6. Can participatory governance improve the quality of democracy? A response from Latin America

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Assessing the quality of democracy has become a central concern in a landscape of increasing political disaffection and disenchantment with democratic institutions. Regardless of various existing explanations for the perceived decline of public trust in institutions like parties and parliaments (Dalton et al. 2003; Inglehart 1997; Norris 2002), the conviction that reforms are necessary is shared by scholars and governments alike (Dalton et al. 2003). What is not yet clear, however, is which model of 'good democracy' can better countervail political disillusionment and enhance the quality of democracy everywhere it has grown roots.

In a major work, Diamond and Morlino (2005) concluded that a particular type of democracy seems better suited to higher democratic quality, namely, one that generates and facilitates high levels of participation and competition. That the latter perform as the 'engines of democratic quality' (Morlino 2011) indicates that Dahl's (1972) concept of polyarchy still remains central to measurements. The question, however, is not whether high participation and competition can boost the quality of democracy, but *how* this result can be attained. Reflecting on this, the scholars point to a crucial problem: 'Is it enough to financially support representative channels, such as parties, and have a constitutional design and an electoral system that allow for participation and competition? Or do we need new and more creative recipes?' (Diamond and Morlino 2005, p. xxxvii).

This chapter assumes that new and more creative recipes for democratic quality are indeed necessary, and seeks to investigate them in representative channels that include more than political parties, as well as in constitutional designs that allow for participation and competition beyond elections. I will thus turn to the so-called 'democratic innovations', new institutional designs that aim at increasing citizen participation in the political decision-making process (Goodin 2008; Smith 2009). These innovations lie at the core of participatory governance (Gaventa 2002; Fischer 2012) and have been increasingly implemented around the world, although with diverse institutional designs and scopes (Johnson and Gastil 2015). The varying success achieved by democratic innovations points

to questions scholars have not yet been able to answer: What makes democratic innovations effective? And what impact does participatory governance have on the quality of democracy?

This chapter will address this problem. That democratic innovations are a response to political disillusionment (Dalton et al. 2003) and a possible cure for the malaises of representative democracy (Selee and Peruzzotti 2009; Geissel and Newton 2012) are not new arguments. The potential of democratic innovations to deepen democracy (Fung and Wright 2003) or to improve its quality (Geissel 2009; Geissel and Joas 2013) is also not an unknown claim. However, scholarships on democratic innovations and on quality of democracy have grown divorced (Geissel and Mayne 2013), and each presents shortcomings that hinder joint efforts to creatively devise new recipes for coping with democratic deficits.

On the one hand, there is little comparative empirical research on the impact of democratic innovations, and the relatively few existing case studies are mostly limited to small-scale, local-level experiments. Democratic theory has been overly concerned with how the institutional design of innovations realizes the values of deliberation, overlooking their outcomes and consequences on democracy at the macro level (Pogrebinschi and Ryan 2017). Moreover, no standards to gauge the actual impact of democratic innovations on the several dimensions of the quality of democracy have yet been developed, as there are presently no objective criteria to assess the diversity of institutional designs that have evolved in very different political systems and social contexts. This leaves open the question of whether democratic innovations may impact on macro-level politics, and thus have an effect on the quality of democracy.

On the other hand, assessments of quality of democracy consistently disregard the existence of democratic innovations and the role they play in political systems, especially when interacting with the institutions of representative democracy. Most measurements and indices simply do not account for political reforms undertaken by national and sub-national governments with the aim of expanding opportunities for citizen participation. Several of these reforms institutionalized democratic innovations, or redesigned institutions so as to further include citizens in the policy process. These new designs and institutional changes are not grasped by most indicators, which still measure participation mainly based on electoral turnout and voting rights, in addition to standard forms of association, protest or petition signing. Without a more comprehensive and updated understanding of participation, existing measurements cannot properly estimate the actual weight of this 'engine of democratic quality', as well as gauge its relation to other democratic qualities, like competition, responsiveness or equality.

This chapter aims at contributing to fill the gaps mentioned above, bringing together participatory governance, democratic innovations and quality of democracy research agendas. First, it argues that democratic innovations as the institutional forms and spaces of participatory governance require a broader understanding of citizen participation than that commonly used by measurements of the quality of democracy. Then it proposes an analytical framework to assess the impact of democratic innovations on the quality of democracy. In order to do that, I offer first some indicators to assess the institutionalization of democratic innovations, and argue that in order to impact on the quality of democracy the latter must institutionalize non-electoral participation by meeting three criteria: *feasibility*, *inclusiveness* and *effectiveness*. I will then argue that once democratic innovations expand the institutional opportunities for non-electoral participation, they may impact on different dimensions of the quality of democracy. Relying on evidence from some Latin America countries, I will finally look specifically at three of these dimensions: *responsiveness*, *competition* and *equality*. The chapter concludes with the claim that participatory innovations may only be a recipe of political reform able to increase the quality of democracy if the new non-electoral means of participation are institutionalized within the representative system. Only then could one say that participatory governance does, in fact, transforms democracy.

RECASTING PARTICIPATION

As citizens expect more from democracy and its institutions, governments seek ways of devolving decision-making into society, and the political landscape becomes more favourable to participatory ideals (Warren 2002). Participatory governance is the result of a recognition that citizen participation requires a whole set of new specific principles, methods and institutions (Fischer 2012, p. 458). Democratic innovations are new institutional forms and spaces that entail such principles and methods. While participatory governance empowers citizens and allow them to make decisions through deliberation (Fung and Wright 2003), democratic innovations comprise a vast range of institutional designs where citizens can participate, deliberate and, often, also take decisions. Democratic innovations are the set of new institutional forms of a democracy that seek to go beyond the governmental structures and beyond classic representation bringing citizens back in (see Heinelt 2010; also the Introduction to this volume).

