Models of Participation:  
A Comparative Study of Participatory Mechanisms in Latin America

by

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A Thesis
presented to
The University of Guelph

In partial fulfilment of requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
in
Political Science

Guelph, Ontario, Canada

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In the past decade, Latin America has witnessed an explosion of institutions designed to encourage and channel popular participation in decision-making. Participatory mechanisms have emerged under left-wing governments that claim a strong ideological commitment to “radical” participatory democracy while in other countries citizen participation is promoted as a means of improving governance rather than as an alternative model of democratic politics. Despite the recent expansion of innovative democratic experiments, scholars have observed that much of what has been written focuses on theoretical issues and normative debates. There is relatively little empirical research and a lack of comparative work that contrasts different models of citizen participation.

This thesis addresses these gaps in the literature. It compares local participatory mechanisms in three countries with different models of participatory design: Venezuela’s “radical” participatory democracy, Chile’s “pragmatic” efforts at expanding participation and Ecuador’s “hybrid” model that demonstrates features of both. Drawing on extensive fieldwork, it compares outcomes produced by participatory mechanisms in these countries and identifies five factors that enhance or diminish their ability to generate positive outcomes: decision-making and implementation capacity, quality of deliberation, inclusiveness, levels of engagement and the nature of relationships between participatory mechanisms and local authorities. The findings reveal that the “radical” model does not produce significantly better outcomes despite its promises of deepening the quality of democracy. Institutional design and state discourse on democracy are therefore less important than the extent to which these five factors are present.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to express my appreciation to my advisor, Dr. Jordi Diez for the time, patience, dedication and advice he provided throughout the research and writing process. His guidance was invaluable at all stages of the development of this thesis. I must also thank the other members of my thesis committee for their valuable feedback and encouragement: Dr. Janine Clark and Dr. Leah Levac. The knowledge, expertise and high expectations of these three academics have resulted in a stronger thesis. My sincere thanks also goes to Dr. Tulia Falleti, Professor of Political Science at the University of Pennsylvania, for contributing her expertise and insightful questions to the final examination process. I must also mention the names of other faculty members who, while not directly involved in this thesis, have provided various forms of support over the past five years: Candace Johnson, Craig Johnson, Byron Sheldrick and David MacDonald. I am also grateful to the staff of the Department of Political Science at the University of Guelph for their dedication and willingness to solve problems and address concerns.

Este trabajo de investigación fue llevado a cabo en tres países maravillosos: Venezuela, Chile y Ecuador, mi querida tierra adoptiva y un país muy adentro de mi corazón. Tuve la suerte de conocer lugares fascinantes, personas dinámicas y dedicadas al mejoramiento de la democracia en sus países. Quisiera expresar un profundo agradecimiento a todos quienes me regalaron su tiempo y sus perspectivas, desde los ministerios y agencias estatales hasta los barrios populares. Por su ayuda y los contactos que me dieron, gracias a Franklin Ramírez (FLACSO Ecuador); Maria Amelia Viteri (Universidad San Francisco de Quito); Steve Ellner (Universidad de Oriente, Venezuela); Rossana Castiglioni (Universidad Diego Portales, Santiago) y Robert Funk, Instituto de Asuntos Públicos, Universidad de Chile. Por último, si bien no menos importante, gracias a mis amiga/os Ricardo Carrera, Christian Paula, Chani Viteri, Maria Maya y Victor Altuve, que siempre me han prestado el apoyo necesario; ella/os me alentaron a lograr este trabajo.
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Chapter 1: Introduction, Research Questions and Arguments

In the past decade, Latin America has witnessed an explosion of institutions designed to encourage and channel popular participation in decision-making. Participatory mechanisms have emerged in the more “radical” left-wing contexts such as Venezuela, Ecuador and Bolivia as well as in countries such as Brazil and Colombia. The discourse of popular participation has even become fashionable in Chile, often considered a model of representative democracy in the region but one of the least participatory systems. While the ideological framework and discourse surrounding the emergence of citizen participation differs, there are a number of common objectives which proponents of increased popular engagement in politics seek to achieve through the creation of participatory mechanisms. These tend to revolve around more equitable policy outcomes and the legitimacy of democracy, however that elusive concept is defined. Within the broader context of popular participation in politics, two distinct models have emerged in Latin America. The governments associated with the Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas (ALBA)\(^1\) have claimed a strong ideological commitment to “radical” participatory democracy and have created a plethora of participatory institutions, including local citizen councils, to implement this vision. In addition to achieving tangible goals such as more equitable access to public goods, these administrations claim that direct public participation can empower those who have traditionally been excluded from decision-making. They have embraced a discourse that frames participation and democracy as conceptually inseparable (Burbach and Piñero 2007; Ellner 2010, 2011; Hawkins 2010; Hellinger 2011). Within this category, Venezuela has gone the furthest in

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\(^1\) ALBA is an alliance formed between leftist governments generally described as more “radical” by observers such as Castañeda (2006), Corrales (2006) and Petkoff (2005). They include the administrations of Hugo Chávez and his successor Nicolás Maduro (Venezuela), Evo Morales (Bolivia), Rafael Correa (Ecuador) and Daniel Ortega (Nicaragua).
terms of replacing liberal representative institutions at the local level with a form of participatory
democracy, while Ecuador has adopted a similar discourse accompanied by a more limited
institutional design. Meanwhile, many non-ALBA governments have framed citizen
participation as a means of improving governance, enhancing representative institutions and
achieving more efficient outcomes rather than as an alternative model of democratic politics
(Cameron, Hershberg and Sharpe 2012; Marín and Mlynarz, 2012). This may be read as a
“pragmatic” engagement with public participation on the part of governments who wish to
reinforce liberal democracy. In this context, participatory mechanisms must work closely with
local and state institutions in order to achieve their goals. The Chilean government has recently
sought to expand and deepen citizen participation at the local level based on these principles.

This debate surrounding the most effective means of integrating popular participation
into the policy process is playing out in academic circles as well as in the media. It has often
been observed, however, that much of what has been written focuses on theoretical issues and
that there is limited empirical research linking participatory democracy theory to concrete cases
(Fung and Wright 2003; Fung 2007; Van Cott 2008; Goldfrank 2011, 2011b; Nylen 2011).
While some scholars have begun to conduct such research, these studies demonstrate a number
of limitations that need to be addressed. Authors tend to assess political systems according to
how far they diverge from the “correct” Western model and formulate normative assessments
based on their ideological framework rather than on empirical evidence. Furthermore, there is a
lack of empirical research that considers the factors that enhance or diminish the capacity of
participatory mechanisms to produce positive outcomes. Finally, there is little cross-country
comparative work on participatory mechanisms, and none that compares experiences across the
“radical” and “pragmatic” models. Scholars tend to favour the more “pragmatic” participatory
initiatives, yet without empirical evidence or comparative work that examines the outcomes and characteristics of various models of public participation, it is difficult to draw meaningful conclusions.

This study contributes to the literature by addressing these gaps. It applies comparative analysis to local participatory mechanisms in three countries with different models according to a typology that the thesis has identified: Venezuela’s “radical” participatory democracy, Ecuador’s “radical hybrid” model and Chile’s “pragmatic” efforts at expanding participation through limited citizen participation. Drawing on extensive fieldwork from nine different cases (three participatory mechanisms from each of the three countries), it compares outcomes produced by these mechanisms (focusing on two of the most common outcomes identified in the theoretical literature) and the factors that explain these outcomes. Developing a better understanding of these questions makes an important theoretical and empirical contribution, but also has significant implications for policymaking and institutional design.

**Research Question and Sub-Questions**

A number of questions have not yet been adequately addressed from a comparative perspective. In what ways does popular participation enhance the capacity of citizens to achieve more equitable access to public goods and services (tangible outcomes)? How does participation affect participants’ perceptions of the legitimacy of democracy and sense of empowerment (spillover effects)? What characteristics of participatory mechanisms enhance or diminish their capacity to produce these outcomes? To what extent are mechanisms based on “radical” participatory democracy more effective than those designed according to “pragmatic” participation principles?
This study is therefore directed by the following research question:

To what extent are some models of participatory mechanism design more effective than others in terms of achieving positive outcomes and what are the factors that enhance or diminish the capacity of participatory mechanisms to produce these outcomes?

The following sub-questions were useful in guiding the comparisons between cases:

- What type of participation is most effective at achieving desired outcomes? To what extent do mechanisms premised on the ideals of “radical” participatory democracy (in terms of state discourse and how the mechanisms are designed on paper) perform better in this regard than those based on “pragmatic” participation principles? How do relationships between citizen participants and officials (which vary according to institutional design) affect the capacity of participatory mechanisms to produce the desired outcomes?

- To what extent do factors commonly identified in the theoretical literature on participatory democracy (devolution of decision-making and implementation powers to citizens, allowing for bottom-up political participation and deliberation, inclusion of traditionally disadvantaged groups, levels of participation and commitment) have an impact on outcomes?

Arguments

This study argues that overall, popular participation does have an important impact on communities and individual citizens. Participatory mechanisms have produced significant tangible outcomes at the local level, such as more equitable access to public goods and services.
Some cases also generate positive spillover effects. While these outcomes are observable to some extent in most of the participatory mechanisms studied in this thesis, there is significant variation among the nine cases. There is little evidence, however, that the “radical” model, despite its promises of deepening the quality of democracy, produces significantly better outcomes. Institutional design of participatory mechanism and state discourse on participatory democracy are not the most important factors in determining outcomes.

This thesis finds that four factors identified in the theoretical literature have an impact on the capacity of participatory mechanisms to produce positive outcomes. These include: quality of deliberation (can everyone participate or are the participatory mechanisms dominated by certain groups?); inclusiveness (do the mechanisms really include the formerly excluded or simply act as another forum for the middle sectors to promote their interests?), high levels of participation and engagement (proportion of the community that participates regularly and how committed they are to participation) and positive relationships between participatory mechanisms and local authorities. Both among and within the three countries, these factors are observable in those cases that produce better outcomes and practically absent in the mechanisms that do not fare as well, yet there is no evidence to suggest that they are inherently unique to the radical model. Institutional design does have an impact on the formal powers that participatory mechanisms have, but the design itself is less important than the degree to which these four factors are present. A fifth factor, devolution of decision-making and implementation powers, is associated with the radical Venezuelan model and with positive outcomes, but participants working within the pragmatic model can find ways of getting what they want even when they cannot formally exercise these powers.
State discourse on participatory democracy appears to have even less of an impact on the ability of participatory mechanisms to produce positive outcomes. There is evidence, however, that citizens are more likely to achieve tangible outcomes when the discourse behind participatory mechanisms aligns with the reality of how they function. In both Venezuela and Chile, participatory discourse produced by the state along with the relevant enabling legislation align to a significant degree with how the mechanisms actually work. This shapes participants’ expectations and strategies in engaging with their participatory institutions. In Ecuador, there is a notable disconnect between state discourse and legislation on the one hand, and how the institutions function in reality. This produces tension between participants and local authorities as citizens’ expectations of what their participatory mechanisms should do are not realized in their day to day operation. This tension damages the relationship between participants and local authorities, thus further reducing the role of the former in decision-making and implementation.

**Structure**

The structure of this study is as follows. Chapter 2 presents the research problem to be addressed in greater detail, a review of the relevant literature (including a justification for the study through identifying important gaps) and the methods employed to conduct the research. It also presents the nine cases studied in this thesis. Chapter 3 provides the relevant historical and political context. It looks at the evolution of the citizens’ revolution movements in Venezuela and Ecuador that led to the emergence of a discourse and set of institutions based on the principles of “radical” participatory democracy and at the more gradual shift in Chile from a closed representative system to an environment in which (limited) citizen participation has become part of the political discourse.
Chapters 4, 5 and 6 present and discuss the results of the research. Chapter 4 compares the tangible outcomes identified for each case (policy outcomes, infrastructure and/or service improvements) and links them to popular participation by tracing the agenda-setting process within the participatory mechanisms. Chapter 5 contrasts the varying spillover effects, both among and within each of the three countries. These two chapters look at the variation as well as the commonalities between cases. Chapter 6 compares and contrasts the factors that explain the outcomes discussed in the two previous chapters. Finally, chapter 7 discusses the broader implications of this study’s findings for the theoretical and empirical literature and for institutional design, as well as some conclusions and paths for further research.
2.1 Research Problem, Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Research Problem
Several problems need to be addressed through new research. First, there is an often identified gap in the literature with respect to studies of concrete instances of popular participation. Until recently, this has often been attributed to the relative dearth of real-world examples to study. Yet despite the recent explosion of participatory mechanisms throughout Latin America, there has been relatively little empirical and comparative research beyond the well-studied Brazilian participatory budgeting model. This gap is even more significant with respect to the “radical” participatory democracy innovations set up by ALBA governments, yet these institutions arguably come closest to the theoretical principles and therefore must be studied to address the theoretical-empirical gap. There is also a lack of comparative work that contrasts the two models of participation (radical participatory democracy and pragmatic citizen participation) in order to understand the characteristics that produce the most positive outcomes and the extent to which these models generate positive outcomes. This thesis examines one of the most common types of participatory mechanisms that have emerged: local citizens’ councils. Citizens’ councils in the three countries share a number of characteristics that facilitate such comparisons and distinguish them from some of the experiments Western observers are familiar with. They are all local (generally neighbourhood-level) mechanisms intended to make participation a regular part of peoples’ lives and cover a wide range of issues pertaining to local development. They are established and regulated by national legislation but residents of a given territory, rather than local authorities, are responsible for initiating and running them. Citizen participants are not
selected to represent a given segment of the population; participation is open to everyone who resides within the given territory. They generally consist of a directive made up of elected volunteers and a citizens’ assembly—which all residents may attend—that has final decision-making authority. Internal procedures tend to value deliberation over voting and aggregation of interests, particularly in the radical model (for an overview of the three country models see Appendix 1). There are also notable differences, however, that will be explored throughout this thesis. Pragmatic citizen participation seeks to enhance rather than replace representation and provide better governance through citizen involvement in decision-making while radical participatory democracy claims to challenge dominant Western conceptions by integrating “the people” (*el pueblo*) into the policy process, at least at the local level. These differences are not only discursive and ideological but translate into variation on a number of factors, including formal powers and relationships with government authorities. These similarities and differences allow for comparisons that will help to answer a number of unresolved questions.

Second, there is an ongoing debate in the literature, the media and the political arena with respect to factors that produce genuine democracy and the extent to which participatory institutions are able to generate more democratic outcomes. While the debate is not likely to be resolved due to different conceptions of democracy, it is necessary to engage in more empirical research that studies participatory institutions from a theoretically appropriate framework. There is a tendency in the academic literature to assess democratic innovations according to how far they diverge from the dominant Western model, yet as the following section will demonstrate there is more than one conception of what democracy is and while a given model may be less liberal, this does not automatically render it less democratic. Many who criticize participatory democracy use a liberal interpretation as the only possible definition of democracy, often without
acknowledging it. These attacks are based on the very standards of the variant of democratic thought which the “radical” participatory initiatives seek to challenge. It is therefore no surprise that evaluations produced through this lens tend to be negative. Using this framework, assessments of pragmatic participatory institutions in countries such as Brazil have been positive, while examples of radical initiatives have been dismissed or ignored. Obviously, it is important to avoid the danger of stretching concepts to the extent that anything may be called “democracy” but at the same time, we must recognize that some initiatives that diverge from the dominant liberal conception may be more appropriate to a particular time and place. They must be assessed according to the vision of (participatory) democracy they are based on. Such an analysis should not preclude, of course, considering the concerns raised by opposing voices. Using participatory theory to study and compare mechanisms of “radical” participatory democracy and pragmatic participation should help to better understand the pros and cons of these different types of institutions and the characteristics that make them succeed or fail.

Related to this, studies of democracy (including participatory democracy) tend to focus on the central state level. One result of this is a tendency is to ignore or dismiss the “radical” participatory democracy initiatives at the grassroots level due to concerns about the (liberal) democratic credentials of these countries’ central governments. Studies have therefore focused on examples of “pragmatic” citizen participation; in the Latin American context these have centered on Brazil. Democracy, however, can be found at many levels, and theorists generally agree that participation is most feasible and meaningful at the local level. While authoritarian practices may exist at the national level (and this is the focus of criticism by those who tend to dismiss the initiatives that the ALBA governments have introduced), this does not preclude the possibility that that genuine participatory democracy is taking place at the local level.
Third, if participatory institutions are able to produce some of the benefits identified in the theoretical literature (and there is promising evidence from countries such as Brazil), it is necessary to consider what factors contribute to the achievement of meaningful outcomes. This should involve looking at both characteristics of the participatory mechanisms themselves as well as how people use them (or attempt to use them) to achieve the outcomes they seek.

Theorists have argued that certain factors must be in place in order for participatory institutions to be effective, yet as with the benefits themselves, these assertions are largely untested. There has also been little attention to how citizens engage with participatory mechanisms beyond their formal characteristics. Comparing the outcomes and factors of different participatory institutions in different jurisdictions should help to provide insight on this important question. Related to this, many of the factors that theorists argue must be present are (at least on paper) observable in participatory mechanisms based on “radical” principles and not in those designed according to pragmatic principles. Comparing mechanisms that represent the different models is therefore useful in further testing the importance of these variables.

This literature review will first situate the relevant debate between proponents of liberal and participatory democracy in a broader theoretical context by examining the evolution of ideas that both of these conceptions are based on. This discussion will also touch on the two types of outcomes (tangible and spillover effects) that scholars believe should result from expanded citizen participation. The review will then situate participatory democracy within the Latin American literature, demonstrating that this thesis engages with a trend that seeks to move from a focus on democratic consolidation at the national level to questions concerning the quality of democracy as it is experienced by citizens at the local level. Finally, it will look at the literature on participatory institutions themselves in order to identify the theoretical-empirical gap that this
thesis seeks to address, to develop a theoretical framework for studying the outcomes of participatory institutions and the conditions under which these are generated, and to specify the most important variables to study.

**Literature Review**

*Democracy: An “Essentially Contested Concept”*

Through a review of the literature on democratic theory, this section will situate the current polemic in two broad and very different understandings of the nature of democracy. The unresolved debates with respect to citizen participation in decision-making continue to be observed in Latin America today and are relevant to understanding both the origins of the “citizen power” movements in some parts of the region, as well as efforts to preserve and enhance representative institutions in other jurisdictions. These debates include mass participation vs. representation by elite groups, the intrinsic value of participation as a tool for development and problem-solving, the existence of a common good or general will, individual freedom vs. equality, and the maintenance of order vs. an expanded role for “the masses” in decision-making. A particular focus on the participatory democracy literature will provide a template for how to evaluate participatory institutions by identifying variables to study, including the potential outcomes. We will also see that much of this literature situates participation at the local level.

Democracy must be understood as an “essentially contested concept” in that its meaning is constantly and will likely always be subject to dispute and debate (Gallie 1956). Although there is far more complexity than a simple dichotomy can fully account for, many theorists suggest that conceptions of democracy can be divided into two main camps: direct-participative
and liberal-representative (Held 2006). This is sometimes presented as a division between participatory and elitist democracy (Bates 2003). The first group argues that democracy must be expanded and deepened, that participation in politics promotes self-development and more equitable outcomes, and that government is only legitimate when the governed are involved in decision-making. The second group argues that most people are either incapable of making good decisions or not interested in political participation and that in any case, too much participation can lead to instability and even tyranny. They favour the rule of law and elite representatives elected by the people who can aggregate demands, rather than direct popular rule. While theoretical debates about the nature of democracy persist in the academic literature, in the public sphere the dominant discourse privileges the liberal representative model over others to the extent that many come to equate democracy with this variant (Fung and Wright 2003).

While conceptions of democracy have certainly evolved over the centuries, it is possible to trace many of the themes back to ancient Athens. Many of the ideals of Athenian democracy (and the criticisms of its detractors) have influenced thinking in the West throughout the centuries. Despite its highly restricted participation (which excluded women, slaves and non-citizens), the basic principles of Athenian democracy have nonetheless continued to inspire those who value participation in decision-making. Citizens did not elect representatives to act on their behalf but voted on legislation in assemblies that they had the right to attend. Decisions were expected to be based on the stronger argument and involvement in the process helped to develop citizens’ skills and capacities (Nelson 2006). While most contemporary theorists of participatory democracy acknowledge the difficulties of applying such a model in today’s complex world, the concept of direct citizen involvement in decision-making remains at the centre of this thinking (Held 2006).
Conversely, the concern over the dangers of participation frequently expressed by liberal-elite theorists throughout the centuries can also be traced back to Ancient Greece. Plato rejects many of the principles of Athenian democracy, arguing that ordinary individuals do not have sufficient knowledge of economics, law and ethics and their decisions are therefore guided by emotions rather than informed reason (Ibid). Plato felt that power must be in the hands of societies’ “best minds”; those with knowledge, wisdom and reason to make the best possible decisions (Nelson 2006). While some of Plato’s ideas appear archaic in the contemporary world, the core of his critique remains relevant; the fear of “too much democracy” was to influence many later thinkers and is present in the 21st century debate over participatory institutions in Latin America.

Aristotle departs from Plato with respect to popular participation, and develops a somewhat more complex and nuanced interpretation. He links participation to citizenship, an association that many proponents of participatory democracy would later make. A citizen is one who rules and is ruled in turn. Being a citizen is more than a formal legal status, but implies very specific political rights and duties such as sharing in decision-making and holding office. This is also related to Aristotle’s belief that politics is essentially about debate and deliberation regarding what is “just” (Bates 2003). Still, Aristotle’s scepticism toward the labouring classes led to an ambiguous position on the ideal regime type. A common view is that his preferred regime type would be the polity (politeia), described as a “mixed regime” which combines of elements of oligarchy and democracy (Nichols 1992; Nelson 2006). The majority does have a certain claim to rule and may be able to judge better collectively than any single person in some circumstances. Therefore, a good regime should give the multitude this power to rule in the areas where it merits that power. In other areas, however, decision-makers should be selected
according to merit and virtue. Unlike Plato, then, Aristotle does not believe in complete subordination to a small educated elite, but rather in some kind of participatory (if regulated and limited) self-rule (Nelson 2006).

