On the Evaluation of Democratic Innovations

DRAFT!

Abstract:

Given the far-reaching triumph and unequivocal superiority of democratic forms of government, the search of political science for the optimal “politike techne” (art of leadership) has shifted to an analysis of the varieties of democracy. Especially democratic innovations, namely direct democratic elements, deliberative procedures and co-governance, are gaining increasing attention – regarded as remedy or threat. Little effort has been made to develop criteria for assessing the benefits and disadvantages of these innovations and to evaluate them systematically. I will conceive of an analytical framework to fill this research gap. Four dimensions are identified and discussed as criteria to measure the success of democratic innovations: Legitimacy, Effectiveness, Civic Education, and Strengthening of Civil Society. Based on empirical studies the effects of democratic innovation are evaluated according to these criteria: Different democratic innovations have different strengths and weaknesses, indicating that linkages will be more successful than the implementation of just one innovation.

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“The democracy of our successors will not and cannot be the democracy of our predecessors”
(Robert Dahl, cited by Schmitter/Trechsel 204: 6).

Despite the world-wide triumphant progress and obvious superiority of democracy, the quest for an optimal ‘politike’ has not reached the “end of history” (Fukuyama). Quite the opposite is the case: many democracies are facing increasing malaises. For example, the distrust of political elites as well as general political dissatisfaction are growing and many citizens doubt the abilities of representative democracies to govern complex societies or solve current problems.

While these malaises – some authors even speak of diseases, “demystification” and “deconsolidation” (Dalton et al. 2003; Habermas 1973; Offe 2003) – do not necessarily lead to far-reaching political crises, they are viewed as cause for concern. This concern is the breeding ground for democratic, participative innovations: More and more citizens, politicians and political scientists pin their hopes on the democratization of democracy to cure the malaises. Particularly democratic, participative innovations – as means of democratization of democracy by including citizens into processes of political will-formation and decision-making – would help to improve the quality of democracy, to overcome political apathy, to reduce the lack of legitimacy, to increase political satisfaction and lead to more effective policies. Participatory approaches along the lines of Rousseau, Pateman (1970) and Barber (1984), who advocate an active role for citizens in (almost) all stages of political decision-making, are en vogue today. International and supranational organizations as well as numerous academics are convinced that the democratization of democracy is required (Offe, 2003). They assume that “the cure for democracies’ ills is more democracy” (Dalton et al. 2003: 251) and that societies will become incapable of producing consensus, making effective decisions, or even surviving without the political involvement of citizens (Abromeit 2003; Habermas 1999; Warren 1996). Or, as Diamond and Morlino (2005: ix) put it, there is a high level of consensus that “deepening democracy is a moral good” that also “long-established democracies must reform if they are to attend to their own gathering problems of public dissatisfaction and … disillusionment”.

However, there are dissenting voices questioning whether participative innovation do improve the quality of democracy. They warn of the dangers of participative innovations and the inclusion of laypersons: “more participation” would just mean that affluent citizens with financial and organizational resources (e.g. men, educated people, the middle class) will take over participatory procedures. They have the time, money, and know-how to participate and guarantee that their preferences are taken into consideration. Under the cover and rhetoric of “grassroots democracy” and “participatory governance”, their interests would be pushed through – to the detriment of the common good (Raymond, 2002: 183). According to these voices participative innovations impede decision-making in the public interest (Papadopoulos, 2004: 220).

Neither the hypotheses that participative innovations can improve the quality of a democracy nor the hypotheses that they have negative impact are answered up to now empirically. Surprisingly enough, many OECD-governments invested significantly in participative innovations, but evaluations of these innovations are just beginning (OECD Report 2005: 10). However, such evaluations are indispensable to analyze the merits and risks associated with different innovations. For such an assessment a systematic theory-driven framework is

1 It is in most western democracies accompanied by a shift of citizens’ attitudes from materialist to postmaterialist values with an increased interest of citizen to have a say in politics – however not in the conventional forms.

