

The Latin American Left and Participatory Democracy: A Case Study of Four Latin American Countries

Li Han

Abstract: Latin America is the pioneer of participatory democratic practice. Compared with other regions in the world, participatory democracy does have a wider presence in Latin America. The first generation of participatory democratic practice in Latin America was in the 1980s and 1990s. The product of left-wing governance in local governments, its main content is various participatory mechanisms for managing Latin American cities. The second generation of participatory democratic practice in Latin America began during the "turn to the left" in Latin America from the late 20th century to the early 21st century. It is a participatory model in the region. The peak of democratic experimentation. During this period, left-wing governments in Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador and Brazil established various forms of participatory democracy. In comparison, Venezuela created a radical participatory democratic model and sought to replace it with participatory democracy. Representative democracy. Brazil provides a pragmatic participatory democracy model, advocating that effective government governance be achieved through expanded participation to consolidate the representative system. Ecuador and Bolivia are hybrid models, which have the characteristics of both. This article starts from the perspective of formality, representativeness, scope and scale. Three dimensions are used to sort out and compare the participatory democratic practices of the above four countries. This article believes that the participatory democratic practices of the Latin American left have achieved remarkable results in expanding political participation, enhancing democratic inclusiveness, and improving government responsiveness. This article provides The democratic systems of Latin American countries have been injected with new vitality, reflecting the positive willingness of Latin American countries

to independently explore the development of democratic systems. However, the inherent complexity of participatory democratic

systems and the dramatic political changes in Latin American countries have put the sustainability of related practices at great risk. Challenges of

Assistant Researcher

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One. During this period, many left-wing parties won municipal elections, including the Peruvian Left Union, the Brazilian Workers Party, the Broad Front of Uruguay and the Radical Cause of Venezuela. The participatory system designed by the left-wing parties was open to all citizens. Participants could negotiate and decide on public expenditures, and public policies, among which participatory budgeting is the most famous participatory system implemented by the Latin American left. Participatory budgeting was first implemented by the Brazilian Workers' Party in Porto Alegre in 1989. Its basic structure includes not only representative institutions, but also local participatory Representative institutions of democracy. It attempts to reconnect the basis of representative institutions (mayors, administrative bodies, etc.) with grassroots associations and assemblies of citizen organizations. This model of participatory democracy has been replicated in Latin America and other parts of the world, becoming one of the most popular citizens Participation mechanism

The second generation of participatory democratic practice in Latin America began during the period when Latin America turned left from the late 20th century to the early 21st century. The region saw a peak in participatory democratic experiments. During this period, 2/3 of Latin American countries were governed by the left. The New Left Paying attention to citizen participation, equality and redistribution. As left-wing governments continue to strengthen the government's redistributive role, they have also launched unprecedented policy experiments. Different from the previous generation of experiments, the left-wing ruling party has activated old participatory systems and created new mechanisms. The scale of participatory democracy expanded to the entire country. This innovation was not only used in the field of public administration, but also in the political decision-making process. This not only changed who governed in Latin America, but also changed how it was governed. Left-wing governments began to seek to establish a comprehensive comprehensive Participatory systems, such as Peru's National Participatory Budget, Brazil's National Public Policy Conference, Nicaragua's Civil Rights Commission, and Venezuela's Community Councils. Bolivia, Ecuador, and Venezuela even incorporated direct citizen participation mechanisms into their new constitutions, making them a new political order. These experiments have been regarded as reference points in the search for different democratic models and represent a key element of the participatory wave in Latin America.

