessed May 13, 2023).

Geographically, sub-Saharan Africa is the area and regions of the African continent located south of the Sahara, including Central Africa, East Africa, Southern Africa, and West Africa. In sub-Saharan Africa, several key conceptual frameworks shape the understanding of deliberative democracy. The first is the African philosophy of ubuntu, which stresses human existence's interconnectedness and communal nature. Ubuntu translates as "humanity toward others" and highlights deliberative democracy by adhering to the principle of collective deliberation, consensus building, and mutual respect.

The second is that grassroots participatory and consensual decision-making processes often characterize the legacy of traditional governance systems in sub-Saharan Africa. Many African societies have a history of participatory decision-making through processes such as village assemblies, elders' councils, and traditional dispute-resolution mechanisms. This provides a basis for deliberative democracy practices in the governance of contemporary African society. Applications of deliberative democracy in sub-Saharan Africa range from local community initiatives to national processes such as participatory budgets, constitutional reforms, and citizens' assemblies.

According to Demo.Reset's findings, very few initiatives are related to active citizen participation in governance in sub-Saharan Africa. The projects mapped 18 initiatives that promote the quality and inclusion of youth and women in political processes. Some of the initiatives within the sample gather resources to defend human, digital, and civic rights by

designing and supporting the implementation of participatory budgets; others focus on conflict stabilization, peacebuilding, and protecting the rights of rural populations. The methods and tools used by these organizations to implement their initiatives are community-centered and collaborative. They all rely on community development, organization, and mobilization to drive, implement, and effect change. Some use collaborative design solutions (i.e., two or more stakeholders working together) to address a common problem. A recurring theme across sub-Saharan Africa is that the organizations and the people behind them bear the burden of self-governance and self-sufficiency.

More troubling is the revelation that while a few select individuals work to increase participation in governance, most public servants oppose this framework. In Nigeria and other sub-Saharan African nations, voting and political discussions about elections are the most common manifestations of deliberative democracy. The modern marketplace for political argumentation is social media, and citizens openly confront public servants on platforms like Twitter. In countries like Nigeria and Malawi, citizen assemblies involving randomly selected citizens deliberating on political issues through traditional and digital media platforms have been tested. These assemblies bring together diverse groups of citizens to deliberate knowledgeably on specific policy challenges and make recommendations to policymakers.

Nigeria may be a good case study on the paradox of deliberative democracy practice in the region because of its status as Africa's most populated nation. In February 2023, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) reported a historically low voter turnout for the 2023 general elections in Nigeria.

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Based on media trends and the number of registered voters, citizen turnout for the 2023 general election was the highest in history. However, the turnout dropped to an all-time low regarding valid votes on election day. Of 93.47 million registered voters, only 24.9 million voted in Nigeria's February 2023 presidential and National Assembly elections. This represents a low voter turnout of 26.72%, the lowest since Nigeria's return to democracy in 1999. The way Nigeria addresses this paradox will depend largely on the more than 200 million Nigerian citizens at home and abroad, who must demand accountability by strengthening deliberative democracy practices and active citizen participation in governance.

Other countries in sub-Saharan Africa, such as Ghana, Kenya, and South Africa, have implemented participatory budget processes in which citizens are involved in the decision-making process on allocating public resources. Deliberative approaches have also been used in constitutional reform processes in countries such as Uganda and Zimbabwe. Citizens participate in public deliberations on government structure, human rights, and electoral systems. These processes are established to ensure that the constitution reflects the aspirations and needs of citizens and promotes inclusiveness and accountability.

^{5.} Yusuf, Kabir. (March 5, 2023). "ANALYSIS: Trend of Low Voter Turnout Continues in Nigerian Elections." Premium Times. https://www.premiumti-mesng.com/news/top-news/586193-analysis-trend-of-low-voter-turnout-continues-in-nigerian-elections.html. (Accessed May 13, 2023).

In sub-Saharan Africa, where democracy has been marred by a complex history of colonialism, post-colonial struggles, and socio-economic challenges, the shift to deliberative democratic practices presents both challenges and opportunities. From the lack of design in deliberative democracy processes to limited systems thinking in deploying African policy frameworks, transforming the landscape of democracy in the region will require a close relationship and constant dialogue between citizens and representatives of the institutions created to make society work for them.

_ActHub and Accountability for Good Governance in Nigeria

Based in Ibadan, Oyo State, in the southwestern region of Nigeria, ActHubisanon-governmentalorganization pioneering active public participation initiatives in governance. ActHub uses various methodologies, such as citizen budgeting, fiscal data, and people-led advocacy, to hold the government accountable in environmental, governance, spending, and selections. Through its flagship #LGAccountified project, ActHub focuses on demanding accountability at the local government level through active citizen training that uses available fiscal data to engage elected officials from the local government level up to the federal government.

#LGAccountified is ActHub's flagship citizen-led " advocacy for accountability" initiative at the local government level.

^{6.} For more information on ActHub Africa, please visit: https://acthuba-frica.org/

The initiative is a "blue ocean" idea that addresses a core area historically neglected by other civil organizations in Nigeria, i.e., local government accountability for improved infrastructure governance. Although limited by funding, the initiative has advanced its work in the area of (i) local/federal government accountability, (ii) citizen-led fight against corruption (iii) citizen participation and focus groups. In a conversation with the founder of ActHub, John Oluwafemi, to discuss Acthub's work in promoting accountability and governance in Nigeria, it was established that ActHub works around two aspects of accountability: social accountability (i.e., budget credibility, participatory governance, and other governance and democracy initiatives) and environmental accountability.

ActHub aspires to promote deliberative democracy, participatory budgeting, accountability, and budget credibility in Nigeria and Africa.

_Founding ActHub

John Oluwafemi is from Moniya and grew up in the semiurban area in Akinyele LGA of Oyo State. He speaks fluent Yoruba, English, and some Hausa, Egun, and Ikale. His journey to become a change agent did not start with advocacy for democracy and good governance but as a promoter of quality education in response to an issue common in his hometown: the lack of schools. "Growing up there was only one school in the area. It takes 50 minutes to one hour to get to school by walking, a distance that will cost around 200 naira by public transportation in Nigeria today."

John remembers that his secondary school was underdeveloped. To keep hope alive, John recalls walking from Moniya in Akinyele LGA to Ibadan North in Oyo, where the University of Ibadan (UI) is located. There he got a taste of university life and decided to pursue his studies regardless of the cost. After enduring the constraints of learning under impoverished conditions, John started applying for admission to obtain a degree at UI while fending for himself.

A major breakthrough for John was when he completed his SSCE and graduated with a degree in Education from the University of Ibadan, majoring in Economics and Political Science. The University of Ibadan, located in the ancient city of Ibadan in Oyo State, is undoubtedly one of Nigeria and Africa's best higher education institutions.

John was part of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) group for his Community Development Service (CDS) during his one-year National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) assignment. He was the President of the group, a role that allowed him to gain experience in the development field as he traveled, taught children and volunteered in Gwadangaji,

^{7.} For more information on the University of Ibadan, please visit: www.ui.edu.ng/uihistory

Jega, Bumza, Ayu, and other locations in Kebbi State. John decided to actively work for society to ensure that people didn't have to suffer as much as he did to get an education. After a successful year in NYSC, he moved to Abuja, Nigeria's Federal Capital Territory (FCT), and pursued other passions. He received training as an IT specialist and consultant before returning to his hometown in Oyo State.

Returning to Oyo after learning about life in other parts of the country only to realize that nothing had changed since he left home marked the beginning of John's journey in search of ways to help his community.



John started an initiative called Tech Tutors in Oyo State. Under this initiative, children in rural areas learned basic computer skills from one village to another. He later applied and was admitted to the regional Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI) conference, where he formalized his knowledge of NGOs and social enterprises. By the end of the YALI conference, John was working with an organization called Endunamoo Transformation Global Initiative (ETGI). This opportunity helped him learn that sitting in the development bureaucracy is not ideal. He applied for and was admitted to another fellowship called Accountapreneur from Accountability Lab, where he found his core mission and passion in demanding accountability. John launched what is now widely known as ActHub Africa at the end of this fellowship.

_People and Networks for Deliberative Democracy in Nigeria

When we think about how any social enterprise is born, there is always something or someone that inspires it all. Organizations and initiatives like BudgIT and TrackaNg inspired John to create ActHub. Founded by Olusegun Onigbinde and Joseph Agunbiade in 2011, BudgIT is a Nigerian civic organization that applies technology to citizen engagement and institutional improvement to facilitate social change.⁸

^{8.} Kazeem, Yomi. (February 3, 2017). Data Transparency Is Being Used to Tackle Nigeria's Corruption Problem One Report at a Time. Quartz. qz.com/africa/899190/budgit-has-raised-3-million-in-funding-from-omid-yar-network-and-bill-and-melinda-gates-foundation. (Accessed May 13, 2023).

"Organizations like BudgIT have given us grants.

#LGAccountified was funded by BudgIT at some point and Citizens' Commons has also funded us."

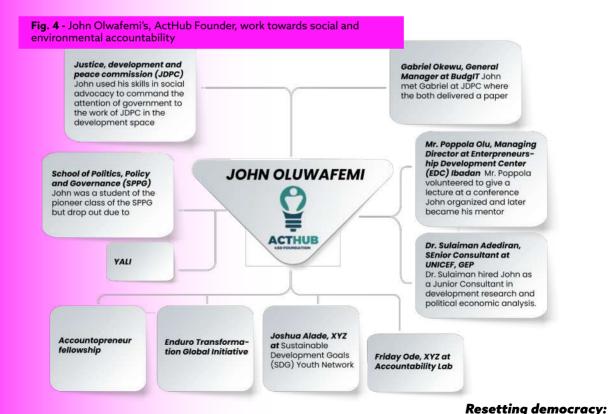


While ActHub Africa's main focus is working on governance, democracy, research, and the environment, ActHub's flagship initiative, #LGAccountified, is inspired by BudgIT and what BudgIT is doing with TrackaNg. #LGAccountified simplifies local government budget documents for greater civic engagement using infographics, data mining, and visualizations. BudgIT makes budgets look less complex by stripping them down into something worth engaging with.