2 Since the ‘participatory revolution’ of the 1970s, minimalist representative democracy of the Schumpeterian kind, supporting a strict division of labour between political elites and the masses, has given way to more participatory approaches.
indispensable, but still missing as well. This paper aims to fill in this gap by elaborating a conceptual framework for the evaluation of different democratic innovations. It is a starting point for a long-term research project to evaluate democratic innovations. The outline of the presentation is as follows: After a short discussion of the term innovation I will discuss criteria and develop a framework for the evaluation of democratic innovations. The framework will then be applied exemplarily. In my conclusion I summarize the findings and draw some implications.

(Democratic) Innovations – Term and Meaning in this Study

“Innovation” is a complex term, mostly used in technology and economics, but receiving increasing interest in the context of politics (Papadopoulos/Win 2007; Smith 2005; Casper/van Waarden 2005). The term “participative innovation” was chosen in this study because it indicates as in other disciplines a new process or a new practice. Similar political terms, such as “strong democracy“, “deep democracy”,” or “participatory democracy” are in contrast often utilized as normative concepts, i.e., they portray “more democracy” as a desirable project with many utopian features. In contrast, my study lacks any utopian ideas, but aims to evaluate already existing participative procedures. These innovations can be regarded as supplements to representative democracy without turning representative democracy into a radically different “strong” or “participatory” democracy.

Participative innovations were often not invented, but reinvented or copied from another country. An innovation in the world of politics can be new in one country, but be widespread in another country. This is no idiosyncrasy of politics, but also well-known in technology and economics. About 70-80 percent of what firms interpret as innovations are not really new for the sector, but are actually imitations (Unger 2005: 21). Thus the fact that, for example, direct democracy is common in Switzerland, direct democratic elements in other countries could be considered as imitation, but also – as in technology – as an innovation. As a working definition, I refer to democratic innovation as new practice consciously and purposefully introduced in order to improve the quality of democratic governance in any given state, irrespective of whether the innovation in question has already been tried out in another state.

The literature on democratic innovations covers checks and balances between the branches of representative government, as well as institutions controlling the political elite (e.g., Beyme 2003; Offe 2003), top-down communication (e.g., ibid.), and combinations of local and global governance (Held 1995), but for the most part the literature has focused on popular participation in processes of political will-formation and decision-making. This is currently seen as the most important issue. My paper will focus on participatory innovations promoting citizen involvement within consolidated democracies.

Which innovations?

Which innovations are now worth considering? Based on a general survey of a comprehensive literature search conducted at the Social Science Research Centre Berlin in 2006, using over 500 publications, the following three main democratic innovations can be identified:

1.) Direct democracy, i.e. people express their will or can even decide on a policy by popular vote:

Direct democratic procedures can be constitutionally required, they can be initiated by political representatives (e.g., parliament, city council, president, mayor) or by a number of citizens. They can be decision-controlling, as all constitutionally required and rejective procedures are. Or they can be decision-promoting putting issues on the political agenda as is the case in many popular initiatives. Direct democratic procedures can be binding or they can be advisory. They can be mostly organized and relative tightly controlled by the political elites, as it is the case in Switzerland, or primarily used by social movements and interest
groups to circumvent the state parliaments as it is the case in some US-American states (Kriesi 2008). Last but not least direct democratic procedures differ vastly in terms of quorum rules (s. Mittendorf 2008).

Somewhat intricate is the blurred terminology in the literature. Some authors use, for example, the term “referendum” for all forms of direct democratic procedures including popular initiatives (e.g. Setälä 2006); other authors differentiate between popular initiatives and referendums, initiated by representatives.