The active citizen ideals of Athenian democracy were to essentially disappear until the Renaissance. To some extent, this can be attributed to the spread of Christianity and the idea of God as the ultimate authority, expressed through a divine ruler. Notions of popular participation resurfaced to a limited extent in Renaissance Italy, at which point some thinkers began to conceive of popular sovereignty, or authority lying with the community. According to this perspective, rulers were backed by force but their source of authority should be the people, and laws should be made in the public interest (Held 2006). However, these authors tended not to promote the value of direct citizen participation. It was not until the 18th and 19th centuries that the question of popular participation again became a topic of discussion, as the debate between participatory and more constrained forms of democracy was reignited.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1994 [1762]) produced what was for his time a radical view on citizenship and has been called the theorist “par excellence” of participatory democracy (Pateman 1970). Like many of the participatory democrats who would follow him, Rousseau provided more of a critique of the European state as it existed at the time rather than a representation of it. Rousseau opposed the idea that people should be governed uniquely through elected representatives, in the form of a parliament or other legislative body. He believed in the individual participation of all citizens in decision-making and viewed participation as central to the establishment and maintenance of a democratic system. Despite his emphasis on individual participation, this was intended to be used for the good of society; membership in the community and striving for the “common good” were more important for Rousseau than the individual,
private rights espoused by liberal theorists of the period. Rousseau was clearly concerned about the dominance of individual will and interests and believed that citizen participation in a context of relative socioeconomic equality was the best way to ensure that the “general will” would take precedence over selfish private interests. The role of the government, then, is to carry out the general will and to eliminate the profusion of private interests. For Rousseau participation is not only about equitable decision-making and good governance, however. It also has an educational and skill-development function. Through participation in public affairs, citizens develop skills and become better informed. This allows them to participate more effectively with time. Yet another benefit of participation is that it allows people to develop a sense of citizenship or belonging to a community with common interests (Rousseau 1994 [1762]). Rousseau’s conception of democracy would inspire the thinking of participatory democrats in the 20th century and up to the present day and its theoretical ideals are embedded in the participatory institutions of 21st century Latin America (Selee and Peruzzotti 2009).

Liberal democracy and its generally more constrained and elitist notions around the extent of popular participation would challenge Rousseauian conceptions of democracy. Liberalism emphasizes values of individual freedom and personal choice, and freedom of private interests from political interference (the notion of protective democracy). The concept of a general will or common good is generally dismissed (Nelson 2006). The growing bourgeoisie of the 17th and 18th centuries was understandably attracted to concepts of individual rights and popular sovereignty. Thinkers such as Thomas Hobbes argued that the human state of nature is constant struggles for power. For the sake of security and peace, people must surrender the right of self-government to an authority that can maintain these; this sovereign power is supreme but is granted by consent (Lemos 1978). The desire of Hobbes and other liberals who would follow
him to find a compromise between liberty and order again reflects the fear of “the masses” found from the writings of Plato to the present and remains an integral part of the present-day debate over the extent of citizen participation in Latin America.

Many liberal thinkers demonstrate the tension inherent in finding a balance between stability and popular participation. In the American context, the authors of the Federalist Papers shared the liberal suspicion of mass participation but applied their thinking more directly to institutional design. In the Federalist #10, James Madison insisted that in any complex society, the passions and varying interests of citizens meant that government could not be controlled directly by “the people”, but must rather be entrusted to representatives who would be accountable to the electorate. But Madison went further by stressing the importance of institutions. It was not sufficient for representatives to be accountable, as individuals elected by a majority may suppress the rights of minorities. The government could only be controlled by having well-designed institutions that would ensure “auxiliary precautions”, or checks and balances to prevent the emergence of the tyranny of the majority (Epstein 1986). Madison argues that attempts at direct democracy will degenerate into despotism if not checked by properly designed institutions (Kobylka and Carter 1987). The ideal form of government was not democracy in which the people rule, but rather a republican form of government which allows the people to act as judges to check state officials.

Alexis de Tocqueville is one of the more prominent liberal thinkers on democracy, yet he offers an articulate endorsement of the benefits of political participation at the local level (Kahan 2010). Tocqueville was primarily concerned with the preservation of liberty and warned against the potential threat to freedom posed by an emotional, uninformed majority. At the same time, he celebrated the value of citizen participation, particularly in local affairs, and his perspective on
this theme has much to offer proponents of participatory democracy. He argues that people are more capable of deciding on local affairs than on issues at the state/national level, because a person "has little understanding of the way in which the fate of the state can influence his own lot," while minor questions of local interest have a tangible impact on his everyday life (Tocqueville 1994 [1840]). People will therefore have a greater incentive to work together and will be more likely to exercise their freedoms if they are given control of everyday local affairs. He expresses admiration for the New England town councils and the autonomy that these bodies have over local matters (and in some ways, share interesting similarities with new participatory mechanisms in Latin America). Yet despite his enthusiasm for public participation at the local level, it is perhaps Tocqueville’s fear of the “tyranny of the majority” that has most influenced the contemporary debate over participatory democracy. According to Tocqueville, a political context that allows the masses to hold considerable power can allow them to dominate everything from institutions to ideas and values, allowing the majority to impose its will on minorities. As we shall see, this is certainly one of the most prominent concerns expressed by critics of popular participation in Latin America, especially those who operate within a “radical” participatory democracy discursive framework.

Throughout much of the 20th century, the mainstream literature advanced a “minimalist” view of democracy that builds on the fears of “too much participation” expressed by writers from Plato to Madison. Many 20th century theorists of representative democracy are influenced by the work of Joseph Schumpeter. Looking back at what he calls “classical” democratic thinkers, Schumpeter (1942) argues that it is not possible for “the people” to rule with the exception of small and “primitive” societies with a simple social structure. Schumpeter and his followers do not see participation as a desirable objective. He accuses people of being prone to “poor
judgement” and “irrational impulses” and inclined to use “weak logic” to analyze complex matters that are simply beyond them (Schumpeter 1942: 260-263). We must therefore, he argues, replace the unrealistic notion of government by the people with government approved by the people. Democracy, then, involves electing the elites who will lead and the only control that citizens have over their representatives once they are elected is to deny them another mandate (Schumpeter 1942: 283). Seymour Lipset (1960) also defines democracy in relatively minimalist terms, as “a political system which supplies regular constitutional opportunities for changing government officials”. Like Schumpeter, he stresses the importance of stability and also argues that overly high levels of participation are not necessarily a requirement for democracy and may in fact be dangerous. Lipset contends that “extremist” movements are more likely to emerge from the lower classes who often display authoritarian tendencies. For Berelson (1954), apathy and limited popular participation act as a cushion against the conflict and chaos that he believes would ensue if every citizen were to insist on having a say in decision-making.

Participatory Democracy and Its (Potential) Outcomes

A growing number of theorists from the 1970s onward have rejected the minimalist view of democracy and have developed theories that challenge this hegemonic model. We can trace the origins of this counter-hegemonic perspective to the “radical” democracy of Rousseau, for whom participation is not just about equitable decision-making but also has important psychological implications and is the only legitimate means of exercising power. In fact, some scholars who study the Venezuelan model refer to it as “Rousseauian democracy” in contrast to the liberal model (Ellner 2008). These critics of representative democracy have attempted to apply some of Rousseau’s ideas in a contemporary context. It is in these ideas that we find the
theoretical inspiration for the experiments in participatory democracy currently found in Latin America and elsewhere. While there is considerable variety among the different perspectives, they share in common a sharp criticism of the exclusionary nature of representative institutions as they have functioned in practice and a desire to broaden and deepen democracy through the creation of institutions that allow for citizen participation and deliberation in decisions that affect peoples’ lives. While different terms have been used to describe these alternative theories, a number of prominent authors have grouped them under the label of radical democracy.\(^2\) Donna Lee Van Cott, one of the most prolific writers on democracy in the Andean countries, defines radical democracy as “normative theory that proposes alternative—sometimes utopian—norms and process that aim to significantly improve the quality of democratic life”. Radical democrats call for “more participatory-deliberative mechanisms that give citizens a direct role in decision-making” (Van Cott 2008: 8-9). Cohen and Fung (2004) also use the term radical democracy to classify those theories that challenge or propose an alternative to “conventional” (liberal representative) democracy. They identify two strands of radical democracy literature, one that is committed to broader participation in decision-making and another that also requires deeper participation but emphasizes deliberation.

The first strand of this literature, with its origins in the work of Rousseau, focuses on citizen participation as a good in and of itself. While it is not clear that Latin American politicians have read these authors, many of the Rousseauian arguments put forward in these works align closely with many of the stated goals participatory policy implementation in the region during the past decade. In her concise but influential work, Pateman (1970) criticized

\[^2\] This differs from Chantal Mouffe’s (1992) use of the term radical democracy. Mouffe (1992) rejects that notion that we should seek to replace liberal democracy with a complete new political model but argues that the left must acknowledge the strengths of the liberal tradition while seeking to correct its weaknesses.
what she referred to as the contemporary theories of minimalist democracy. Pateman rejects that the “masses” are ignorant and uninterested in politics, that participation should be limited to voting, and that elected elites should be left to make decisions. She believes that “representative” democracy is not really representative and argues that participation is a common good in itself. MacPherson (1977) also emphasizes the need for extensive citizen participation in government. He offers a strong critique of liberal democracy, arguing that proponents confuse democracy with free markets and insisting that this leads to the “freedom of the stronger to do down the weaker following market rules.” MacPherson contrasts this with an alternative view of freedom that provides for all citizens to use and develop their capacities and pursue their own well-being, a perspective that he claims is incompatible with the former. In Barber’s (1984) treaties on “strong democracy”, he also insists that modern societies suffer not from too much but rather from too little democracy. He dismisses the liberal model as “thin democracy” which acts as “the chambermaid of private interests” and goes so far as to argue that the term “representative democracy” is an oxymoron. Strong democracy, writes Barber, “is a distinctly modern form of participatory democracy” (Barber 1984: 117). It is defined by self-government by citizens rather than representative government in the name of citizens. Active citizens must govern themselves not necessarily at every level and in every instance, but often enough and in particular when basic policies are being decided (Ibid: 151). More recently, Santos and Avritzer (2005) argue that the struggle for democracy today is above all a struggle for the democratization of democracy. This must include an acceptance of “demo-diversity” (the recognition that there are many variants of democratic practice and the rejection of the Western drive to impose its hegemonic model on the South) and a rejection of “low intensity” representative democracy through increased participation. They do not believe that representative institutions can be done away
with entirely, but promote a model in which representative and participatory democracy complement each other.

The second strand of the radical democracy literature also involves increased citizen participation but emphasizes the importance of deliberation. Deliberative democrats emphasize the importance of public reasoned discussion over aggregating individual preference through voting (Elstub and McLaverty 2014). Habermas (1984) argues that freedom comes through free communication between equal citizens. He encourages the development of a public space as a forum for face-to-face interaction autonomous from the state and a broadening of the public domain to include the politicization of new issues. Decision-making should emerge from deliberation and be based on the “force of the better argument”. Following Habermas, Elster (1998) posits that deliberative democracy involves decision-making among free and equal citizens and that democracy revolves around the transformation, rather than aggregation, of preferences. The former occurs through deliberation, the latter through voting. The idea is that through rational deliberation, individuals will evolve into citizens and come to better understand the perspectives of others, thus leading to a transformation of preferences. Cunill (1997) distinguishes citizen participation from more liberal forms of participation, such as political (engagement through formal institutions such as political parties) and social (involvement in associations). Citizen participation seeks not only tangible policy outcomes, but also deliberation that calls on rational arguments to identify and address social interests and values.

While few authors believe that liberal institutions can or should be done away with, most point to the failures of these “minimalist” arrangements and argue that enhanced citizen participation can lead to better outcomes for a greater number of people. The potential outcomes are perhaps the most widely written about aspect of participatory democracy yet have at least
until recently been understudied. A review of the relevant literature reveals two sets of outcomes that participatory theorists hope to achieve. While these are not conceived of as mutually exclusive, authors have tended to focus on either tangible outcomes or spillover effects. The first category focuses on results that improve the material conditions of those who have traditionally been excluded from the institutions through which decisions are made. Cohen and Fung (2004) outline four goals for deepening democracy: expanded opportunities for citizens to participate in decision-making, greater accountability and transparency, increased equality, and autonomy and self-government. Such a model should produce, among other things, better policy outcomes as communities will be able to tackle concrete concerns of interest to them. A number of authors agree that participatory democracy should lead to more equitable policy outcomes, particularly greater access to public goods and services for marginalized sectors, including the poor, women and ethnic minorities (Santos 1998; Avritzer 2002; Santos and Avritzer 2005; Baiocchi 2003; Goldfrank 2011). These scholars contend that deepening democracy will, among other things, lead to a higher quality of life through redistributing resources in favour of the more vulnerable social groups, increased investment in the poorer districts, and improved public works projects in previously neglected areas. As we shall see in the following chapter, the discourses of state institutions in Venezuela and Ecuador with respect to public participation draw heavily on the concepts espoused by the tradition represented by these authors.

The second category focuses on the spillover effects, often referred to in the literature as “spillover effects” of citizen participation (Altschuler and Corrales 2012). While there are various perspectives represented in this participatory democracy literature, a common criticism is that while the minimalist or “low intensity” representative model produces popular participation that leads to a disengaged citizenry and cynical perceptions of democracy itself, direct
involvement in decision-making leads to an improved perception of the legitimacy of democracy and an increased sense of political efficacy among participants (Macpherson 1977; Barber 1984; Baiocchi 2003; Wampler 2007; Smith 2009; Hellinger 2011). There have been various attempts over the past few decades to consider these types of effects of participation on citizens. While not participatory democrats, Almond and Verba (1963) took the sense of political efficacy acquired by citizens as an operational effect of participatory democracy that can be studied. They found a correlation between participation in organizations and sense of efficacy and concluded that participation may give people “skills needed to engage in political participation”. They agree with Pateman (1970) that individuals can generalize from their smaller scale experiences to the wider political sphere. Arnold Kaufman (1960), credited with coining the term “participatory democracy”, wrote that democratic participation would improve participants’ “powers of thought, feeling and action”. Pateman’s (1970) influential work posits that the more an individual participates in decision-making (at home, in the workplace, or in the political arena), the greater his or her sense of political efficacy. Involvement at the local level is seen as a good place to begin; participation in local decision-making is a means of “learning democracy”, as it fosters “psychological qualities” required for participation at the national level as well as the development and practice of “democratic skills”.

Fearon (1998) elaborates further on the benefits of deliberation. Among other things, he believes that it can render decisions legitimate in the eyes of the group, improve the moral or intellectual capacities of participants, and produce the best decisions for the greatest numbers of people. Cunill (2008) writes that participation encourages the promotion of the interests of social sectors that have been traditionally marginalized or underrepresented, with the ultimate goal of restoring a certain balance that is necessary in order for these sectors to exercise citizenship.
Others have concentrated on the relationship between citizen participation, training and power. Gaventa (1999) argues that an important dimension of power centres on being able to get an issue onto the agenda (or keep it off the agenda), which entails training citizens on how to participate effectively in politics. Another dimension of power is exercised by shaping awareness through education, among other things. Gaventa argues that citizens must not only have an awareness of policy issues and their implications, but also practical knowledge and skills that can translate into making their voices heard and having influence. Others have acknowledged that even where participation does not have a significant impact on policy outcomes, the possibility of recognition and having a voice may be an important benefit in and of itself (Font and Smith 2013).

Some authors have theorized about both sets of outcomes. Joshua Cohen, one of the strongest proponents of deliberative democracy, also draws on Habermas in developing the concept of public fora, or spaces for public forms of deliberation that produce binding decisions and lead to clear outcomes (Cohen 1997). Like others, Cohen and his colleagues believe that empowering citizens is both an intrinsic good as well as a more efficient way of addressing tangible problems but believes that this can only come through deliberation, which he describes as a particular type of discussion, one that gives careful and serious weighing of reasons for and against a proposition (Cohen and Rogers 2003). Richardson (1983) provides a useful framework that encompasses both types of benefits identified by scholars, dividing these between developmental (the impact on participants, including increased self-esteem) and instrumental (improving the quality of decisions and policy outcomes).
Institutional Design

Most democracy theorists over the centuries have either not touched on institutional design or have done so in an abstract manner. Participatory democrats tend to present primarily theoretical and normative arguments in favour of what they believe democracy should look like. This section will consider the existing literature on participatory institutions themselves in order to identify the gaps that exist between the theory and the empirical research and determine some of the variables that must be studied, according to the literature, in order to address these limitations.

While they identify various factors, most agree that successful participatory mechanisms must demonstrate democratic procedural qualities, the ability to influence the policy process, as well as sufficient independence from the state apparatus so that citizens do not lose their autonomy in the process (Font and Smith 2013; Font and Galais 2011; Cunill 2007). In terms of institutional design, MacPherson (1977) emphasizes the need for “extensive citizen participation” in government, and proposes a participative bottom-up “pyramid” democracy, in which citizens can both be involved in local decision-making and provide input that will move up the pyramid to each higher level and eventually to the top. MacPherson acknowledges that a state cannot function on such a model alone and argues that a combination of his pyramid model and a central state with traditional parties could work. He admits, however, that there are few models of such an arrangement in non-authoritarian states. MacPherson’s vision bears some resemblance to the model proposed by Poulantzas (1978). While Poulantzas acknowledges that parliaments play an important role at the national level, there must be a parallel development of workers’ councils or ‘self-management’ bodies, organized according to the principles of direct
democracy. While he believes these two forms of governance should co-exist, Poulantzas admits that it is difficult to elaborate on exactly how this would work in practice.

Although Barber (1984) devotes only a small part of his work to institutions, he does envision a model that would involve citizen participation at both the neighbourhood and national levels. He proposes a number of criteria for the types of institutions he believes could promote and operationalize his vision of “strong democracy”. They must be autonomous and have real decision-making powers, yet must also have a relationship with national or regional institutions so that local participation is linked to central power. They also require a base of committed citizens interested in deepening democracy and willing to invest the time and effort. He proposes, among other things, neighbourhood assemblies in every rural, suburban and urban district as the first and most important reform for any strong democratic platform. These assemblies would allow for deliberation of both local and national issues. Barber also envisions civic education programs as a necessary compliment to local assemblies. While these are interesting proposals, Barber fails to tie his model together in a manner that demonstrates how decisions made at the local level (local assemblies) could be translated into concrete, binding decisions and finally put into action.

Cohen (1997), Fung and Wright (2003) and Cohen and Rogers (2003) offer more detailed prescriptions for institutional design “to bring real world institutions closer to utopian ideals”. For them, deliberation must take place among equal citizens and involve the exercise of real authority as a means of transforming preferences from private to public in a way that would enhance possibilities for social cooperation. Fung and Wright acknowledge the danger that such reforms will simply reproduce relations of power within the deliberative institutions, yet believe that good institutional design can alleviate many potential problems and advance the values of
radical democracy. Their principles for institutional design include: bottom-up participation, real deliberation in which every citizen has an opportunity to have her voice heard, delegation of real power to the local level, “coordinated decentralization” which maintains linkages with higher levels to ensure that there are real policy outcomes based on the decisions of local actors, and state sponsorship of the institutions (as opposed to disconnected, volunteeristic initiatives) so that the institutional reforms actually transform the state by institutionalizing participation. Yet while most of these authors lay out interesting proposals and blueprints for what radical democracy could look like, few have actually based their suggestions on concrete examples or empirical evidence.

Avritzer (2000) believes that the challenge is to design institutions that can strengthen the innovations that have emerged at the public level while weakening the continuities of traditional political culture at the level of the political system. To be effective, institutions must be genuinely deliberative (as opposed to merely consultative) and must include mechanisms to transform the results of deliberation into concrete outcomes. Unlike many authors, Avritzer does base much of his thinking on a concrete model, specifically the participatory budgeting experiment generally associated with the Brazilian city of Porto Alegre, a model of institutional design that he believes is successful and could serve as a lesson for others.

More recently, some authors have turned their attention to comparing the various types of institutions designed to support citizen participation and deliberation in practice. While acknowledging that there cannot be one universal method for implementing and assessing citizen participation, the scholars emphasize criteria that are relatively similar to those proposed in earlier work. Among other things, mechanisms should: comprise a broadly representative sample of the affected population (inclusiveness), be independent in their deliberations, fair and allow
for the structuring the process (which speaks to the quality of deliberation), have a genuine impact on policy and be actively engaged (Rowe and Frewer 2005, 2000). These authors recognize, however, that many of the criteria discussed in the literature are focused on the procedures rather than on outcomes. The typology that they develop also tends to be focused on Western examples (deliberative mini-publics, deliberative polls, citizens’ juries) which are quite different from the Latin American models (Rowe and Frewer 2005; Elstub 2014). These differences will be further explored in the discussion of the cases (section 2.2).

Democracy in Latin America

The polemic discussed above, although extremely prevalent in Latin America today, arrived late to the region. This is due to the fact that most countries were dominated by oligarchic and authoritarian regimes throughout much of the 19th and 20th centuries, and therefore had little experience with democracy of any type. Much of the contemporary literature has focused on democratic consolidation (or lack thereof) at the national level following the Third Wave of democratic transitions that swept the region in the 1970s and 1980s. This section will situate the thesis within a more recent trend that shifts our focus from the weakness of procedural democracy at the state level to the quality of democracy. In recent years many authors, concerned by the apparent lack of relevance of liberal democracy for the average citizen, have called for increased attention to the role of citizens and to democracy at the local level, themes addressed by this thesis. This section will also demonstrate that in the Latin American context in particular, we can identify two camps of authors who hope to address the shortcomings of liberal democracy through increased citizen participation. Some view increased participation as a necessary means of addressing the shortcomings of liberal democracy as it has been
implemented in the region, seeking to increase legitimacy for democratic institutions and connect citizens with their representatives. Others follow in the radical democracy tradition of Rousseau, considering increased participation (even if initiated through populism) as a source of democratic revival and an alternative to the dominant model.