Local NGOs, such as the Justice, Development and Peace Commission (JDPC), and international organizations, such as UNICEF, have funded ActHub and have provided mentoring and one-on-one opportunities to ActHub leaders since its founding. ActHub management also provides paid consulting services to

groups such as *Brace up the Youth*, an initiative led by Obasanjo Fajemirokun in Ogun State. ActHub has also collaborated with JDPC in Nnewi, Anambra State, and the Civil Social Action Coalition on Education For All (CSACEFA) to monitor Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) projects in any state. Joining and collaborating with global and regional development networks has helped ActHub access resources to implement original ideas on a large scale.

John's personal and professional networks comprise individuals and organizations generally considered advocates and mentors in the development field. John's journey demonstrates that he has always wanted to step outside the norm and become an accountability activist.



While discussing some of the people and connections that were instrumental in the founding of ActHub, I discovered we shared a bond. John was an alumnus of the School of Politics, Policy, and Governance (SPPG), where I am currently enrolled. Although John did not complete the SPPG program, he was part of the pioneering class and said he learned everything he needed to know in the process. The School of Policy and Governance (SPPG) exposes young Nigerians and Africans to issues affecting Nigeria's policy formulation and political framework. Then it inspires them to act accordingly to create solutions to the identified problems plaguing the system.⁹

It is possible to conclude that a growing network of people and organizations is intentional about development in Nigeria. The Deliberative Democracy political ideology may not be mainstream, but it exists and thrives in Nigeria.

_Leading Deliberative Democracy Initiatives in Nigeria

ActHubconcludedthatinitiativeslikeTrackaNGinorganizations like BudgIT mainly focus on holding the Federal Government of Nigeria accountable. Therefore, it created #LGAccountified as an initiative that ensures openness and transparency at the local government level. John insists that governance has

^{9.} Nnah, Mary. (November, 2022). SPPG to Solve Africa's Leadership Deficit. This Day LIVE. www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2022/10/18/sppg-to-solve-africas-leadership-deficit/. (Accessed May 13, 2023).

a local nature. By facilitating and simplifying access to fiscal data, people can use it and knowingly participate in decision-making at a local level.

When Governor Seyi Makinde assumed leadership of Oyo State in 2019, John says he went into the state's Ministry of Budget and Economic Planning and told them they needed to do participatory and citizen budgeting in Oyo State. From 2019 to date, ActHub has produced Citizens' Budgets for the Oyo State government and continues to be part of the successful formulation and implementation of fiscal policies in the state. This movement emphasizes the importance of government officials extending an invitation or accepting those extended to them by ordinary citizens to participate in the governance process.

"I don't know the confidence that actually came to me but I went there and started listing so many things that we needed to do and luckily for me, they invited me over for a kind of discussion."

John notes that Nigeria does not actively practice deliberative democracy due to a lack of political education and enlightenment, an absence of transparency on government activities, and funding problems faced by civil society organizations. There is a dire need to improve the standard of living, educational infrastructure, and political leadership to have the opportunity to increase political awareness in Nigeria. The firm entrenchment of ethnicity and religion profoundly divides the country, and addressing

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this situation will require arduous efforts that must begin at the grassroots. Nigeria is one of the most linguistically diverse countries in the world, with over 500 or more languages spoken. Language can become a barrier to doing development work in the region. ActHub mitigates this challenge by using local languages to create awareness-raising materials.

"Once we publish simplified fiscal data, we interpret it in the Yoruba language so that the people of Oyo State can access it. I think it is time state governments engage people in the language that they understand."

Some states in Nigeria (Oyo, Akwa Ibom, etc.) practice some aspects of deliberative democracy. Still, the general approach is that policymakers and legislators gather and think for the people, then push their personal or political ideals as democratic. Political education is absent, and many Nigerians do not understand the do's and don'ts of government, policymaking, and how politics affects their lives as citizens. The current state of politics is that there is one side where the government is, and then the citizens are on another. Based on the #LGAccountified project, ActHub has prototyped a software called dev. info (i.e., development information) to help citizens group their needs based on the LGA they come from. The system can perform an auto-prioritization of needs, and government officials can see and work to meet needs based on what is most important to citizens.

As a result, government officials are currently engaging citizens and hearing directly from them. ActHub does not lead the conversations but prompts citizens by giving them what they need to lead their own advocacy. #LGAccountified does not stop at the local government level because

ActHub has also made an impact at the state level. The Oyo State government is currently signed to its Open Government Partnership (OGP), an aspect of deliberative democracy that will introduce participatory monitoring and budgeting in the state.

Funding is a severe issue, and Acthub still works pro bono to gain credibility and access. ActHub views its pro bono service as a win because positive feedback on the project is publicly available for anyone who wants to replicate the same approaches. Exposure to international organizations such as UNICEF through the Oyo State government was based on the sacrifices ActHub made for the state regarding its pro bono work. Another technical challenge faced by ActHub is data collection for research. Nigerian agencies that are spared with the job of educating the masses are inefficient, and some data requests take up to four or more months from submission to access.

"The National Orientation Agency (NOA) in Oyo State is as good as non-existent, yet they are in every local government in the state and have a secretariat."

In his travels throughout Nigeria, John has developed an emotional intelligence about the cultural sensitivity and nuances of navigating Nigerian diversity. With thirty-six distinct states spread across six geopolitical zones, the problem of acceptance is also common. More prominent NGOs tend to resist adopting new initiatives based on establishing a monopoly on success in the development field. John was quick to stress the importance

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of support from government organizations and NGOs that provide funding and mentoring and from individual citizens who volunteer to launch impact initiatives.

_Africa's Voices Innovates for Deliberative Democracy in Kenya Using Radio

In another interview with Samuel Kimeru, Executive Director of Africa's Voices, I saw how an innovative initiative relies on accessible technologies such as radio to build bridges between the government and active citizens in Kenya's political economy. Samuel, a lawyer by training, joined Africa's Voices 4 years after its founding due to a convergence of personal and political ideologies.

"Kenya was coming out of many years of dictatorship and economic mismanagement and Kenyans had the opportunity to self-reflect and begin a transvaluation of how they wanted to move forward based on what they had."

In 2010, the Kenyan Constitution reflected a more structured society that emphasized the centrality of Kenyan citizens in governance and decision-making. Samuel worked in civil society groups that addressed the broader problems of poor governance at the time. He had the opportunity to contribute to the laws of Kenya, especially on the devolution of powers as one of the revolutionary provisions of the constitution.

The Kenyan constitution states that citizens should be at the center of decision-making.¹⁰ Still, on-ground experience in Kenya shows few politicians are interested in making this happen. Even though Samuel was part of the deliberation that led to the development of the national guidelines on public participation, he believes that Kenya is far from actively practicing deliberative democracy.

By mobilizing digital media spaces for pluralistic, rich, and inclusive debates, Africa's Voices is working to revolutionize the use of radio as a platform where citizens can exchange informed opinions on priority concerns. In turn, decision-makers in government listen to these opinions and act on them.

_Radio as a Tool for Social Change

Africa's Voices originated from research conducted at Cambridge University -with on-site research in Kenya, Zambia, and Malawithat focused on exploring how radio can be deployed as a socio-technical system for governance. The study successfully created a prototype that effectively extends communication to engage citizens and ensure their ideas are heard and considered in the governance process. Some of the early motivations that brought the founders together to launch the organization were interdisciplinary thinking, in which schools from Cambridge University converged. Dr. Sharath Srinivasan, co-founder and first

^{10.} Parliament of Kenya, The National Assembly. (2022). Public Participation in the Legislative Process. Factsheet No.14, Aug. 2022. www.parliament.go.ke/sites/default/files/2022-08/FS14%20Public%20Participation%20in%20The%20Legislative%20Process.pdf. (Accessed May 13, 2023).

Executive Director of Africa's Voices, conceived a study on how to use radio for governance purposes on the African continent.

Fundraising for this research attracted Africa's Voices Founding Board Chairman, Simon Cairns, also known as *Lord Cairns*. Trusting that the concept could make a difference for decision-makers making an effort to engage with beneficiaries of their leadership in Africa, Lord Cairns funded the research to be carried out by Dr. Claudia Abreu Lopes at the Centre of Governance and Human Rights (CGHR) in Cambridge University. The outcome of that research was put into action as an organization. So far, Africa's Voices has done a lot of work in Somalia and is now building a public presence in Kenya for more people to appreciate the transformative power of radio. The mission of Africa's Voices is guided by the idea that citizen voices must be at the center of their decision-making and the continent's development.

Radio is the primary mode of mass communication on the African continent.¹¹ Although a growing demographic does not listen to the radio in the traditional sense, as they prefer to go online for services like news, that population is still quite the minority compared to those who still use the radio in Africa. The use of radio for deliberation can tend towards three broad outcomes: (i) citizen engagement in political

^{11.} LifelineEnergy. (n.d.) 9 Big Reasons Why Radio Is Important to Africa. www.lifelineenergy.org/9-reasons-why-radio-is-important-to-africa/. (Accessed May 13, 2023).

conversations, (ii) success in evidence-driven insights based on data analysis of citizens' ideas, and (iii) informed action and measurable social change in society.

Africa's Voices brings a radio guest into the studio to discuss a topic for about an hour. A facilitator will take the time to explain and train guests on the objectives of the program based on the traditional function and ethical practice of radio broadcasting.

Radio presenters also work to help Africa's Voices achieve its goal by preparing to interact and offer helpful critiques intelligently. Since interaction with the public is limited regarding how many phone calls can be made during a 1-hour radio program, Africa's Voices uses text messaging to collect feedback on live radio programs. An SMS shortcode that is free to use is opened up to as many people listening to the live radio program for their voices to be heard. People's opinions are collected via SMS into Africa's Voices data pipeline. The data is analyzed using traditional social science analysis methods to produce qualitative and quantitative insights into respondents' thoughts regarding a particular issue.

Other instant messaging platforms, like Facebook, Telegram, and, more recently, WhatsApp, are also being tested for use at Africa's Voices. Radio stands out as an innovative means for introducing deliberative democracy in the region because people do not need to move from where they are to express themselves or for their voices to be heard. Furthermore, social behavioral change through mass media like radio can create an impact on a wider scale, amplify positive norms, and contest negative ones. This can, in turn, move society from one level of development to another.