2.) Co- and network-governance, i.e. political representatives share their decision making power with other political actors such as citizens, civil society or business groups:

According to Smith (2005: 56-60) co-governance is distinguished from other innovations by at least some degree of direct citizen influence over decisions. I define co-governance even stricter: I only label procedures as co-governance when political representatives share their decision making power with other political actors, particularly citizens and their associations. Participatory budgeting is an example for co-governance and means that the residents decide on the allocation of local public finances, especially of financial investments. In most cases of co-governance delegates of citizens’ associations or constituencies (interest groups, neighborhoods) and only few ordinary citizens take part – with many the problems well-known for neo-corporatist arrangements (Streeck/Kenworthy 2005). The delegates identify, form and channel the preferences of their association, transmit the preferences to the decision-making body they are part of and are accountable to the members of their associations. Procedures of co-governance can of course be discursive or even deliberative. But the predominant mode of communication and decision-finding is negotiation between elected representatives and delegates.

3.) Consultative-discursive procedures (“mini-publics”), i.e. procedures in which public issues are discussed among ordinary citizens to give advices to political representatives:

Consultative-discursive procedures can have many different faces. The most wide-spread forms are public hearings and similar information-exchanging events, e.g. assemblies of citizens, in which city councils inform the citizens about its decisions. These events are on one side of the continuum of possible consultative-discursive procedures. On the other side of the continuum high-quality deliberative procedures can be found with well organized discursive processes, well-recruited participants, well-prepared back-ground materials and invited experts, as well as facilitators and mediators, for example the Finish Deliberation Day in Finland 2006 or Deliberative Polls (Fishkin).

Consultative-discursive procedures can be initiated for different reasons. They can aim to identify collective goals, to develop alternative options to reach collective goals or to solve conflicts, negotiate compromises and find solutions that are acceptable for all stakeholders. Examples are “Planungsstellen” (planning cells), “Round Tables”, “Cooperative Discourse”, “Citizen Juries” or “Focus Groups”, to mention just a few. All these different terminologies insinuate unambiguous differences between the different procedures and clear-cut procedural structures. However, this is not the case: similar procedures may be named differently in different municipalities and differing procedures might have the same labels. So the field is still somewhat chaotic with respect to terminology and semantics.

However, what can be generalized is that discursive procedures with ordinary citizens are always consultative and have no decision-making power. This is self-evident since the number of participants is always limited, even if hundreds of citizens take part as in some of

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3 Some authors also include private-public interrelationships between political representatives and societal political actors such as lobbying, petitioning, or social movements – or even clientelism, patronage, or bribes. However, none of these phenomena are of interest here. Of interest are discursive consultative procedures, in which political actors deliberate on political problems.
Fishkin’s Deliberative Polls. The participants are neither formally legitimized by elections nor are they accountable to any constituency. And they constitute of course a far lower percentage of a constituency than any election. So these procedures generate suggestions and advice which are given to the decision making body. The decision making bodies decide, whether they accept or deny the advice. Only seldom politicians must explain why they adopt or reject the suggestions made within a consultative-deliberative procedure. In few cases, for example the Danish Consensus Conferences, the elected representatives take the advice into account. Sometimes the media picks up the event transforming the discussions into a broad public debate. However, most procedures depart without much public attention.

How to measure the effects of participative innovations on the quality of democracy – Framework

Up to now most democratic measurements focus on checking the existence of certain institutions and the fulfillment of basic democratic principles. Most of these studies are of limited use for the question of concern here, because they are aiming to distinguish undemocratic, semi-democratic, and democratic systems. In contrast, the democracies of interest here are advanced, consolidated democracies. It goes without saying that universal adult suffrage, recurring, free, competitive and fair elections, more than one political party and alternative sources of information (Dahl) as well as civil and political freedom and democratic institutions accountable to the people (Diamond/Morlino 2005) are well established in consolidated democracies. But beyond the threshold (fulfillment of basic democratic principles) democracy is a continuous process reaching different levels of democratic quality. So the question of this study has to be calibrated: How can the level of democratization be measured within an established democracy? And finally the question to be answered in the context of this study is: Which criteria are useful to measure whether and how democratic, participative innovations have any impact on the quality of democracy?