Aiming to implement the principles of participatory governance,

democratic innovations have been multiplying across continents and countries and displaying an enormous variety of new institutional designs (for an overview see examples listed in Table 6.1). The tasks assigned to citizens are as varied as the new institutional designs. Lay people and civil society organizations are entitled to set the policy agenda along with governments, giving recommendations or making decisions on public expenditure prioritizing, reallocation of budgetary provisions, management of local resources, policy planning, design, implementation of urban and rural development projects, and the like (Selee and Peruzzotti 2009; Smith 2009; Cameron et al. 2012). The ascribed aims of participatory governance are also multifarious (see Fischer 2012), yet democratic innovations usually revolve around addressing failures of specific administrative organs, monitoring and improving institutional performance, fixing the delivery of public goods and services, enhancing transparency and social accountability, defining public budget priorities, including affected citizens and minority groups in public decisions, among many others.

Accordingly, a large volume of scholarship ranging from democratic theory to public administration has been claiming that participatory and deliberative models of democracy find in the new institutional designs a chance to correct the purported flaws of liberal, representative democracy. While theorists have over the last years redefined the concepts of participation and representation in order to meet the new challenges posed by democratic innovations (Mansbridge 2003; Urbinati 2006; Urbinati and Warren 2008), comparativists have not yet paid sufficient attention to the need to revise how participation is conceptualized and measured as an indicator of democracy and its quality. Most democracy surveys and indices still lack a concept of participation that acknowledges its non-electoral dimension and the variety of new participatory designs implemented around the world.

Neglecting the existence of participation beyond elections, concepts of participation used in democracy measurements amount to a minimalist (Schumpeter 1942) or, at most, pluralist (Dahl 1956) model of democracy. Aiming at moving further from Dahl, Altman and Pérez-Liñán (2002) claim that participation and competition should be evaluated not merely as rights but as effective exercise of rights, and propose a new measure to capture effective participation, which nevertheless consists in redefining electoral turnout as the number of voters over the voting-age population. Levine and Molina (2011) also measure participation by quantifying electoral participation (voting turnout), but add to the account the existing opportunities to vote, participation in political organizations and the representativity of institutions. Diamond and Morlino (2005) concede that voter turnout rate 'captures only one aspect of democratic participation',

however their definition of participation does not comprise more than the kind of activities facilitated by membership in parties and political organizations. It does not account for the worldwide spread of participatory innovations, underestimating their impact on the very institutions of representative democracy.

Morlino and Katz made an important step forward by considering forms of participation 'with regard to specific policies and deliberative democracy arenas' (2013, p. 14). They advance a quite broad definition of participation that allows for empirical assessment of conventional (elections, referendum, membership in political organizations and associations) and non-conventional forms of participation (strike, demonstrations, riots). But it tends to put non-electoral forms of participation equal with non-conventional forms of participation, which implies equal participation in demonstrations or riots, for example, with participation in 'deliberative democracy arenas'. The latter modality of participation, however, entails a specific institutional design, which, regardless of its various possible forms (Fung 2006), cannot be equalled to borderline participation in protests, riots and the like.

Indexes and measurements of democracy and its quality also rely on a very narrow concept of participation. Most democracy indices and surveys define participation as meaning primarily voting. Electoral turnout and exercise of political rights are the main and most usual indicators, present in all measurements. Many indices also include assembling and organizing among their indicators of participation, measuring access to government offices and membership in political parties and civil society associations.

The debate has moved forward considerably with Coppedge et al. (2011), and their recent Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Project. The V-Dem presents itself as a new approach to conceptualizing and measuring democracy, and includes participatory and deliberative principles among its seven principles of democracy. However, V-Dem's quite normative conceptualizations may fail to capture the empirical experiments with democratic innovations. While the V-Dem asks country experts the extent to which the *ideals* of participatory and deliberative democracy are achieved, it may fail to grasp where and how those ideals have been materialized, namely, democratic innovations.

The new institutional designs that aim at enhancing citizen participation and promoting deliberation often do so by *adapting* the once normative principles behind their creation. Democratic innovations often *combine* the ideals of both participatory democracy and deliberative democracy, and such combination can happen in a quite pragmatic way, that is, through the *adjustment* of those ideals to the existing institutions of representative democracy (Pogrebinschi 2013). This means that the ideal of participatory

democracy, in real, existing democracies, will not necessarily be translated as an 'uneasiness about delegating authority to representatives' or the fact that 'direct rule by citizens is preferred wherever practicable' (Coppedge et al. 2011, p. 253). Most existing innovations are the result of participatory governance, where elected representatives and public administrators include citizens and civil society organizations in the political process. There is no direct rule by citizens, and they depend on the authority of representatives to turn the outcomes of participatory processes into binding political decisions.

Participatory governance comprises participation, deliberation and also forms of 'citizen representation' (Brown 2006; Warren 2008). It amounts to more than voting, assembling, protesting and lobbying. It also entails more than petitioning and demanding justification. Participation implies likewise more than just to validate or veto a previously framed policy, such as happens in most referendums and plebiscites. It is also not just about choosing candidates and holding them accountable through elections. Participation is also about *engaging* in policymaking, *having a say* on policy formulation, and *taking part in* policy implementation. In several countries today innovations allow citizens to become directly involved in public administration, having a role in the design, implementation and control over public policy. Without acknowledging participatory governance and the new meanings and practices of participation, research on quality of democracy will be 'increasingly subject to the limitations we should expect when nineteenth-century concepts meet twenty-first century realities' (Warren 2001, p. 226).