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_Samuel's Journey to Africa's Voices

Samuel was born about 70 kilometers southeast of Nairobi, in Machakos County -formerly Machakos district-. This is a semi-arid part of Kenya with little rain, and the Machakos people have a history of mixed farming, basically keeping cattle and farming crops for subsistence. In the pre-colonial period, the Machakos people had a reputation for walking 400 or more kilometers to Mombasa to sell ivory and other goods to the Arabs and Indians. In my conversation with Samuel, I learned about his upbringing in Kenya under previous governments.

Samuel's father was a public servant working for the Government of Kenya, and his mother was a housewife that raised her children in the village. Samuel's mother was not so concerned about the traditional gender roles, and she taught him how to cook. By the time he was about ten years old, he could cook many meals for the family. Governance structures and political leadership in Kenya in the late 70s and early 80s were formative when Samuel first came into political consciousness.

"Occasionally during the holidays, we'll come to meet my dad in Mombasa and then go back to the village where we will go farming and also go to school at the same time. My responsibility in the family was to look after the goods."

Samuel grew up when Kenya had its second president. Daniel Toroitich arap Moi (1978 to 2002) was President of Kenya for 24 years. In this single-party era, the government was called baba and mama, i.e., father and mother. As the leader of the ruling party, the President was very pervasive. The philosophy about politics around that time was that the ruling party was the government, and the government was the ruling party, so this instilled fear in many people. There was controversy over how long the President could legitimately stay in office and whether or not he repeatedly won elections with the huge percentages recorded in the one-party era.¹²

"I still remember the Chief coming with some youths and carting away with my mom's chicken to contribute towards some national fundraising initiative."

Back then, it was mandatory to attend the Chief's meetings in which the citizens were informed about government policy. Of course, this would hardly be called deliberation, as it was a monologue directed to the citizens in which they were told about what the government wanted and how quickly it wanted it. Something that greatly influenced Samuel's interest in law school was a land dispute between his father and one of the members of a school board who was a relatively powerful political player at the time. During this period, Kenya had the

^{12.} McFadden, Robert. (February 3, 2020 Daniel Arap Moi, Autocratic and Durable Kenyan Leader, Dies at 95. The New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/03/obituaries/daniel-arap-moi-dead.html. (Accessed May 13, 2023).

largest corruption scandal in Africa, the *Goldenberg* scandal.¹³ This was a political scandal in which the Kenyan government was found to have subsidized exports of gold far beyond standard arrangements, leading to approximately 46% inflation.

"I participated in a good number of demonstrations which I can't do now. At my age and with my weight, I can no longer fly over fences like I used to."

After leaving college, Samuel interned at the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ). He was deployed to do human rights education nationwide for about five years before being recalled into administrative and managerial work for ICJ. He moved from civic education and mobilizing for the constitutional review process to the arena of decision-making. He worked with decision and policymakers and used his legal knowledge to offer legal aid in public interest litigation cases that did not favor the communities. His choice to contribute and give himself almost as a sacrifice for the liberation of others is seemingly in response to the injustices he faced in his childhood.

Samuel studied laws locally at the University of Nairobi and also obtained a Master's degree in International Human Rights Law from the University of Notre Dame, Indiana (US) in 2007. Upon his return to Kenya, Samuel worked for three years in a diplomatic

^{13.} Grynberg, Roman & Singogo, Fwasa. (2021). An Anatomy of Grand Fraud: The Goldenberg Scandal and the IMF/World Bank. In: R. Grunberg & F. Singogo. African Gold: Production, Trade and Economic Development. Palgrave Macmillan. https://ideas.repec.org/h/spr/sprchp/978-3-030-65995-0_9. html. (Accessed May 13, 2023).

organization involved in development. There he oversaw a project related to democratic institutions and security sector reforms. He became more inclined to the field of governance and worked on the frontline in the fight against corruption for almost a decade. As the director of Transparency International, Kenya chapter, Samuel was involved in many debates on the role of citizens and the kind of state citizens wanted in 2011 when Kenya was drafting a new constitution.

He crossed paths with Africa's Voices in his search for ways to widen channels for citizen participation.

_Foreign Influences & Kenyan Politics

A look inside the history of the Kenyan people can be instructive and informative to reflect on the practice of deliberative democracy in Kenya. During the pre-colonial period, Kenya had about three main linguistic groups: (i) the Bantus (Nigerkordofan family), (ii) the Nilotic (Nilo-Saharan), and (iii) the Cushitic (Afro-Asiatic) people. These three categories of people had very different ways in which they governed themselves. ¹⁴ Some had Kings and an elders council that helped make decisions, and some were pretty advanced in their leadership structure, and their Chiefs were elected or chosen through a peer review

^{14.} National Museums of Kenya. The Language of Kenya: The Nilotic, Bantu and Cushitic Language Groups. Google Arts & Culture. https://artsandculture.google.com/story/the-language-of-kenya-the-nilotic-bantu-and-cushitic-language-groups/2AJCwOhG6x7aIQ. (Accessed May 13, 2023).

process. When colonialists disrupted Kenya's governance system, Christianity became the agent of change and transformed how Kenyans organized themselves. A situation that also eroded individuality in contemporary Kenyan society.

As a young Nigerian, I've been privileged to experience life in developing African countries and overseas in developed nations like France, Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America. From January 2019 to December 2020, I studied for a master's in Communication, Culture, and Technology (CCT) at Georgetown University, leading me to live in Washington, DC. At that time, the US was in a transitory period with an election that ushered in President Biden after a tumultuous run with the Trump administration. During this period, the US built resilience and supported underdeveloped countries to rebound from the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic. These realities catalyzed geopolitical shifts worldwide, from the rise of China in the global order to the war in Ukraine. I witnessed firsthand as the US made tough decisions to secure social justice and sustain democracy to work in favor of the people.

This atmosphere taught me about diplomacy, international affairs, and how strong foreign policies can shape the future of developing nations. US diplomacy helps foster and protect democratic values abroad, creating a more secure, stable, and prosperous world where democracy is viewed beyond the political system. Samuel's

^{15.} Dan Epelle, Evelyn. (November 9, 2020). BIDEN-HARRIS: The Tumultuous Journey To The White House. KAFTAN Post. https://kaftanpost.com/biden-harris-the-tumultuous-journey-to-the-white-house/. (Accessed May 13, 2023).

personal experiences abroad also depict how foreign education and international influences can shape an African's fundamental understanding of democracy; as a set of fundamental principles, including liberty, free speech, equality, human rights, and justice.

"There were some firebrand religious leaders who spoke truth to power and challenged the single-party era at a time when, you know, the politicians had a very difficult time and people were being silenced and killed."

Education made all the difference for Samuel. He did very well in his exams to be admitted into a national school established about a hundred years ago by an alliance of churches to train African leaders. There, Samuel was exposed to the works of Martin Luther King at a time when few schools in Kenya had access to a library.

At 29, Samuel was chosen by the Council of the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) to be in charge of the organization in an acting capacity. Moving from intern to Executive Director of the ICJ required him to return to study for a master's degree. Although his dream school was the University of Pretoria in South Africa, Samuel was admitted to the University of Notre Dame, Indiana (US). He resigned from his position as Executive Director of the ICJ to study abroad. Once there, Samuel immersed himself in the teachings of Martin Luther King. He accompanied one of his graduate school professors to an Inter-American Commission on Human and Peoples'

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Rights session in New York and had one of the most profound insights into his career and path.

"The black people I saw in that commission had come with complaints. They spoke a language I couldn't understand, although I could see that they looked like me. I was informed that the largest population of African or Afrodescendants in America are Latin Americans."

Many people are moved to think that the Caribbeans hold the largest number of people of African origin outside Africa, but it's actually Latin America. Samuel shared an apartment with an Ecuadorian who elaborated that: "huge populations of Afro-descendants in the US are only visible in Sports. You will see Africans on US national teams, but in politics and social life, you don't see them, and it is because they are marginalized". Samuel takes every opportunity to let people know that linkages between Latin America and Africa are very weak, but fluency and buoyancy in language and income will make a difference. He also discovered that there were no direct flights from Africa to Latin America and pointed out that it was inexcusable for Africans to make multiple connections before arriving there.

Samuel attended a predominantly white institution that had existed before the town around it was developed. The institution controlled the water supply system, transportation, and to a large extent, the information flows in the area. Newsletters issued at the university would report few security incidents in the neighborhood, and the

narrative of the reports created fear about black people in the region. Samuel says that insecurity data analyzed for the region showed that few black people resided in the area and that the crimes being reported were, in fact, committed by white folks. Historically, black people in the US are viewed with suspicion and stereotyped for crimes like assault or rape when merely walking along the streets.

Black people are also tokenized in many US institutions. When a report in one department at Samuel's institution said, "the number of black students had grown by almost a hundred percent," he discovered that the department had merely increased to seven black people from the previous four.

Another good experience he had overseas was when Obama campaigned to be President. Samuel had first-hand experience of how campaigns are run in the US. He spent three months in Washington, DC, doing an internship on global rights after completing his program in Indiana. The Obama campaign had people knocking on doors to tell DC residents why they should vote for Obama, as did the other candidates.

"By interacting with the university and people from different countries, I got to learn a lot that I would never have learned if I remained and schooled entirely in Kenya."

Foreign exposure is good for young Africans. It provides experiential learning about what works in developed economies and the factors that directly limit underdeveloped economies from shared prosperity and the development path.

In comparing the local to the global, young Africans in the diaspora also learn about organizing for democracy. The shared experience of the Africans in the diaspora is valuable and provides a background for how Africa can reshape its thinking around diversity and divisive stereotypes. Most independent African countries like Kenya and Nigeria had endured in the past the African imperialist company administering a protectorate on behalf of the British empire in their territories. Governance proceeded this way until countries gained independence and had their first elections. Africa is still clearly recovering from the trauma. Between 1963 and 1966, many changes were made to create what was known in Kenya as the imperial presidency. The President was like a replacement for the Queen or the King and was not accountable for anything. As a matter of fact, Kenya's first President never lost an election and was elected in every other election until he died in 1978.

"Anyone else who came up as an alternative voice was vanquished politically, or even physically. When the first President passed in 1978, many said the second President was fairly progressive until 1982 when there was an attempted coup to overthrow his government. His reaction was draconian and he entrenched himself as an imperial president."