Frameworks for evaluating democratic innovations within consolidated democracies are rarely spelled out. Although the call for a “concise research agenda” was made as early as 1979 (Sewell/Philips) and continued to echo in the following years, it remained almost unheard of (Abelson/Gauvin 2006; Rowe/Frewer 2004: 521 ff.). The few studies working with a framework applied two different approaches:

Some authors’ approach was to develop criteria by relating to the perspectives of the participants. According to this kind of study “success must be defined and judged by those involved.” (Moore 1996: 168) Thus, criteria were based on the statements of participants in democratic innovations and mostly refer to impacts on the participant and the group, for example improvement of political knowledge and enhancement of civic skills (Carnes et al. 1998: 390; Moore 1996: 156).

Other authors’ approach was to develop a theory-oriented frame. Within the European context in the wake of Scharpf’s work on the (alleged) democratic deficits of the European Union the dimensions “legitimacy and effectiveness” gained major attention. In his book “Governing Europe: Effective and Democratic?” Scharpf (1999) argues that political systems can not only be legitimized by input-legitimacy, but also by a dimension he calls out-legitimacy, meaning basically effectiveness (s. below). Several European authors referred to these dimensions in their evaluation of democratic innovations. Holtkamp et al. (2006) refer to efficiency, effectiveness and legitimacy. Not identically, but in a similar vein Papadopoulos and Warin (2007: 455 ff.) use the following criteria: „openness and access“, „quality of deliberation“, „efficiency and effectiveness“, „publicity and accountability“.

Very seldom advice of a deliberative process with citizens are transformed into a direct democratic popular vote, which was the case in the British Columbia Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform.
Rowe et al. (2004: 93), who are interested in public participation in deliberative conferences, suggest two criteria, namely “acceptance criteria” and “process criteria,” each of which is divided into several subcategories, e.g. representativeness, independence, influence, transparency, access to resources, cost-effectiveness or early involvement (see also Rowe/Frewer 2004). Referring to these criteria Abelson and Gauvin (2006) differentiate between “context evaluation”, “process evaluation” and “outcome evaluation“ – using subcategories such as deliberative quality or effects on policies, on decision-makers, on the participants and on the general public (similar Chess/Purcell 1999). Fung (2005) suggested several characteristics to decide which form of decision making is more democratic: inclusion of those affected, equal consideration, effective consideration, equal and effective opportunities to participate, constructive conflict management, participatory and deliberative economy. And a report by the OECD (2005) refers to the criteria effectiveness, support for participation and development of social capital (similarly: Abelson/Gauvin 2006; Beierle/Cayford 2002; Chess/Purcell 1999).

Most of these criteria, however, are facing five crucial problems: First, they are either too abstract to be used empirically or, second, they lack any theoretical background. Third, criteria for the evaluation of success and prerequisites for success are often mixed up: for example, the subcategories “access to resources” or “early involvement” are prerequisites and favorable conditions for a successful participatory process and not criteria to evaluate success. Similarly, “context evaluation” is necessary to identify favorable conditions for successful innovations, but can not be a criterion to evaluate the success itself. In research on democratic innovations it is fundamental to distinguish between success (or consequences, respectively) and determinants for success. Both are linked without doubt, but for a clear analysis the distinction between effects and determining factors is indispensable. Fourth, some of the criteria are problematic. For example the criteria openness is tricky. “Open” innovations, in which participants recruit themselves, might provide less comprehensive stakeholder participation than innovations with selected participants. Another example is the criteria accountability: Only elected representatives can be held accountable for their decisions and be “voted out”. But for participative innovations accountability is hardly applicable. Also the criterion publicity is not a very convincing indicator to measure the effect of participative innovations. Why should a high level of publicity enhance the quality of democracy? These examples lead to the last but not least problem: ex ante and ex post impacts are often not differentiated properly, meaning that impacts which are predisposed by design a priori and impacts which can only be measured after the end of the procedure are lumped together. For example, the fact that consultative procedures have no decision making competency is part of the design and not an ex post impact.