INSTITUTIONALIZING DEMOCRATIC INNOVATIONS

Participatory governance implies a more comprehensive and updated concept of participation, one that takes into account its non-electoral dimension. However, such a non-electoral dimension does not imply that participation is necessarily and exclusively 'unconventional', 'informal' or 'non-institutionalized'. These labels may appropriately fit protests, demonstrations, riots, sit-ins, boycotts, advocacy campaigns and petition signing, which are typically forms of contestation that often arise spontaneously and oppose political decisions or representative institutions. They may also sometimes be suitable to assess participation of civil society organizations, social movements, social accountability networks, and other forms of social organization and engagement.

Participatory governance relies on democratic innovations, which involve specific institutional designs that are distinguished for enhancing

Table 6.1 Dimensions of participation

Participation	*Electoral*	Electoral turnout, voting rights, membership in political parties and other political organizations (interest groups) and associations	
	Non-electoral	*Institutionalized*	Citizens' assemblies, citizens' panels, policy councils, citizens' initiatives, e-democracy processes, e-parliament, crowdsourcing legislation, participatory budgeting, participatory investment planning, governance committees, community councils, etc.
		Non-institutionalized	Protests, demonstrations, strikes, riots, sit-in, boycott, advocacy campaigns, petition signing Membership in civil society organizations, social movements and social accountability networks

participation beyond elections. They are not mechanisms of contestation, and are not devised around the wish to oppose political decisions or representative institutions. Au contraire, those designs seek new and innovative ways for citizens to have a larger role in the policy process that takes place within representative systems, and thereby enhance democracy. They can be more or less institutionalized, and the more institutionalized they are, the more they fit the notion of participatory governance. Table 6.1 distinguishes between the electoral and non-electoral dimensions of participation, as well as the institutionalized and non-institutionalized dimensions of the latter.

Avritzer highlighted the importance of differentiating participation and participatory institutions. Defining participation as 'an outcome of institutions designed to promote participation' and what 'takes place within specially designed institutions' (2009, p. 4), he argues that democratic theory misses the institutional dimension of participation and proposes a theory of participatory institutions. According to Avritzer, participatory institutions have four main characteristics: they operate simultaneously through the principles of participation and representation; they transform

the voluntary features of civil society into forms of permanent political organization; they interact with political parties and state actors; and they have an institutional design which is relevant to their effectiveness (Avritzer 2009, p. 8). Certainly, not all of those characteristics apply to all democratic innovations. But they call our attention to the institutional dimension of non-electoral participation and of the new designs of participatory governance, which is crucial to assess the potential impact of the latter on the quality of democracy.

It is reasonable to expect that the opportunities for participation created by democratic innovations will have a more significant impact on the quality of democracy than the extent to which they are institutionalized. But how should one assess the institutional dimension of non-electoral participation? I propose five criteria for this: formalization, representativeness, scope, scale and decisiveness.

First, institutionalized innovations tend to display some degree of *formalization*. Participatory practices have been increasingly turned into more formal designs or incorporated within the existing institutions of representative democracy. When democratic innovations are not inscribed into laws or constitutions, they are often backed up by governmental policies, political reforms or parties' platforms. Second, institutionalized democratic innovations enjoy some degree of *representativeness*, as they tend to work within or along with representative institutions, and are frequently implemented or sponsored by elected governments with varying degrees of input from civil society. They also frequently revolve around one issue or policy, which allow for consistent group organization and the representation of collective interests, in contrast to individual ones. Third, participation in the public policy process seems to be the main *scope* of institutionalized democratic innovations. The opportunities the latter provide citizens consist in taking part in at least one of the stages of the policy cycle, that is, problem definition, agenda setting, policy development, policy implementation and policy evaluation. Fourth, the more participatory innovations are institutionalized, the more they are not constrained by *scale*. Non-electoral participation is no longer limited to the local level and the small scale. The new institutional designs have been attracting a growing number of participants and many have been institutionalized at the national level in recent years. As they institutionalize, democratic innovations must be able to impact on macro politics and on national policymaking even if they take place at the local level or on a small scale. Lastly, as they institutionalize, many democratic innovations tend to yield *decisions* as a conclusion of deliberative processes, although those decisions are not always binding. Table 6.2 specifies some indicators to assess how participation is institutionalized through democratic innovations.

Table 6.2 Measuring the institutionalization of democratic innovations in participatory governance

	Low	*Medium*	*High*
Formalization	Not backed up by legislation or constitution nor by governmental policy or programme	Backed up by governmental policy or programme	Backed up by legislation or constitution
Representativeness	Implemented outside the realm of institutions of representative democracy	Implemented within the representative system, but does not work together with existing institutions	Implemented within and together with elected bodies or officials
Scope	Does not involve participation in the policy cycle	Involves participation in at least one of the stages of the policy cycle	Involves participation in more than one of the stages of the policy cycle
Scale	Institutional design prevents it from scaling up	Institutional design does not hinder scaling up	Institutional design induces scaling up
Decisiveness	Does not yield decisions	Yields non-binding decisions	Yields binding decisions

If democratic innovations are expected to impact on the quality of democracy, they are expected to match these criteria at least to some extent. The higher their institutionalization, the greater are the opportunities provided for citizens to participate in governance, and the higher are the chances that such participation will generate political outcomes and thereby transforming democracy. However, the institutionalization of democratic innovations should not undermine their experimental character. Institutionalization does not prevent nor hinder experimentation. But it does raise the chance of impact.

The more the new participatory designs are institutionalized *within* or in connection *with* the representative system, the higher are their chances to

have an impact. Institutional innovations that allow participation through deliberative, direct or digital means are not categories that stand outside of or compete with representative democracy. The same is true for the new institutional venues of citizen representation that do not rely on an electoral authorization, but that result from delegation or devolution from representative institutions. Democratic innovations expand the opportunities of participation beyond elections, but participatory governance does not necessarily grow only outside the realm of representative democracy.