What is common is the semblance of democracy through elections organized to give an enforced government some measure of legitimacy, with the burden of social order falling on the legislature to effect manageable constitutional changes. Many activists in

Sub-Saharan Africa have decried the conduct of elections and the need for accountability and transparency in the electoral process. Samuel surrounds himself with people known for expanding citizen participation paths. Today Kenya remains a fairly open society, and the efforts of organizations like Africa's Voices and people like Samuel makes the Kenyan civic space vibrant and poised for development.

_A Positive Outlook for Democracy in Sub-Saharan Africa

In learning about the work and mission of Demo.Reset to strengthen democracies in the global south, I deduce that Sub-Saharan African countries have very similar experiences in terms of the context of issues discussed in this chapter. In the last five years, I have worked as a journalist with a local TV station based in Abuja, Nigeria, and as a Communications Consultant for the Africa-focused social impact firm Baobab Consulting, headquartered in New York City, US. I have covered diaspora stories for KAFTAN TV in the African diaspora, and I believe in the possibility that Africans can rethink and redefine democracy based on positive developments being reported in the region.

While deliberative democracy holds promise for promoting inclusive and accountable decision-making in Sub-Saharan Africa, emerging trends and challenges also need to be considered. Issues such as weak institutions, corruption, and political polarization can challenge the practice of deliberative democracy. In some cases, political elites may manipulate or ignore the outcomes

of deliberative processes, limiting their impact on policy decisions. To solve this problem of not being deliberative in our style of democracy, countries in the region must recognize that there is no government without the people.

It is family members, relatives, and acquaintances that are in the government. Acknowledging this will help Africans build stronger political institutions where only the best people are brought forward to represent the masses in public offices. The experiences shared in this chapter can shape our collective thinking as Africans by informing us that a working society largely depends on our unification. The inaction we see in the region today is because many Africans can't properly articulate that things aren't working. The leadership of development initiatives by Africans like Samuel and John, exposed to working economies, is invaluable because the awareness of what works is inherent in Africa's future governance approaches. Reading and writing should be prioritized for young African children under this climate, as this will impact how their minds work as adults.

A society where ignorance and disorder are the status quo will adapt to change only when more people are exposed to superior understanding and enlightenment.

Prospects of
Deliberative Democracy
in Southeast Asia
with Special REFERENCE

to Thailand and Taiwan

BY: Sunil Tambe



Resetting democracy: the south side of global deliberation



Sunil Tambe

Presently an Independent Journalist, he started his career in Marathwada, a lesser-known regional Marathi daily from Aurangabad, a district town in the state of Maharashtra, India. And gradually moving to English newspapers with a brief stint in electronic media. He landed in Reuters, a global leader in news and financial information service in 2006. He was heading the Editorial of Reuters Market Light from 2007 to 2015.

As a journalist, he has traveled the length and breadth of India covering politics, agriculture, and social issues. He won Jagan Phadnis Award for Investigative Journalism. He wrote one book—MarquezChi Gosht. The book introduces Marathi readers to the life and works of Gabriel Garcia Marquez and his Magical Realism. He translated two books in Marathi—Free Voice by Ravish Kumar, Magsaysay Award Winner Journalist and 21 Lessons for 21st Century by Yuval Noha Harari.

_Introduction

Trust has been broken in the democratic process mainly because people feel the elites and their institutions have captured it.

The most commonly held view of democracy is a system of free and fair elections and majoritarian rule. In this sense, democracy deepens in South Korea, Taiwan, and Japan. But it is in trouble in most of Southeast Asia, the region south of mainland China and east of India. Southeast Asia is culturally diverse, with hundreds of different languages and ethnicities. Historically the area was significantly influenced by Indian, Chinese, Arab, and European Colonial cultures, thanks to the Asian Monsoon. European colonization exploited natural resources and labor from the conquered lands and attempted to spread European institutions in the region. During World War II, several Southeast Asian countries were briefly occupied by the Japanese Empire. After World War II, most of the region got decolonized, and independent nation-states govern today.

Populism, patronage-money politics, and mobilization of ethnic and religious identities, as well as the emphasis on religion, can be identified as the common elements in South and Southeast Asian politics. In Malaysia, hopes of a new democratic era were dashed when the Barisan Nasional Coalition returned to power. Myanmar's military continues to oppose democratic reforms, and large-scale atrocities against the Rohingya people continue unabated. In Sri Lanka, the alleged war criminals voted to power. Prime Minister

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Narendra Modi uses his vast majority in India to lead Hindu Nationalism strangulating the free press. According to Reporters Without Borders, India ranks 161 in Freedom of the Press. In this context, deliberative democracy is crucial as it supplements electoral democracy to overcome the tyranny of the majority and promote the force of public reason. It is in this context that I would like to sketch out prospects and processes of deliberative democracy in Thailand and Taiwan based on the two interviews with Onsua Kanhachat, Project Director of Pulang Kampong Foundation in south Thailand, and Yu Pei Chen, Planning Team Leader with Taiwan Reach-Out Association of Democracy (T-ROAD).

_Thailand

Thailand is located in Southeast Asia, where it is blessed with an abundance of incredible fauna and flora, making it one of the world's most unique ecosystems. Thailand has a mixed economy system where the food industry and culture are highly valued. Currently ranked in the 13th place for the largest global food exporters, Thailand is one of the globe's crucial food sources. Hence, the food industry is undoubtedly a pillar of the kingdom.

Thailand is among the oldest democracies in Southeast Asia, yet it has also

witnessed the greatest number of coups. With the introduction of democratic politics in the 1970s, Thailand became the second-largest democracy in Southeast Asia. But Thailand has suffered multiple regime oscillations since military coups were frequent: nineteen attempts from its transition to a constitutional monarchy in 1932.¹⁶

^{16.} Sinpeng, Aim. (2021). Opposing Democracy in the Digital Age: The Yellow Shirts in Thailand. University of Michigan Press.

The southernmost multicultural region of Thailand comprises three provinces: Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat, with 85% of the population identifying themselves as Muslim. They are distinct from the dominant Thai culture. They draw their identity from three sources: as Malays with their own language and cultural traditions, as Muslims, and as the heirs to the Sultanate of Patani, the historical Malay kingdom that comprised the three southern border provinces. Since 2004 these three provinces have been witnessing insurgency that has deteriorated the region's multicultural character. The ethnic violence can be partly attributed to economic backwardness. According to an opinion article published by Al Jazeera, 17 the Australian anthropologist and counter-insurgency expert Dr. David Kilcullen called the widespread violence in South Thailand between 2004 and 2007 "second only to Iraq and Afghanistan." The Southern Border Police Operation Centre in Thailand reported that between 2004 and 2011, 5,243 people had been killed in the southern border region. The victims include Muslims, Buddhists, Thai, and Malay people, mainly soldiers, police officers, civilians, teachers, monks, and insurgents.

Pulang Kampong Foundation had to overcome these cultural and political barriers to instill confidence in the local Muslim population. It acted as a bridge between the government and local people, since for Onsua Kanhachat, Project Director of Pulang Kampong Foundation in South Thailand, "peace is intertwined with economic development," as she stated in her interview.

Pulang Kampong Foundation was founded by Sanan Kanhachat, father of Onsua Kanhachat. He used to work as a senior officer

^{17.} Ahmed, Akbar & Akins, Harris. (february 27, 2012). Restoring harmony between Bangkok and the Malay Muslims of South Thailand. AlJazeera. https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2012/2/27/restoring-harmony-between-bangkok-and-the-malay-muslims-of-south-thailand. (accessed may 18, 2023).

on peacebuilding for the General Border Committee of Thailand-Malaysia and as a senior project officer for the Royal Initiative and Special Project Sub-Bureau of Thailand. Onsua and her colleagues went door to door to understand people's issues and problems. They concluded the development of a sustainable agricultural ecosystem could offer jobs and career prospects and ensure the development of backward Southern Thailand.

They then decided to offer the locals training on permaculture and aquacultural practices, particularly farmers and students in traditional religious institutions. Currently, the region has 409 private religious institutions with almost 250,000 students. The religious institutions imparting training in economic activities amount to "creating a force of reason," a critical initiative in deliberative democracy. This is a welcome innovation, as we all know that in Afghanistan, the Taliban, the religious institution, is the breeding ground of Islamic Fundamentalists and terrorists. The next step was to establish Farmers Councils in Pattani (78 members), Yala (381 members), and Narathiwat (130 members), along with active public engagement of a minimum of 2,000 people across different villages. This brought economic uplift as well as behavioral change in the local population. The farmers' councils and their members got actively engaged with the government on issues related to policies and schemes.

The Pulang Kampong Foundation is planning to establish a community network under the platform "One Family, One Sufficiency Economy," where one successful family leads to another, extending into several family networks, where agriculture, dairy farming, and aquaculture can sustain the

household economy as well as community economy which would blossom into entrepreneurship. This project would undoubtedly politicize families greater common good. This positive response also aims at strengthening deliberative democracy as the minorities would be actively engaged in dialogue with the government.

_Taiwan

"According to Mei-Fang Fan, 18 Taiwanese deliberative practices and democratic innovations offer the rest of the world valuable insights".

Taiwan's history exemplifies the rapid transition and emergence of a democratic polity, illustrating the global trend toward democratization. A situation that is especially rare in Asia, where authoritarian (e.g., China and Vietnam) or strongly technocratic (e.g., Japan) modes of governance predominate.

Growing social movements and a vibrant civil society have become constant forces accelerating institutional reform and influencing governance processes, thus creating new spaces for public participation. Taiwan has integrated Western democratic values with those of its multiple cultures, and institutional change and the promotion of democratic innovation in Taiwan continue to adapt flexibly to emerging technologies and changes in the global environment.

^{18.} Fan, Mei-Fang. (2021). Deliberative Democracy in Taiwan: Deliberative Systems Perspective. Routledge.

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In addition, Taiwan shares many challenges with other actors around the world, such as the need for energy transition, the problem of nuclear waste siting, resource scarcity, and the emergence of unprecedented risks like climate change or emerging technological risks. As for the democratization of science, citizen activism and the resurgence of social movements have facilitated greater dialogue, deliberative practices, and reflection on such democratization, which has deepened institutional evolution and citizen participation in the policy-making process.¹⁹

Taiwan Reach-Out Association of Democracy (T-ROAD), consisting of a group of practitioners, dedicates itself to civic engagement, social innovation, and democratic deepening. They do this by practicing the democratic values of equity, inclusion, and empowerment. T-ROAD designs various facilitation techniques and methods to foster genuine dialogue and organic collaboration among people of different backgrounds.