Based on the described literature and with reference to Eastons’ work on political systems and Scharpf’s studies on (supranational) democracy, I suggest a comprehensive framework based on the following four dimensions: i.e. 1.) input and legitimacy, 2) throughput and process, 3) output and effectiveness and 4) civic education and civic skills. All aforementioned topics coalesce and relate in one way or another to these four criteria. However, all four criteria are complex concepts and need further explanation. They are outlined in the remaining part of this chapter.
1.) Input and Legitimacy

Input(-legitimacy) refers to the input-side of the political system (“government of the people”). According to Scharpf (1999) political choices provide (input-)legitimacy if they reflect the will of the people. From this perspective institutional links between citizens and elected representatives are needed to guarantee that public policies are in accordance with the preferences of the citizens. Responsiveness is another term describing this democratic principle. A means to strengthen these links is enhanced vertical accountability. Criteria to measure the quality of democracy from this point of view are the tightness of links between citizens and their representatives and the level of vertical accountability. So it might be asked whether participative innovations enhance these principles of representative democracy.

In contrast, to participative theories input-legitimacy means that citizens affected by a political decision are actually involved in the decision-making. A system is considered as democratic to the degree that it enables broad and equal input into the political process beyond the election of representatives. Several terms mean the same, such as “equality in input”, “representative input”, “inclusion”, “inclusive participation”, “breadth of input”, or “participative governance”. From this perspective the quality of a democracy can be measured by the formal as well as de facto inclusion of stakeholders into the political process.

Main arguments for and against participative innovations focus on the question of inclusive participation: Proponents of democratic innovations argue that participative innovations would attract a multitude of citizens which do not take part in traditional participation; opponents argue that only politically already active social strata of society would get involved. So one criterion to evaluate democratic innovations will be whether stakeholders are actually involved or whether the participants just stem from the “well-off”, already politically active strata of society.

In research on public opinion and political culture, legitimacy refers to citizens’ support of political objects, for example the political system or politicians (“perceived legitimacy”). So, to evaluate democratic innovations it can also be asked whether they improve the “perceived legitimacy” of political objects. According to Luhman, for example, support is guaranteed if citizens accept institutionalized democratic procedures. If they accept a procedure, they also accept the decision, even if they do not like it. Several proponents of democratic innovations argue that citizens would accept political decision with more enthusiasm, if they were involved in the decision making process. So one criterion of evaluation should be whether political decision derived in the context of democratic innovation enjoy more acceptance than decision made by exclusively elected representatives.

2) Throughput and Process

This dimension focuses on the political process. In the context of participative innovations the quality of the procedure has moved into the focus and indicators such as transparency are assessed (Bickerstaff/Walker 2001; Renn et al. 1995). The question is here, whether formal democratic process rules exist and whether they are applied de facto within democratic innovations.

Finally, after the so called „deliberative turn in democratic theory“ (Dryzek 2002) the deliberative quality of participatory procedures reached the centre of attention. However, the measurement of deliberation is controversial. European “deliberalists” refer to Habermas’ concept of deliberation which includes strict rules. Only communication in compliance with these rules, especially rational debate based on equity, are regarded as deliberative. In

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5 From the perspective of (constitutional) law, legitimacy is synonymous with legality. Legal legitimacy is generated through compliance with existing rules and laws. In representative democracies legal legitimacy is generally generated through the selection of political representatives by free and fair ballot.
contrast, US American “deliberalists” apply less high standards and regard almost all kinds of discussion as deliberation (e.g. Fishkin).