Although participation methods vary from country to country, such as participatory budgeting, community committees, policy meetings, advisory committees, and Indian self-governance, these participation methods are more institutionalized than many traditional methods such as petitions, public hearings, and demonstrations. Their most novel The common denominator is direct (rather than delegation) participation in consultations to make collective decisions. Citizens participate in consultations equally, have advisory or decision-making rights, and make binding decisions in some cases. The new participation system expands the scope of political representation. Allow citizens and leaders of civil society organizations to play a representative role and make representative claims, even if citizens do not

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Qualified to make binding decisions, participatory institutions sometimes achieve representation by allowing citizens and government officials to consult together on the design, implementation, and evaluation of public policies. Policy committees at all levels composed of government and non-government members, Participatory consultation mechanisms such as committees, conferences, and working meetings are all innovations of the Latin American left.

(3) Debate on participatory democracy in Latin America Within the

Latin American left, there are differences on the strategic role of participation. Not all lefts regard participatory democracy as a suitable strategy or goal. The orthodox left believes that according to the Leninist point of view, in cities where the left is elected, such as Fortaleza in Brazil, participation in planning can give birth to revolution. The municipal government is an activity venue that creates a dual power situation. The political and social left confronts the central government through local governance in order to speed up the realization of the revolution. Focusing on local areas cannot achieve changes in class, property and power relations. On the contrary, the radical left believes that direct participation of citizens in government decision-making is a key mechanism for deepening democracy. Citizen participation in the decision-making process can gradually change political culture. Municipal governments are important to demonstrate governance capabilities and consolidate the field of local power and ultimately electoral victory. From this perspective, this Gramscian-influenced path quickly became the banner of the Broad Front in Uruguay, the Venezuelan Radical Cause, and the Brazilian Workers' Party. The participatory democracy promoted by the radical left occupied dominant position.

The Latin American radical left believes that participatory democracy can supplement the representative system, but the specific relationship between the two systems is still unclear. Only through practice can we see whether the two are balanced or a master-slave relationship. However, right-wing conservatives believe that participatory democracy threatens the current representative system and firmly oppose the participatory reforms led by the left. The right wing in Caracas, Montevideo and Porto Alegre warned that participatory budgeting was intended to replace the representative system and weaken the legitimacy of municipal electoral commissions. Others introduced There are also debates in cities and countries about participatory budgeting. Centrist technocrats believe that participatory democracy can be used to enhance "good governance", improve government efficiency and transparency, reduce poverty and eliminate corruption. Participatory democracy is complementary to and subordinate to representative system.

There are various controversies in academic circles about Latin American left-wing participatory democracy. The main views can be roughly divided into The following three categories

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The second view is that participatory democracy is a necessary and effective way to improve the quality of government and promote social justice.

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Binding. Article 184 of the Constitution stipulates that communities and citizens have the right to submit investment proposals to municipal and state governing bodies and to participate in the implementation, evaluation and control of work projects, social programs and public services within their jurisdiction. Venezuela's participatory system including the Bolivarian Group, the Constituent Assembly, referendums, water resources planning committees, land use committees, local public planning committees, community self-governing organizations, cooperatives and many "plans". In 2006, as the government promulgated the "Community Council Law" and Community councils have become the core participatory system in Venezuela. According to this law, community councils "allow organizations to appoint people to directly manage public policies and projects, aiming to respond to community demands and aspirations and build equality and social justice." During the

administration of Ecuadorian President Correa To promote "civic revolution", one of its five axes is "constitutional revolution". "Constitutional revolution" is to implement true democracy and participatory democracy in Ecuador and reform the political system. In 2008, Ecuador held a referendum and adopted a new constitution. The new constitution establishes that citizen participation in decision-making is a basic right. Citizens can exercise this right through various mechanisms. Article 95 of the Constitution stipulates that the right to participate should be directly implemented through representatives and community democratic mechanisms. In the political field, in addition to administration and legislation In addition to judicial power and judicial power, the function of citizen participation in social management and elections was added. In 2010, Ecuador promulgated the "Citizen Participation Law", creating a participation system at all levels, including departmental participation committees, corresponding to each government department and major policy areas, and citizen supervision agencies and Provide social control and supervise policy implementation and public administration. Participatory budgeting. "Empty chair". One or more citizen representatives are added by local government agencies. The