Much of the earlier literature focused on transitions and consolidation is characterized by the concern over the region’s “hyphenated” democracy: the use of conditional terms to label what is generally seen as unsatisfactory democracy. Regardless of their explanation, most authors agree that while countries have built institutions that appear democratic, they have preserved their old political, social and economic structures behind a façade of liberal democracy (Gill, Rocamora and Wilson 1993; Linz and Stepan 1996; Domínguez 2003; O’Donnell 1996, 1994; Hagopian 1990). More recently, some scholars have criticized the earlier literature for focusing exclusively on procedural issues and paying little attention to substantive matters, such as the quality of democracy. O’Donnell (1996) argues that few democracies in the region have institutionalized more than elections and argues that there is a tremendous gap between the formal rules and what actually happens. Clearly, this complicates matters. As Karl (1990) points out, once we begin looking for substantive elements (for example, the incorporation of increasingly broad segments of the population) as opposed to the merely formal, it is difficult to find any completely consolidated democracies in Latin America. She states that while these substantive properties are important, they are less tangible, making it difficult to engage in empirical study.

A growing number of scholars, however, argue that the quality of democracy is simply too important to overlook. For O’Donnell (2004), a democratic regime is essential but not sufficient for real democracy. He criticizes political science for focusing too much on the regime
and formal institutions. O’Donnell acknowledges that studying the substantive elements is “tricky”, but argues that it is essential to do so. Normative assertions are needed, not only descriptive ones. Agency is the grounding factor of democracy and allows us to assess the differential quality of actually existing democracies. Agency involves not only looking at people as carriers of formal rights, as such a perspective omits the conditions of the exercise of these rights. It requires a level of human development, as agents must be able to relate to each other as equals. The conditions that allow for the effective exercise of citizenship are diminished without social rights. Hagopian (2005, 2007) also argues that the literature has looked at “democracy without citizens”. She encourages a shift in the research agenda from democratic consolidation to a focus on substantive issues such as the quality of democracy. Studying political institutions without considering the aspirations of a country’s citizens and how they engage with democratic institutions is no longer adequate. We must study citizen perceptions of political institutions, linkages among citizens and the organizations in which they come together to have their interests conveyed to the state.

Scholars who examine the quality of democracy are more concerned with participation than those who focus exclusively on procedural issues and formal institutions, yet most of these authors still favour liberal rather than participatory democracy. While generally acknowledging the deficiencies of “really existing” liberal institutions in the region, they have generally supported the improvement and institutionalization of representative democracy rather than the replacement of these institutions. This may manifest itself as a “pragmatic” form of popular participation through which institutions may be enhanced through some form of public engagement. Hagopian (2007) promotes the “thickening” of citizenship by reuniting civil society with political society; by linking civil society to political representatives. There is clearly
a role for increased citizen involvement in her vision, but Hagopian is not arguing in favour of a new “radical” democracy, but rather encourages citizens to connect and engage with their institutions of political representation.

Generally, then, the literature on Latin America paints a bleak picture of democracies that have yet to be fully consolidated yet more recent work that considers participatory initiatives presents a more complex picture and places value on citizen participation. Fung characterizes the work of “traditional” scholars of democracy in Latin America as pessimistic and “replete with adjectives that lower our expectations” for democracy in the region (Fung 2011: 858). He astutely point out, however, that these conclusions are perhaps due to the fact that these theorists have primarily focused on developments at the national level. In contrast to these “senior Latin American scholars”, Fung points to a new generation of academics who paint a very different picture through studying democratic innovations taking place at the local level. Avritzer (2002) dismisses the notion that “democratic elitism” is the only means of guarding against the authoritarian tendencies of the masses that destroyed democratic regimes in 20th century Europe. He claims that in Latin America, democratization cannot be attributed to elites but rather to the emergence of public spaces in which citizens can engage as equals in a decision-making process guided by deliberation. Such a public sphere involves direct face to face communication. Democratization is therefore not the institutionalization of competition among elites but is a societal practice (public spaces of deliberation) in need of institutionalization. For Avritzer, the central problem is a disassociation between an open egalitarian public space and the more traditional (and closed) institutions of power. Full democratization requires the capacity to transform these new practices from a societal innovation into a public form of binding decision-making.
In their volume on participatory innovation in Latin America, Selee and Peruzzotti (2009) and their contributors describe various types of participatory institutions in Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, Chile and Bolivia. While they point to several important accomplishments, including the replacement of clientelistic practices with more transparent means of distributing public good and the engagement of previously marginalized actors, these authors are primarily concerned with participation as a complement to representation. They therefore tend to evaluate institutions based on the extent to which they improve representation and do not ground their assessments in participatory theory. Avritzer (2009) looks at different participatory institutions in Brazil arguing that the design of participatory institutions must be based on local circumstances and context (such as strength of civil society and willingness of political actors, as results are achieved through the interaction of these forces). He is not using participatory theory to evaluate outcomes, but rather examining the contextual conditions that contribute to the success of participatory initiatives. Van Cott (2008) looks at indigenous local government experiments in Bolivia and Ecuador, focusing on both successful and less successful cases and arguing that these can provide models for broader areas. She concludes that the political context affects the quality of institutional innovations, that bottom up initiatives are better, that leadership matters and that institutionalized parties improve participation. Most of the participatory initiatives studied were instigated by neoliberal administrations as a means of making government more efficient through decentralization (Rivera-Ottenberger 2009). Leftist academics and popular movements contend that initiatives launched by neoliberal regimes of the recent past were primarily aimed at using participation to contain and defuse social demands as opposed to being based on an ideological commitment to “power to the people” democracy (Burron 2012; Remy 2008). From this emerging body of research, it is not unreasonable to conclude that Latin
America has become an “epicentre” of democratic revitalization. Fung (2011), Nylen (2011) and others applaud this trend but argue that there is still work to be done here.

It is possible to identify two broad models of popular participation that have emerged in the region. In the first, and most common, participation is designed with pragmatic goals in mind, seeking to enhance (not replace) representation and provide better governance through citizen involvement in decision-making (Oxhorn 1995; Montambeault 2011; Nylen 2011; Cleuren 2007). Institutions have been created or re-invigorated in recent years with the intention of enhancing governance and bringing citizens closer to their elected representatives. While not subscribing to the radical democracy ideals as discussed in the theoretical literature, these governments nonetheless support participatory mechanisms which liberal democrats claim will produce a deeper and richer democracy (Nylen 2011; Montambeaut 2011; Selee and Peruzzotti 2009). The discourse of popular participation has even become fashionable in Chile, often considered a model of representative democracy in the region but one of the least participatory systems (Cameron, Hershberg and Sharpe 2012b).

Meanwhile, the vision championed by Chávez and other leaders of ALBA group includes citizen participation in decision-making (particularly at the local level, but increasingly with the intention of expanding this involvement to intermediate and national levels), the integration of civil society into the policy process and more citizen involvement in the development of political party policy (Méndez and Jonnathan 2009; Ellner 2010, 2012; Hawkins 2010; Irazábal and Foley 2010). This has created a direct challenge to Western hegemonic constructions of democracy imposed by the United States and local elites (Burron 2012). Each of these governments has moved beyond rhetoric to create concrete institutions that they claim will translate this vision
into practice (Ramírez and Welp 2011; Schnieder and Welp 2011; Goldfrank 2011b; Crespo 2008).

Not surprisingly, serious criticisms have been levelled against “radical” participatory initiatives. Drawing on many of the same arguments put forward by thinkers from Plato to Schumpeter, these scholars remind us of the dangers of “too much participation” and the advantages of representative institutions. In order to properly study participatory democracy mechanisms, it is necessary to take these potential threats seriously and to examine the extent to which these negative effects are produced by the models identified in this study. Observers express concern that these institutions are highly politicized and will diminish the autonomy of civil society by co-opting individuals and organizations through state-supported initiatives (Lovera 2008; García-Guadilla 2008; Machado 2009). Latin American observers express concern that radical participatory institutions (more so than pragmatic) will diminish the autonomy of civil society by co-opting individuals and organizations through state-supported initiatives (Lovera 2008; García-Guadilla 2008; Machado 2009). Other concerns that may apply, particularly to the more ideologically-charged environment surrounding the radical model, are that citizen involvement in politics contribute to the exclusion of minorities and societal fragmentation (Armony 2004) and that deliberation pushes groups and individuals toward more extreme political positions (Sunstein 2003). The group polarization that emerges produces serious consequences, including a radicalization of civil society that may result in attempts to undermine political and judicial institutions.

The proponents of radical democracy in fact intend some of the dangers identified, particularly those identified by ideologically motivated critics on the right. For example, many proponents of radical democracy would not necessarily see the diminishing power of
representative institutions (which are deemed unrepresentative) in a negative light. However, some of the dangers would, if they are in fact produced by the new institutions, conflict with radical democracy theory and would be a real cause for concern for radical democrats. These include the possibility that participatory institutions will simply reproduce class hierarchies in that those with higher levels of education (likely to be more “eloquent”) will have significant advantages in a deliberative process (Bourdieu 1991), that social inequalities may mean that underprivileged minorities will be excluded regardless of participatory mechanisms (Elstub and McLaverty 2014; Bonham 1996) or that most citizens will not be motivated to engage, either because they do not have the time or because they fail to see the benefit of doing so (Warren 1996; Lijphart 1999; Mansbridge 1980).

Despite the gloomy picture of democratic regression painted in much of the academic literature, citizen perceptions of democracy in Venezuela and Ecuador have remained above the regional average. Pointing to the exceptionally positive perceptions that Venezuelans hold toward democracy, the 2013 Latinobarometer report states that these results are “difficult to understand” given that all of the available evidence suggests the country’s institutions do not fully guarantee basic democratic rights. The authors of the Latinobarometer report state that while Venezuela has generally been characterized as a “limited democracy” it is clear that “her citizens do not feel this way” and conclude that with respect to perceptions about the quality of democracy, Venezuela remains the country that displays the greatest difference between citizens and the “international community”. The report draws similar conclusions with respect to Ecuador, noting that citizens’ support for and perceptions of the quality of democracy in their country have grown despite significant institutional problems. As with much of the academic literature, the Latinobarometer survey remains heavily focused on formal procedural standards of
liberal democracy. Citizen participation is barely treated by the survey. Yet understanding the discrepancy between the (perceived or real) institutional weaknesses and the positive citizen perceptions in these countries requires looking beyond procedural factors at the national level to the experiences of democratic innovation at the local level.

Theoretical-Empirical Gap

While both supporters and opponents of radical democracy make strong theoretical arguments, many have noted that this literature tends to be abstract and generally fails to offer concrete examples or empirical evidence (Humphreys, Masters and Sandbu 2002; Cohen and Rogers 2003; Fung and Wright 2003; Delli Carpini, Cook and Jacobs 2004; Montero and Samuels 2004; Fung 2007; Van Cott 2008; Smith 2009). Conversely, little of the empirical work that does examine institutional innovations has directly addresses radical democracy theory (Baiocchi 2003). Beetham (1999) attributes this to a “disciplinary divorce” within political science between those who study political institutions and those who theorize about the principles of democracy. There is a clear and often noted need to address this gap by engaging in empirical research to determine to what extent participatory institutions conform to the theoretical principles.

Humphreys, Masters and Sandbu (2002) argue that despite a widespread trend towards the adoption of increasingly participatory approaches to political decision-making in developing countries, there is little or no evidence that these practices in fact return the benefits attributed to them. In their theoretical discussion of deliberative democracy, Cohen and Rogers (2003) state that empirical literature on the topic is thin, and that any new evidence will make an important contribution. Fung (2007) believes that the lack of empirical research poses a “fundamental obstacle to progress in democratic theory”. According to him, democratic theorists have successfully pointed out the limitations of liberal representative institutions and developed
convincing arguments in favour of deeper democracy, but we cannot advance this theory further without studying the potential and real outcomes of actual institutions that promote citizen participation. Writing in the South American context, Van Cott (2008) also contends that the literature on radical democracy tends to be abstract, fails to offer concrete examples and insists there is a need to address limitations of normative radical democracy literature by testing against empirical research.

Smith (2009) writes that while democratic theorists have made a strong case for deeper and broader citizen participation, these discussions have taken place at a high level of abstraction and there remains a dearth of studies that engage in the “messy” task of empirical research on institutional design. He also points out that the studies that do exist tend to focus on a single case study and that there is a significant gap in the discipline: a lack of “theoretically informed, comparative studies of democratic innovations”. Fung and Wright (2003) also mention the need for empirical evidence that looks at cases of institutional innovation toward radical democracy to determine if they can produce the benefits discussed in the theory. Researchers, they insist, must attempt to determine if these abstract principles can truly characterize the institutions in practice and if there is a significant price to pay for any benefits they produce. Furthermore, those studies that do exist tend to focus on the procedural quality of participatory processes rather than on concrete outcomes (Abelson and Gauvin 2006). Authors attribute the paucity of empirical studies to a preoccupation with rights-based arguments surrounding participation but also to the inherent difficulties in studying the concrete benefits of participatory mechanisms and designing evaluation tools (Nabatchi 2012; Burton 2009; Abelson and Gauvin 2006).

This is not to say that there are no studies on reforms that involve the deepening of participation. In the Western context, authors have started to compare and contrast various types
of institutions in the countries they are most familiar with, from public communication mechanisms (information is conveyed to the public), to public consultation to mechanisms that allow for a greater degree of dialogue (Rowe and Frewer 2005). Researchers have started to turn from normative debates about the desirability of participation to more empirical studies (Elstub and McLaverty 2014). Most of this work in focused on North American and European mechanisms with a particular focus on deliberative mini-publics (Elstub 2014). In addition to the obvious cultural and political differences, these experiments are generally aimed at supplementing existing structures with participatory mechanisms as opposed to restructuring the state. They may be useful in terms of analyzing pragmatic mechanisms in Latin America, although the significant contextual differences would render comparisons problematic. The Western empirical research tells us little, however, about more radical experiments or about the role of citizen participation in a context of extreme inequality and poverty and in which large segments were long denied basic political and social rights. Furthermore, the depth of direct citizen participation provided by these North American and European mechanisms is usually limited in comparison with the Latin American experiences studied in this thesis. The communal councils and local assemblies in Venezuela, Ecuador and Chile probably come closer to what Rowe and Frewer (2005) label as the highest category of participation (type 4), or the New England Town Meeting, although there are also significant differences which will be explored further on.

There has been an expansion of work on participatory experiences in Latin America, although this remains limited in scope. Recent research by Altschuler and Corrales (2012) demonstrates that participation does lead to the development of positive spillover effects. This work provides us with useful tools for further exploring the questions addressed although it
focuses on instances of participatory democracy that are fairly limited in scope (primary education). One of the genuinely participatory experiments that has been the object of extensive empirical research is the Porto Alegre participatory budgeting model. Santos (1998) demonstrates that in the city of Porto Alegre, known as the birthplace of participatory budgeting in Brazil, remarkable improvements to public services were achieved through citizen participation, yet he does not compare these outcomes to those achieved in other cities. In fact, most authors who have studied the Porto Alegre model argue that empirical evidence demonstrates the capacity of this model to produce the benefits of participation identified in the theoretical literature (Avritzer 2002; Abers 2000; Baiocchi 2003; Fung 2007; Goldfrank 2011). They contend, for example, that the institutions are genuinely deliberative, produce concrete policy results, provide skills to participants and do not demonstrate many of the threats feared by liberal critics. These studies are encouraging in that they suggest that participatory institutions can be successful. It is not clear, however, whether the success is limited to Porto Alegre due to the particular political and socioeconomic circumstances of that city. In fact, while participatory budgeting has been expanded to other cities in Brazil, research has tended to focus overwhelmingly on the original city and on successful cases (Smith 2009).

In a more recent work, Avritzer (2009) compares Porto Alegre with less successful cases in Brazil and argues that context matters. Because participatory institutions in Brazil (unlike the ALBA countries) are not part of a national strategy but are implemented at the whim of municipalities, researchers tend to use within-country comparisons and uncover conditions related to local circumstances. There remains a need to expand empirical investigation to other participatory mechanisms in order to consider whether the principles can be successful
elsewhere. This suggests a need to look at participatory institutions beyond Brazil, which has been the focus of most of the research in the area.

Despite the expansion of participatory discourse and institutions, academic research into participatory mechanisms has remained limited to a handful of countries and empirical studies beyond the aforementioned Brazilian model are rare. Those that do exist present discrete in-depth case studies of participatory mechanisms in various countries as opposed to comparative research across country models (Selee and Peruzzotti 2009; Cameron, Hershberg and Sharpe 2012). Goldfrank (2011) does engage in comparative research among three South American cities, but his work focuses on mechanisms developed at the municipal (rather than the national) level and was conducted prior to the election of the ALBA governments and the emergence of the “radical” model and discourse on “citizen’s power”. Furthermore, these studies do not base their research on variables drawn from the theoretical literature.

The new “radical” participatory institutions created in the ALBA countries have been the object of debate in the academic literature and the media, but there is little empirical research as of yet. The fact that these institutions are relatively new (the first were initiated in Venezuela in 2006, while other ALBA countries have only done so more recently) explains in part why there is little empirical research. As is the case with the broader literature on participatory democracy, what has been written on these types of institutions tends to focus on conceptual arguments. A number of authors see the communal councils as having the potential to institutionalize genuine popular participation (Burbach and Piñero 2007; Machado 2008, 2008b; López-Valladares 2008; Ellner 2010; Hawkins 2010) while others express pessimism (Urribarri 2008; López-Valladares 2008; Garcia-Gaudilla 2008; Colburn and Trejos 2010). These discussion articles on communal councils present arguments based on normative opinions about what democracy should look like.
rather than empirical research (Goldfrank 2011b). Most are focused on institutional design (as it appears on paper) and are primarily descriptive. For example, López-Valladares (2008) concludes that the Venezuelan communal councils do appear to be a means for social inclusion, but her evidence is based on conceptual contributions of others and an examination of the institutional framework itself through studying various pieces of legislation. Similarly, Burbach and Piñeiro (2009) see in communal councils the potential to promote the values of equality and solidarity through practice, but their arguments also remain at the theoretical level and are not based on investigation. These authors are looking at the potential of the communal councils rather than at actual evidence of outcomes.

At the same time, articles by critics of communal councils point out many potential dangers related to their perception that the institutions will be used to concentrate power in the hands of the Executive, but they do not engage in any primary research to support these claims (Sánchez Urribarri 2008; Colburn and Trejos 2010). García-Guadilla (2008), Machado (2009) and Helliger (2011) do draw on interviews with communal council participants and come to different conclusions; the former two posit that these mechanisms are instruments of clientelism and cooptation, while the latter sees them as empowering. Yet while these studies provide important new evidence about particular cases, they offer little detail about the questions asked and do not draw on participatory theory to establish the criteria they are evaluating. Furthermore, none engage in comparisons with participatory mechanisms in other countries.

Much of the relevant literature (and much of the work on democracy in Venezuela more generally) also suffers from a tendency to portray the state as a monolithic and autonomous entity with a unified purpose and manner of functioning. This work often suggests that what happens at the central level (and particularly the executive level) must infiltrate every level of the
state, even down to local participatory mechanisms. Analyses of the state under “radical” leftist
governments such as Venezuela and Ecuador rarely draw on more complex theories that seek to
“dismantles the wholeness” of the state and to look at the “reinforcing and contradictory
practices and alliances” of its parts (Migdal 2001). They therefore preclude the notion that
different types of democratic practices may be occurring within the various institutions that make
up the state and negate the possibility that meaningful democratic practices are emerging at the
local level. This creates a binary top-down vs. bottom up dichotomy with participatory practices
being presented as either one or the other. Yet the research does not substantiate such claims; it is
possible that both are present at the same time. The Venezuelan system involves a number of
contradictions and it is necessary to understand the state as consisting of multiple parts and
practices, which in the case of participatory mechanisms requires looking at the local level in its
own context.

While the available research contributes to our understanding of individual participatory
experiences, we continue to lack empirical studies that examine the outcomes produced by the
institutions and the factors that explain these outcomes while drawing on participatory theory. In
fact, while Venezuela is perhaps one of the most written about countries in Latin America, it
remains surprisingly understudied. This is because while an abundance of opinion pieces have
been written, these are generally limited to producing somewhat more sophisticated observations
than what appears in media accounts of Venezuelan politics but very few authors have conducted
research that looks at the experiences of Venezuelans engaged in participatory processes. This is
another gap that this thesis begins to address by engaging directly with participatory mechanisms
and their members on the ground.
There is far less discussion and practically no empirical work on participatory institutions in Ecuador. This can be explained in part by the recent nature of these institutions (the relevant legislation was adopted in 2010). For a country of its size, Ecuador has indeed received considerable attention from scholars, yet studies related to public participation have tended to focus on civil society, indigenous groups and extra-institutional forms of participation (Yashar 2007, 2005; Zamosc 2004). Van Cott’s (2008) work is a notable exception, although her study predates the new participatory institutions created by the current government and the role that they play in how the public engages with decision-making. This focus is not surprising giving that Ecuador during the 1980s and 1990s had developed the region’s strongest social movements and that political participation during these decades was inevitably linked to involvement in these movements and their disruptive tactics. The role of popular participation has clearly changed under the Correa administration, however, and this thesis will contribute to studying this new reality in Ecuador.