3) Output, Outcome and Effectiveness

In politics effectiveness refers to the capacity of a political system to solve collective problems and to reach the shared, collective goals a constituency wants to realize (Lijphart 1999). Accordingly output-legitimacy is achieved when a political system fulfills these duties. Or in the words of Scharpf, political decisions are legitimate if and because they effectively promote the common welfare of the constituency in question (Scharpf 1999: 6). Accordingly, effectiveness must comprise two components: first the collective goals (“common welfare”) of a constituency are uncontroversial and identifiable. Only if the “common welfare” can be agreed on, can it be promoted. And second a community should have the capacity to implement policies effectively to reach these collective goals. These definitions of effectiveness and output-legitimacy refer to states and state-like units. To evaluate participative innovations the definition of effectiveness and output-legitimacy must be redefined. In terms of some local problems the measurement is straightforward: an innovation is effective if it reaches a collective local goal, such as the reduction of water pollution (e.g., Geissel/Kern 2000). However, frequently the collective objectives of a community are not that clear. More often they are contested. In these cases collective aims must be developed, identified or compromised before they can be “translated” into policies. Accordingly, some democratic innovations are designed to elaborate and deliberate on goals and to identify, what the objectives of a community are. So participative innovations can be evaluated on whether they are helpful to identify collective goals of a community, to assign priorities and to decide on ways and predominant policies to reach these goals. Several authors furthermore refer to the impact of participatory innovations on public debates or on policy process (e.g., Freitag/Wagschal 2007; Guston 1999; Petts 1995). They examine, for example, whether goals such as low public debt and the application of democratic innovation correlate negative or positive.

4) Civic Education and Civic Skills

Measurements of democracy seldom take into account political culture or civic skills (exception: „democratic audit“, Weir/Beetham 1999). „Many classical liberals believed that a liberal democracy could function effectively even in the absence of an especially virtuous citizenry“ (Kymlicka 2002: 285). This is surprising, since already Almond and Verba have demonstrated the importance of citizens’ attitudes, skills and behavior for stable, thriving democracies (see also Inglehart/Welzel 2005). Democracies can only consolidate if the citizens accept democratic principles and act accordingly. Several proponents of participative innovations stress their significance for the enhancement of civic skills (e.g., Mansbridge 1999). Democratic innovations are regarded as a catalyst for developing civic skills (Renn et al. 1995; Gundersen 1995: 6, 112). Some authors even expect, that “participating in democratic decisions makes participants better citizens”. (Mansbridge 1999; Fung/Wright 2001; Barber 1984: 232; Pateman 1970). However, it is unlikely that all civic skills can be enhanced in the same pace and breadth. Some skills, such as knowledge, for example, might be improved quite quickly and easily, whereas democratic skills like tolerance might be more difficult to acquire. The framework with the discussed dimensions is summarized in the following table (Tab. 1).

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6 Output means policies and public spending, outcome refers to the actual resolution of the problem. For example, studies on output ask about policies and public spending concerning the health care or education systems, whereas studies on outcome look at the actual achievement, e.g. low infant mortality or high educational level of the population.

7 What about political outcomes such as social equality or social security. How do they relate do democratic innovations? Up to now I have no theoretical answer to that question.
Tab. 1: Framework to evaluate democratic innovations

**Input and Legitimacy**
- Responsiveness
- Inclusive Participation
- Perceived legitimacy

**Throughput and Process**
- Democratic process, e.g. transparency
- Deliberative quality

**Output, Outcome and Effectiveness**
- Identification of collective goals
- Impact on debates and policies to reach goals

**Civic Education and Civic Skills**
- Improvement of knowledge
- Improvement of democratic skills

**Interconnectedness and Trade-offs**

No doubt, the criteria are less “clear-cut” as they are portrayed up to now in this paper. Some dimensions might be conceptually and empirically closely related that one can not exist without the other, so that improvement within one dimension might diffuse benefits to the other. They might be so densely interactive that it could almost impossible to say where one dimension ends and another begins.

However, several precarious balances and trade-offs between the mentioned criteria have to be mentioned as well. For example a trade-off might exist between comprehensive stakeholder inclusion and effectiveness. Already Easton has (1965: 58) has pointed out the danger of “demand input overload”. Demands might be created and enforced by participative innovations whereas the state has insufficient capacity and means to fulfill them. Furthermore demands which are not channeled traditionally via intermediate organizations, but brought up directly from citizens, are mostly “unstructured” and chaotic, creating a cacophony. Although some innovations are meant to identify or compromise on collective goals, they might end up in a variety of demands the state and its actors are unable to fulfill. Thus inclusive participation could impede effectiveness and also diminish political support (perceived legitimacy).

So it might be impossible to improve all dimensions at the same time and with the same maximum degree.