The Planning Team Leader of the T-ROAD, Yu Pei Chen, was associated with the Sunflower Student Movement in Taiwan in 2014, making her realize the importance of people's political participation. She participated in online discussions of various issues. The movement also sparked the development of youth participation in politics and deliberative democracy.

Yu Pei Chen told me that in 2015 there was a surge of interest in participatory budgeting in Taiwan. By 2016, she became a member of the participatory budgeting team in Taichung. After the project ended,

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19.	Ibid.				

some council members felt that representative democracy was being threatened by participatory democracy. The project faced obstacles in continuing to promote that time, but she and her colleagues were determined to promote participatory democracy, so they founded T-ROAD.

The Taichung Participatory Budgeting project operated at the city level from 2015 to 2018 and was implemented in several administrative districts and opened to public participation. Proposals that included public and urgent issues were accepted, and the maximum funding of each proposal was set at one million Taiwan dollars. From 2017 to 2019, T-ROAD mainly implemented participatory budgeting projects, including Taichung Participatory Budgeting, themebased projects (entertainment activities for migrant workers, disability welfare services), and community-based projects.

"Fishery-Electricity Symbiosis" is a green energy plan proposed by the Taiwan government in response to global net-zero carbon emissions and energy transformation. It involves installing solar panels on fishing ponds to generate electricity while maintaining existing aquaculture. Due to the lack of successful global examples to reference, the policy needed to balance the interests of the aquaculture industry, green energy industry, fishermen's rights, and environmental sustainability. With the advocacy of environmental organizations, the new policy "Fishery-Electricity Symbiosis Environmental and Social Inspection" was implemented to conduct environmental and social assessments before installing solar panels near fishing ponds. In 2021, the "Fishery-Electricity Symbiosis Environmental and Social Inspection" was launched for the first time in most fishing pond areas in Taiwan. At that time, six out of seven projects were executed by environmental ecology companies, while T-ROAD was the only social advocacy organization.

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At the early stage of the project, T-ROAD visited environmental advocacy organizations to consult their opinions on policy, environment, and conservation. It also conducted related connections and applied deliberative democracy in the project implementation process. From interviews, focus group discussions, and stakeholder meetings to public consultations, T-ROAD gradually expanded the communication targets from individuals and the same group to crossgroups of stakeholders. The process involved multiple adjustments in response to policy implementation and the challenges of the difficult pandemic situation.

"To be honest, my understanding of participatory democracy was limited when I first encountered it in 2016. At that time, I mainly followed Professor Sheng-Wen Shih from Taipei Medical University, who initiated street democracy deliberations during the Sunflower Movement. Most of the team members had a social science background, and besides regular project meetings, we discussed our social concerns and values within the project. This communication mode helped me maintain a more open and equal attitude when working with different teams later on," she said while responding to my question.

In her opinion, Taiwanese citizens need to deal with misinformation from China in their daily life. "What role should a democratic government play? In 2021 we hosted a civic forum discussing the relationships between freedom of expression and information with national defense." The forum was titled "Freedom of Reading and Listening and Defence of Democracy - The Impact of China's Cultural Export on Taiwan, and followed the format of a citizen consensus conference, with stages such as regional forums, keynote speeches, and citizen forums. "We invited Taiwanese citizens to think about and discuss the infiltration of Chinese culture from the perspectives of books, movies, and OT," she added.

For Yu Pei Chen, the core of our discussion is "when facing an aggressive foreign country, to what extent should our cultural policy be open or restricted? To what extent should we use the concept of defensive democracy to prevent foreign countries from taking advantage of our democratic environment to undermine and destroy our democracy? But as a country that prides itself on being able to accommodate diverse cultures in Asia, how do we maintain an open and diverse environment?"

As pointed out by Mei-Fang-Fan,²⁰ Taiwan has many lessons to share with the world. These lessons have been gained from its experience with catastrophic events—involving pollution, natural disasters, technological problems, and institutional failures. Moreover, young activists in Taiwan skillfully use digital technology to remake democracy to be more open and digital.

_Closing Remarks of an Indian: Bhoodan, Village Development Board and Mendha Lekha

Interviewing Onsua Kanhachat and Yu Pei Chen was quite enlightening for me as an Indian exposed to completely different kinds of democratic deliberations. In my

20. Ibid.

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youth, I had great respect for Vinoba Bhave, an ardent follower of Mahatma Gandhi. He initiated The Bhoodan Movement (Land Gift Movement), a voluntary land reform movement in India, in 1951. Vinoba used to walk from village to village persuading wealthy landowners to voluntarily give a percentage of their land to landless people in their village. His mentor, Mahatma Gandhi, was deeply influenced by John Ruskin's book "Unto This Last" and translated it into Hindi with the title Sarvodaya (Everyone's Emancipation). Vinoba founded an organization of Sarvodaya.

The third annual Sarvodaya Conference was held in Shivarampali, a town south of the southern Indian city of Hyderabad. Vinoba walked more than 400 km to attend the meeting. Telangana, the region surrounding Hyderabad, was then the epicenter of the armed communist rebellion. For Vinoba, the future of India was essentially a dispute between the fundamental ideologies of Gandhi and Marx. On the last day of the conference, April 11, 1951, Vinoba announced that, on his way home, he and a handful of his companions would tour the communist areas of Telangana to promote the message of nonviolence. On April 18, Vinoba entered the Nalgonda district, a center of communist activities. After meeting with Vinoba, the untouchables (India's most disadvantaged caste or community) of the Pochampalli village were demanding 80 acres of land for the livelihood of their families. Vinoba stated that if the government couldn't secure the needed land, the villagers should do something about it. Astonishingly, the local landowner offered to give 100 of his lands to those families. And so, the historic Bhoodan Movement (Gift of Land) began.21

^{21.} Mehta, Subhash. Bhoodan-Gramdan Movement - 50 Years: a Review. Mk-gandhi. https://www.mkgandhi.org/vinoba/bhoodan.htm. (Accessed May 13, 2023).

Vinoba toured the country and, in 1967, got some 4.7 million acres of land given to him, which were distributed among the landless laborers. The movement spontaneously attracted the attention of many people outside India. For example, the famous American correspondent Louis Fischer called Gramdan the most creative thinking to come from the East at that time. Hallam Tennyson, the grandson of poet Alfred Tennyson, wrote the book "The Saint on the March," recounting his experiences while traveling rural India with Vinoba. Chester Bowles, U.S. Ambassador to India, said the Bhoodan Movement was giving a message of Renaissance in India in 1955 in his book "The Dimensions of Peace." Bowles acknowledged this movement offered a revolutionary alternative to communism, for it was based on human dignity. British industrialist Earnest Bader was impressed by the Bhoodan movement and used the Gandhian concept of trusteeship by giving his industrial workers a 90% stake in the company. Others, such as British Quaker Donald Groom, Rev. Kaithan, David Graham, and Arthur Koestler, joined the movement as volunteers and collaborators.²²

As for the Village Development Board, I went to the tribal state of Nagaland in Northeast India in 1984 to study its Village Development Board Program. This program was the brainchild of the late Shri Achyut Gokhale, a war veteran and administrative officer. Nagaland was then infested by armed insurgency. Village Development Boards (VDB) were formed in all villages in Nagaland from 1976 to 1982. This institution has been the primary vehicle for delivering the government's schemes for rural development. Each VDB may

22. Ibid.

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design its development plan for villagers. The VDB is about the institutionalization of the idea of common property. It was about creating "common property" and managing it openly and honestly. This institution survived the onslaughts of state-level politics that encroached upon people's autonomy and the ravages of a raging insurgency. The VDB and its associated models had the potential to become a major strategic thrust in the Northeast, and with some modifications, in villages elsewhere in the country as well as in tribal communities across the world.

In order to highlight the significance of this program, it is important to note that Achyut Gokhale was awarded the "Padma Shri" by the President of India for his success in engaging the people of Nagaland with the "Nagaland Empowerment of People through Economic Development" (NEPED) program within the Village Development Boards.

Mendha Lekha Gadchiroli district of Maharashtra in India is famous for its biodiverse dry deciduous forests and tribal communities. The district is more than 700,000 hectares in area. Approximately 80 percent is under forest cover.

Mendha Lekha is a village located 30 km from the district headquarters and is spread over two small and closely situated tolas (hamlets). There were approximately 400 people in the village, mainly without class and caste hierarchies, when I visited it sometime in the 1990s. The entire population is of the Gond tribe, which had ruled and inhabited the surrounding forests since time immemorial. The villages' livelihood mainly depends on subsistence farming and the forest, which provides a range of

food, fuel, timber, and fodder. The average landholding is 5 acres. The primary source of income is from the collection of non-timber forest produce and daily wages from labor work with government and private agencies.

In 1987, the village decided to assert itself under the leadership of villager Devaji Topa. Mohan Hirabai Hiralal, an activist of Sarvodaya, played the catalyst role. The village tribal community in Gram Sabha (Town Hall Meeting) took the following decisions unanimously:

- 1. All domestic requirements of the village would be met from the surrounding forests without paying any fee to the government. However, this was accompanied by a set of rules for sustainable extraction.
- 2. No governmental or non-governmental outsider would be allowed to carry out any forest activity without the permission of the Gram Sabha (which includes one member from every household).
- 3. No commercial exploitation of the forests, except for non-timber forest produce, would be allowed.
- 4. Villagers would regularly patrol the forests.
- 5. They would regulate the amount of resources they could extract from the forests.
- 6. Water and soil conservation efforts followed to arrest soil erosion.
- 7. Forests would not be set on fire, and villagers would aid in fireextinguishing activities.
- 8. An encroachment would not be allowed.

The Forest department that controls the forest opposed it, but after a long struggle, the Government of India finally passed legislation that empowered the Gram Sabhas and the Forest Rights

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Act. Today, the village gets revenue in millions from the minor forest produce. Other villages are also following suit, thanks to the 73rd Amendment of the Indian Constitution that envisages Gram Sabhas as the crucial pillar of rural democracy. As noted in Deliberative Democracy in Asia, deliberative democracy can contribute to improving the course of democracy in Asia. Many countries in Asia²³ have long traditions of public deliberations in both democratic and undemocratic settings; some of which continues today.