main mechanism for realizing local participatory democracy is the local citizens' assembly. Bolivia builds participation The ambition of formal democracy is less than that of Venezuela and Ecuador. During the Morales administration, the new constitution in 2009 proposed the creation of a "participatory, representative and communal" democratic model. This shows that Bolivia mixes three different concepts of democracy. Representative democracy is supplemented by referendums, citizens' initiatives and community democracy. Article 11 of the new constitution stipulates that citizens directly participate through referendums, people's initiatives, recalls, assemblies, national committees and prior consultation, including the election of representatives through universal suffrage and secret direct voting. In addition, the constitutions of Venezuela and Ecuador give citizens the right to participate in public policies at all levels. However, Bolivia's old municipal participatory regulatory committees were abolished. Only Indian settlements have created "Indian autonomous" communities, according to their own rules and regulations. procedures to elect, appoint or nominate their representatives, while other participatory systems such as the National Social Supervision Participation Mechanism mentioned in the Constitution have not been implemented. Public participation in decision-making is based on informal participatory systems such as the National Council for Change.

Public participants and 40% of government personnel. Some meetings will also include a certain proportion of staff related to deliberative matters. Municipal and district-level public policy meetings are completely open to the public. One of its main purposes is to elect representatives. Any Anyone can participate in municipal public policy meetings, and may also be selected as a representative to participate in state-level public meetings. Participants are responsible for electing representatives. Usually citizen groups designate one or a few of their members as representatives to participate in local meetings. Representatives Usually appointed by government and civil society organizations. In state and national public policy conferences, elected representatives and designated representatives participate together with other participants (observers). Brazil's National Public Policy Conference provides a representative and participatory democracy. A compatible case solves the conflict between the two. In Venezuela, Chavez proposed replacing local

government with the form of community committees. The government regarded community committees as the country's grassroots political form, building participatory democracy and the main features of the new political system. The "Community Committee Law" formally clarifies that community committees are the core participatory system in Venezuela. The committee has the power to formulate and manage local socio-economic development projects, including infrastructure, health, education, housing, sports and other fields. The committee's decision-making is not subject to the municipal authority. Government or other levels of government leaders. Community committees are composed of the Citizens' Assembly, Executive Officer, Financial Management Department, Community Supervision and Community Participation Units. In addition to these institutions, the committee can set up working groups based on local needs, such as education, housing, electricity and health. Working groups and cooperatives in other aspects. All community members can participate in meetings and make decisions. The community committee forms a closed loop, including all processes of agenda setting, decision-making, financing and execution. The community assembly participates in the entire process. The financing stage is more complicated. Community The committee's development projects come from national budget allocations, but the committee can also raise funds from local government or through commercial activities. Regarding central government allocations, technical experts from agencies such as the Joint Government Committee work with working groups of community committees to conduct research on the needs of each community. Projects are evaluated and funds are allocated. Community committees receive substantial financial support from the government, while the financial support received by local governments decreases. In order to ensure that citizens participate in high-level government decision-making, spokespersons of community committees can participate in regional and national conferences. The system of community committees The design is to break through the limitations of representative democracy and replace rather than supplement the representative system. The conflict between the two increases.

Although both Bolivia and Ecuador have incorporated direct citizen participation into their constitutions outside the channels of representative democracy, there are major differences in practice between the two countries. Bolivia uses informal participation as a supplement to the representative system, and has a better balance between participatory democracy and representative system. During the Morales administration, Bolivia's progress in participatory democracy was reflected in the joint participation of the government and social organizations in decision-making. The National Council for Change can be regarded as an unofficial organization parallel to the Legislative Assembly, a limited social force that supports the government. It is an informal mechanism for participation. Its organizational composition and functions are not formally stipulated by relevant laws. Its main members include government representatives, the Movement for Socialism (MAS) and social organizations that support the government.