There is also relatively little empirical and/or comparative research on “non-radical” or “pragmatic” participatory institutions outside of Brazil and hardly any work on popular participation in Chile. Some have looked at Mexico, demonstrating that there have been significant and meaningful experiments in participatory democracy in at least some municipalities (Montambeault 2011; Olvera 2009; Selee 2009). These studies are focused on specific issues such as the capacity of participatory institutions to reduce clientelism and are not informed by radical democracy theory. They also tend to be isolated cases of success and failure, and feature only limited within-country comparisons, in part because Mexico has no national-level strategy to implement participatory democracy. Popular participation in Chile has rarely been studied because it has simply not been an issue in a country which is instead seen as a
model of liberal, representative democracy. A few scholars have written about the state of popular participation in Chile under the Concertación governments (1990-2010) and more recent articles demonstrate a shift in values from the early 2000s onward in favour of increased citizen participation (Aguilera 2007; Checa, Lagos and Cabalin, 2011). These tend to focus on changes in discourse at the central level and on high-level consultative processes initiated under Bachelet. Some have touched on participatory institutions such as the neighbourhood councils (juntas de vecinos) in a historical context, generally concluding that they cannot be very effective given Chile’s closed political system (Cleuren 2007; Posner 2003). Yet just as negative assumptions are often made about citizen councils in the ALBA countries based on normative assertions rather than empirical evidence, so too do critics tend to dismiss participatory mechanisms in Chile due to an assumption that Chile’s closed political system means they cannot work. As in the Venezuelan case, there has been little recent empirical research on institutions such as neighbourhood councils, although one of the more thorough qualitative studies demonstrates that citizen participation was quite effective in at least one Santiago commune (Rivera-Ottenberger 2009). There is thus a need to further explore the “liberal” brand of participatory democracy found in countries such as Chile and to compare it with more “radical” counterparts developed by left-wing governments in order to better understand the varying conditions under which they operate and how these conditions may affect results.

Having noted the lack of empirical research with respect to radical democracy institutions, Fung and Wright (2003) provide researchers with a blueprint to help them study participatory institutions. They suggest a number of questions for researchers to consider when studying participatory democracy initiatives. In terms of whether the institutions conform to theoretical principles: Are there concrete outcomes and are these outcomes more desirable than
those of prior and/or alternative institutional arrangements? To what extent do they constitute schools for democracy and increase capacities of participants? Do they improve quality of life through, for example, better access to public goods and services? How genuinely deliberative are the decision-making processes? How effectively are the decisions made through this process translated into action? To what extent can the deliberative bodies effectively monitor the implementation of their decisions? The institutions should have a practical focus (be able to tackle important public problems), allow for bottom-up political participation and real deliberation. With respect to the flaws, they feel we should ask a number of questions rooted in the concerns of liberal opponents of radical democracy to determine if these threats are present and if they outweigh the benefits. These questions relate to whether domination is reproduced within the institutions, the amount of control exercised by external actors, political fragmentation and the sustainability of participation over time. Finally, questions with respect to scope should ask whether participation is applicable to broader decision making, or only at the local level and whether these innovations can only be applied to a certain set of concrete problems.

Smith (2009) also provides a framework for those who wish to study institutions of deliberative democracy. He argues that institutionalized forms of participation must also take us beyond traditional modes of engagement (elections and consultations) and must include formerly excluded sectors. Smith discusses six “ingredients” that can be used to assess institutions of democratic innovation. While he acknowledges any particular institutional design is unlikely to realize all of these components, for institutions to provide the benefits of radical democracy, we should hope to see a combination of as many as possible. These are: inclusiveness (can the institutions institutionalize effective participation of citizens across different social groups?); popular control (what is the extent to which citizens are given increased influence and control in
the decision-making process?); deliberation (do the institutions provide citizens with the capacity to make thoughtful and reflective judgements?); transparency (do citizens, participants or not, have the ability to scrutinize the activities of these institutions?); efficiency (are the demands placed on citizens and other institutions worth bearing socially and individually?) and transferability (can the innovations operate effectively at larger scales?)

2.2 Methods and Cases

Comparative Approach

This is a comparative study of local participatory mechanisms in three countries. In addition to the identified need to study these types of institutions against the theory, there is also a need to engage in more comparative work. As noted earlier, most authors who have studied the Porto Alegre model argue that empirical evidence demonstrates the capacity of participatory institutions to produce tangible benefits yet much of the research on this and similar initiatives focuses on only one case study. Goldfrank (2011) notes the lack of cross-national comparative analysis in this area and laments that the research that does exist tends to be limited to individual success stories. The few existing studies of communal councils also tend to focus on single cases, and more comparative studies would serve to enrich our knowledge of these institutions (Goldfrank 2011b). Van Cott (2008) underscores the importance of comparative study as the basis for development of theoretical generalizations as well as for comparing the circumstances under which some initiatives may be more successful than others. Doing a comparative study of participatory/deliberative innovations in different jurisdictions helps to avoid the problems inherent in selecting the dependent variable and would allow us to better test local institutions against the theory of radical democracy.
The subnational comparative research design was determined to be the most appropriate means of addressing the research question. Subnational comparisons are an efficient way to construct controlled comparisons when the number of cases involved is low (Avritzer 2009; Snyder, 2001). This method allows for both within and across-country comparison (Snyder, 2001). It is also particularly useful for studying context, which is essential to understanding the conditions under which participatory institutions operate. Comparing formal and informal practices through qualitative research is useful in revealing variation in the conditions under which the participatory mechanisms operate and the impact that these factors may have on outcomes. Considering similar institutions in different countries (with probable variance in outcomes) helps to determine which variables produce benefits, which are less relevant and which are more likely to lead to failure. Comparing institutions based on radical participatory democracy with a case of “liberal” participatory institutions that are similar in functions and objectives but based on more pragmatic principles is useful in testing some of the variables. For example, radical democrats view participation as an alternative to representation, so it was valuable to consider whether participatory institutions that work more closely with government (as one of the conditions) are more or less effective than those that are entirely autonomous.

Case Study Design

A case study design was selected as the most appropriate means of addressing the research questions. Focusing on a limited number of cases allows for in-depth description and comparisons of instances of citizen participation. It is the most common approach to evaluating the outcomes of participatory processes, as it allows the researcher to use a number of qualitative data collection methods designed to develop a detailed understanding of processes, outcomes and
participant experiences (Nabatchi 2012). While there are obvious difficulties in demonstrating causal links between participation and outcomes, the methods employed in a case study design can produce “most likely” correlations between processes and outcomes (Barrett, Wyman and Coelho, 2012). While not establishing formal causal links, a case study approach allows us trace the impact of participation on policy by linking decisions made by participants to concrete and demonstrable outcomes.

The cases of Venezuela and Ecuador were selected to provide a strong and informative comparison for a number of reasons. Of the recent attempts at creating institutions to channel participation, the new institutions in these countries are arguably the most directly associated with the principles of radical democracy, including a rejection of neoliberalism and representative democracy (Burbach and Piñero 2007; Ellner 2010; Hawkins 2010 and also see Venezuela 2006, 2009; Ecuador 2010). They are comparable in that they have similar local-level institutions and these have been promoted through a similar ideological framework. In terms of institutional design, they demonstrate (at least on paper) many of the characteristics identified by theorists as essential for participatory democracy to work, including “bottom-up” design, autonomy from state authorities, decision-making powers as opposed to merely consultative prerogatives, deliberative forums for discussion and debate, and links with higher levels of government (MacPherson 1977; Poulantzas 1978; Barber 1984; Cohen 1997; Fung and Wright 2003; Cohen and Rogers 2003).

Chile was selected as a case against which to compare and test the other two. Generally cited in the literature as one of the least participatory countries in Latin America, it is seen as a model of liberal representative democracy in the region (Cameron, Hershberg and Sharpe 2012). There has been a marked shift in discourse from 2000 onward, however. The Bachelet
administration (2006-2010) in particular declared increased citizen participation to be an important goal, although participation in the Chilean context tends to be framed as an instrument for effective governance and policymaking and not as an alternative to representative democracy (Cleuren 2007; Chile 2011). Still, the past few years have seen concrete changes including the adoption of a new national law that recognizes citizen participation as a right and provides stronger legal recognition and support to institutions such as the juntas de vecinos (neighbourhood councils) (Chile 2011).

While there are differences between the models implemented in these countries, particularly with respect to the ideological framework, there are significant similarities that allow for meaningful comparisons (see Appendix 1). The institutionalization of participatory mechanisms is similar across the three countries and differs from models found elsewhere, particularly in the West. They are intended to make participation a regular part of peoples’ lives as opposed to offering a temporary, “one shot” experience. Unlike citizens’ juries and mini-publics, they are not focused on a given policy area but territorially based and intended to cover a wide range of issues pertaining to local development. While they are legislated by the state in all three countries, the mechanisms are set up through citizens’ own initiative. Residents of a given territory, rather than local authorities, are responsible for initiating and running their participatory mechanism. Also unlike most of the examples found in the North American and European literature, citizen participants are not selected to represent a given segment of the population; participation is open to everyone who resides within the given territory and anyone may participate at any time. In fact, particularly in the radical model, there is a deliberate intention not to simply reproduce representation within these new institutions but rather to encourage the community to engage.
Importantly for comparative purposes, the structure and powers of these mechanisms are established by national legislation. In most countries, including Brazil and Mexico, participatory institutions are set up by local levels of government in the absence of a national strategy. The existence of national enabling legislation makes between-country subnational comparisons more feasible, as we are essentially comparing three instances of institutional design, making it easier to compare the conditions under which the institutions operate. Comparisons with countries where institutions are implemented by various municipalities would introduce other variables related to different within-country institutional designs. Finally, while the powers devolved to these mechanisms differ among the three countries, all are formally integrated into the local policy process and have a legislated mandate to participate in local social and economic development, infrastructure and neighbourhood improvement. This allows for meaningful comparisons of participatory processes and outcomes.

There are also notable differences between the participatory institutions in the two ALBA countries and those in Chile that must be acknowledged. The array of powers is similar on paper in Venezuela and Ecuador: councils are intended to be relatively autonomous bodies that have the power to make decisions about public matters, decisions that (at least according to legislation) must be respected by state authorities. These institutions and the broader framework they fit into (including the higher-level bodies they interface with) come closer than any other modern-day institutional arrangement to the theoretical models of radical democracy and bear striking similarities with the models proposed by theorists such as MacPherson (1977) and Barber (1984). This thesis will reveal, however, Ecuador’s model resembles more of a hybrid participatory system. While on paper it falls into the “radical” model, in practice the institutions do not have the same powers in practice as their Venezuelan counterparts.
Venezuela’s communal councils and Ecuador’s local assemblies are part of a broader leftist agenda that promotes participation and are the result of constitutional renewal that seeks to institutionalize this agenda. In each case, the enabling legislation and subsequent government positions promote the values of radical participatory democracy that we find in the theoretical literature and an alternative model to “failed” representative democracy (see for example Universidad Bolivariana de Venezuela 2007; Consejo Federal de Gobierno 2008; Venezuela 2010; Ecuador 2010; SENPLADES 2011).

Chile’s councils are based on “pragmatic” or “instrumental” participatory democracy, according to which participation can strengthen the quality of democracy, provide more efficient services and lead to more effective governance (see for example Ministerio Secretaría General de Gobierno 2012, 2013). This model seeks to strengthen representative democracy through citizen participation, not propose an alternative to it. The deliberation and decision-making processes are autonomous within the mechanisms themselves, but citizens must work with representative institutions and authorities make the final decisions and during the implementation stage.

**Sampling: Diverse Case Method**

To the extent possible, this study has looked at a representative sample of participatory mechanisms in each country, selecting cases according to a diverse case method. Choosing cases for a small-N study is a challenging task in that the selected cases are expected to represent a broader population of cases. Under such circumstances, purposive case selection allows the researcher to determine a representative sample and to achieve a certain level of variation on a number of important dimensions (Seawright and Gerring 2008). It is arguably the best approach for ensuring representation in small-N studies (Altschuler and Corrales 2012; Seawright and
Gerring 2008). The diverse case method requires the selection of two or more cases which are intended to represent a range of important variables. Attempting to gain the most representative picture possible, cases for this research were selected to reflect population distribution as well as a number of other variables: important regional/cultural differences, ethnic representation, political cleavages, socioeconomic factors, and the urban vs. rural divide. Of course, it was not possible to visit all regions of each country due to financial and time limitations.

It is necessary to consider population distribution, as all three countries tend to have populations concentrated in a handful or urban areas or provinces, while large swathes of the national territory remain sparsely populated. For the sake of representativeness, the focus was on the most populous regions of each country, although one case per country was selected from a region located farther from the centres of power. Venezuela and Ecuador are characterized by important regional differences based on culture and geography. Most of the historical and contemporary political literature reveals significant cultural, attitudinal and lifestyle differences between, for example, highland and coastal Ecuador, or coastal versus inland Venezuela. Ethnic divisions are not as significant as in other parts of the world, but are present to varying degrees in all three countries and particularly in Ecuador. Class divisions have played a role in politics in all three countries, and the radical democracy agenda is often portrayed as having created significant polarization between mostly poorer supporters and middle/upper income opponents. Related to this are political divisions that exist in each country. The polarized nature of Venezuelan and Ecuadorian politics makes it important to sample right and left-leaning regions (or pro and anti-government areas). Finally, the urban/rural divide remains important and was also taken into consideration with respect to sampling.
Regionalism has not been as much of a factor in Venezuela as it has been in other countries, but there are still important cultural, ethnic and political differences between the central region (including Caracas), the Llanos region (central plains), the Guayana Highlands in the southeast, the Western Lowlands and the Andean region. Ideally, it would have been beneficial to sample communal councils from each of these regions. However, 93% of the population lives in urban areas in the northern part of the country. With limited time and resources it made sense to focus on the most populous regions (the central/capital region and the urbanized regions to the west). Given the polarizing effect the president has on national politics and the threats pointed out by opponents of communal councils, it was decided to sample in both pro and anti-Chávez regions. The poorer areas of Caracas have recently played a key role in the political evolution of the nation. Any study of popular democracy must consider the western neighbourhoods of Libertador Municipality (synonymous with the Capital District), a centre of support for Chávez and his Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela (PSUV). While chavista support is fairly evenly distributed around the country, Mérida state and its eponymous capital city remain a stronghold of the opposition; the city demonstrated one of the highest rates of support for opposition candidate Henrique Capriles in both the October 2012 and April 2013 presidential elections.3 In terms of ethnicity, while the vast majority of the population identifies as mestizo, it is worth including representation from the country’s significant black population. Carabobo state provides for this, and is also situated in the centre of the country’s highly populated urban region west of Caracas. These areas provide the best possible representation in terms of population distribution, geographic representativeness and cultural/political differences

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3 Consejo Nacional Electoral de Venezuela, http://www.cne.gob.ve
yet are geographically proximate enough to make visiting them feasible given time and financial constraints.

Ecuadorean history and politics have been characterized by an entrenched regionalism. The primary political division has been between the traditionally more conservative highlands (where much of the indigenous population lives) and the more liberal coastal region, although in recent years the trend seems to have reversed with voters in the coastal provinces supporting more right-wing candidates and the highland populations backing Correa’s *Alianza PAIS* party. Cultural differences are also apparent, with the highlands being more influenced by indigenous cultural practices, while the coast has remained strongly *mestizo*. It was therefore necessary to include participatory institutions in both the highlands and the coast. Due to the importance of the indigenous population in Ecuador, an effort was also made to select a case in which the dominant Quichua group would be represented. The study thus focused on the greater Quito area (capital, large urban area, highlands), the province of Carchi (highlands, significant indigenous population) and the coastal province of Manabí, one of the country’s most populous. These three regions provide a good sample in terms of geographic and population distributions, cultural and ethnic differences, and political affiliations.

Chile has not experienced the emergence of strong regionalism and related cultural differences, making it one of the more homogenous countries in South America. It also lacks the sharp political polarization evident in Venezuela and Ecuador. The sharpest divisions between Chileans are generally described as being socioeconomic in nature (despite relatively low rates of poverty, the country has one of Latin America’s highest levels of inequality). Given this, and considering the strong concentration of the population in and around the capital, a more appropriate means of achieving representativeness for Chile involved studying two
neighbourhood councils in the greater Santiago area, one each from a middle-class municipality and a poorer commune to ensure representation from the two largest socioeconomic categories that make up Chilean society. A third case was selected from a mid-sized urban area in South Central Chile to represent that important region.

Once these regions/municipalities were selected, demographic data was used to identify representative subdivisions within each using available data on population, income levels, etc. This data was obtained from statistics agencies: Venezuela, INE, http://www.ine.gov.ve, Censos de Población y vivienda; Ecuador, INEC, http://www.inec.gob.ec/estadisticas/, Estadísticas sociales; Chile, INE, http://www.ine.cl, Demográficas y vitales. Once a suitable municipality was selected for each region, lists of participatory mechanisms (available through government departments and online) were consulted to identify a case to study.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

This research was conducted over a nine month period, from September 2012 to May 2013. Data includes semi-structured interviews, a survey and documents produced by the participatory mechanisms and by relevant local and central government departments. A total of 222 semi-structured interviews were conducted (see Appendix 2). Citizens engaged in participatory mechanisms accounted for 136 of these (49 Venezuela, 46 Ecuador, 41 Chile). These interviews were intended to examine complex issues that could not be adequately explored in written surveys; they focused on the tangible benefits of participation, the processes to achieve these outcomes and on the conditions under which the participatory mechanisms operate (here, the focus was on the factors discussed above: degree of inclusiveness and autonomy, quality of deliberation, and so forth). Another 86 interviews were conducted with government officials,
opposition actors and academics. Government authorities generally fall into two categories: 1. Senior and mid-level officials in departments and agencies responsible for implementing participatory policies or with oversight of participatory institutions and 2. Local (generally municipal) officials from the communes and parishes in which the cases studied are located.

Citizen participants were selected with the help of the leaders (voceros or dirigentes) of each chosen case. Leaders of the mechanisms selected according to the diverse case method discussed above were contacted, interviewed and asked to complete a survey. They were then asked to contact a representative sample of participants based on their knowledge of the membership and, if the individuals were willing, to provide contact information for these individuals, including both active and less active participants. A number of individuals, based on the size of the participating membership, were then selected and interviews were solicited. Those who accepted were interviewed and asked to complete a survey. Given that the number of interviews that the researcher was able to conduct was relatively small, both the dirigentes and interviewed members were asked to distribute a copy of the survey to additional members of their community who participate currently or have participated in the mechanism and to assist the researcher in collecting the completed surveys in a reasonable time frame. This work was conducted for three participatory mechanisms in each country.

In order to survey a greater number of citizens and to capture important representative characteristics identified through the diverse case method, leaders were asked to help with the distribution of the surveys to other assemblies/councils for which they had contacts in relevant parts of each country, for an additional three in Venezuela, two in Ecuador and one in Chile.

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4 The researcher asked the leaders to consider potential interviewees based on the following criteria: gender, age, occupation, role in the participatory mechanism (including more and less actively involved individuals and past participants) and political party preference (if known to the leader).
Surveys were thus received from all citizen participants interviewed (136) as well as from a further 310 current or former participants. A total of 446 surveys were therefore received from these three countries, 188 (Venezuela), 156 (Ecuador) and 102 (Chile). These were received from six communal councils in Venezuela, five local citizen assemblies in Ecuador and four neighbourhood councils in Chile. The survey is primarily quantitative and asks various questions about participants’ perceptions of democracy, sense of political efficacy and skills acquisition (the spillover effects).

Understanding the role of traditionally marginalized groups is essential in order to analyze factors such as levels of inclusiveness, quality of deliberation, and spillover effects. For this reason, a number of demographic variables were collected for both the interviews and surveys. These were selected based on groups most commonly identified as marginalized in the literature. Data were collected to establish participants’ socioeconomic status (occupation and income), gender, age and ethnicity (self-identified). The analysis in this thesis focuses primarily on socioeconomic marginalization, in large part because the participatory mechanisms are framed as enhancing the role of the poor. In some of the cases, however, issues related to race and gender did emerge from the participants themselves (in both interviews and surveys) and these are reported when appropriate.

Interview transcripts were analyzed over a nine month period with a view to understanding the variables presented above in a multi-step process. The researcher first conducted a careful content analysis of all transcripts which involved reviewing them several

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5 Because of the complex social constructions surrounding race in Latin America (for example, the mestizo/indigenous distinction is often based on socioeconomic status), questions on ethnicity are difficult. The survey used in this research asked a question in order to identify individuals belonging to the two groups most commonly labelled as “ethnic” in these countries. The survey asked whether the respondent identified as indigenous or of African descent (afrodescendiente), depending on the region.
times. This content analysis involved creating a series of identified codes (categories) based on the variables to be studied, searching for these in the data and analyzing the resulting categories for context. Given that many themes emerged that were not present in the original variables to be studied, the researcher next conducted a more intensive thematic analysis. This involved creating new categories (codes) from the process of analyzing the data. Relevant chunks of each transcript were coded (open coding). Finally, a third step involved stepping back to examine the various categories that emerged and making links between these where relevant (axial coding).

Document analysis proceeded in a similar manner. This consisted of looking at various types of documents produced by the local participatory mechanisms themselves, and by local and central government departments. The most important type includes documents related to infrastructure projects carried out in each case studied (project proposals, project planning documents, budget information and project evaluation reports). Examples of documents analyzed include: documents produced by each communal council (Venezuela) such as their Communal Development Plans (which details proposed projects), budget documents showing money received and how it was spent and their community oversight report (which details how the plan was implemented); and reports produced by agencies charged with supporting and funding communal councils, such as the local offices of the Consejo Nacional de Gobierno (the reports detail how many citizens were trained, how many participated in a given participatory process, projects funded, money and materials provided to the councils, and so forth). A list of primary documents analyzed for all three countries is provided in Appendix 3.

Interviews were conducted and transcribed in Spanish. All translations used in this thesis are the author’s, including excerpts from interview transcripts and selections from documents analyzed.
Cases

Venezuela

Sucre (Caracas)

This communal council is located in Sucre Parish of Libertador, the largest municipality in Venezuela’s Capital District. Sucre is primarily working-class and is representative of the Capital District in that it falls in the middle of the spectrum with respect to various socioeconomic indicators, including inadequate housing (3% of households, down from 5.7% in 2001) and lack of basic services (1.5%, down from 2.6%). In 2011, about 13.5% of the population was considered poor, while 1.6% lived in extreme poverty (compared to an average of 12% and 1.4% respectively for the municipality). These numbers were also down considerably from the 2001 levels at which time 20% of Sucre’s population was poor and 3.8% extremely poor. Sucre has a population consisting primarily of informal sector workers, labourers (obreros), retired and non-professional self-employed people. The parish is strongly chavista: 64% supported Chávez in the 2012 elections compared to 54% of the residents of the municipality and 55% nationally, while 59% of Sucre residents voted for Nicolás Maduro in the 2013 elections, compared with 51% of voters in the municipality and 50% nationally. Sucre’s residents are also well known for playing a central role in social and political events such as the mass demonstrations that returned Chávez to power after a failed coup attempt in 2002 and the parish is the home to important community-based organizations.