ASSESSING DEMOCRATIC INNOVATIONS

Once enjoying at least a low level of institutionalization, democratic innovations can be assessed by means of three criteria: feasibility, inclusiveness and effectiveness. These dimensions differ from other evaluation frameworks, such as for example those proposed by Smith (2009), Geissel (2012) or Geissel and Mayne (2013). While Smith (2009) focuses on the goods to be realized by democratic innovations (inclusiveness, popular control, considered judgement and transparency), Geissel (2012) on input-legitimacy, democratic process, effectiveness and civic education, and Geissel and Mayne (2013) concentrate on the qualities of the citizens (political capacities and democratic commitments), I do not focus exclusively in the input nor in the output.

The framework presented in Table 6.3 follows Goertz's (2006) methodological insights on 'three levels concepts', namely, the main concept, the secondary level and the indicator/data level. The third level of each concept – the indicators – refers to evidence, that is, the data to be used to evaluate the fulfillment of the criteria (indicated in the secondary level) proposed to assess democratic innovations.

Beginning with *feasibility*, the concept refers to the *rules and procedures* of democratic innovations. The assumption is that in order to be feasible – and therefore work not only under specific conditions given by a particular context – democratic innovations should be open to participation, engage state and civil society actors, and be backed up by legislation. Saying that democratic innovations should be open does not imply that they should not use a method of recruitment like random selection to gather participants. Experiments using random selection have proved to be quite feasible (as in the cases of the British Columbia Citizens Assembly on Electoral Reform and the Icelandic Constitutional Council). It also matters for the feasibility whether a given democratic innovation implies a top-down process or a bottom-up one, or rather a combination of both through the conjoint engagement of state and civil society actors. Finally,

Table 6.3 Criteria and indicators for assessing democratic innovations

Main concept	Secondary level	Indicators
Democratic innovations	*Feasibility*	*Rules and Procedures*: access and selection rules, publicity; degree of state and civil society involvement; level of civil society organization and social capital; degree of expansion and replication
	Inclusiveness	*Opportunities for Participation*: absolute and relative numbers of participants according to social class, gender, education level and other social indicators; opportunities for expressing and changing preferences, quality of deliberation
	Effectiveness	*Impact on Policies*: quantity and quality of laws and policies enacted which are congruent with democratic innovation's decisions or recommendations; support by political parties and interest groups

different types of legislation and policies may back up a democratic innovation, and the important thing here is that the institutional design can be replicated and have continuity. At the indicator level, evidence should determine who can participate and in what ways, and how open the process is to citizens and civil society organizations. The data to be assessed here should refer to access rules, publicity, as well as rules and criteria of selection of participants, when that is the case. Evidence should also capture whether the experiment is organized by the state or by civil society; if by the latter, then it should indicate if alone or along with the state, and to what extent the state supports the innovation. Data should therefore indicate the degree of state and civil society involvement and support, the degree of social capital and of civil society political organization, as well as the rules and procedures of convening and implementing the innovation. Lastly, data should provide information on whether the democratic innovation is backed up by law or depends on the will of governments and/or political parties. The evidence should comprise rules and other legal acts that indicate the enforcement and implementation's frequency of the innovation, as well as its ability to be expanded and replicated.

The second criterion for assessing the impact of democratic innovations is *inclusiveness*, which refers to the *opportunities for participation* made available by a given democratic innovation. The assumption here is that

democratic innovations allow for a more inclusive participation than the one achieved by elections, making room for less educated and low-income citizens, as well as for a larger presence of minority groups such as indigenous peoples. It is also expected that democratic innovations offer a more dynamic arena for the expression and transformation of citizens' preferences than elections. On the indicator level, evidence should show who participates, whether the participation of historically excluded and disadvantaged groups has been assured, whether citizens participate alone or in groups, and whether underrepresented groups take part in the democratic innovation. Data should indicate the absolute and relative numbers of participants according to social class, gender, education and other social and cultural indicators. Organizational procedures should provide evidence of opportunities for expressing and changing preferences, as well as of the quality of deliberation itself, when such is involved.

The third and last criterion is *effectiveness*, a concept that refers to the *impact on policies*. The idea here is that democratic innovations are effective if to some extent they impact on policies, empower citizens and groups, activate old or engender new forms of representation, and somehow improve the lives of the citizens concerned with it. Different democratic innovations may match these to different degrees, and one such democratic innovation may match them differently accordingly to variables like context and time. One example is participatory budgeting, which achieved variable levels of effectiveness in different countries where it was implemented (Goldfrank 2007), as well as within the same country (Avritzer 2009; Wampler 2007; see also Stolzenberg and Wampler in this volume). It is also relevant for effectiveness whether democratic innovations are only consultative or deliberative, if they only issue recommendations or if they take decisions, and whether the latter are binding or not. The channels through which democratic innovations' recommendations and decisions are communicated to representative institutions are also important. On the indicator level, evidence should indicate whether laws and policies reflect citizens' deliberations and decisions, an indicator that democratic innovations may increase issue congruence. Data should include bills introduced in the legislature as a result of citizens' deliberations, corresponding laws passed that match citizens' demands, as well as policies enacted and implemented by the public administration following citizens' deliberations. Indications of support by political parties and interest groups are also relevant to measure the effectiveness of democratic innovations, as well as the existence of rules ensuring the communication and consideration of deliberative results to representative institutions and other governmental bodies.