The National Council for Change is responsible for formulating and discussing important laws such as autonomy and decentralization laws. Once the law is supported by the committee and then submitted to the Legislative Assembly, it can transmit the demands of the grassroots of society to government departments, laws and important political and social events. After discussion and research by social organizations, the government and Cracks between societies.

Ecuador's citizen participation system is modeled after that of Venezuela. Local citizens' assemblies are most similar to community committees. Citizens can actively advocate the establishment of an assembly and elect speakers. The assembly promotes development plans and local policy proposals, provides services, and improves infrastructure, promote education and exercise supervisory powers. The entire process includes evaluating plans, prioritizing plans and preparing budgets, formulating development plans, implementing selected plans and evaluations. In comparison to Venezuela, the level of participation of government officials in local citizen assemblies Higher. The budget process requires cooperation with local government representatives to make decisions. In the early stages of the project, the assembly notifies local residents through the media and invites each resident to participate in the meeting. However, in the decision-making, implementation and monitoring stages of the project, it must depend on local Citizens do not have real decision-making, execution and supervision rights despite the will of the government. Most citizens are not satisfied with the actual operation of the participatory system and are full of distrust in the cooperation between local citizens' assemblies and the municipal government. Obviously, Ecuador's There is a disconnect between the legislation and mechanism operation of participatory democracy, which does not give full play to the decision-making and execution roles of participants. Therefore, it damages the relationship between participants and local governments, causing tension between participatory democracy and representative systems.

(3) Scope-Scale The Brazilian

National Public Policy Conference is a national participatory democratic mechanism. "In terms of the number of participants, policy scope and potential impact, it is by far the largest participatory democratic practice in the world." This makes the national public policy conference Policy conferences are distinguished from other participatory democratic experiments. On the one hand, the number of public affairs discussed in national public policy conferences has increased significantly. Between 1988 and 2010, 73% of national public policy conferences were held during Lula's administration (2003-2010).) is held, about 92 times a year. Previous governments rarely held national public policy conferences, and they were limited to discussions on health-related matters. Starting from 2003, the scope of public affairs discussed at the national public policy conference has broadened and can be divided into more than 40 categories. items, 28 of which were included by the Lula government. Specific matters related to education, culture and rural fishery development, from health to the interests and rights of minority groups. On the other hand, the scale of the National Conference on Public Policy expanded, whether as a direct representative Whether participating in national conferences or indirectly participating in free meetings at the state, city or district level, the number of participants is constantly increasing. In 2009, about 5.24 million people participated in the first national public policy conference. There were 266 municipal meetings in 514 cities across the country. The number of people reached 44,651. Every state in Brazil held a public event.

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policy conferences, with approximately 170,000 representatives, and 670,000 people participated in the 1,140 free meetings organized by various social groups. From 2003 to 2011, a total of about 7 million people participated in 82 national public policy conferences. Compared with participatory democracy in other countries around the world, the scale of participation in Brazil's National Public Policy Conference is shocking.

Community councils are the most important and broad-based local participatory democracy promoted by the Venezuelan left. Mechanism. In cities, a community committee is composed of about 150 to 400 families. In rural areas, at least 20 families form a community committee. In Indian settlements, more than 10 families form a community committee. In 2015, the government official The website shows that there are approximately 460,000 community committees in Venezuela, and millions of people have participated in at least one community committee meeting. The main purpose of a community committee is to propose, plan, implement, and supervise community projects and plans. It can propose local-level decisions. Development plans, you can apply for special funds for community education, transportation, medical care, agriculture, and residential construction. Funding for community committees is mainly provided by the government. By the end of the first decade of the 21st century, community committees had received US\$4 billion to implement digital projects. Thousands of small infrastructure projects