^{23.} He, Baogang, Breen, Michael & Fishkin, James (Ed.). (2022). Deliberative Democracy in Asia. Routledge.

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Latin America ---- and the Institutional

BY: Gabriela Sisniega



Resetting democracy: the south side of global deliberation



Mexican architect and sociologist of the global south. She is currently an inhabitant and participant of Mexico State's landscape and territory. Expert in research, design, and implementation of collective thinking methodologies, with the interest of contributing to the care and strengthening of just, safe, and sustainable communities, through observation, collaboration, exchange, and with a basis in human and non-human rights.

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. Shee wrote his 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

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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 many²⁴ citizen initiatives deployed in Latin America, we spoke with the promoters of two recent examples that tackle ecological and corruption issues, respectively:

In 2019, the Fortaleza Citizens Council (Conselho Cidadão de Fortaleza) in Brasil elaborated 19 recommendations²⁵ on the issue of solid waste management in collaboration with the city hall.

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.

^{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/democraciaabierta/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).

_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 anticorruption 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 Brasil²⁶ 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

^{26.} For more information on Delibera Brasil! please visit: http://deliberabrasil.org/.

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

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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.²⁷

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

^{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-3FVzhdRFe0FojKXl_BAxk/view. (Accessed May 9, 2023).

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.

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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 sortition²⁸ 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

28. To learn more about this process, please visit: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VwVEMSTJ40w&ab_channel=ExtitutoPol%-C3%ADticaAbierta.

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."

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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:

- 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.

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.²⁹ 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

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

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 institutions³⁰ 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."

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

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. ³¹

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

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.

lasked Sofia what she sees in her local context and what she want 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 Extituto³² and Democracia en Red.³³

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.

^{32.} To learn more about Extituto, please visit: https://www.extituto.com/.
33. To learn more about Democracia en Red, please visit: https://democraciaenred.org/.

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.

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Eastern Europe: Tangled Between SOUTH

and North

BY:

Katya Petrikevich





Katya Petrikevich

She focuses on mainstreaming best practices in public participation and community engagement as a Co-Founder of Participation Factory and Civic Port. She is also working towards these goals as a member of the PB Practitioners Board at People Powered and a mentor at the Rising Star mentorship program offered by People Powered.

During her work, she supported the domestic and international offices of a civic tech company and provided expertise for the development of new methodologies. She conducted research on current trends in tech and innovation for the EU Commission, trained young Western African leaders, and activists in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire, and served as a jury member of the Prague Civil Society competition SWITCH.

An alumna of Columbia University and Sciences Po Paris, she tried to bring her extensive knowledge of political science and human rights into the field of participation and civic engagement, with special attention paid to the issues of gender parity and inclusion of marginalized groups.

_Introduction

Democracy in the world is facing continuous challenges, with more and more people talking about a crisis of representative democracies and a need to reinvent the existing democratic order and explore new models of social and political engagement through participatory and deliberative practices. At the same time, the conversation about democratic innovation continues to be dominated by representatives of the Global North. This approach shows significant shortcomings due to the exclusion and underrepresentation of the Global South's needs, specific characteristics, approaches, and experiences.

This chapter looks at the Central European region that stands at the crossroads of the two worlds, providing a space for experimentation on how to combine them best to promote and foster democratic innovation. According to *Nations in Transit*, ³⁴ Central Europe currently consists of countries that represent a wide range of levels of democracy, ranging from consolidated authoritarian regimes to consolidated democracies

^{34.} Smeltzer, Mike & Buyon, Noah. (2022). Nations in Transit Report: From Democratic Decline to Authoritarian Aggression. Freedom House. https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2022-04/NIT_2022_final_digital.pdf. (Accessed May 13, 2023).



_The Rise and Decline of Democracy and Peace in Central and Eastern Europe

Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) is a region that faced an opportunity for democratization in the 1990s, following the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Iron Curtain that ushered in the wave of regime change.

In a short period, popular movements flushed away pro-Soviet regimes that have consistently been rated as "Not Free" by

^{35. &}quot;The map reflects the findings of Freedom House's Nations in Transit 2022 survey, which assessed the status of democratic development in 29 countries from Central Europe to Central Asia during 2021". Smeltzer, Mike (2022). Civil Society's Many Faces on Nations in Transit Report: From Democratic Decline to Authoritarian Aggression. p. 4, Freedom House. https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2022-04/NIT_2022_final_digital.pdf. (Accessed May 13, 2023).

Freedom House.³⁶ Following the changes in Bulgaria, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, and Romania, other former Soviet bloc countries turned towards democratic systems with competitive elections and increased freedom of speech and other civil liberties.³⁷ Yet, the whole region has not followed the path of peaceful transition as a series of ethnic conflicts, independence wars, and insurgencies took place in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia between 1991 and 2001, leading up to and resulting in the separation of Yugoslavia.

Unfortunately, democracy in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and the Balkan region is currently at a crossroads. It faces internal threats from populist and autocratic regimes, external aggression, and other security threats such as cybercrime and disinformation. The victories of the first years of democratization and expansion of social and political freedoms in other parts of CEE were not long-lasting either. Reorganizing the existing order also created a power vacuum and power struggles that resulted in the slide of fragile democracies into hybrid or autocratic regimes. The Freedom House report from 2020³⁸ noted that there were fewer democracies in the region at that time than at any point since the report was first published in 1995. The decline left society even more vulnerable to further

^{36.} Freedom House is a non-profit organization group best known for its political advocacy on democracy, political freedom, and human rights.
37. Kakissis, Joanna. (May 7, 2022). Democracy At Risk In Central And Eastern Europe, Report Finds. NPR. https://www.npr.org/2020/05/07/851774707/democracy-at-risk-in-central-and-eastern-europe-report-finds. (Accessed May 13, 2023).

^{38.} Smeltzer, Mike & Buyon, Noah. (2022). Nations in Transit Report: From Democratic Decline to Authoritarian Aggression. Freedom House. https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2022-04/NIT_2022_final_digital.pdf. (Accessed May 13, 2023).

power grabs during the COVID-19 pandemic when governments and their leaders got a chance to tighten control and continue the centralization of power. At the same time, the general information landscape got increasingly flooded with Russian and Chinese misinformation and propaganda.

The situation further deteriorated when on February 24, 2022, the Russian Federation started a full-scale invasion of Ukraine, shifting the autocratic attack on democratic order towards violence. The war has already displaced millions of people and potentially accelerated a continuous antidemocratic transformation of Central and Eastern Europe. The stakes of the conflict are especially high since the Kremlin aims to subjugate a freely elected sovereign government and continue to utilize its militarist, expansionist, and imperialist instruments and rhetoric. Thus, the ongoing war in Ukraine created an urgent need for cooperation and coordination across the region to protect democracy and support Ukraine and over 4 million Ukrainian refugees.

Even though the current trend of democratization in the region points downwards, the political climate is far from homogeneous but rather a tapestry of different spaces and levels of experimentation with deliberative and participatory democracies on governmental and non-governmental levels. The cases documented for the Demo.Reset deliberative journal series presented below showcase two opposing sides of the spectrum: creating the space for political innovation and education in Hungary and institutionaliziting a participation agenda in Slovakia and the Czech Republic.

_Creating Space for Deliberative Democracy in Hungary

Hungary is one of the focal points of our overview. This landlocked country in Central Europe has borders with seven nations and a population of almost 10 million. The population is mainly comprised of Hungarians, with a significant Romani minority. The history of Hungary follows the trajectory described above: Post-WWII, Hungary became a satellite state of the Soviet Union. After the failed revolution in 1956, Hungary became a comparatively freer yet still repressed member of the Eastern Bloc. In October 1989, Hungary turned into a parliamentary democratic republic and joined the European Union in 2004, and became a part of the Schengen Area in 2007.

However, since then, Hungary's form of governance became a hybrid regime. This regime combines elements of democratic and authoritarian rule yet is distinct from both.

"They may be democratic in the minimal sense that they feature regular, competitive elections, but their dysfunctional institutions are unable to deliver the definitive components of a liberal democracy: checks and balances, the rule of law, and robust protections for the rights and liberties of all." 39

^{39.} Smeltzer, Mike & Buyon, Noah. (2022). Nations in Transit Report: From Democratic Decline to Authoritarian Aggression. Freedom House. p. 4. https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2022-04/NIT_2022_final_digital.pdf. (Accessed May 13, 2023).

As noted by Nations in Transit,

"Hungary's decline has been the most precipitous [...] It was one of the three democratic frontrunners as of 2005, but in 2020 it became the first country to descend by two regime categories and leave the group of democracies entirely." 40

Prime Minister of Hungary since 2010, Viktor Orbán, illustrates this trend and is slowly dropping the pretense of respecting democracy. He has centralized power, took over much of the media, created a hostile climate, and harassed civil society organizations as well as continuously supported like-minded regimes in the region, including Russia. Adopting the emergency law in 2020 allowed the government to rule by decree and exposed the undemocratic nature of the regime. In addition, conservative Christian policies and rhetoric propagated by Orbán exude xenophobia, racism, Islamophobia, and various forms of queerphobia, making already marginalized communities' life all the more difficult and outright dangerous.

This socio-political climate generates an imminent need for creating new democratic and communal spaces where various actors can safely cooperate and work on educating and supporting their communities, empowering each other to create change and fight for democracy, and experiment with new forms of democracy-building. Association of Alternative

^{40.} Csaky, Zselyke. (2020). Nations in Transit Report: Dropping the Democracies Facade. Freedom House, p. 2. https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2020-04/05062020_FH_NIT2020_vfinal.pdf. (Accessed May 13, 2023).

Communities (Alternatív Közösségek Egyesülete),⁴¹ based in the second largest city of Hungary, Debrecen, is one of these organizations.

Alternative Communities is a 25-year-old organization that focuses on community building and engagement. During an interview conducted on April, 2023, President of the Association Richárd Damu, Community Organizer Ági Tóth, and Program and event organizer Zsuzsa Béres-Áfra talked about the joy of working with and for their community, learning from its members and supporting them in their search for acceptance and inclusion. For example, the Association members habitually take part in the LGBTQIA+ Pride parades to support members of the queer community in times of increasing state-sponsored homophobia. As Richárd Damu noted, one of the most memorable experiences of their community work was helping a lesbian woman who had been depressed and attempted suicide due to her struggles with homophobia. They directed her towards a queer community group that helped her to accept herself and work on restoring her self-esteem and mental health.