**One framework for all innovations?**

Is it now possible to evaluate different innovations according to the same framework? Shouldn’t the criteria and the framework differ from innovation to innovation, because different innovations might aim to solve different democratic problems? Shouldn’t each innovation be assessed within the parameters of their own paradigms? Furthermore, innovations might differ from state to state, from level to level, and from policy field to policy field, because in different countries, at different political levels and different policy fields different problems must be solved and innovations were introduced for different reasons?

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8 Generally the connection between participation and effectiveness is controversially discussed in the political scientific literature. Based on the assumption of authors like Schumpeter (1976) we can expect a negative correlation between participation and effectiveness. From his point of view a democracy is most successful when citizens do not interfere with the work of their political representatives. An active citizenry impinges on the political elites, binds their hands, hinders their decision-making, and prevents them from effective governing. According to an argument stressed by Dahl (1994), legitimacy is fostered by citizens’ involvement, but effective governance will be impeded. He emphasized what he calls the “democratic dilemma”, i.e., the conflict between effectiveness versus citizen involvement. From this point of view citizens’ involvement implies input-legitimacy, yet it is at odds with effective implementation of policies.
The case study approach looking at one innovation in one country at one level in one policy field is currently predominant, e.g. in the special issue on innovative, participative procedures in policy making edited by Papadopoulos and Warin (2007). In most of these case studies each innovation is assessed on its own goals – or what the author, the participants, the initiators, or mediators define as objectives. All these studies are extremely valuable and important without any doubt. In contrast, the goal of my study is to discuss a conceptual framework, which allows the evaluation and comparison of several innovations – beyond the current scientific patchwork. This does not mean that all innovations can and must be evaluated according to the same criteria. Some criteria might fit to one innovation, but not to another. However, the idea and objective of the project is, to provide – at the end of the research – a full picture, which shows clearly which innovation is useful, useless or even harmful to address which “democratic disease”.

Up to now there are several hints, that the impacts of the different innovations are multifaceted. Direct democratic procedures, for example, can have a variety of different effects depending on their design: Accountability can be enhanced by decision-controlling forms of direct democracy, i.e. by referendums held after parliament has passed a decision (Setälä 2006). However, other features of direct democracy can advance public deliberation, for example by placing three options on a ballot in spite of the normal two options. The Swedish nuclear power referendum (1980) was such a case. The set-up with three options led to considerate, less polarized public debates, in which citizens discussed about the pros and cons of the different choices (Le Duc 2006). On the other hand, (few) deliberative “mini publics” also have an impact on public policies (see Goodin/Dryzek 2006). The Danish consensus conference on gene-technology (1987), for example, contributed significantly to the decisions on the parliament (see for more examples Mayer/Geurts 1996: 240). To provide a big picture on the benefits and disadvantages of different innovations a framework is necessary, which is manageable and still provides comprehensive criteria. Only on the bases of such a picture we can understand, which innovation can be a remedy for which problem

Exemplary Application of the Framework

The method used in the study is a kind of evaluative or meta-analysis, based on existing empirical studies. The selection of the empirical studies for this analysis – out of the already mentioned compilation of literature – was based on three criteria. First, the studies had to contain empirical information relevant to the four aforementioned. Second, the publications were sorted according to scientific quality, clarity of the method, reliability and the validity of the research. This ruled out, for example, self-promoting documents. Third, to the extent that it was possible, recent studies were chosen.