The autonomous model of the community committee allows citizens to directly participate in local public affairs. The highest decision-making body of the community committee is the community assembly, which is composed of community residents over 15 years old. The assembly elects the community committee. All important decisions in the community must be discussed and approved by the majority of the community assembly. Passed by vote, the community meeting must be attended by more than 30% of the adults in the community. Since the management scope of the community committee cannot exceed 400 households, it cannot exercise decision-making power in a larger geographical scope and among more people. Therefore, Chavez It was decided to establish a new type of autonomous organization - the commune, so that multiple community committees can make joint decisions on a larger range of collective affairs under the framework of the commune. After the promulgation of the Community Law in 2010, some community committees formed communities. In 2015 In 2007, the government registered 1,195 communes. From 2007 to 2012, Venezuela had 6 million to 8 million people participating every year. Community committee participants accounted for

29% to 36% of the country's adult population. The scale and scope of participation in Ecuador is far less than that of Ecuador. Brazil and Venezuela. Ecuadorian Government Of It is believed that citizen participation is low, with less than 10% of people in the country having participated in some kind of participation mechanism. The local citizens' assembly in Tarqui has a lower number of participants as a proportion of the total local population than in the northern highlands. San Gabriel (San Gabriel) and the Chaco plain outside Quito

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(Llano Chaco) In the citizens' assemblies in the two places, less than 5% of the local residents participated. ÿ Bolivia's National Council for Change is a joint organization of social organizations, composed of 20 social organizations such as Indian farmers, workers, and women. Its number of participants There is a lack of corresponding official statistics.

3. The effectiveness and limitations of participatory democracy in Latin America

It can be seen from the above cases that participatory democracy led by the left in Latin America attempts to correct the defects of representative democracy and improve inequality. Severe inequality in Latin America is a key factor in understanding the left-wing government's pursuit of participatory democracy. Latin American participatory democracy to a certain extent It has the effect of correcting the defects of representative democracy, but it also has obvious limitations.

(1) The effectiveness of participatory democracy in Latin

America. Although the degree of success of participatory systems in Latin American countries varies, they have all achieved the following three achievements.

First, expand political participation. The participatory democracy promoted by the Latin American left provides institutionalized participation channels other than elections, giving citizens more adequate political participation rights. Brazil, Venezuela, Bolivia and Ecuador ensure that by implementing different forms of direct democratic participation, Citizens can make suggestions and make decisions on public affairs such as setting agendas, managing local resources, policy planning, and designing urban and rural development projects. They transform the voluntary character of citizens into the form of political organizations and increase the formal way for citizens to express their personal wishes. Opportunities for citizens to play a more important role in the political process. Venezuela and Ecuador in particular do not want to re-create representative features within the new system, but rather encourage the participation of the entire community. In contrast, Chile is a country with a high degree of institutionalized representative democracy. ÿ There is a relatively stable party system, but almost no direct participation system has been tried. ÿ The current constitution implements an exclusive electoral system, limiting voters' choices. Therefore, the Chilean people are generally indifferent and disappointed with politics, and stay away from the political system. Minority groups such as young people, Indians and workers have a strong sense of exclusion. The participatory democracy implemented by the Latin American left has the effect of mobilizing people for political participation. In Venezuela, Chavez's ruling party coalition has used community committees in general elections many times. Gain political support. In Bolivia, Morales and the Movement for Socialism mobilized people through participation to obtain the resources they needed to campaign. The government recognized that its ability to mobilize the grassroots was important to the organization. National leaders and local social organizations

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 New York Pressÿ 2018ÿ p 138 Chile will

hold a referendum to amend the constitution on October 26, 2020. This is Chile's first referendum in 30 years. ÿ

They must help community development projects proposed by community committees, and the legitimacy of their regimes also depends on this responsiveness. In Bolivia and Ecuador, Indian political parties were elected to local governments and held regular general assemblies in accordance with Indian cultural traditions, allowing Indian groups to discuss public expenditures. Free expression of opinions on the budget, thereby making local government budget expenditures more transparent.