41. To learn more about the Association of Alternative Communities (Alternatív Közösségek Egyesülete), please visit: https://altkozegy.hu/about/.

42. Tisza, Eleonóra, 2023. The girl gang has come together to help raise funds for the community space. Taken from Alternative Communities Facebook Page. in https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=6210438142328677&set=a.250491874990030 (Accessed May 5, 2023).

The organization's core focus is community building since they believe that one of the basic conditions of democracy is to give space to civil organizations. Creating such space should help activate the local community, provide it with new democratic tools and knowledge, and engage them in resolving social problems. Working with the community should serve as a way to nourish cooperation among different actors and help marginalized parts of the community and grassroots organizations.

One of the key demographics is the youth because this group is consistently disengaged from political life or even excluded from it. According to the National Democratic Institute (NDI) research, there's a lack of political engagement among the youth in CEE. The results show that young people

"neither believe that political institutions adequately represent their priorities nor that these institutions effectively include their voices." 43

The Association of Alternative Communities piloted the first-ever school Participatory Budgeting (PB) in Debrecen to engage the youth. Usually applied at the city level, this methodology started in Latin America in the 1980s but did not reach Hungarian schools yet. At the same time, city-level PBs in Hungary usually set an age limit of 16, thus excluding young people from the process.

Between 2021 and 2022, students from the Medgyessy Ferenc High School, Art High School, and Technical School in Debrecen were

^{43.} National Democratic Institute. (n.d.). Youth Attitudes of Politics and Democracy: Czech Republic. NDI. https://www.ndi.org/publications/youth-attitudes-politics-and-democracy-czech-republic.

invited to participate in a school-level decision-making process. The students were able to choose how to spend 350,000 HUF (1,030 USD) by proposing their ideas and voting for their favorite ones. The project was implemented with the support of Miklós Merényi (K-Monitor, Hungary), who works on disseminating the participatory budgeting methodology, and an American mentor, the Center for the Future of Arizona (US) coordinator. Since these democratic exercises and youth engagement are not governmental and educational system priorities, the funding had to be acquired externally from the United States Embassy in Budapest. The funding acquisition in this political climate is especially challenging for organizations like the Associations. Ági Tóth, Richárd Damu, and Zsuzsa Béres-Áfra noted that the Association is ostracized and is de facto seen as "an enemy of the government."

As noted by Richárd Damu, working with younger generations in Hungary is a great way to spread democracy because they are "sensitive to new ideas. They can change, while the older generation cannot accept those new ideas." This methodology was, in essence, used as a way to show young people democracy in action and start preparing them for the life of an active citizen who understands how to take part in politics through broader community-focused social and political activities, and not only in elections. Thanks to such a process, students can realize that their voice matters, and they can create change. Therefore, an exercise in which young people are invited and empowered to deliberate, cooperate, and make decisions

^{44.} Personal communication, April, 2023.

^{45.} Ibid.

for the whole community, can help break down cultural and knowledge barriers that block the development of deliberative democracy, as identified by Demo.Reset.⁴⁶

Practically speaking, the process took three weeks, during which members of the Association, with the support of the local Student Parliament, worked in the school. Any student could participate by submitting a proposal, deliberating, and voting. Out of 900 students, 400 (44.4%) participated in the process showing a high interest in participating in the initiative. The project generated 30 proposals, some of which were developed and submitted by individuals, while others were put together by groups of students. Seven of them were practically the same and required the replacement of uncomfortable classroom chairs.

Ten concrete and feasible ideas were confirmed and put on the ballot. However, before the voting, participants were invited to run a campaign in school or on social media. For the campaign, students could "make a poster that [would be] displayed in the hall... [...] [Students] could also plan a video [to show] on the school's Facebook page, and write an official one or two sentence summary [to] be included on the ballot. It was not mandatory, but the Association managed to mobilize the majority of participants."⁴⁷

^{46.} Demo.Reset. (2022). Phase 1. Be Part of this Global Network: Demo. Reset. www.demoreset.org/en/global-network/. (Accessed May 5, 2023). Miklós, K-Monitor, 2022. Page 20.

^{47.} Report on the Debrecen School PB (A diákok költségvetése), Merényi



During the three voting days, 385 votes were received, most of which were cast on the first day. After the voting was closed, the Headmaster announced the results on the radio. The results were also communicated online. The winning ideas were "Restroom renovation" (156 votes) and "Sanitary box [with free pads and tampons in the bathrooms]" (148 votes).

According to the members of the Association, since this was a pilot project that aimed to test whether this methodology would work in the Hungarian context and generate any interest from the young people, it was exciting to see that the methodology worked well and that the level of engagement from young people surpassed the 40% mark. In addition, the President of the Association, Richárd Damu, noted that this case sparked the interest of other actors, and now more schools are interested in running their own PBs.

48. It is a library room. On the forefront are shelves with books and a table with chairs and a computer in the background. The shelves with books are partially covered with hand-made posters describing school PB projects. The texts are in Hungarian. Tisza, Eleonóra, 2023. Taken from Alternative Communities Facebook Page. in https://www.facebook.com/altkozegy/photos/pb.100076469551265.-2207520000./1025083021484589/?type=3 (Accessed May 5, 2023).

Despite their frustration with the current government, the organization's members are optimistic that legislative change can end the existing regime. However, they recognize that there is still much work to be done to achieve such change, as organizations like the Association for Alternative Communities need to foster cooperation between themselves and communities, as well as support decision-makers in moving towards more open governance driven by participation and deliberation, and community-centered policies. To achieve this, they need to continue to build and expand the social and political space in which everyone, including young people, is adequately equipped and empowered to work for change.

_Participation Institutionalization in Slovakia

A contrasting example of participatory and deliberative democracy can be found in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, where participatory democracy is increasingly more and more institutionalized and mainstreamed in the daily operations of the governing institutions. In this case study, we will focus on the Slovak Republic. This landlocked country with around 5.4 million inhabitants borders five countries, including the Czech Republic and Hungary.

After WWI's end and the Austro-Hungarian Empire's dissolution, it became a part of Czechoslovakia, one of a few CEE countries that remained democratic during the interwar period. However, local fascist parties came to power, and the first Slovak Republic existed during WWII as a satellite state of Nazi Germany. Czechoslovakia was reestablished at the end of WWII and became a part of the Sovietled Eastern Bloc. There were attempts to liberalize the country,

yet it culminated with the crushing of the Prague Spring by an invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1948. The regime ended after a peaceful Velvet Revolution in 1989, and Slovakia became an independent state in January 1993 after a peaceful dissolution of Czechoslovakia. In 2004, Slovakia joined the European Union and NATO and became a part of the Eurozone in 2009.

Since then, Slovakia has become one of a few consolidated democracies in the Central and Eastern European region alongside Czechia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Slovenia. However, the corrosive effect of the democratic decline in the region, conservatism, foreign disinformation and propaganda, and local corruption brought down the democracy score for all of those countries in 2022.

Even though Slovakia follows the trend of democratic decline, it is still a consolidated democracy, which creates a favorable environment for democratic innovation and the implementation of participatory and deliberative practices. One of the central national agencies working with this agenda is the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic, specifically the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government of the Slovak Republic for the Development of Civil Society. Borrowing Prague's good practice of creating local participation coordinators, the Slovak Ministry of Interior cooperated with Participation Factory, a Czech social enterprise, to create teams of participation coordinators at the regional level in five of the eight Slovak regions.

^{49.} Smeltzer, Mike & Buyon, Noah. (2022). Nations in Transit Report: From Democratic Decline to Authoritarian Aggression. Freedom House. https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2022-04/NIT_2022_final_digital.pdf. (Accessed May 13, 2023).

Participation Factory⁵⁰ is a four-year-old Prague-based social enterprise that focuses on designing and delivering participation processes. Participation Factory is a member of People Powered and coordinates its activities in Central Eastern Europe and the Balkans. The context of their work differs significantly from the Hungarian case presented above.

Local political institutions in the Czech Republic and Slovakia seek innovation and are increasingly interested in deliberation and participation-based methodologies. Thus, Participation Factory (PF) identified a strong need to create an environment for the sustainable implementation of such processes and, as noted by Anna Tehlova, Managing Director of PF, "a huge knowledge and experience gap in this field."⁵¹ The latter represented one of the challenges in engaging stakeholders and citizens in key decision-making processes to ensure that the policies and solutions proposed by the government reflected the real needs of the people.⁵²



Fig. 4 - First planning workshop in Bratislava for regional participation coordinators, by Karel Kolar & Renata Balogh, 2022^{53}

^{50.} To learn more about Participation Factory, please visit: https://www.participationfactory.com/.

^{51.} Personal communication, April, 2023.

^{52.} Ibid.

^{53.} Koral, Karel & Balogh, Renata, 2022. The first planning workshop in Bratislava for regional participation coordinators. taken from Participation Factory in

To solve this problem, the Ministry of Interior engaged PF for 18 months so that their experts would train regional coordinators "from zero to actual experts who can handle any process by themselves."54 The challenge of the work is not only to pass the know-how, guide the coordinators, and be the guarantors who ensure the high quality of projects but also to raise awareness among other government agencies. Even though Participation Factory previously implemented a similar project in 11 city districts of Prague, the project in Slovakia is qualitatively different as it focuses on regional governments. It includes, for example, the development of different strategies and policies in contrast with the urban-planning-oriented projects of the Prague municipal districts. Due to the nature of the projects, coordinators and Participation Factory experts work primarily with the stakeholders rather than the general public, who is mostly unaware of the ongoing program.

An example of such projects is setting up a platform for cooperation among the CSOs, NGOs, and associations that work on the issues faced by a Roma community in the Prešov region. This project gathered over a dozen organizations and kick-started the first-ever conversation among them, which laid the path for their cooperation among themselves and the Prešov regional government. As noted by the PF experts, working on projects like this, which help support already marginalized communities, has a high social impact and value and brings a special sense of fulfillment.

