

Topic Democratic Innovations for Civic Engagement

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Key Takeaways Background

Democratic innovations are reshaping how citizens engage with governance. As democratic participation evolves, young people must understand new methods for citizen involvement to actively influence decision-making. This session focused on explaining democratic innovations, their types, opportunities, challenges, and how Civil Society Organizations can leverage them to foster deeper democratic engagement..

Understanding Democratic Innovations and Their Impact

Definition and Forms: Democratic innovations are processes or institutions new to a policy issue or governance level, developed to reimagine and deepen citizen involvement in decision-making. Examples include:

- Mini-publics (e.g., People's Panels)
- Referenda and citizen initiatives
- Collaborative governance
- Participatory budgeting
- Digital participation platforms.

Impact: Democratic innovations aim to achieve democratic goods such as inclusiveness, popular control, considered judgment, and transparency. They can improve governance, enhance trust and legitimacy, and foster more inclusive decision-making. Hybrid forms combining digital and non-digital participation are increasingly common, reflecting a broader trend of innovation.→ Key Insight: Democratic innovations are not only achieved through digital space.

Real-World Examples:

- Scottish Parliament People's Panels: Mini-publics using random selection to inform parliamentary committees on issues like climate change and drug harms.
- Participatory Budgeting in Barcelona: Citizens submitted 727 proposals through a hybrid of online platforms (Decidim) and in-person sessions, with €30 million allocated to implement selected ideas. → Key Insight: The top-performing proposals were submitted by CSOs, highlighting the vital role of civil society in driving and shaping democratic innovations.

Other resources

Tools :

- Decidim: Open-source participatory platform used for digital engagement.
- AI Tools: Increasingly used experimentally in citizen assemblies and participation platforms, though ethical concerns remain.

Additional Reading

- [Deliberative Democracy: Amplifying the voices of young people in Colombia](#)
- [Lessons from deliberative democracy in Africa](#)
- [A space for enhancing knowledge in participatory democracy, governance, and local development](#)
- [Lessons from Asia – Exploring Worldwide Democratic Innovations](#)
- [Citizen Engagement in Public Libraries](#)