(2) Limitations of participatory democracy in Latin

America Participatory democracy in Latin America faces two limitations. On the one hand, it is the inherent complexity of participatory democracy. In view of the endogenous problems of participatory democracy, it is difficult to design an ideal system, especially It is in a society with severe inequality and diverse citizenship. Although the Latin American left has created many participatory mechanisms, no government can create a participatory system that combines broadness, inclusiveness, transparency, consultation and policy influence. In Venezuela, community councils are broad-based, socially inclusive, and consultative, but their issues are extremely local and lack transparency and national scope. Some party candidates have tried to use community councils in their campaigns, and the government has also set up voting centers, and these behaviors undermined inclusiveness. Brazil's National Public Policy Conference is consultative and transparent, and deals with a wide range of issues. However, it is not highly socially inclusive, and the number of participants accounts for a low proportion of the total population of Brazil. The influence on public policy has also been questioned. Portuguese left-wing scholar Santos (Boaventura de Sousa Santos) believes that participatory budgeting, policy committees and policy meetings are symbols of the people's government, and they serve as participatory democracy. The tool has been compromised and lost updates ability, and gradually used it more and more for issues that are insignificant to decision-making. The large-scale public protests in 2013 also showed that Brazil's participatory democracy has inherent flaws.

On the other hand, there is the practical dilemma of achieving sustainable development. Citizen participation is the banner of left-wing ideology in Latin America, and it relies on left-wing governments to lead its implementation. However, in the current political landscape of "left retreats and right advances" in Latin America, participatory democracy is a left-wing legacy. The political legacy under the rule of law is facing sustainability challenges. Since Temer took office as president in 2016, Brazil's participatory democracy has suffered a heavy blow. Citizen participation activities have declined sharply. The government has continuously reduced financial support for participatory systems and eliminated citizen representatives. The impact The operation and survival of the participatory system have been affected. From 2016 to 2018, a total of 7 national public policy conferences were held, and their importance has been significantly reduced. Venezuela is facing a political and economic crisis, and the participation of community committees has been declining. According to

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A 2018 poll showed that 45% of respondents believed that the role of community committees was declining. Only about 31% of adults participated in community committees in 2018, and the participation rate was lower than in 2014. Participatory democracy in Bolivia and Ecuador It is already fragile, and the ouster of Morales and Correa has brought the participatory system to a near standstill.

Four conclusions

The participatory democratic practices of Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador and Brazil have enriched the public The form of citizen participation has expanded the degree, scope and field of citizen participation. The Latin American left has made great efforts to explore the practice of participatory democracy and has achieved certain results. They regard participation as a tool for democratic innovation. Use citizen participation as a new way to formulate policies and provide public goods. However, practice has proved that the Latin American left has not brought about a breakthrough in participatory democracy. Participatory democracy still cannot replace the deliberative system. As the political landscape of Latin American countries changes, participatory democracy From highs to lows, but related practices will not stop. For example, participatory budgeting has long transcended its inherent left-wing characteristics and has become a tool used by many countries and international institutions in the world to reduce poverty and achieve good governance. The practice of participatory democracy of the Latin American left embodies Latin American countries do not want to imitate Western democracy step by step, but have their own attempts and innovations. Different from the Western citizen juries and micro-public spheres, the participatory democracy practiced by the Latin American left is not limited to a certain policy field, but is based on regional attempts. Covering a wide range of issues related to local development. These participatory democracies are protected by law and created based on citizen initiatives. Unlike cases in North America and Europe, participatory democracy in Latin America is open to all local residents, and anyone can participate at any time. Rather than being selected representatives of some groups, it provides every citizen, especially traditional marginalized groups, with an important opportunity to participate in decision-making. This is something that many developed countries have not done. Therefore, the participatory democratic practice of the Latin American left and its The results have valuable reference significance for other countries in the world.

(Editor Gao Han)

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