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6 Greater Caracas is divided into five municipalities, each of these is divided into parishes. Libertador is the only municipality to be located within the Capital District; the other four municipalities that make up Greater Caracas are located in Miranda State.

7 Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Censos de Población y Vivienda (http://www.ine.gob.ve)

8 Consejo Nacional Electoral, Divulgación presidenciales (http://www.cne.gob.ve)
The council represents about 350 families and has 126 active members. Twenty-one (21) communal council participants were interviewed and asked to complete a survey. This sample includes three council leaders, five members who have served on various committees, nine active participants, three occasional participants and one former member. An additional 39 surveys were received from participants not interviewed, for a total of 60 surveys. Of these individuals, 56% were women and 81% were above the age of 40. The largest number of respondents (26%) identified themselves as unskilled labourers (generally in the informal sector). This category included many construction workers and self-employed individuals. Other common categories included homemakers, domestic workers, education (teachers), and skilled tradespeople and a few respondents were retired. An overwhelming 92% professed support for then-President Chávez and his party.

Guacara

The council is located in a semi-rural parish in Guacara, Carabobo (Central Region), Venezuela’s third most populous state. The parish fares somewhat poorly on socioeconomic indicators such as inadequate housing (10% of households, compared to 5.3% for Guacara) and lack of basic services (5%, compared to 3.5% for Guacara). With respect to the latter, however, this represents a considerable drop from 2001 at which time over 20% of residents lacked access to basic services. In 2011, about 15% of the population was considered poor, while 2.8% lived in extreme poverty, down considerably from 31% and 6.6% in 2001.9 The parish supported Chávez with 58% of the vote in 2012 and Maduro with 53% in 2014, which is just above the national and state averages in both elections.10

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9 Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Censos de Población y Vivienda (http://www.ine.gob.ve)
10 Consejo Nacional Electoral, Divulgación presidenciales (http://www.cne.gob.ve)
The district is primarily rural but has gradually been developing due to encroaching urban sprawl. Many of its inhabitants are relatively recent arrivals who migrated to the area from regions further afield in the hopes of finding work in Guacara’s factories or in Valencia. The council represents about 213 families and has 49 active members. Families represented are split between those who commute to the manufacturing industries of Guacara and those who are involved in small agricultural production in the rural parish itself. Many of these families acquired their property through land occupations and land redistribution programs initiated by the Chávez government.¹¹ Sixteen (16) communal council participants were interviewed and asked to complete a survey, including current council leaders (3), former and current members of committees and working groups (2), and active (8) and occasional (3) participants. An additional 23 surveys were received from individuals not interviewed, for a total of 39 surveys. A majority 58% were women and most were above the age of 40 (74%). The largest number of respondents (21%) identified themselves as informal labourers. Other common categories included homemakers, agricultural workers, education (teachers), formal labourers, skilled tradespeople, and small farmers. A strong majority (83%) identified as pro-Chávez.

As mentioned earlier, the area represented by the council is primarily rural and has both paved and unpaved roads. Many of the homes are detached with small parcels of land and most were built within the past 15 years but are in varying states of repair. Because the area was settled relatively recently, infrastructure is not fully developed. Many residents still lack reliable basic services (particularly electrical), many streets remain unpaved (and become muddy in the rainy season) and some of the houses constructed with the aid of Misión Vivienda¹² are already

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¹² One of the so-called Bolivarian Missions, Gran Misión Vivienda is intended to provide housing for those who cannot afford it
beginning to deteriorate in Carabobo’s humid climate. Securing adequate housing for residents who have acquired land through land invasions or redistribution programs has been one of the primary objectives of the council. Unlike the Caracas case, the communal council does not operate out of its own building but rather out of the local elementary school (several members of the council are teachers at the school). The council’s leaders claim a high level of active participation and engagement in its assembly meetings but feel that the members of the executive are left to do much of the day-to-day work.

Mérida

This communal council is located in central Mérida, a mid-sized city in the Andean region of Venezuela. Capital of the state of the same name, Mérida is home to one of Venezuela’s most important universities (the Universidad de los Andes) and has recently become a stronghold of support for opposition candidates and political movements. The council is situated in a middle-income parish; socioeconomic indicators are above average with only 1.2% lacking adequate housing and 1.8% lacking basic services. In 2011, only about 5% of the population was considered poor, while less than 1% lived in extreme poverty. Following the tendency of the Mérida metropolitan area to favour opposition candidates, the parish supported Henrique Capriles in the 2012 presidential elections with 57% of the vote to Chávez’s 41%. Support for

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13 Interviews with Helen, Raquel, Maria and Maricruz, council executive members, Nov. 26 and 27, 2012
14 Ibid.
15 Greater Mérida is actually made up of four municipalities, each with its own municipal government. The central areas of the city (in which this case is located) are actually within the Municipality of Libertador, but locals simply refer to them as Mérida (many municipalities in Venezuela are named Libertador).
16 Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Censos de Población y Vivienda (http://www.ine.gob.ve)
17 This puts the parish well above the national average in terms of support for the opposition candidate, but below the municipality’s 64%.
the opposition grew even stronger in the 2013 elections; 63% of parish residents voted for Capriles in comparison to Maduro’s 36% support.\textsuperscript{18}

The council represents 234 families and has about 29 active members. Twelve (12) council participants were interviewed and asked to complete a survey, including one former and two current council leaders, four active participants, four occasional participants and one former member. An additional 26 surveys were received from individuals not interviewed, for a total of 38. Of these individuals, 48% were women and 83% were above the age of 40. In terms of occupations, there is more variety here than in the other two cases, with a higher number of individuals who can be classified as professionals. A number of individuals were employed in tourism, Mérida having long established itself as a tourist centre in the Venezuelan Andes. Whereas in the other two cases, council leaders tended to identify their members as “poor”, “working-class” or “humble”, the spokespeople for this council were keen to point out that most participants should be considered “middle-class”.\textsuperscript{19} Support for Chávez was considerably lower than in the other two cases at 55% although the council’s elected spokespeople were more likely to identify as \textit{chavista} than the average member.

\textbf{Secondary cases (surveys)}

As noted earlier, the above cases were the focus of this research but surveys were also distributed to participants in three more communal councils. One is located in 23 de Enero, a working-class parish of Caracas and \textit{chavista} stronghold. It represents 310 families and twenty-two (22) surveys were received. Another is located in Macuto (Vargas state); the council represents about

\textsuperscript{18} Consejo Nacional Electoral, Divulgación presidenciales (\url{http://www.cne.gob.ve}). In 2013, the Mérida area witnessed one of the lowest levels of support for Maduro in the country.

\textsuperscript{19} Interview with Marbella, former council president, Mérida, Nov. 14, 2012.
190 families and 17 surveys were received. The socioeconomic characteristics of respondents are more varied than in most of the other cases but more closely resemble the Mérida case in that there is a mix of white and blue collar members. The final case is located in Puerto Cabello, a mid-sized coastal city in Carabobo State that suffers from a high poverty rate (20% in 2011, but down from 32% in 2001). A significant percentage of residents and council participants are Afro-Venezuelan.\textsuperscript{20} The council represents about 230 families and 12 surveys were received.

Table 2.1: Interviews and Surveys, Venezuela

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communal Council</th>
<th>Interviews</th>
<th>Surveys\textsuperscript{21}</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Government support</th>
<th>Primary occupations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caracas Sucre</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>56% (n=34)</td>
<td>92% (n=55)</td>
<td>informal labourers (e.g. construction workers), domestic workers, retail, homemakers, education (teachers), skilled tradespeople, retired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caracas 23 de Enero</td>
<td>n.a</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>42% (n=9)</td>
<td>100% (n=22)</td>
<td>informal labourers, retail, construction, skilled tradespeople, retired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guacara</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>58% (n=23)</td>
<td>85% (n=33)</td>
<td>informal labourers, homemakers, agricultural workers, small farmers, education, formal labourers, skilled tradespeople</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macuto</td>
<td>n.a</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>47% (n=8)</td>
<td>51% (n=9)</td>
<td>Skilled tradespeople, formal labourers, homemakers, retail, professionals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mérida</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>48% (n=18)</td>
<td>55% (n=21)</td>
<td>Skilled tradespeople, retail, homemakers, education (teachers), tourism, professionals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{20} Interview with José Luis, council spokesperson, Puerto Cabello, Dec. 5, 2012

\textsuperscript{21} Includes surveys submitted by interviewees and additional surveys from individuals not interviewed
Puerto Cabello  |  n.a  |  12  |  33% (n=4)  |  100% (n=12)  |  informal workers, fishermen, domestic workers, inactive/unemployed  
---|---|---|---|---|---
Total  |  49  |  188  |  51% (n=96)  |  81% (n=152)  

**Chile**

**La Pintana (Santiago)**

The first case is situated in La Pintana, the poorest of Santiago’s thirty-seven communes and one of the lowest-income urban municipalities in Chile. It is primarily residential and most businesses are small and cater to local residents. It falls below the national average with respect to various socioeconomic indicators.\(^2^2\) In 2009, about 27% of the population was considered poor, well above the average of 11.5% for Greater Santiago and the 14% national average. While only 1% of households lacked access to basic services, about 26% of households were considered below average in terms of housing quality and ownership of modern amenities.\(^2^3\) A significant majority (76%) of residents voted for Bachelet in the 2013 presidential elections.

Just over 600 individuals are registered as members of the neighbourhood council and the directive is made up of four individuals.\(^2^4\) Seventeen (17) neighbourhood council participants were interviewed and asked to complete a survey, including the president, vice-president and treasurer and two working group members. The remaining interviewees were equally split between active and occasional participants. An additional 33 surveys were received from individuals not interviewed, for a total of 50 surveys. Of these individuals, 52% were women and

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\(^2^2\) Ministerio de Desarrollo Social, Encuesta de Caracterización Socioeconómica Nacional (CASEN), 2011  
\(^2^3\) INE, Clasificación Socioeconómica de Hogares de Chile  
\(^2^4\) Junta de vecinos 6 de mayo, Libro de socios
84% were over 40. The largest number of respondents (22%) identified themselves as labourers. This category included many self-employed individuals. Other common categories include homemakers, domestic workers and tradespeople and a few respondents were unemployed or retired. An overwhelming 82% of respondents identified as *Concertación* supporters, higher than the average for La Pintana.

**Maipú (Santiago)**

The second neighbourhood council is located in Maipú, another one of the thirty-seven communes of Greater Santiago. The largest commune by population, it is primarily middle-class and above average with respect to various socioeconomic indicators, including housing and wellness. It is primarily residential but also contains a significant variety of businesses and retail options. In 2009, about 6% of the population was considered poor, compared to an average of 11.5% for Greater Santiago. Less than 1% of households lacked access to basic services, while only 5% were considered below average in terms of housing quality, ownership of modern appliances, etc. In terms of electoral support, 62% supported left-leaning candidate Michelle Bachelet in the 2013 presidential election, compared to 38% for her right-wing opponent Evelyn Matthei.

The neighbourhood council represents about 500 families. Nearly 900 people are registered in the council’s members’ book, although only about 60 participate on a regular

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25 Santiago has no overreaching municipal government; the 37 communes act as individual municipalities with their own mayor, municipal councils and each delivers its own services.

26 Ministerio de Desarrollo Social, Encuesta de Caracterización Socioeconómica Nacional (CASEN), 2011

27 INE, Clasificación Socioeconómica de Hogares de Chile

basis.\textsuperscript{29} The council’s directive consists of only three people. Fourteen neighbourhood council participants were interviewed and asked to complete a survey, including the three members of the executive (president, secretary and treasurer), six active members, three infrequent members and two former participants. An additional 30 surveys were received from individuals not interviewed, for a total of 44 surveys. Of these individuals, 53\% were women and 87\% were above the age of 40. There was significant variation in occupational categories: skilled labourers, professionals, office personnel, homemakers, education (teachers), and skilled tradespeople. In terms of political support, 69\% of respondents favoured the centre-left \textit{Concertación}, which is only slightly higher than the municipal average for Maipú.\textsuperscript{30}

**Cayumapú (Valdivia)**

The third case is located in Cayumapú, a semi-rural district within the commune of Valdivia in Chile’s southern Los Ríos region. The economy is strongly dependent on forestry, agriculture, and tourism while the city of Valdivia is an important university town and tourist centre. The commune is characterized by mixed socioeconomic indicators, but has a relatively high poverty rate. In 2009, about 20\% of the population was considered poor, above the national rate of 14\%.\textsuperscript{31} Over 6\% of households lacked access to basic services (higher than any of the communes in Greater Santiago) and over 55\% were considered substandard in terms of housing quality and ownership of modern appliances. Many homes in the section of Cayumapú represented by this neighbourhood council were not connected to the municipal water and sewage system (relatively

\textsuperscript{29} Libro de socios and interview with Sandra, Maipú, March 17, 2013
\textsuperscript{30} The coalition’s name was changed to \textit{Nueva Mayoría} shortly after this research was conducted
\textsuperscript{31} Ministerio de Desarrollo Social, Encuesta de Caracterización Socioeconómica Nacional (CASEN), 2011
rare by Chilean standards) and many streets are unpaved. In terms of electoral support, 67% supported Bachelet while 32% preferred Matthei in 2013.\textsuperscript{32}

The council is relatively small as only about 170 individuals are registered as members.\textsuperscript{33} Ten (10) neighbourhood council participants were interviewed and asked to complete a survey (three members of the executive committee, four active and three less active members) and an additional 25 surveys were received from individuals not interviewed, for a total of 35 surveys. Of these individuals, 40% were women and 71% were above the age of 40. The employment categories of respondents are different than the other two cases and reflect the rural nature of the district. Many residents are employed in areas such as forestry and agriculture. The largest single employer produces and ships flowers; many residents are employed in activities such as packing bulbs. The second largest employer is a cheese factory. Others commute to the city of Valdivia and work as labourers or retail workers. A strong 79% of respondents identified as \textit{Concertación} supporters.

\textbf{Secondary cases (surveys)}

Surveys were also distributed to participants from a neighbourhood council in Providencia, an upper-income commune of Santiago with a mere 0.2% poverty rate. Providencia is the only case in which a majority of residents favoured right-wing Matthei in the 2013 presidential elections.

\textsuperscript{33} Junta de vecinos Camino Real, Libro de Socios
Table 2.2: Interviews and Surveys, Chile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neighbourhood Council</th>
<th>Interviews</th>
<th>Surveys[^34]</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Concertación support</th>
<th>Primary occupations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Santiago (Maipú)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>53% (n=16)</td>
<td>69% (n=21)</td>
<td>Skilled labourers, professionals, office personnel, homemakers, education (teachers), skilled tradespeople</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santiago (La Pintana)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>52% (n=17)</td>
<td>82% (n=27)</td>
<td>Labourers, construction workers, self-employed, homemakers, domestic workers, tradespeople, unemployed, retired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santiago (Providencia)</td>
<td>n.a</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>43% (n=6)</td>
<td>47% (n=7)</td>
<td>Professionals, self-employed, retired, homemakers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valdivia</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>40% (n=10)</td>
<td>79% (n=20)</td>
<td>Labourers (flower packing, cheese production), forestry, agriculture, retail workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>41</strong></td>
<td><strong>102</strong></td>
<td><strong>48% (n=49)</strong></td>
<td><strong>74% (n=75)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Ecuador

**Calderón (Quito)**

The first local assembly is located in the canton (municipality) of Calderón on the outskirts of Quito. It is primarily residential and contains both suburban and rural zones, although in recent years has seen economic development in the form of light industry. The area is characterized by mixed socioeconomic indicators. According to the 2010 census, 27% of the population had

[^34]: Includes surveys submitted by interviewees and additional surveys from individuals not interviewed
unsatisfied basic necessities, just slightly above the average for Greater Quito. Only 2.1% of people lived in inadequate housing and about 5% lacked access to basic services such as sewage. The indigenous population for the canton is slightly higher than the Quito average at 7% compared to 4%. The largest number of residents work in the service sector and retail.

The local assembly represents about 130 families, many of which are headed by women. Fifteen (15) assembly participants were interviewed and asked to complete a survey. This includes the president and vice-president, eight active members, two occasional participants and three former members. An additional 34 surveys were received from individuals not interviewed, for a total of 49 surveys. Of these individuals, over two thirds (68%) were women and 76% were above the age of 40. Nearly three-fourths (73%) of respondents identified as AP supporters. This assembly is also characterized by the most diverse socioeconomic structure of any of the cases studied in this thesis. The neighbourhood includes a mix of both more established suburban/semi-rural neighbourhoods and newly built shantytowns. Many homes in the neighbourhood represented by the local assembly lacked basic services and infrastructure such as paved roads, while others live in established neighbourhoods. Employment categories vary; many residents are informal labourers and domestic workers while those who live in the more established areas include some business owners.

Montúfar

The second case is situated in within the rural canton (municipality) of Montúfar. It is located in the agricultural highland province of Carchi and has a significant indigenous population. The

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35 Instituto de la Ciudad, Censo de Población y Vivienda y del Censo Económico 2010
36 Ibid.
37 Instituto de la Ciudad, Indicadores CPV 2010, Calderón INEC, Información Censal Cantonal
38 Interview with Carlos Veintimilla, Metropolitan District of Quito, Oct. 4, 2012.
parish is primarily rural (52%) and poor; 63% of the canton’s population was considered poor in 2010, which is well above the national average of 33%.39 Over half of residents work in agriculture.40 In terms of electoral support, 51% supported Correa’s re-election in 2013 (below the national average) while 28% preferred his right-wing rival Guillermo Lasso.41

The local assembly represents the canton’s population of about 28,000 people and has about 100 active members, although participation varies.42 Seventeen (17) participants from the assembly were interviewed and asked to complete a survey (president and vice-president, ten active members, three occasional participants and two former participants) and an additional 39 surveys were received from individuals not interviewed, for a total of 56 surveys. Of these individuals, 47% were women and 72% were above the age of 40. A strong 74% of respondents identified as AP supporters. This assembly represents both indigenous and mestizo communities and participants live in small towns or in outlying rural zones. Some homes in the neighbourhood represented by the local assembly lacked basic services and infrastructure such as paved roads. The majority of participants work in agriculture.

Tarqui (Manta)

The third local assembly is located in one of the five urban parishes of Manta, a mid-sized city located on the coast. Manta is one of Ecuador’s most important ports and a centre of its fishing industry. The Tarqui parish is urban but working class and 53% of the parish population is considered poor.43 The largest number of residents work in retail and services, followed by

39 Sistema nacional de información (SENPLADES), Ficha de cifras generales, Cantón de Montúfar.
40 Ibid.
41 CNE - Consejo Nacional Electoral
43 Censo de Población y Vivienda 2010
manufacturing and construction, and the fishing industry.\textsuperscript{44} In terms of electoral support, the canton is heavily correista; 71\% supported Correa’s re-election in 2013 while only 15\% voted for Lasso.\textsuperscript{45}

The local assembly represents the population of the parish (60,000) but has about 200 registered members. Seventeen (17) assembly participants were interviewed and asked to complete a survey, including four members of the executive (president, vice-president, treasurer and secretary), nine active and three less active participants and one former member. An additional 37 surveys were received from individuals not interviewed, for a total of 54 surveys. Of these individuals, 51\% were women and 79\% were above the age of 40. Over half (57\%) identified as \textit{AP} supporters. Typical of the coastal zone, people represented by this assembly are mestizo, there are no indigenous residents. Homes in the neighbourhood are in varying states of repair but have access to basic utilities and infrastructure. The most common occupations include labourers, manufacturing and construction and retail. Many work in the fishing industry either as fishermen or packers.

\textbf{Secondary cases (surveys)}

The above cases were the focus of this research but surveys were also distributed to participants in the following local assemblies: Bahía de Caráquez (a small, middle-income town on the coast) and Paltas (a mid-sized town in the southern highlands).

\textsuperscript{44} Sistema nacional de información (SENPLADES), \textit{Ficha de cifras generales, Cantón de Manta}.  
\textsuperscript{45} CNE - Consejo Nacional Electoral
Table 2.3: Interviews and Surveys, Ecuador

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Citizen Assembly</th>
<th>Interviews</th>
<th>Surveys</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Government support</th>
<th>Primary occupations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bahía</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>67% (n=14)</td>
<td>62% (n=13)</td>
<td>Labourers, retail and commerce, fishing and packing, homemakers, tourism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tarqui</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>51% (n=19)</td>
<td>57% (n=21)</td>
<td>Labourers, manufacturing and construction, retail and commerce, fishing and packing, homemakers, unemployed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montúfar</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>47% (n=18)</td>
<td>74% (n=29)</td>
<td>Agricultural workers, labourers, self-employed, retail and commerce.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paltas</td>
<td>n.a</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>52% (n=13)</td>
<td>68% (n=17)</td>
<td>Labourers, manufacturing and construction, retail and commerce, agricultural workers, unemployed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calderón</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>68% (n=23)</td>
<td>73% (n=25)</td>
<td>Majority: domestic workers, labourers, self-employed, retail workers. Four residents (council) leaders were business owners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>56% (n=87)</td>
<td>67% (n=105)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Variables**

As we have seen, the theoretical literature offers a number of variables to study. The sets of variables that were taken into consideration to address the research question include the outcomes of participation (tangible and spillover effects), the distinct models of participatory design identified in this thesis and the factors that influence the outcomes. The analysis focuses on the intersection of these three sets of variables.

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46 Includes surveys submitted by interviewees and additional surveys from individuals not interviewed
Outcomes

As we have seen, one of the most commonly cited outcomes of participatory democracy is related to more equitable policy development and improved services and access to public goods (particularly for marginalized sectors). Given that it is the most tangible theorized benefit of participatory democracy, this thesis focuses on this area. Infrastructure, public services and housing are a common area of jurisdiction for participatory mechanisms in the three countries (see Appendix 1). The most common types of projects across the three countries include: constructing roads and streets, building water and sewage systems, installing public lighting, building or repairing schools and providing services such as public utilities and transportation. With respect to housing, these mechanisms are involved in either building or improving public housing (framed as a social right in Venezuela) or obtaining and distributing public funds for private home improvement (more common in Chile, where such funding is means-tested and aimed at poorer families). Studying public goods and services will allow for strong comparisons with respect to both tangible outcomes and the conditions that produce them.