If a democratic innovation is *feasible*, then it can be replicated, that is,

it may work in different contexts, and the criteria provided in the first row of Table 6.3 allow for comparative studies among diverse experiments or diverse countries or cities that implement them. If a democratic innovation is *inclusive*, then it fulfils its aim of bringing citizens in and allowing them to deliberate on policies that may affect their lives. In this regard, the criteria provided in the second row of Table 6.3 allow assessments of how democratic innovations are indeed participatory and deliberative, as they usually aim and claim to be. Finally, if a democratic innovation is *effective*, then it does somehow affect policymaking, bringing about consequences for democracy. The criteria displayed in the third row of Table 6.3 should allow case studies and comparative research to assess the impact of democratic innovations on the macro-political level, and not isolated from the representative system to which they belong. If democratic innovations prove to be feasible, inclusive and effective, they certainly strengthen participatory governance, and may therefore impact on the quality of democracy, as I will argue in the next section.

Assessing the Impact of Democratic Innovations on the Quality of Democracy

A more comprehensive and updated concept of participation should make clear its connections with the other dimensions of the quality of democracy. If democratic innovations trigger participation, could they also enhance competition and responsiveness, for example? I suggest that, as democratic innovations make opportunities for participation greater, the latter may increase the opportunities for competition and the chances of responsiveness, and these may also bring about more equality. The question is how, on the one hand, to achieve higher participation through non-representative channels and, on the other hand, use those channels to improve the representative channels themselves? It is crucial to assess the ability of non-electoral means of participation to make the traditional institutions of representative democracy more competitive and responsive, as well as to assess their ability to contribute to a more equal society.

In the following, I propose an analytical framework to assess the impact of democratic innovations on the quality of democracy, and provide an indication of how this has been achieved in Latin America. I focus on three out of the eight 'democratic qualities' or 'dimensions of quality of democracy' conceptualized by Morlino (2011) and Diamond and Morlino (2005): responsiveness, competition and equality (Figure 6.1). I use Dahl's (1972) definition of competition, that is, organized contestation by political parties and organized interest groups, assuming, however, that it does not happen exclusively in elections. One of the assumptions that

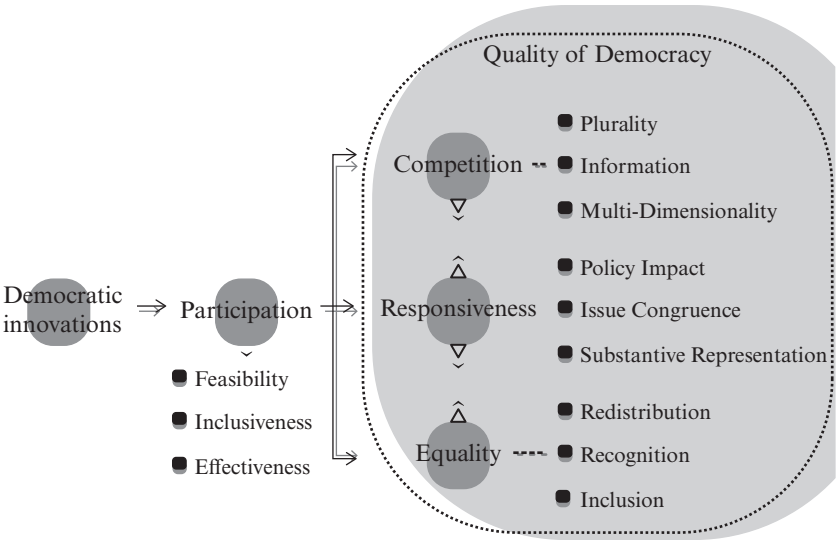

Figure 6.1 Criteria for assessing the impact of innovations on the quality of democracy

can be verified is whether democratic innovations can raise the level of contestation of the political system by raising the plurality and the multi-dimensionality of governments and parliaments, as well as the level of information available to political parties, elected representatives, interest groups or public administrators. Such a perspective allows the dismissal of trade-offs between competition and participation. Concerning responsiveness, I adopt Powell's (2004) definition, namely, the ability of democracies to translate citizens' preferences into policies. Translating preference into policy can be done through elected representatives, competitive political parties, lobbies and interest groups; but it can also be achieved through democratic innovations. If democratic innovations help elected representatives to formulate policies, and if those policies are more congruent with citizens' preferences or manage to represent groups traditionally underrepresented, then they make governmental institutions more responsive. Lastly, the analytical framework will assume that not only political equality but also social equality matter for the quality of democracy. If by enhancing political equality democratic innovations are channels through which citizens are more included, minority groups achieve recognition and redistribution is realized, then they certainly enhance the quality of democracy.

Democratic Innovations and Responsiveness

The concept of responsiveness is 'predicated on the prior emission of messages by citizens' (Manin et al. 1999, p. 9). A government is responsive 'if it adopts policies that are signaled as preferred by citizens' (1999, p. 9). Traditionally, those signals are given through votes for particular party platforms. If, however, today's increasing electoral volatility implies that voters cannot justifiably expect that parties would do what they promise, by means of democratic innovations citizens may expect that their changing preferences are heard even by parties they have not voted for, but which use these non-electoral channels to increase their chances to win new voters. Democratic innovations increase the information available to elected representatives for citizens' preferred policies, as the latter have more opportunities for signalling the policies they prefer. Furthermore, democratic innovations tend to be more dynamic and frequent than elections, thus serving as possible means through which parties can more rapidly grasp changes in the preferences of their constituencies.