Table 1: Example for the analysis of the literature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author/Year</th>
<th>General Topic</th>
<th>Innovation</th>
<th>Criteria evaluated</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Benz/Stutzer 2002</td>
<td>Political voice and political knowledge</td>
<td>Direct democracy</td>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>Citizens are better informed when they have a larger say in politics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freitag/Vatter 2000</td>
<td>Fiscal politics and direct democracy</td>
<td>Direct democracy</td>
<td>Effectiveness</td>
<td>Effective resolution of problems, positive impact on financial policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bühlmann 2007</td>
<td>Direct democracy and political support</td>
<td>Direct democracy</td>
<td>Perceived legitimacy</td>
<td>Perceived legitimacy improved</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Unsurprisingly, studies on direct democratic procedures usually focus on Switzerland and The USA, especially California (e.g. Vatter 2006). Studies on co-governance and network governance refer, in particular, to Great Britain, the Scandinavian countries, and the USA. All publications examine the different innovations separately. They focus on one innovation, e.g. direct democracy, but do neither scrutinize the results of other innovations nor compare the success and failures of one innovation with another innovation. Although it might seem problematic to draw general conclusions from studies, which are very heterogeneous in terms of methods (e.g., case studies, survey analyses) and objects of research, several identical experiences can be identified. On the whole, despite all differences in the studies, astonishingly homogenous pictures can be painted.

Table 3 (see below) presents the results of the literature review, which, despite its preliminary nature, highlights some unambiguous trends.

**Table 2: Preliminary results on the impact of democratic innovations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria of Evaluation</th>
<th>Direct Democracy</th>
<th>Co-Governance</th>
<th>Consult.-disc. procedures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Input and Legitimacy</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsiveness</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>(+)</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusive Participation</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived legitimacy</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>(+)</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Throughput and Process</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic process, e.g.</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>transparency</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deliberative quality</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>(+)</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Output, Outcome and Effectiveness</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification of collective goals</td>
<td>+</td>
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<td>Impact on debates and policies to reach goals</td>
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<td><strong>Civic Education and Civic Skills</strong></td>
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<td>Improvement of knowledge</td>
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Discussion, outlook and some concluding remarks

The aim of this paper was to elaborate a conceptual framework for the evaluation of democratic innovations. Based on this framework the benefits and disadvantages of three innovations, direct democratic, co-governance and deliberative-consultative procedures, were discussed. The empirical analyses showed that the impacts of democratic innovations are often overstated and proponents would need some modesty – or at least more fine-tuned arguments. It turned out that participative innovations are neither a guarantee nor a threat for democracy. The impacts differ vastly: The three innovations have different strength and weaknesses. Some innovations, e.g. direct democratic procedures, allow involving all citizens, yet the deliberative quality is low and democratic skills are hardly enhanced. Procedures of co-governance are in some cases helpful to solve problems effectively, but the inclusion depends on the recruitment of the participants. In consultative procedures participants often develop democratic civic skills, but their impact on public policies is mostly small. However, these findings are only a start for further evaluation. The results allow just a rough estimate, because the impacts of all innovations differ crucially according to the design of the procedure (similar: Papadopoulos/Warin 2007: 591). For example direct democratic procedures have different impacts depending on whether they are binding or non-binding, whether they are launched “top-down” or “bottom-up” or whether they provide just two alternatives (“yes-no”) or more alternatives. The impacts of consultative procedures differ in many ways as well: for example according to the recruitment of the participants (self-selection versus random sampling or “representative sampling”). So, any kind of innovation fetishism is detriment. No innovation can solve all democratic problems and malaises (see similar Fung 2005).

Thus, most hopes concerning democratic innovations can only be fulfilled if different innovations are combined, so that their weaknesses and strengths can be balanced. For example different options can be developed in consultative, discursive procedures and subsequently decided on via direct democracy. While it is often discussed whether deliberative processes or the aggregation of preferences (“voting”) lead to “good” policies (Fishkin & Luskin, 2004), the combination of both could mitigate some of the weaknesses of both forms.

Considering a future research agenda the study reveals the need for a comprehensive data set. Up to now case studies on one or a small number of municipalities prevail. These studies are necessary and useful because of their depth, especially for the formulation of hypotheses. However in the next phase of research more representative, quantitative studies are needed to help political actors and especially political representatives selecting the suitable democratic innovations. Comprehensive research will make it easier to choose the democratic innovation that fits best to solve the specific problem within a certain social-political context, to allocate financial and other resources, and to guarantee that the chosen innovations are adequate, leading to enhanced legitimacy as well as efficiency, and to improve the civic skills of the citizenry.
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