Authors have also placed considerable importance on the “psychological” and educational benefits, or spillover effects. This includes perceptions of and support for democracy, sense of political efficacy and skills acquisition. While more difficult to analyze, this thesis also tackles these questions to the extent possible.

Factors that affect the outcomes

The research also examines the following five factors in order to determine to what extent they are associated with these outcomes. While not all authors give equal weight to the same factors, there are a striking number of similarities between the factors that scholars identify.
These are arguably the most important and commonly cited conditions for genuine participatory democracy identified in literature and studying them is essential to understanding which are relevant to explaining outcomes.

1. Devolution of decision-making and implementation powers to citizens and autonomy of participants vis a vis the state and/or local government. The extent to which powers are devolved (on paper and in practice) represents the most important variation between the models of participatory design, with the “radical” model placing more emphasis on this factor.

2. Quality of deliberation. Bottom-up political participation and deliberation within the participatory mechanisms (as opposed to merely consultative).

3. Inclusiveness. Participation expanded to traditionally disadvantaged groups; diffusion of power from small elite groups and/or middle class to marginalized sectors.

4. Levels of participation, engagement and sustained commitment among citizen participants.

5. The importance of a fifth factor, the nature of relationships between citizen participants and local officials, emerged during the research.

Models of Participatory Design

This thesis also considers the impact of each model of citizen participation in order to determine which, if any, produce more desirable outcomes and how the five factors interact with these models. The next chapter will further elaborate on these models.

1. The “radical” participatory democracy model with its strong ideological commitment to improving and deepening democracy through devolving “power to the people”.

State
discourse tends to be critical of liberal democracy and promote a sense of emancipation from the “old” model of democracy. Participatory institutions are intended (at least on paper) to be relatively autonomous bodies that have the power to make decisions about public matters independent of elected authorities and civil servants. In practice, this model can take one of two forms:

- Venezuela’s communal councils, which generally adhere to the “radical” principles as described above. On paper, they can be distinguished from the other models by the extent to which the first factor (formal devolution of powers) is integrated into their design.

- Ecuador’s hybrid model which promotes a similar discourse but creates institutions that provide more restrained powers in practice. The local citizen assemblies are framed as demonstrating the factors discussed above, including devolution of powers. As we shall see, despite a “people’s power” discourse, state officials and institutional design are somewhat more hesitant with respect to this factor when compared to Venezuela.

2. The “pragmatic” public participation model, which seeks to strengthen the quality of (liberal) democracy, provide more efficient services and more effective governance. Lacking the ideologically charged and emancipatory discourse of the radical model, governments expect that authorities will maintain decision-making power but will incorporate citizen engagement into the policy process. Citizen participants understand their role as complementary to that of liberal institutions. In terms of formal powers, they do not allow for devolution of decision-making and implementation or fundamental changes to the relationships between participants and officials.
Given that the radical Venezuelan model demonstrates all of these characteristics most clearly, and has gone the furthest with respect to formal devolution of powers, it is reasonable to expect this model to produce superior results, followed by the Ecuadorian model, and that the Chilean cases will be marked by obstacles and conflict. The evidence demonstrates, however, that variation does not occur strictly along these lines.

Evaluation of outcomes

Answering the research questions proposed in this thesis requires at least two levels of evaluation (see Burton, 2009; Richardson, 1983). First, it is necessary to assess the outcomes produced by the participatory mechanisms. As discussed in the literature review, these outcomes fall into two categories: instrumental benefits (the concrete policy outcomes associated with participation) and spillover effects experienced by individuals and groups who participate. Second, in order to understand which factors contribute to or diminish the capacity of participatory mechanisms to produce the desired outcomes (including which type of participatory design is more effective), it is necessary to understand the processes themselves. In either case, evaluating the impact of participatory programs and mechanisms remains notoriously difficult (Nabatchi, 2012; Burton, 2009; Rowe and Frewer 2000).

There are no agreed-upon methods for assessing the outcomes of citizen participation and it is understood that measurement of outcomes is particularly complex (Abelson and Gauvin 2006). For one thing, it is difficult for researchers to develop a framework that encompasses the wide range and variety of participatory programs. Institutional design and goals vary considerably, making it difficult to deploy a single rigorous assessment tool across all cases. It is also difficult to develop standardized evaluation criteria because of the wide range of contextual
and environmental factors that may interact with institutional design (Rowe and Frewer 2000). This is particularly problematic given that the many of the evaluation frameworks that do exist were developed by Western scholars seeking to assess very different types of mechanisms in a North American or European context. Second, it is often not clear what constitutes a “good” or significant outcome and there are obviously difficulties with respect to establishing causal links between participatory processes and concrete outcomes.

Evaluating outcomes of participatory programs will remain challenging due to the inherent complexities of citizen participation and to the factors discussed above. Scholars continue to work on developing methods to study the relationship between participation and outcomes, but in the absence such a framework, there are a number of criteria we can use to assess participatory experiences (see Table 2.4). First, the scope of the outcomes is an important factor to consider. Do the outcomes affect large numbers of people in the jurisdiction represented by a given participatory mechanism, or do they only benefit a few (Burton, 2009)? Were significant quantities of resources deployed as a result of participation? Second, while determining what constitutes a “significant” outcome will remain ambiguous, it is possible to study whether the outcomes align with the decisions made by citizens through their participatory process. This, in turn, requires an understanding of the process itself in order to ensure that it is inclusive and deliberative and therefore reflects the will of the largest number of citizens. Third, in the context of developing countries we can look for evidence that outcomes have improved the standard of living or material conditions of a significant proportion of the population represented by the participatory mechanism. Based on these criteria, outcomes produced by the participatory mechanisms can be ranked as high, medium, low or no value. To be clear, the purpose of this
research is not to conduct a formal program review of the outcomes of each mechanism but rather to establish some assessable criteria for comparative purposes.

Table 2.4: Evaluation Criteria, Tangible Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alignment</th>
<th>Scope</th>
<th>Material conditions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>High value</strong></td>
<td>Outcomes are directly aligned with decisions made through participation</td>
<td>Outcomes are significant in scope and affect a significant proportion of the given population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Medium value</strong></td>
<td>Outcomes are mostly aligned with decisions made through participation</td>
<td>Outcomes are moderate in scope and affect a fair proportion of the given population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Low value</strong></td>
<td>Some alignment with decisions made through participation</td>
<td>Outcomes are minor in scope and affect a small proportion of the given population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>No value</strong></td>
<td>No alignment with decisions made through participation</td>
<td>No demonstrable outcomes or outcomes affect only a select few</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Process tracing was used to establish relationships between participation and outcomes. Criteria were measured through a combination of interviews and/or focus groups with actors involved (participants, elected officials and civil servants in relevant departments) and through analyzing texts that document the processes and outcomes. Spillover effects were measured through interviews and surveys with the participants themselves using criteria from the literature on perceptions of democracy and sense of empowerment.

Validity Threats

There are a number of challenges and potential validity threats to consider. While every effort was made to establish a representative sample (in terms of size, who participates, geographic

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47 Adapted from Burton, 2009.
distribution, political inclinations and socioeconomic status of participants, etc), data was somewhat limited. As discussed earlier, data was used to identify particular regions or municipalities to focus on, but this was generally limited to the municipal level (and not available at the neighbourhood or barrio level). Thus, once a municipality/geographic region was determined for a case study, the actual participatory mechanism studied had to be selected from an available list of local mechanisms in that locality, although the researcher drew on local informants to select representative neighbourhoods and cases.

While it was fairly easy to find contact information for the leaders (vocero/as or dirigentes) of selected participatory mechanisms, the researcher was required to rely on these individuals to identify other participants. In some cases, the researcher was allowed to consult a membership book with names and contact information but for the most part the leaders provided lists of members who they felt would be willing to meet. The researcher did request that the list be as representative as possible (in terms of gender, political perspective, education and occupation) and that it include some individuals who participate regularly and others who do not, but ultimately it was necessary to rely on the leaders’ judgement to establish the list of members to be interviewed. With respect to the surveys, each individual interviewed was asked to complete one and distribute copies to their neighbours in an attempt to survey as many participants as possible from the same participatory mechanism, but again it was necessary to rely on these individuals to select their fellow participants. It is therefore possible that some participants who are not well-liked (perhaps because of contrary political positions) would not have received a survey or been interviewed. Furthermore, in certain locations (i.e. rural/semi-rural locations in Ecuador and Venezuela) it is possible that informants would have not distributed the survey to neighbours they know to lack literacy skills. Given that the research is primarily qualitative
(they survey focuses on spillover effect), the numbers of citizen participants is relatively small. While this has its drawbacks, a qualitative approach was necessary to look at context and draw on participant’s experiences in order to consider the key questions that this thesis seeks to address.

Given that this research looks at public goods (infrastructure development) before and after the existence of participatory mechanisms in each locale, there was to some extent a need to rely on the memory and perceptions of participants and public officials with respect to the role that participation played in achieving any tangible benefits. Participants were thus asked about what their participatory mechanisms had achieved. While participant perceptions are routinely used to measure the outcomes of participatory processes, critics have pointed to the problems associated with interpreting such data and have argued that satisfaction is not necessarily indicative of “good” policy (Abelson and Gauvin 2006). To some extent, this problem was offset by the fact there was considerable consensus in most cases around this question, and the researcher only recorded a project as a benefit of participation when a clear majority of participants identified it and tied it to the efforts of their citizens’ council. Triangulation was also used whenever possible (in addition to asking participants, local officials and a number of non-participants or former participants were asked the same questions to determine if they also attributed a given infrastructure project to the local citizens’ council or to some other factor(s). Finally, wherever possible, the researcher used available documentation (project plans, budget information) to back up the information provided by informants (i.e. do municipal planning or budget documents also attribute given projects to the participatory mechanism?).
It should also be stated that this thesis does not purport to undertake a formal program evaluation of the participatory mechanisms but rather to make general comparisons of outcomes in order to understand the factors that contribute to them.

With respect to the surveys, which primarily looked at spillover effects, it would have been ideal to compare participants with a control group of individuals from the same communities who have never been involved in participatory mechanisms, or who have ceased to participate. This was not possible due to time and financial constraints, along with the inherent difficulties involved in identifying comparable groups of non-participants. As an alternative approach, survey data from the Latinobarometer survey or national sources were used to compare participants’ responses to the population as a whole (using the same questions). To address comparability between the surveyed groups and the national data, it must be noted that the demographic characteristics of participants diverge from the population as a whole with respect to age (those involved in participatory mechanisms are considerably older than the population average in both countries), but are relatively aligned along the other variables mentioned here (gender and occupation). The Latinobarometer data suggests very little variation between these categories (age, gender, occupation) with respect to the questions that are being examined in this article. For example, when asked about support for or satisfaction with democracy, the difference between the four age categories in the national data does not exceed 5%.

Finally, establishing causal links between participation in these institutions and particular outcomes remains a challenge due to various spurious variables, the time lag between processes and outcomes and the impact of intervening events over time. Determining the counterfactual is also problematic as it is not possible to demonstrate what the outcomes would have been without the participatory process. While these challenges cannot be fully overcome in a study of this
nature, it is possible to establish a relationship between tangible outcomes and conditions under which participatory institutions operate through process tracing; conducting numerous interviews and observation with both participants and non-participants across several jurisdictions, and by reviewing documents that demonstrate what has been done and who has been involved.

Researchers and practitioners who study public participation argue that case studies relying on qualitative data can make strong “logical links” between a participatory experience and policy impacts, although these are based on “most likely associations” rather than on direct causal links (Nabatchi, 2012; Barrett, Wyman and Coelho, 2012).
Chapter 3: Background, Political Context and Models of Participatory Design

“‘We are taking a step forward, we are transcending a democracy that is merely representative and becomes a trap in which the aspirations of the people die and are buried…we are accelerating the construction of a participatory democracy, a Bolivarian democracy…a revolutionary democracy. The people are no longer the object but the subject. The people are taking the reins of the homeland’”

Hugo Chávez Frías, President of Venezuela (1999-2013), Aló Presidente no. 252, April 9, 2006

“Democracy is perfectly compatible with a government that provides leadership and direction but that also benefits from an active citizenry that has the right to put forward ideas and possibilities. The idea is that the interaction between authorities and citizens will allow us to base public policy on the mutual responsibilities of these actors …public authorities responsible for governing with the people, and citizens in civil society responsible for contributing to a democratic government”

Michelle Bachelet Jeria, President of Chile (2006-2010 and 2014-2018), Launch of the Pro-Participation Agenda, Santiago, September 29, 2006

These declarations, delivered by the presidents of two of the countries studied in this thesis, reveal some of the basic conceptual differences between “radical” participatory democracy and “pragmatic” citizen participation. In the discourse of the late Venezuelan leader, popular participation is framed not as being complementary to representative democracy but as an indispensable component of democracy itself. He distinguishes between “real” democracy and that which is “merely” formal and representative, suggesting that the political regimes of the past were illegitimate because the majority was excluded from the decision-making process. The solution, then, is to develop a new model in which the people play the role of protagonist, a “revolutionary” democracy according to Chávez. In contrast, Chilean President Michelle Bachelet frames participation more as a partnership between citizens and state institutions that should enhance good governance. She sees mutual benefit for citizens and authorities through increased public participation but does not seek to “revolutionize” democracy in any way. We
have seen how these two broad conceptions have been developed in the academic literature; this chapter will situate these ideas in the context of the cases to be studied in this thesis.

One important observation in terms of understanding the different outcomes and related variables that affect these outcomes is that participatory mechanisms cannot be understood solely by examining how their respective states and their leaders frame participation nor can we only consider powers attributed to these institutions by enabling legislation. Rather, participatory mechanisms consist of three distinct elements that must be understood and evaluated: 1. The discourse through which they are promoted by politicians and state institutions, exemplified by the above quotations and materials produced by state agencies; 2. The institutional design of the mechanisms themselves; and 3. How they actually function in reality. This chapter will explore the first two by looking at the historical context of political participation and democracy in Venezuela, Ecuador and Chile. Drawing on an analysis of relevant primary sources and interview material, it looks at state discourse behind the establishment of participatory mechanisms and describes the composition, attributions and processes of the institutions studied in this thesis: communal councils (Venezuela), local citizens’ assemblies (Ecuador) and neighbourhood councils (Chile). The following three chapters, which get to the heart of the research questions proposed in Chapter 1, will focus on the third element: how the cases studied function in day to day life. They will reveal that while discourse, design and reality may align, this is not always the case.

“Radical” vs. “pragmatic” discourse and design are key variables in determining the conditions under which participatory mechanisms operate, as these factors affect everything from their formal powers and decision-making processes to how citizens themselves perceive their role in decision making. Understanding these variables will also help us to compare and contrast
mechanisms across the three countries and to determine if one model (radical or pragmatic) produces results that more closely align with the desired benefits. Given the ongoing debate about the value and ideal form of citizen participation, such an understanding makes a significant contribution to the literature on this topic. A review of the design of local citizens’ councils in these three countries and the discourse transmitted through state agencies charged with promoting public participation reveals three distinct models. In Venezuela and Ecuador, the discourse surrounding participation is similar: these states promote a conception premised on active, social and collective citizenship that places primacy on direct participation in decision-making (at the local level) in pursuit of communitarian goals. Citizens are not discussed as individuals but are conceived of in collective terms and organized into (state sanctioned) participatory mechanisms.

Still, there are differences between the two countries in terms of institutional design. Venezuelan communal councils have significant autonomy and are actively involved in all stages of the project development process with minimal interference from elected officials and a supporting (but not decision-making) role for civil servants. There is therefore an alignment between the state discourse on participatory democracy and the design of the institutions that act as the cornerstone of the Bolivarian participatory project. Ecuadorian citizen assemblies allow for citizen involvement at all stages including developing plans and budgets. The capacity for citizens to play a role in decision-making is significant (at least on paper) but they are generally “accompanied” by state officials in this process and decisions are shared. As we will see in subsequent chapters, this produces a disconnect between discourse and institutional design.

In Chile, the state promotes a model premised on a relatively passive but cooperative relationship with state actors and limited participation confined to consultation and providing
feedback to elected officials and municipal departments. Neighbourhood councils allow citizens to participate in establishing priorities and deciding on what they want done in their communities, but they are dependent on officials to move these ideas forward. Unlike in Venezuela and (to a lesser extent) Ecuador, institutional design is such that neighbours are expected to play a minimal role in planning, budgeting and implementation. This role is described in participatory legislation as involving consultative practices and a vaguely defined “oversight” over decisions. Still, this relatively limited role for citizen participation aligns with state discourse on the subject; the state constrains rather than encourages citizens’ expectations of how they should expect to use their participatory mechanisms. Subsequent chapters will consider to what extent these mechanisms adhere to this design in practice.

It is also worth noting that while Chile’s constitutional and legislative context provides participatory institutions with limited powers in comparison to those in the other two countries, they are less prescriptive with respect to establishing parameters around preferred mechanisms for citizen action. Legislation and materials developed by government agencies to promote the new Citizen Participation law refer to a wider range of organizations recognized as legitimate forms of participation; these may include mechanisms established by state legislation (such as neighbourhood councils) but also civil society organizations autonomous from the state, including functional (sports clubs, associations representing seniors, etc.) and public interest (education, health and environmental organizations), all of which can participate in the municipal Civil Society Councils. In contrast, legislative texts and training/promotional materials in Venezuela and Ecuador tend to establish parameters around participation, and tend to prescribe and delineate the types of mechanisms in which citizens should participate. In Venezuela, for example, materials that instruct citizen groups on how to develop, present and obtain funding for
plans for their community are focused around the communal councils, suggesting that these are the primary (if not the only) participatory mechanisms through which citizens may successfully participate. There are also limits placed upon the range of political issues in which citizens may participate; local matters are clearly within the boundaries of citizen participation while broader national issues are not.

**Venezuela: “Radical” Participatory Democracy**

It is useful to consider the political environment prior to the election of Hugo Chávez Frías in 1998. The period following the end of military rule (1958) is characterized as one of “pacted democracy” between a limited number of elite actors. Known as the Punto Fijo Pact, the agreement forged between Venezuela’s two major political parties in 1958 created a highly unrepresentative system of two parties with a shared commitment to maintaining the status quo and excluding the popular sectors from decision-making (Ellner 2008; Buxton 2009). It was this system—increasingly seen as illegitimate by the majority of Venezuelans—that Chávez successfully attacked through a “people’s power” platform in the 1990s. While civil society in Venezuela has been historically weak, this began to evolve from the late 1980s onward, as citizens began to mobilize against the neoliberal austerity reforms imposed by the governments of Carlos Andrés Pérez (1989-1993) and Rafael Caldera (1994-1999). Popular neighbourhoods of Caracas and other large urban centres witnessed the emergence of independent, grassroots neighbourhood councils created as forums to discuss local needs and develop strategies for dealing with common problems in the absence of the state. These types of local popular initiatives grew from 1989 onward following the series of popular uprisings and state repression known as the *caracazo*. 
With the ascension to power of Chávez, the concept of popular democracy was enshrined in the 1999 constitution as a first step in the “refounding” of the country’s democracy. The opening articles mention that the people’s sovereignty must be exercised directly (article 5), but article 62 establishes a clearer definition of this “new” democracy. It states that “the participation of the people in the elaboration, implementation and control of public matters is necessary to guarantee their complete development as individuals and collectively”.

Constitutional language provides an important template for discourse related to citizenship and participation in Venezuela. The language used promotes active, participatory citizenship, with multiple references to solidarity, social equality and communitarian values. References to “participation” and “participatory” appear 107 times. Citizens are frequently described collectively as “el pueblo” (58 occurrences). This is a complex term which is generally understood to imply collective identity and is often represented in the singular, as a single virtuous entity that speaks with a united voice and seeks a “common good” (de la Torre 2010; Stehn 2011). The term “citizen” (as both a noun and an adjective) appears 98 times and “social” (as an adjective) appears 79 times (generally accompanied by co-occurrences such as cohesion, control, inclusion, justice and policy). The constitution also calls for the creation of institutions to channel this citizen participation, stating that communities will be incorporated into decision-making bodies that must be respected by authorities (article 70) (Venezuela 1999).

The first attempt to establish participatory mechanisms was launched in 2002, with the creation of Local Public Planning Councils (CLPPs). Based on participatory budgeting initiatives in Brazil, the CLPPs were intended to integrate popular participation into decision-making at the municipal level, but participants complained that powerful local officials resisted citizen involvement. In April 2006, a new law formally established communal councils (consejos
comunales) as a mechanism designed to address these issues through autonomy from local governments. The law reprises the language of participatory democracy and clearly establishes communal councils as the centerpiece of citizen participation in Venezuela (Venezuela 2006). Subsequent legislation, such as the 2009 reform of the Communal Council Law (which provides more power to these participatory mechanisms vis-à-vis local governments) and the 2010 People’s Power Law, enforce the use of this discourse, describing citizens as playing the “leading role” in the democratic process, framing citizenship as communitarian and participation as revolutionary, collective and aimed at achieving “the common good” (Venezuela 2009, 2010).