The impact of democratic innovations on responsiveness can be assessed based on three criteria: policy impact, issue congruence and substantive representation (Table 6.4). As for the *policy impact*, what is to be assessed is the ability of governments to implement policies that translate citizens' preferences. If democratic innovations make governments more responsive, then they must impact on policymaking. This impact needs to be congruent with citizens' preferences, that is, the content of policies must match that of the preferences citizens voiced through

Table 6.4 Criteria for assessing the impact of democratic innovations on responsiveness

Main concept	Secondary level	Indicators
Responsiveness	*Policy impact*	Implementation of policies that translate citizens' preferences
	Issue congruence	Enactment of laws and policies which are congruent with the issues deliberated in democratic innovations
	Substantive representation	Ability of democratic innovations to boost the representation of minority groups and other underrepresented groups that have special needs and demands (such as women, indigenous people, and other racial and ethnic minorities)

democratic innovations. Evidence on *issue congruence* must gauge the degree of congruence between policies enacted by governments and the outputs and outcomes of democratic innovations, even if their resulting deliberations and decisions were not supposed to be binding. Finally, the *substantive representation* criterion seeks to evaluate the extent to which democratic innovations make representative institutions more sensitive to the demands of minority groups and other underrepresented citizens, especially those whose voice and preferences are usually not heard in elections. If democratic innovations prove to be a channel that helps the preferences of minority groups to be captured by elected representatives and government officials, then they can increase the responsiveness of the institution of representative democracy.

In Mexico, participatory innovations have created new channels between citizens and elected representatives, constituting an alternative to clientelism (Selee 2009). The flourishing of participatory efforts in local governments throughout Mexico beginning in the late 1990s resulted in varied experiences with different degrees of success; however, several have reduced clientelism and constructed more public and transparent channels for citizens' voices in local affairs. Selee shows how in Ciudad Nezahualcóyotl and Tijuana, for example, elected neighbourhood communities and participatory planning bodies helped generate new forms of interaction between citizens and the state. In Tijuana the planning system also produced extensive public deliberation on municipal priorities and made citizens and government officials become closer. New patterns of leadership selection have been engendered, and citizens who undertook an active role in the participatory innovations eventually became part of the public administration (Selee 2009, pp. 62–83).

Evidence of participatory innovations making political parties more responsive is also found in Bolivia and Ecuador. Van Cott (2008) showed that the experiences of indigenous parties promoting institutional innovation in local government in these countries helped mayors to establish personal bonds of loyalty and trust with voters. By establishing participatory and deliberative innovations, indigenous movement-based political parties achieved greater community control over elected authorities and greater transparency with respect to budgeting and spending (2008, p. 13). The institutional innovations implemented by the Andean indigenous parties following their own cultural traditions include regular, frequent and open assemblies, where public spending preferences are freely exposed and jointly prioritized. Committees and working groups reuniting municipal government officials and representatives of civil society also take responsibility for decision-making, oversight and implementation (2008, p. 22). One of Van Cott's main findings is that those participatory innovations

help to generate new sources of authority for weak local political institutions, such as those existing in the ethnically divided and politically unstable Andean countries (2008, p. 225).

Further evidence of the impact of democratic innovations on responsiveness is found in Brazil. The National Public Policy Conferences (NPPCs), a national-level experiment promoted by the federal Executive along with civil society organizations, gather together ordinary citizens, civil society organizations, private entrepreneurs and elected representatives from all three levels of government to deliberate together and agree on a common policy agenda for the country. The NPPCs are reported to have a significant impact on policymaking and lawmaking especially since the Workers' Party took over the federal government in 2003. Pogrebinschi and Santos (2011) found that about 20 per cent of all legislative bills under discussion in the Brazilian federal legislature in 2009 were congruent with recommendations of NPPCs held in the previous years. In addition, Pogrebinschi (2012) found that about 48 per cent of all constitutional amendments enacted by the Brazilian Parliament after the country's re-democratization would have dealt with specific policy issues deliberated and recommended by the NPPCs.

Democratic Innovations and Competition

The impact of democratic innovations on competition can be assessed through three criteria: plurality, information and multi-dimensionality (Table 6.5). Those concepts refer to the theories of pluralism and political information, as well as to multi-dimensional spatial models for the analysis of legislatures and governments. *Plurality* seeks to assess the extent to which groups organize, mobilize and become empowered as a result of democratic innovations. This includes not only civil society organizations and social movements but also political parties. The greater the plurality displayed by different organizations and groups vis-à-vis democratic innovations, the greater the level of contestation the latter raise in the political system. *Information* aims at assessing the extent to which democratic innovations favour 'cheap talk' (Crawford and Sobel 1982), raising the level of information for government officials and elected representatives regarding citizens' preferences, thereby solving informational problems. It also aims at assessing the extent to which democratic innovations work as 'third-party speakers' (Lupia and McCubbins 1998), providing elected representatives and government officials with information that can raise the level of certainty of their decisions regarding the consequences of policies to be adopted. Finally, the criterion of *multi-dimensionality* serves to verify the extent to which democratic innovations can introduce new issues

Table 6.5 Criteria for assessing the impact of democratic innovations on competition

Main concept	Secondary level	Indicators
Competition	*Plurality*	Creation of new organized groups and empowerment of already existing political parties and organizations
	Information	Ability of participatory innovations to solve information problems and facilitate decision-making, raising the level of information of legislatures and governments regarding citizens' preferences
	Multi-dimensionality	Ability of democratic innovations to enhance the multi-dimensionality of governments and legislatures by introducing new issues to the policy agenda; ability to avoid political parties operating exclusively in a single dimension and, therefore, losing members and voters

to the policy agenda and increase the multi-dimensionality of policies, so that policymaking is not reduced to disputes between coalition and opposition parties (or left or right policy programmes) in a one-dimensional space. If democratic innovations help government officials and elected representative to expand the policy options, bringing new policy issues to light and shaping new policy areas, this certainly raises the level of the contestation of democracy. As Dahl said, 'the greater the opportunities for expressing, organizing, and representing political preferences, the greater the number and variety of preferences and interest that are likely to be represented in policy making' (1972, p. 26).