54. Ibid.



Since the project focuses on internal capacity-building, it definitely responds to the knowledge barrier to deliberative democracy as identified by Demo.Reset. Additionally, this program aims to change a governance culture and to make it more citizen-focused, open, transparent, efficient, and data-driven. However, Anna Tehlova, who also coordinates the Slovak project, notes that the program's main purpose is to tear down the organizational barriers and support institutions in creating infrastructure that would make deliberative and participatory practices a part of their DNA. In order to do that, the PF team is in continuous contact with the coordinators and their direct bosses and heads of other relevant departments who are engaged in the projects supported by coordinators, for example, the Department of Health or Social Affairs. There is also an ongoing commitment with the Ministry,

55. Bodor, Mikulas, 2022. Quo Vadis, Romale? Workshop members in Preśov Region. taken from Quo Vadis, Romale? in Participation Factory https://www.participationfactory.com/quo-vadis-romale-how-the-presov-region-is-moving-towards-better-integration-of-roma-communities/ (Accessed May 5, 2023).

which is trying to ensure that everything being built will be used in the future beyond those 18 months.

According to Anna, one of the effective tools used in the process is a "Community of Practice" or weekly meetings among coordinators to discuss their challenges, ask each other for advice, and support each other's work. It is easy to deal with challenges when you are not the only one facing them, says Anna. Additionally, it creates opportunities for cooperation and a habit of keeping in touch, which can continue even after PF experts step aside.

This program constitutes a great example of systematic participation that helps consolidate and make sustainable infrastructure for continuous democratic innovation and deliberative democracy. Compared with Hungary, where the main actors are non-governmental, Slovakia's main actors are governmental institutions supported by a team of experts. This program shows how setting up the participation as a system is a long-term process contrary to ad hoc short-term deliberative methods like school Participatory Budgeting.

Yet, similarly to any other context, the Slovak case showed that continuous advocacy and awareness-raising among other governmental actors is necessary to decrease risks of new internal institutional blocks and challenges. However, this issue is much easier resolved by a team of coordinators in the case of Slovakia than by individual coordinators, as in the Prague case, since a team of coordinators has more resources to advocate, promote, and negotiate with other actors.⁵⁶

56. Thid.

Participation Factory and its experts hope to continue working on creating long-lasting participation systems and practices that support local governments in creating and sustaining political and social spaces that continue to welcome democratic engagement, inclusion, and support.

The reviewed cases demonstrate how different the contexts are within the CEE region, and how much these differences affect the scope of potential projects, the needs of local organizations, and their ability to cooperate with the government and each other.

_Eastern Europe: Neither Global North, Nor Global South

Despite the differences in the contexts, the scope, and the nature of the projects presented, both members of the Association for Alternative Communities and Participation Factory shared a positive view of the future and a belief in the continuous growth of deliberative and participatory methodologies in all levels of governance. However, experts from both organizations also highlighted that the Eastern European region is unique in that it significantly differs from Western Europe and the Global North since it still struggles with corruption and sustaining stable democracies.

At the same time, neither of the experts who took part in the interviews for this chapter said that they identify their region with the Global South. The main reason is that the Global South is associated with more barriers to democracy, higher rates of

corruption, and the lack of various essential services. As noted by Anna Tehlova, who also co-founded and coordinated the Public Space Network (PSN) in Nairobi, Kenya, certain marginalized communities in Eastern Europe have similar problems accessing essential services faced by many Sub-Saharan African communities. However, the average level of access and quality of life in Eastern Europe is, on average, higher.

This issue of Eastern European self-identification is even more complicated because the countries in this region vary significantly in their levels of democracy and economic status. This ambiguity undoubtedly contributes to Eastern Europe's low levels of cooperation with other regions, either from the Global South or the Global North. The differences among the countries in the region also make it difficult for the local corporations to communicate, find common points, and cooperate with each other.

Regardless, it is evident that solutions that work for the Global North cannot be fully or at all applicable in Eastern Europe. At the same time, it is necessary to eliminate the desire to "catch up" with the North, as it is necessary to recognize the differences between all the regions and acknowledge that, in some cases, countries of the Global South have more innovative solutions. The relationship between "the North" and "the South" should be based on mutual respect, recognition of differences, acknowledgment of the existing discrepancies and imbalances, achievement of equity, and exchange of best practices from democratic innovation and deliberative democracy.

PG. 144 - 151

Lessons Learned

BY: Sebastián Calderón Adelaida Pardo Viviana Villa





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Is a Colombian filmmaker with a BA in Visual Arts and an MFA in Cinematography from the European master's program KINO-EYES. She has worked in both documentary and fiction film productions in countries such as Canada, Colombia, Scotland, Estonia and India. Now, she works as a cameraman and assistant director between Europe, Colombia and India; while developing her personal documentary projects. In 2018, she worked at the Scottish Documentary Institute in Edinburgh as a production production assistant to broaden her knowledge about the creation and story development. There, in addition to working on documentary projects in different stages of development, she was part of the production team of the pitching workshops "Bridging the gap" and "Edinburgh Pitch". Today, she offers dramaturgy consultancy to documentary projects in different stages of development.



Graduated in philosophy from the University of Antioquia and visual anthropologist from the University of Barcelona. Interested in the analysis and representation of information and knowledge in multiple forms: chronicles, audiovisuals, information systems, maps, graphics. Faithfully believes that one learns by doing and that thinking is doing violence to oneself and getting out of one's comfort zone to find unexpected solutions to complex problems. She loves dancing to electronic music and the eternal clash of bodies.



The global community is currently facing several crises, such as global warming and the decline of democracy. These crises have led many people to have a sense of despair and helplessness regarding the future. That is why the great challenge of our times is to find effective global solutions. Only by creating new strategies can we collectively re-imagine a utopian future instead of the dystopia that the world presents us with.

Mass migration, climate change, financial crisis, pandemics, authoritarian regimes, etc., set the pace of our times, and it is up to us to determine how to find solutions through collective intelligence. In this scenario, recognizing the Global South's voices, perspectives, and practices can bring us closer to the answers we are constantly seeking.

The work done in creating the Demo.Reset network of practitioners has been strongly influenced by the idea of moving from dystopias to the transformations needed to materialize what we dream of. The intention behind the development of this project and all the people from the Global South who participated is to recognize that deliberative democracy actually exists in the Global South and, in some cases, has existed since before colonization.

In addition to recognizing the Global South in creating this deliberative wave, it is necessary to understand that looking at these countries can lead us to find innovative answers to common problems. However, recognizing the processes of the Global South is not simply a matter of allowing us to listen to their voices and give them visibility; recognition is also an invitation to expand the limits of what we know as deliberative democracy to enrich it with new and diverse methodologies.

The Demo.Reset journey was not without its challenges or difficulties. While identifying common barriers to implementing democracy-strengthening initiatives is an exercise that is directly relevant to us, as an organization from the Global South, we are also constantly confronted with the lack of resources to develop our activities and achieve our advocacy goals. Thus, implementing a global laboratory where practitioners and organizations from 4 regions of the Global South would travel, exchange experiences, and learn by doing, required many resources, something similar to what we had already experienced with the Democracy Residencies project we implemented along with People Powered.

Democracy Residencies was a project through which we were able to take 13 people to 6 different countries to implement strategy and work models to help build the deliberative wave of the Global South. To implement it, we had to overcome a series of challenges ranging from obtaining entry permits to the countries (especially for people coming from the Global South, who usually need visas to go most places) to building collective and innovative models that did not replicate old individualism and self-centered patterns and that were based on the complementarity of the participants through the implemented methodologies.

Finally, the challenge of communication and language also became visible. Not all people behind deliberative processes speak European languages such as English, French, or Spanish. Furthermore, not everyone has access to the internet or the necessary tools to make themselves visible and accessible on social networks, participate in online conferences, or even access WhatsApp, which hinders their processes' visibility and findings and limits their reach. However, we would like to think that these challenges serve to open new paths and find ways to continue building routes.

One of the lessons we learned from the challenges we faced and the general mapping of deliberative democracy exercises in the Global South was that we need to carry out more rigorous exercises to find the particularities of deliberative scenarios in the Global South. Only by emphasizing the specificities of the projects will we be able to find a common language with what has been previously developed in Europe and North America.

Identifying the contributions of the indigenous Mingas in Latin America, Barazas and Urambas in Africa, and in general, the deliberative traditions throughout the Global South is a task that must continue to be done and that could bring: (i) new answers to the already known crisis of democracy; (ii) the creation of alternative models of deliberative democracy that genuinely respond to the contexts and needs of the Global South and (iii) the creation of a common global language to develop a truly global collective intelligence.

Another of the main lessons learned from the project has to do with the transformative desire of the organizations we work with. Organizations working on these issues in different parts of the world are focused on generating community strengthening, also known as community building. Through this strengthening, organizations become catalysts for democratic innovation and deliberative democracy, developing tools and languages that increase people's abilities to participate in public power.

These organizations work is motivated by the recognition in their contexts of a deep desire to transform democratic conditions, especially in Africa and Latin America. However, many organizations state that they do not have the necessary tools to influence decision-making spaces effectively. However,

this does not prevent them from doing an excellent job of creating conditions for citizens to understand how to participate and develop the skills required to do so. Thus, one of the next steps we must take to continue strengthening the deliberative democracy ecosystem in the Global South and take it towards institutionalizing its alternative models is to provide these tools that organizations and practitioners need so much to effectively and directly influence decision-making processes.

There is still a lot of work to be done to overcome common barriers, generate conditions for impactful advocacy and transform our democracies. That is why we are committed to continuing to work from Demo.Reset with the network of practitioners of deliberative democracy in the Global South. We will continue to manage a community of practice combining the "international" and "local" levels so that the deliberative wave in Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, Eastern Europe, India, and Southeast Asia keeps growing.

Thus, we aspire to multiply the laboratories and generate more spaces for the co-creation of alternative models of deliberative democracy, combining the Global South's diverse knowledge with the Global North's work in terms of Climate Assemblies, Citizens' Juries, etc. We want to continue generating spaces for exchange through the Democratic Residencies to get closer and closer to institutionalizing these local deliberative practices and transforming the paradigms of public powers. Ultimately, our dream is to continue amplifying networking, collective intelligence, and democratic innovation to move towards scenarios with more guarantees for citizen participation. We will persist in working to reset our democracies in the Global South!



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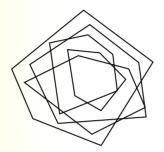
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