One of the more interesting features of the reform is that it declares the communal councils to be a “public power” on the same footing as municipal, regional and national governments. The councils are thus meant to be the centrepiece of Venezuela’s Bolivarian Revolution, a movement that, according to Chávez and supporters seeks to promote popular democracy, economic independence, and increased socioeconomic equality. Referring to the articles in the constitution, the enabling legislation describes them as “allowing the people to directly exercise management of public policy and projects related to their own needs” and as being “an important vehicle for the construction of a more equal society” (Venezuela 2006). They are intended to be autonomous bodies that have the power to make decisions about public matters, decisions that must be respected by elected authorities of the state. The councils have the power to establish and manage programs in local social and economic development, infrastructure, health, education, housing, sports and other areas, and their decisions are not subordinated to the control of municipalities or other levels of government. The entire system of communal councils is under the oversight of a central government ministry, the Ministerio del Poder Popular para las Comunas y los Movimientos Sociales (MPComunas).
The participatory process is determined by the legislation and promoted through training materials developed by various central government agencies. Any citizen over the age of 15 can set up a communal council and no resources are required to do so. To set up a council, interested citizens must begin by calling a first meeting. If they are able to achieve quorum (10% of community members aged 15 and older), they can proceed to elect members and spokespeople who will establish the communal council. Any member of the community over 15 years of age is eligible to be elected to any council position or working group. Once the council is officially established (they must apply for and receive recognition from the central government, although legally this permission is only a formality if the members have proceeded according to the law), it must hold a meeting to assess community needs and to begin establishing priorities and considering how to obtain resources. While elected spokespeople drive the meeting agendas, all members of the council (the 200-400 families in an urban setting, for example) are eligible to participate in setting priorities and making decisions.

The councils are divided into a Citizens’ Assembly comprised of all members of the represented community, an Executive consisting of elected spokespeople (voceros), as well as financial management, community oversight and community engagement units, members of which are also elected by the Assembly. In addition to these organs, councils may elect to form work committees based on local needs (education, housing, electricity, sanitation, etc.) as well as cooperatives and even small businesses. Only the Assembly has the power to decide on matters and is able to exercise oversight of projects and budgets. Communal councils are expected to function according to an annual cycle which involves several phases known as the “Cycle of Communal Power”: a “diagnostic” stage during which the council must engage in a participatory

48 Universidad Bolivariana de Venezuela, Formación consejos comunales.
and deliberative process with the community to develop a needs assessment; a process of identifying the most pressing needs along with plausible solutions; the elaboration of the “Communal Development Plan”, a funding phase and an implementation phase.\textsuperscript{49} The Assembly is supposed to be actively involved at all stages. Funding is complex: a portion of the national budget is allotted to funding communal council Development Plans but councils may also seek money from local governments and through fundraising or business activities. With respect to central government funding, proposed projects are evaluated and funding is attributed through a process that involves working groups made up of participants from various communal councils in a given territory working in collaboration with technical experts from agencies such as Fundacomunal and the Consejo Federal de Gobierno (a body charged with decentralization). Delegates review all project submissions, categorize them into areas (health, infrastructure, etc.) and assign priorities based on most pressing needs according to a defined methodology.\textsuperscript{50}

In order to ensure popular input at higher levels of government in Venezuela, elected council spokespeople are able to participate in regional and national assemblies created for this purpose. A number of spokespeople from each council are elected to serve on the regional citizen assemblies, while delegates to the regional bodies are elected to serve on the national citizen assembly, chaired by the President of the Republic. Through these bodies, the councils are able to access and connect their communities’ needs with other branches of government. Furthermore, the legislation is designed so that councils can form partnerships with each other to enhance their ability to move initiatives forward and also have links to other participatory institutions, such as local planning councils (Venezuela 2009; MPComunas, \textit{El Poder popular}).

\textsuperscript{49} MPComunas, \textit{Guía de formulación de proyectos}
\textsuperscript{50} Interviews with Project Support Agent, CORPOANDES, Mérida, Nov. 21, 2012; Director of communal development, Consejo federal de gobierno, Mérida, Nov. 15, 2012; Francois Albarrán, Coordinador, Taquilla Unica, Fundacomunal, Mérida, November 13, 2012.
Training for those involved in participatory mechanisms is provided by numerous central and state government institutions including the Servicio Autónomo Fondo Nacional de los Consejos Comunales (SAFONACC) and the Consejo federal de gobierno. The regional offices deliver workshops and produce pedagogical materials on topics such as developing a budget, writing project proposals and guidelines for community infrastructure projects.51 The Ministry of Popular Power for Communes and Social Movements (MPComunas) and its regional offices also deliver workshops on participation more broadly (citizens’ participatory rights, how various state institutions fit into the picture, etc.). Other state institutions provide more specific training. For example, the Central Bank of Venezuela provides workshops on topics such as “building the social economy”.

Evidence suggests that the councils are popular among a large sector of the population. In 2008, only two years after their inception, 26,143 councils had been created in Venezuela, with another 10,669 in the process of being set up (FCG 2008). Considering that each council consists of 200 to 400 families, this translates into large numbers of people providing their insight and experience toward decision-making on local matters. Survey data has been used to estimate that as many as 6 million adults, or about 35% of the eligible population, is or has been involved in a communal council (Hawkins 2010). They are thus arguably one of the most successful innovations of the “Bolivarian Revolution”. However, critics charge that unlike the grassroots neighbourhood councils that emerged during the caracazo period, the communal councils are state generated institutions that seek to centralize and incorporate citizen participation into state-sanctioned forums (McCarthy 2012; Garcia-Gaudilla 2008).

51 Consejo federal de gobierno, Plan de inversión comunal and Modelo de autoconstrucción; Francois Albarrán, Coordinador, Taquilla Unica, Fundacomunal Mérida, November 13, 2012
Ecuador: Hybrid Model (radical state discourse, pragmatic in practice?)

While Ecuador made early strides toward decentralization throughout the 1980s and 1990s, popular participation has historically been limited and weak. Due to the decentralized nature of the political system, citizen participation has been extremely uneven and largely dependent on the willingness of provincial and municipal leaders. A number of experiments such as citizen’ assemblies to provide input into budgeting were launched during this period, particularly in rural and small-town indigenous communities with varying results (Van Cott 2008). From the time of the establishment of liberal democracy (1979) through the late 2000s, however, citizens dissatisfied with government policies but excluded from any role in decision-making tended to express themselves through extra-institutional tactics. During this period, Ecuador became one of the most politically unstable countries in the region, as marginalized sectors (particularly indigenous peoples) with no access points to government developed some of the strongest social movement organizations in Latin America (Yashar 2005). Following the election of President Rafael Correa in 2007, popular participation has been promoted as part of a broader movement dubbed the Citizen’s Revolution.

The new constitution, adopted in 2008 by referendum, declares that citizen participation in decision-making is a fundamental right and states that citizens, as individuals or as part of a group, may exercise this right through various mechanisms (Ecuador 2008). The language used promotes active, participatory citizenship: references to “participation” and “participatory” appear even more frequently than in the Venezuelan magna carta (147 times) and citizens are also frequently described collectively as “el pueblo” (57 occurrences). The term “citizen” (as both a noun and an adjective) appears 108 times and “social” (as an adjective) appears no less
than 213 times (as in Venezuela, accompanied by co-occurrences of inclusion, justice and solidarity).

In 2010, the government followed up on these constitutional provisions with the adoption of the *Ley Orgánica de Participación Ciudadana* (Law of Citizen Participation). The law reaffirms participatory rights, using collective language to declare that all citizens and groups (such as indigenous nations) have the right to participate in decisions that involve them. It also creates the various types of mechanisms through which citizens may exercise these rights at every level of the state; an entire chapter of the law is dedicated to defining the composition and role of these state-sanctioned mechanisms. These include sectoral citizen councils corresponding to each government ministry and major policy area to promote dialogue, deliberation and follow up; citizen oversight bodies to provide “social control” and monitoring of policy implementation and public administration; participatory budgeting; and a *silla vacía* (empty seat) on local government bodies for one or more citizen representatives (Ecuador 2010b). The legislation requires agencies and departments at all levels of government (central, regional, provincial and municipal) to establish a “system of citizen participation” which incorporates one or more of these mechanisms into planning and decision-making. Legislation and other documents produced by the state claim that achieving this goal requires a redefinition and redesign of state institutions in order to move from a purely representative model to one that integrates citizens into the decision-making process and they prescribe and define a set of core participatory institutions through which citizens should ideally exercise these rights.52

While the discourse that associates democracy with “the people” and popular participation is similar in many ways to that found in Venezuelan documents, the discourse

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52 Ecuador, *Ley Orgánica de Participación Ciudadana* (2010); CPCCS, *Políticas de participación ciudadana*. 
found in documents produced by Ecuadorian state agencies is more focused on citizens working with the state and local authorities through participatory mechanisms. Thus, a manual produced by the state planning agency (SENPLADES) affirms that participatory planning makes citizens and the state “jointly responsible for the design and management of public policy and action.53

Of all the newly created institutions, those that most closely resemble Venezuela’s communal council model are the asambleas ciudadanas locales (local citizen assemblies). Citizens can form an assembly at their own initiative and once established they can put forward development plans and local policy initiatives, administer service and infrastructure improvements, promote education with respect to citizen rights and exercise oversight over decisions made (Ecuador 2010, articles 56-60). A founding group of citizens must first elicit interest among fellow citizens, convene a meeting of those interested in forming an assembly and elect spokespeople to guide the institution. The process they are expected to follow mirrors that of Venezuelan communal councils: needs assessment (diagnostic); prioritization and budgeting (in collaboration with municipal and regional-level participatory mechanisms convened by the corresponding level of government); the elaboration of a Development Plan, implementation of selected projects (described as “participatory management”), and an evaluation stage which involves citizen oversight and accountability to the local assemblies involved in the project.54 While participatory, the process demonstrates more involvement from elected officials and civil servants than in Venezuela, and decisions about funding are made in fora that include both citizen and local government representatives. A senior official charged with implementing participatory democracy described a process which involves three sets of actors: citizens, local authorities and representatives from the appropriate government department. Citizen

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53 SENPLADES, Guía de participación ciudadana
54 Pamela Troya, Participation Advisor, CPCCS, Quito, Oct. 12, 2012; CPCCS, Las Asambleas Locales Ciudadanas.
participation occurs when these three are able to work together; citizen involvement lends legitimacy to the process.55

As in Venezuela, the local assemblies can “feed up” by sending representatives to provincial and regional assemblies and there are seats reserved for local assembly representatives on other participatory bodies, such as National Planning Council and relevant sectoral councils. Oversight for the entire system of popular participation is provided by a central government ministry, the Secretaría Nacional de Gestión de la Política which is charged with ensuring that central and local government departments fulfil their obligations. The Consejo de Participación Ciudadana y Control Social (CPCCS) serves as the interface between the central government and the various participatory institutions created by the Citizen Participation Law. The body is itself made up of citizens elected to serve for a set term and employs a number of technicians charged with supporting citizens involved in the various participatory mechanisms. Training is provided by these two agencies as well. The CPCCS, for example, has a participation “advisor” (asesor/a) for each province who is dedicated to travelling to various communities to promote participatory rights and deliver training and has also developed an online course for citizen participation.

Given that the Ecuadorian process is relatively new, these efforts have tended to focus on teaching relevant legislation and guiding people with respect to how to set up citizen assemblies.56 As in Venezuela, instruction provided by Ecuadorian institutions charged with supporting citizen participation promotes active participatory citizenship which includes sectors traditionally excluded in decisions that affect their lives, while simultaneously limiting this

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55 Interview with Pamela Troya, Quito, Oct. 12, 2012.
56 Interviews with Emilífran Pazmiño and Marlene Jarrín, Participation Advisors, CPCCS, Quito, Oct. 28, 2012; Viviana García, Participation Advisor, CPCSS, Guayaquil, Feb. 21, 2013.
participation to certain domains and mechanisms and incorporating it into the state. While promoting the idea of a profound democratic reform of the state, there is more of a focus on co-management, with the people defined as playing a leading role, yet in cooperation with state actors.\textsuperscript{57} The mechanics of participation, then, appear to deviate somewhat from the overreaching “citizens’ revolution” discourse in that “people’s power” gives legitimacy to, rather than replaces, representatives. While the higher-level discourse is framed as “radical” democracy in terms of citizen autonomy and devolution of powers, the day to day working of participatory mechanisms looks more like the Chilean model.

\textit{Chile, Pragmatic Citizen Participation}

Since Chile’s return to democracy in 1990, the country has regularly been considered a model of representative democracy in the region but one of the least participatory political systems (Cameron, Hershberg and Sharpe 2012). The country’s constitution, promulgated under the Pinochet regime and modified numerous times since 1990, does not establish citizen participation as a right. Discourse found in the Chilean constitution is quite distinct from the other two countries. There are few references to “participation” and “participatory”. The collective term “el pueblo” only appears twice, and there are only 35 occurrences of the term “citizen” (as both a noun and an adjective), primarily related to who is a Chilean citizen in the legal sense (as opposed to the active, “citizen’s power” discourse present in the other two documents). The term “social” appears only 26 times, primarily in a context that deals with communication and media. Citizens and citizenship are thus strikingly absent from the Chilean

\textsuperscript{57} CPCCS, \textit{Curso de Participación Ciudadana, Control Social y Rendición de Cuentas}. 
constitution other than as they relate to a legal status, with various sets of political and civil (but not social) rights.

Despite this context, Chile was in fact one of the first countries in Latin America to establish a system of participatory mechanisms through national legislation. The *juntas de vecinos* (neighbourhood councils) have a history rooted in a particular conception of participatory democracy. Created in 1968, the councils were the centrepiece of the Popular Promotion program of the government of President Eduardo Frei (1964-1970) aimed at reducing marginality. Frei’s Christian Democrats identified the low living standards of Chile’s poor as tied to lack of political participation and sought to develop institutions that would allow people to participate in addressing their own problems (Oxhorn 1995). The *juntas* lost much of their independence during the Pinochet dictatorship, but regained some vitality in the 1990s. Oxhorn (1995) observes that in the years following the return to democracy, the roles and activities of these institutions were expanding and they demonstrated great potential, particularly with respect to neighbourhood improvement and standard of living issues. Still, the concern of the successive Concertación governments (1990-2010) with containing popular mobilization meant that the capacity of these mechanisms as an agent of large-scale participation remained limited. A 1997 law more clearly defines the functions of the councils, which include proposing and managing projects that benefit the neighbourhood and addressing common problems and development issues in conjunction with local authorities (Chile 1997). The establishment of a council is at the initiative of community members, who must gather the necessary number of participants (50 for a commune of less than 10,000 residents) and have their council recognized by the municipal authorities.58 Through the neighbourhood councils, citizens are able to obtain improvements to

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58 *Biblioteca Nacional de Chile*, Guía legal sobre juntas de vecinos.
their neighbourhoods, although they need to work through state and local government departments because these councils do not have actual decision-making powers.

The process that neighbourhood councils must follow to propose and implement projects is far less defined than in the other two countries. There are no established guides, processes and methodologies. Rather, council leaders (*dirigentes*) generally establish lists of priorities based on feedback from regular contact with their neighbours. They then convoke an assembly which everyone in the areas represented by the council may attend, present their list and ask neighbours to vote on the projects they wish the council to pursue. Once a list of priorities is established, the *dirigentes* must then attempt to convince local officials (either mayors, municipal councillors or relevant bureaucrats) that the project has the support of the community and should be funded and implemented. Unlike in the Venezuelan case, funding decisions are at the discretion of elected officials or civil servants and implementation is generally managed by state agencies, with “oversight” from neighbourhood councils.59

Despite a notable lack of popular participation in the Chilean context, the theme emerged as part of the political discourse under the first administration of President Michelle Bachelet (2006-2010) and continued under the administration of her predecessor, Sebastián Piñera (2010-2014), resulting in the adoption of a Citizen Participation Law (2011) that establishes participation as a right and creates new participatory institutions at all levels of government, including Civil Society Councils intended to enhance participation at the municipal level by providing a forum for civil society actors (including neighbourhood councils) to interact with elected officials. The law also recognizes the neighbourhood councils as legal entities and creates

59 Interviews with Thomás Marín, Director of Citizen Participation, Municipalidad de Providencia, March 14, 2013; Monica Jarra, Head of Community Organizations division, Municipalidad de La Pintana, March 19, 2013; Sandra and Maria Teresa, council president and secretary, Maipú, March 14, 2013; Gloria, council president, La Pintana, March 22, 2013.
a new source of funding for projects promoted by the councils. While the effectiveness of the
neighbourhood councils has been criticized because of the lack of formal linkages between local
councils (leading to fragmentation of demands), the 2011 law allows them to form unions
comprised of representatives from various councils within the same commune. They can use
these unions to address common concerns and to pool their resources, a strategy which should in
theory give participants greater power vis à vis local governments.

Unlike in the other two cases, the discourse used in the new legislation does not employ
the language of “people’s power” or suggest that some kind of revolution in the relationship
between “el pueblo” (a term which is not used) and the state is taking place. Rather, it tends to
frame citizen’s participation in practical and pragmatic terms, emphasizing “more effective and
efficient” public policy, “strengthening communication between citizens and the government”
and “increasing transparency and confidence” in government institutions. The law clearly
establishes citizen participation as falling “within a framework of co-responsibility” between
citizens and the state and participation is primarily consultative; there is no sense that the people
play a direct leading role in decision-making.\textsuperscript{60}

Training for participation is less common that in Venezuela and Ecuador. When
provided, training is usually offered by the department of the municipal (commune) government
responsible for enacting citizen participation initiatives, although the new legislative framework
establishes a School of Public Management for leaders of social organizations (including
neighbourhood councils). The relative lack of formal training is not surprising given that much
of the work central to the participatory process in Venezuela and Ecuador (diagnostic,
elaboration of development plans and budgets, etc.) is carried out by municipal and other state

\textsuperscript{60} Chile, Ley sobre asociaciones y participación ciudadana en la gestión pública (2011); MSGG, División de
Organizaciones Sociales, La Participación Ciudadana como Eje de Gestión del Gobierno.
agencies in the Chilean context. Certain central government ministries, including the Secretaría de Gobierno, play a significant role in promoting the state’s new policy on public participation and a growing number of municipalities are creating departments charged with promoting and supporting citizen participatory initiatives, although the process is quite uneven (Marín and Mlynarz, 2012). In the Chilean context then, it is difficult to separate participation from co-responsibility and co-management. Participation and the mechanisms through which it is exercised are more consultative in nature. This co-governance is more about efficiency than any ideological or “common good” commitment to participatory democracy.
Chapter 4: Tangible Outcomes, Participatory Mechanisms and Social Development

This chapter examines the tangible outcomes achieved by the nine participatory mechanisms selected for this study, focusing on public goods and services. It also considers the processes through which alternatives were selected and implemented in order to establish the role of popular participation in achieving these outcomes. As we have seen in the review of the literature, proponents of participatory democracy argue that citizen engagement should produce outcomes related to social development, such as improvements to infrastructure, more equitable access to public services and other benefits that improve citizens’ quality of life. While they frame participation differently, state agencies in Venezuela, Chile and Ecuador promote their respective local participatory mechanisms as essential institutions for achieving these types of goals.

The purpose of this chapter is threefold. First, it presents the outcomes produced by each participatory mechanism and evaluates them according to a number of criteria. Evaluating the outcomes from a comparative perspective is necessary in order to assess the models of participatory design and to examine the factors that enhance or diminish the capacity of participatory mechanisms to produce these outcomes. The difficulties inherent in assessing the outcomes of participatory processes were outlined in Chapter 2. While it is not possible to overcome all of these challenges, this research adopts a number of criteria that researchers and practitioners have used for evaluation purposes (these were outlined in Table 2.4). It considers the scope of the outcomes (the proportion of the population affected and the quantity of resources deployed); the extent to which the outcomes align with the decisions made by citizens through their participatory processes; and whether outcomes have improved residents’ standard of living and material conditions. Outcomes are rated on a four-level scale (high, medium, low
and no value) with high-value outcomes demonstrating an impact on a proportionally large sample of the population represented by the participatory mechanism, the deployment of a significant quantity of resources; evidence that the outcomes are closely aligned with participants’ preferred alternatives; and evidence that citizens’ standard of living has improved as a result. While this scale is relatively simple, the purpose is not to produce a formal program evaluation of the participatory mechanisms, but rather to establish the criteria required to compare outcomes produced by the various cases.

Second, this chapter establishes links between public participation and tangible outcomes. While it is not possible to demonstrate formal causal links due to the inherent complexity of participatory processes, the evidence presented establishes “most likely associations” between participation and outcomes by using process tracing to examine these relationships. Finally, this chapter begins to examine and compare the processes through which alternatives are identified and decisions are made and implemented. It presents an overview of these processes in order to determine how participants are using participatory mechanisms and to what extent the operation of these structures aligns with their institutional design. A more thorough analysis of the processes observed is presented in Chapter 6, which looks at the factors that explain the outcomes discussed here.

The results demonstrate high to medium-value outcomes in a majority of the cases studied. While there is variation among the three countries (as well as within each country), decisions made by citizens through participatory mechanisms have to some extent been translated into action in all but one of the cases. The Venezuelan cases demonstrate the most substantial results, with major community improvement projects that have benefited hundreds of families. Two of the three cases have been rated high-value in terms of outcomes. The Chilean
cases, however, also present positive outcomes despite the more constrained nature of citizen participation in that country. Neighbourhood council participants have been successful at using their relatively limited powers to improve their communities. The Ecuadorian cases exhibit mixed results, but while the discourse surrounding popular participation is similar to that developed by the Venezuelan government, participatory mechanisms have been less successful at producing tangible outcomes.

The decision-making and implementation processes vary considerably among the three countries. As seen in the previous chapter, the institutional design of participatory mechanisms creates very different models in Venezuela and Chile, yet in both of these countries there is alignment between the process “on paper” and how this translates into reality. A deliberative process in which citizens play an active and leading role in local policy development characterizes Venezuelan communal councils. In contrast, the Chilean neighbourhood councils function according to a process of co-governance, in which citizens are able to use these mechanisms to develop policy demands at the local level and convey these to politicians and bureaucrats who have final decision-making power. The process in Ecuador borrows elements from both of these models, yet unlike in the other two countries, there is a conflict between the powers the citizens’ assemblies are supposed to have and the capacity that citizens have to use these mechanisms for local policy development. The institutional design appears to favour the Venezuelan model, while the actual process resembles that which was observed in Chile.
Venezuela

Venezuela can be considered the prototype for the “radical” model of participatory democracy in Latin America. The three Venezuelan cases have been successful with respect to achieving significant social development goals in the form of improvements to the neighbourhoods they represent. High-value outcomes were achieved in two cases (Sucre and Guacara). Medium-value outcomes were observed in the third case (Mérida), although the needs identified were less acute (see Table 4.2).