The extensive use of direct democracy mechanisms for dealing with questions of institutional redesign in Latin America reveals how these direct forms of participation can be used to raise the level of contestation of the political system. Beyond the attempt to correct institutional deficiencies of representative democracy (Altman 2011), forms of direct participation have been the channels through which decisions have been made, for example, on length of mandates, frequency of elections, organization of parties and summing up of constitutional assemblies. Uruguay, for instance, the country that has most extensively experimented with direct democracy mechanisms, is today reputed to have the stronger representative system and the better quality of democracy in Latin America. Evidence has shown that political parties have always retained centrality

throughout Uruguay's history of direct votes. The parties' support would have been crucial for the propositions to reach a direct vote, and the initiatives not backed up by at least one party have not made it to the ballot. Lissidini (2011, p. 174) argues that as a result of the experience with direct democracy mechanisms, new party identities have been generated in Uruguay (2011, p. 174).

The neighbourhood communities and participatory planning bodies of Ciudad Nezahualcóyotl and Tijuana have shown that the success of democratic innovations in Mexico depended largely on including parties and party-affiliated groups in the process. Sellee (2009) has claimed that these participatory innovations empower citizens, not through bypassing political parties but by bringing them closer to their constituencies and forcing them to compete for public support. In a highly party-centric political system that for a long time has been ruled by a single party, such an outcome indicates the significant potential for participatory innovations to make the representative system more plural and competitive.

The NPPCs in Brazil is a case in which a single democratic innovation fulfils all three criteria of plurality, information and multi-dimensionality, contributing to increase the level of contestation of the political system. The NPPCs are a relevant source of information to the Parliament. Between 2003 and 2010, Parliament proposed 1477 bills, enacted 125 laws and six constitutional amendments on the same policy issues recommended by citizens in NPPCs. Even if congressmen did not intend to respond to citizens, one can expect that the social mobilization drew their attention to the relevance of certain policy issues. More important, however, is how this information has helped the legislature to impose its agenda over that of the Executive branch. While about 85 per cent of the entire legislation enacted in Brazil's legislature since re-democratization has been initiated by the president (Figueiredo and Limongi 1999), of the legislation that is congruent with the NPPCs' recommendations a surprising 56 per cent has been initiated by the legislature. When the Congress acts congruently with the NPPCs' recommendations, it has a greater chance of passing legislation and can more strongly oppose the policy agenda of the Executive. Further interesting evidence of how NPPCs raise contestation is the fact that in the period 2003–10, while the Workers' Party (PT) was in power, opposition parties initiated 31 per cent of the legislative acts congruent with the NPPCs' recommendations. The main two opposition parties (PSDB and DEM/PFL) have together proposed 23.8 per cent of these, about the same amount as the governing party (PT), which proposed no more than 25.8 per cent. The NPPCs provide evidence of how recommendations that citizens and CSOs make in democratic innovations may increase contestation between parties in the Parliament

Table 6.6 Criteria for assessing the impact of democratic innovations on equality

Main concept	Secondary level	Indicators
Equality	*Redistribution*	Allocation of state resources, delivery of public goods, access to public services, reallocation of budgetary provisions, public expenditure prioritizing
	Recognition	Enactment of legal and constitutional rights recognizing the identity of new social groups and of minority and historically marginalized groups
	Inclusion	Formulation and implementation of policies addressing historically underrepresented groups; formulation and implementation of social policies and programmes envisaging the reduction of poverty and inequality

and between government and opposition, making the policy agenda more multi-dimensional and political representation more plural.

Democratic Innovations and Equality

The impact of democratic innovations on equality can be perceived in three dimensions: redistribution, recognition and inclusion (Table 6.6). As for *redistribution*, evidence should indicate how democratic innovations impact on the allocation of state resources, the delivery of public goods, access to public services, the reallocation of budgetary provisions and the prioritizing of public expenditure. *Recognition* seeks to assess the enactment of legal and constitutional rights recognizing the identity of new social groups and of minority and historically marginalized groups. Finally, *inclusion* refers to the formulation and implementation of policies addressing disadvantaged groups, as well as the formulation and implementation of social policies and programmes envisaging the reduction of poverty and inequality.

With the extensive decentralization that has taken place in most of Latin America, the delivery of basic social goods, like health, for example, have in several countries been devolved to the municipalities, where new participatory institutions began to engage state and civil society's actors in the task of converting rights into reality. Municipal councils, notwithstanding

important variations in design, seemed in the first instance the preferred institutional option of many governments. Empowering the citizens and letting them play a role in the solution of their own problems proved to be a valid method to further develop citizenship, and an effective means of implementing social policies on a local basis. Participatory innovations started to be used as a means to achieve equality.

Whether providing redistribution of public goods (social inclusion), improving the life conditions of disadvantaged groups (economic inclusion), increasing levels of participation among the less educated and lower-income citizens (political inclusion), or extending rights to minorities and reintegrating historically underrepresented groups in the political process (cultural inclusion), participatory innovations have been increasingly used by Latin American governments as a means to inclusion. The extent to which this really happens is contested, and the level of success of participatory innovations varies across countries and even within single countries. The extent to which the expansion of political participation entails the expansion of social and economic equality is not yet quite known.

Participatory budgeting is usually deemed the most successful of Latin America's democratic innovations precisely because of its demonstrated ability to generate greater equality through a more equitable redistribution of public goods and to increase the levels of participation among disadvantaged groups, the less educated and lower-income citizens. Although the degree of success of the hundreds of experiments across Brazil and Latin American cities varies, as Boaventura de Sousa Santos (1998, p. 484) has put it, 'the redistributive efficacy of the participatory budgeting has been fully confirmed'; the initial achievements of Porto Alegre – where between 1989 and 1996 participatory budgeting is considered to have doubled the number of children enrolled in schools and increased from 49 per cent to 98 per cent the number of households with access to water – would suffice to show that participatory budgeting is the 'embryo of a redistributive democracy'.

This redistributive potential of participatory budgeting is also endorsed by Baiocchi (2001, pp. 50–2), who shows that Porto Alegre's districts with a higher level of poverty have received significantly greater shares of public investment due to participatory budgeting. In a period of about ten years (1989 to 2000), sewage coverage has risen to 98 per cent from 46 per cent, the number of functioning public municipal schools has risen to 86 from 29, and in only three years (1992–95) housing assistance has been offered to about 27,000 families more than in a similar period (1986–88) before participatory budgeting was implemented in the city. Furthermore, the socio-economic profile of the average participant fell below the city's

average in terms of education and income, accordingly to a 1998 survey: over half of the participants had household earnings of four minimum wages or below, and over half lacked education beyond the eighth grade. In a comparative study, Avritzer (2009, p. 113) found that, depending on specific configurations of civil and political society, in some cities participatory budgeting has not achieved such strong redistributive effects as in others, however, in all cases the poor neighbourhoods are those that have benefited the most, confirming participatory budgeting's potential to favour the most disadvantaged and lower-income citizens.

Local participatory initiatives are also reported to have improved the economic well-being of the average citizens in Bolivia. Laserna (2009) shows that initiatives like the popular participation law, the administrative decentralization law, the national dialogue law, the indigenous territories and environmental and forestry laws, as well as reforms in the electoral system have resulted in a proliferation of channels and mechanisms for participation, creating more opportunities for the representation of citizens and their political empowerment. He found that the poorest and more depressed areas have been favoured with more resources, and that previously ignored geographical areas have received increased public spending (Laserna 2009, p. 143). Moreover, the coverage of basic services has been expanded nationally and in rural areas, improving living conditions at a faster pace than before participatory innovations were introduced (Laserna 2009, p. 148).

The NPPCs in Brazil can also be claimed to impact on the promotion of social inclusion. They have ensured the inclusion of minority groups by promoting rights and developing corresponding policies to address matters of gender, race, ethnicity and other minority issues. Pogrebinschi (2012) found that the number of federal policies established by presidential decrees addressing minority and human rights increased from 12 to 224 between 2003 and 2010, an increase of almost 200 per cent. Extensive national policy plans have been enacted in this same period delivering specific policies that ameliorate the lives of minority groups like women, elderly, people with disabilities and racial and ethnic minorities, as a result of the demands voiced by them in the NPPCs (Pogrebinschi 2014). Pogrebinschi and Samuels (2014) also found that the NPPCs on food and nutritional security supported the enactment of Brazil's first comprehensive policy in this area, the Food and Nutritional Security National Plan (PLANSAN), which has been translated into specific actions and programmes impacting the lives of millions of Brazilians. One example is the Food Acquisition Program (*Programa de Aquisição de Alimentos* – PAA), which 'provides food for malnourished people and promotes social and economic inclusion in rural areas through improvements in family

agriculture'. In 2011 the PAA attended to the needs of 19,728,731 families, using about US$233 million in budgetary funding.

DO WE NEED NEW AND MORE CREATIVE RECIPES?

Although participatory governance is now a worldwide trend, the new participatory designs seem to have found a quite fertile soil to germinate roots in Latin America. Some of its fruits, in particular participatory budgeting, have also grown in dozens of other countries in different continents, however often not achieving the same degree of effectiveness (Sintomer et al. 2010). One possible explanation for this is that in Latin America the new participatory designs have been increasingly institutionalized *within* representative systems, providing citizens with opportunities other than voting to express their preferences, and to have a say in the policy process. When contrasted to democratic innovations that evolved in Europe (see Smith 2009; Geissel and Newton 2012; Geissel and Joas 2013; Font et al. 2014 for an overview), for example, those that flourished in Latin America (see Avritzer 2002; Selee and Peruzzotti 2009; Cameron et al. 2012; Pogrebinschi 2013 for an overview) offer distinguishing features, which, regardless of contextual constraints, can provide useful insights regarding their institutional design.

All Latin American governments that undertook participatory reforms, even the more radical left-wing ones, have preserved the basic institutions of representative democracy (Madrid et al. 2010, p. 141). Nevertheless, the channels of representation have been expanded, providing citizens with more opportunities to participate. Since Latin America's re-democratization, institutions have adapted themselves to participation (Avritzer 2009, p. 8).

It is perhaps too early to evaluate whether the new institutions of participatory democracy in Latin America do indeed contribute to the overall improvement of the quality of democracy. It is indeed very difficult to measure the impact of specific participatory governance innovations in the short term. Moreover, there are also several other relevant variables that play a role in such assessment. A possible correlation between the increase of democratic innovations and the improvement of political and social indicators must still be investigated. However, citizens' expectations towards democracy do seem to be increasingly absorbed by the new institutional designs.

In a recent article, Archon Fung (2011, p. 857) suggests that 'many of us may soon turn our eyes to Latin America, and to Brazil in particular,

to understand their accomplishments in democratic governance'. Asking whether the participatory reforms is an 'exceptionalism or a model for the rest of us?', he concludes that as for 'the vast range of ambitious and successful democratic reforms . . . there are simply no analogs of similar scale and depth in North America, Europe, Asia or Africa' (Fung 2011, pp. 867–8). This may be true. But whether democratic innovations may increase the quality of democracy, and participatory governance change democracy as we know it, is still an open, empirical question.

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