Table 4.2: Projects, Processes and Outcomes, Venezuela

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alternatives selected</th>
<th>Process</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sucre</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Deteriorating</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Reconstructed drainage and sewage systems benefiting over 200 families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>infrastructure (sewage and drainage, water supply)</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Updating of water system benefiting 238 families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Structural deterioration of homes and residential buildings</td>
<td>Participants identify alternatives and select priorities</td>
<td>• Housing improvements (roofing) for 30 buildings (450 families)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Security concerns</td>
<td>Participants make final decisions</td>
<td>• Establishment of a liaison program with local police detachment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participants play a major role in obtaining funding</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Implementation carried out by participants</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participants assert decision-making role in relationship with local authorities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Guaraca</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Poor housing conditions, particularly for recent arrivals living on “invaded” lots</td>
<td></td>
<td>• 50 homes built, another 30 in the planning stages, 250 people benefited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lack of utilities (electricity and sewage)</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Electrification provided to 100 homes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Unpaved streets</td>
<td></td>
<td>• 80 septic tanks purchased and installed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Deeds needed for families living on plots of land</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Paving of 50 streets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Obtained deeds for plots of land for 70 families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mérida</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Housing improvements (roofing)</td>
<td>Participants identify alternatives and select priorities</td>
<td>• Housing improvements approved, not yet completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sports court</td>
<td>Participants make final decisions</td>
<td>• Sports court completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Eating facilities for the school</td>
<td>Participants play a role in obtaining funding</td>
<td>• Dining room and kitchen (with equipment) built for school, over 200 children benefited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Grants to study for locals</td>
<td>Implementation carried out by both participants and state agencies</td>
<td>• Grants for 20 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participants assert decision-making role in relationship with local authorities but allow officials some involvement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sucre**

The Sucre (Caracas) case exhibits the most significant outcomes of the cases studied in terms of the scope of the projects and number of residents affected, alignment with participants’ wishes and amelioration of material conditions. The alternatives identified by residents through the council’s assembly are focused on improving the infrastructure in the neighbourhood, which was constructed in the mid-20th century and suffers from deteriorating sewage and housing conditions. Improving the state of housing complexes was also deemed to be a concern in this high-density sector of Caracas.61

**Outcomes**

The first initiative undertaken involved the reconstruction of drainage and sewage systems for the neighbourhood blocks represented by the council in 2007. The sewage system reconstruction

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61 Consejo Comunal Sector EC, Propuesta Proyecto de Colacas, 2006; Propuesta Mejoramiento de Vivienda, 2008.
was carried out over the next two years at a cost of 2.9 million Bs.F.\footnote{Bs.F = \textit{bolivar fuerte}, the currency of Venezuela since 2007. The equivalent dollar values are difficult to determine because there have been multiple devaluations and currency controls imposed over the past few years and because the “real” market value of the \textit{bolivar fuerte} is considered to be far less than the Venezuelan government’s officially posted rate.} The project resulted in laying down over 800 meters of new pipes, repairing an additional 1200 meters and improving access to and from the system to buildings covering 11 blocks.\footnote{Funadcomunal Caracas, \textit{Informe “Memoria y Cuenta”} 2008.} About 200 families, or over 800 people benefited from the project (over 40% of residents in the neighbourhood represented by the council). The project plan provides a detailed timeline for completion, an extensive list of materials required (from tools to pipes to concrete), calculations and diagrams depicting the area to be updated, detailed budget and the number of labourers required. As per the communal council’s decision, a stipulation was included ensuring that workers from the area represented by the council be given priority and that materials would also be purchased from local business whenever possible. This provided temporary employment to 40 individuals.

The second major project, the improvement of the district’s water system, was undertaken in 2009 and is related to the first. The project involved updating the pipes that carry water into 8 apartment buildings at a cost of 1.5 million Bs.F.\footnote{Funadcomunal Caracas, \textit{Informe “Memoria y Cuenta”} 2010.} This included purchasing the materials, managing the budget and hiring local labour (approximately 20 local workers were hired).\footnote{Consejo Comunal Sector EC and SINATECC, \textit{Plan comunitario de desarrollo integral 2009-2010}.} A total of 238 families benefited. A third project involved improvements to housing in the area, particularly roofing. This initiative resulted in repairs to 30 housing complexes and semi-detached homes, benefiting over 450 families. The council has since voted to establish this as an annual program, with the process beginning at the start of each “communal power cycle”\footnote{Consejo Comunal Sector EC and SINATECC, \textit{Plan comunitario de desarrollo integral 2011-2012}.}.\footnote{Consejo Comunal Sector EC and SINATECC, \textit{Plan comunitario de desarrollo integral 2009-2010}.}
As with the other two projects, materials were purchased locally when possible and residents from the neighbourhood were hired to do the work.

The initiatives discussed above represent the major projects completed but a number of minor initiatives were also undertaken, including repairs to the council’s headquarters and purchasing various materials (books, art supplies, etc.) for the local elementary school. The council’s executive also considered creating and funding a “security” force, as other councils in Sucre parish have done, in response to rising crime problems. However, the citizens’ assembly rejected this proposal, with opponents arguing successfully that arming more local citizens was not an ideal use of funds. Instead, the assembly decided that the council should work on forging better relationships with the local division of the Bolivarian National Police.68 More recently, residents voted in favour of an initiative that will establish programs for teenagers aimed at keeping them “out of trouble”69. This includes sports and job skills programs.

**Process**

The sewage system reconstruction priority was decided on in a near-unanimous vote at one of the council’s earliest assemblies in 2007 and was then developed into a detailed plan that was submitted to Fundacomunal and FIDES70 for funding later that year. The project was deemed essential in the council’s proposal due to “significant structural deterioration of the sewer network” which was identified as “the most significant problem facing this ‘popular’ sector” as residents have been seriously affected by “sewage waters running through some streets, which

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69 Ibid.
70 Fondo Intergubernamental para la Descentralización, another central state fund that finances communal council projects.
causes infection, illness and general unpleasantness due to the noxious odours”. 71 While the sewage system had not deteriorated across the entire neighbourhood represented by the council, the proposal insists that the quality of life of all residents has been affected and that even those whose homes were not directly touched voted to make this a priority at the council’s assembly meeting. A working committee of local residents was elected in order to take the lead on the project and report back to the assembly. Local officials responsible for funding and technical support to communal councils pointed to this as an example of how these participatory mechanisms should work, arguing that they encourage solidarity, community values and deliberation. These qualities, along with the demonstration of need, are the factors used to determine funding for this and other projects.72 While technicians from the Technical Support System for Communal Councils (SINATECC) provided necessary technical support, the council’s elected voceros and relevant working committee members were involved at all stages of the project, from developing the proposal to presenting the plan and making the case for funding at the parish’s annual “war room” (the process during which various councils present their projects for funding) to the implementation stage.73

The second project was identified as the most pressing need in 2009 due to health concerns surrounding drinking water. The decision-making process, according to residents who participated in the assembly, was similar to that experienced during the sewer rebuilding initiative. As in that case, members of the executive, working groups and representatives of families living in the buildings targeted for water system improvements were involved at all

71 Consejo Comunal Sector EC and Sistema Nacional de Apoyo Técnico a los Consejos Comunales (SINATECC), Plan comunitario de desarrollo integral: Sistema de Cloaca.
73 Interviews with Blanca, communal council president and Alina, council participant, Caracas, Jan. 8 and 11, 2013.
stages of the process, including implementation and evaluation. In both of these cases, participants interviewed felt that the needs were pressing enough to ensure that all members were inclined to support these projects whether or not their families were directly affected.

Given that the housing improvement project was intended to benefit particular dwellings as opposed to entire blocks, the decision-making process was considerably more complicated. Still, participants and local officials involved in funding and technical support agree that the process was democratic and worked according to the principles of “communitarian democracy”. Residents were asked to nominate families whose homes they believed were in dire need of structural repairs, a council working group was established to inspect these homes and establish a “greatest needs” list. Two members of a communal council located in another parish were brought in and asked to report on incidents of bias or corruption. While there was some dissent with respect to the homes selected, the individuals interviewed agreed that the process was fair, with most arguing that it was considerably more democratic and transparent than the “old way”, in which municipal officials made these kinds of decisions.

**Perspectives**

The Sucre case demonstrates high-value outcomes with respect to improved and more equitable access to public goods and services. Of the 21 participants interviewed, all indicated a strong satisfaction with the outcomes discussed above and all claimed that these were achieved through the communal council. Respondents were also unanimous in agreeing that their quality of life and access to public goods and services, which they see as democratic rights, have improved as a

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74 Interviews with Francisco, communal council executive member, Caracas, Jan. 8, 2013.
75 Interviews with Blanca, communal council president, Jan. 8; Coordinator of Communal Technical Support, Jan. 21, 2013 and Technical Support Agent for Communal Councils, Fundacomunal Caracas, 23, 2013.
result of the direct participation of their community in decision-making and implementation. Almost all of the participants interviewed attributed these improvements to the work of their communal council and agreed that their standard of living has improved as a result. Officials from Fundacomunal and the municipal government also attributed these outcomes directly to the communal council and not to the municipality.76

Residents who benefited from these various projects were extremely positive about the improvements and almost exclusively attributed these gains to their communal council, with most comparing the process and results to the pre-communal council past. Typical of this sentiment are the following comments by a shoe salesman and a retail worker:

“Do you know how bad it was with the drainage system before? It was unhealthy for us, the city hadn’t fixed it for decades. Do you think the government back then cared or did anything? No, we tried to deal with it but they didn’t listen, they weren’t working for us. With the communal council, with participation, we work for ourselves, we decide what we are going to do here. So we decided to fix the drainage ourselves”.77

“The community was waiting for years for funding to upgrade this infrastructure but it never came, in part because of corruption under the old system, local politicians would just steal the money and what could the people do? Now, they can’t do that because the community gets to decide, so we finally got the drains fixed”.78

Officials from agencies charged with supporting public participation initiatives were unanimously positive about the accomplishments of this particular council and of popular participation more generally. Officials also tended to agree with participants with respect to their perception of participatory democracy. Of the 11 state representatives and 6 elected officials interviewed in the Capital District (including 3 opposition members), all agreed that citizens

76 Interviews with Coordinator and Technical Support Agent, Fundacomunal Caracas, Jan. 21, 2013; Coordinator, Public Works Division, Municipio Bolivariano Libertador, Jan. 26, 2013.
77 Interview with Javi, council participant, Caracas, Jan. 13, 2013.
78 Interview with Martin, council participant, Caracas, Jan. 11, 2013.
should play the leading role in decisions that affect their lives. As we shall see in subsequent sections, this presents a clear contrast between officials in Venezuela and their counterparts in the other two countries.

**Guacara**

This case also demonstrates significant high-value outcomes. A significant proportion of the represented population (particularly the poorest sectors)\(^79\) felt the impact of the council’s work. Outcomes were closely aligned to the alternatives identified by participants and the standard of living improved for many of these individuals as a result.

Members of this council were extremely consistent with respect to identifying the most significant problems facing their community. Because the area was settled relatively recently, infrastructure is not fully developed. Many residents still lack reliable basic services (particularly electrical), many streets remain unpaved (and become muddy in the rainy season) and some of the houses constructed with the aid of Misión Vivienda\(^80\) are already beginning to deteriorate in Carabobo’s humid climate. The lack of paved roads creates sanitary and transportation/access problems, particularly as many residents are required to trudge through mud to get to and from home. Many of the homes that have been built remain off the power grid and have no access to sewage and plumbing. Building adequate housing for residents who have acquired land through land invasions or redistribution programs has been one of the primary objectives of the council. Residents voted to make these problems a priority and the council has been quite successful in

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\(^79\) Over 100 families have benefited from the projects described in this section, nearly half of the 213 families represented by this communal council.

\(^80\) One of the so-called Bolivarian Missions, Gran Misión Vivienda, is intended to provide housing for those who cannot afford it.
achieving these goals through its participatory planning and budgeting process. Obtaining titles to the land that families’ homes are built on has been another important component of the council’s housing policy agenda.

Outcomes

Between 2010 and 2012, 50 homes were built on lots in the area and the council was in the process of building 30 more at the time of this research. Over 250 people in the semi-rural community have benefited from the project directly through new housing, while over 20 local workers have been employed in the construction of the homes during this same time period. The homes were built with quality materials and designed to be weather resistant, but lacked services such as electricity and plumbing, although septic tanks were installed to deal with sewage as this was considered the minimum required for a “dignified” quality of life.

Extending electricity and sewage to newly constructed homes is part of the second phase of the council’s social development plan. According to members of the council executive and confirmed by a municipal official, 100 homes in a 1.8 sq. kilometer area were provided with electricity by extending the grid from sections of the parish closest to the area without service. This was followed by the purchase and installation of septic tanks for the new homes (up to 80) over the following year. While the electrical service is provided by the state-owned National Electric Corporation (Corpoelec), the communal council has the authority to “coordinate” the service in collaboration with Corpoelec representatives and municipal officials. This involved

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81 CC Los Cabos “El Toco”, Actas de la reunión de la asamblea ciudadana, 21 Oct. 2009; and interviews with Helen, Raquel, Maria and Maricruz, members of communal council executive, Guacara, Nov. 26 and 27, 2012.
82 CC Los Cabos “El Toco” and Instituto Municipal de Formación Técnico Comunitaria (Guacara), Plan de desarrollo comunitario, 2012-2013 and interviews with Helen, Raquel, Maria and Maricruz, Nov. 26 and 27, 2012.
83 Interviews with Raquel, communal council treasurer, Guacara, Nov. 26, 2012; and Planning Agent, Servicio Comunitario de Atención al Ciudadano, Municipio Socialista de Guacara, Dec. 8, 2012.
supervision of the installation of the service as well as ongoing coordination of service provision, performance and maintenance. In order to take on this role, the council established an electrification committee with representatives from the target community. This “round table” works with the newly established Institute for Community Technical Training, a body set up by the mayor of Guacara to provide technical assistance to members of the municipality’s communal councils. The council has also been working on gaining the legal status required to manage the district’s water supply. The council members charged with pursuing this goal argued that, “democratization also involves giving ownership of natural resources to the people who use them. Water is not a commodity it belongs to the community, it used to be in the hands of a private company but our members want to manage these resources themselves and the council has mechanisms to ensure they are being used well.”84 Both council spokespeople and local officials who have supported the idea believe that they will be granted the necessary legal status.85

From 2008 to 2012, about 50 streets in the area represented by the council have been paved.86 This has benefited over 400 families and has improved their quality of life by creating a cleaner environment and making transportation more accessible.87 As with the other projects, local workers were hired to do the work and materials were purchased from local businesses when possible. Beyond these main priorities, this communal council has also been involved in a number of other initiatives. One important initiative of the council has been to assist residents in obtaining titles for the land they occupy. As mentioned, many locals inhabit land acquired

84 Interview with Maricruz, communal council secretary, Guacara, Nov. 26, 2012
85 Interviews with Helen and Raquel; Interview with Planning Agent, Servicio Comunitario de Atención al Ciudadano, Municipio Socialista de Guacara, Dec. 8, 2012.
86 CC Los Cabos “El Toco” and Instituto Municipal de Formación Técnico Comunitaria (Guacara), Plan de desarrollo comunitario, 2010-2011.
87 Interviews with with Geraldina and José Luis, communal council participants, Guacara, Nov. 29 and Dec. 3, 2012.
through occupations or redistribution programs but this land legally belongs to the National Land Institute (INTI), a state agency charged with administering land redistribution. While they cannot own the land (it remains in the hands of the state), they may obtain titles that allow them to legally occupy it, use it for production and pass the land on to their heirs. Because the process is complex, the council has set up a working group of citizens who have been trained to assist residents in obtaining these titles; more than 70 families have benefited so far.88

Process

The lack of adequate housing was deemed a priority from the time the council began operating in 2007. The first elected executive council established a working committee to tackle the issue and a proposal was subsequently brought forward to the citizen’s assembly that provided a detailed plan for building 50 homes over the next two years. The proposal argued that housing is “a basic necessity for members of our community and for all citizens in order to live in a dignified manner” and that making this a priority over all other community objectives was in line with the ideas of “21st Century Socialism” and with communitarian values. 89 There was considerable discussion over the proposal (in which families without adequate housing participated) and it was adopted by a unanimous assembly vote.90 The actual project, developed by the council in collaboration with Misión Vivienda, included participant input into the materials to be used and a detailed timeline (from purchasing the materials and preparing the lots to painting the finished houses).91

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89 CC Los Cabos “El Toco” and SINATECC, Plan de desarrollo, Construcción de Vivienda 2007.
90 Actas, July 22, 2007 and interviews with Helen, Raquel, Maria and Maricruz, Nov. 26 and 27, 2012.
91 CC Los Cabos “El Toco” and SINATECC, Plan de desarrollo, Construcción de Vivienda 2007.
The electrification project was somewhat more complicated. Given that newly built homes lack all basic services, residents were required to choose between a set of services they wished to have access to. Electrification was selected as a priority because it was considered more feasible to provide power lines than to extend the sewage and water systems, an initiative which would have cost more. The council executive put forward a proposal (adopted by the Assembly) that focused on ensuring that homes without electricity would be connected to the grid within a year and that septic tanks would be installed in newly built homes without access to sewage.92 Council participants from various parts of neighbourhood conducted a census in order to determine which homes needed these services. The council received funding from both Fundacomunal and the municipality of Guacara through processes that included representatives from various communal councils.

Streets to be paved were chosen in a participatory process, but selection was made according to certain criteria also discussed and debated by the council’s citizens’ assembly.93 Unpaved streets with the greatest number of homes were identified in order to ensure that the largest number of residents benefited. Also, while not every residential street could be paved immediately, arteries that connect with major paved roads were identified to ensure that at least every home would be with a couple of blocks from a paved street. As with the other projects, the process ensured that unemployed residents would have priority in being hired as labourers and materials would be purchased from local sources when possible94.

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92 CC Los Cabos “El Toco” and Instituto Municipal de Formación Técnico Comunitaria (Guacara), Plan de desarrollo comunitario, 2008-2009.
93 Interviews with Raquel, council treasurer, Guacara, Nov. 26, 2012; Geraldina and Anita, council participants, Guacara, Nov. 29, 2012; Martín A., council participant, Valencia, Nov. 25, 2012.
94 CC Los Cabos “El Toco” and Instituto Municipal de Formación Técnico Comunitaria (Guacara), Plan de desarrollo comunitario, 2008-2009.
Perceptions

Given the socioeconomic context of this semi-rural community, this communal council has achieved significant outcomes. Of the 16 participants interviewed, all indicated a strong satisfaction with these outcomes and with the participatory process through the communal council. As in the Caracas case, respondents were unanimous in agreeing that their quality of life and access to public goods and services has improved as a result of the direct participation of their community in decision-making and implementation and feel that there has been a significant improvement over the past (pre-communal council era), during which they insist that people in their community were denied access to these types of benefits due to the closed nature of the “old” form of local government. The vast majority (14) were positive with respect to the participatory process itself; arguing either that the benefits were a result of their own work, or that they were actively involved in various stages of the process. Municipal officials agreed that these outcomes are the result of the communal council’s work and insist that the municipality only provided the necessary technical support.95

Families that moved into the new homes were extremely pleased with both the houses and the process. Typical of the comments made by domestic worker who moved to the area from a poorer region on the coast:

“A roof over your head isn’t just something that is nice to have, it is a human right. Before, us poor people had to use most of our earnings just to put a substandard roof over our heads…And now we can be involved in decisions about these kinds of things, I mean I was involved in the planning and construction of my own home”96

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95 Interviews with Planning Agent, Instituto Municipal de Tránsito, Transporte y Vialidad, Municipio Socialista de Guacara, Dec. 8, 2012; and Advisor, Office of the Mayor, Municipio Socialista de Guacara, Dec. 9, 2012.
96 Interview with Geraldina, communal council participant, Nov. 29, 2012.
Residents feel that having the communal council involved in provision of basic services allows for a higher degree of responsiveness, as expressed by a school kitchen worker whose home was electrified in 2008:

“I have electricity in my home thanks to the communal council. Yes, there are blackouts but my neighbours are part of the mesa (electrification round table) and they have the power to do something when there are problems, so it isn’t like calling a big bureaucracy that doesn’t care. Through the council we can exercise control over these things that affect our lives”. 97

Local authorities were unanimously positive about the benefits produced by communal councils, including elected municipal officials who credited these structures with “improving not only material and social conditions but improving democracy by allowing people to have a say about decisions that affect them”. 98

**Mérida**

The Mérida neighbourhood represented by this communal council is located in an established middle-income part of that city. As such, the needs identified were decidedly different and this is reflected in the alternatives that residents chose to pursue. While one of these (funding for home improvements) is similar to programs observed in Sucre and Guacara, the other priorities and outcomes are very different. The outcomes have been classified as medium-value. While they do align to an extent with the alternatives identified by participants, there are some gaps where projects had not yet been implemented a year after decisions were made by the council’s assembly. The scope is not insignificant but is less than that observed in the other two Venezuelan cases. Residents’ standard of living is higher than in the other cases, and those who benefited from specific projects saw an improvement in material conditions, but this is tempered

97 Interview with Anita, communal council participant, Guacara, Nov. 29, 2012.
98 Interview with Planning Agent, Guacara, Dec. 8, 2012.
by the relatively limited scope of the outcomes. There is also more disagreement among participants with respect to the quality of the outcomes.

**Outcomes**

The first two projects tackled by the communal council involved improvements to neighbourhood facilities as opposed to large-scale infrastructure projects. These were selected among the alternatives presented at the council’s assembly. The first involved revamping the local sports centre. The court was remodeled and modernized with a new roof and facilities, and new sports equipment was purchased. This was deemed to be an important benefit for local children and teenagers. The second project was the construction of a dining facility (including a kitchen) for the local school. The school, which welcomes primarily underprivileged children from the neighbourhood represented by the council and from other sectors of the city, lacked such facilities and this was used as the justification for this project. The dining room was built and furnished with kitchen equipment; state funding ensures that children receive free meals. It is estimated that over 200 underprivileged children have benefited from these facilities.

As in the other two cases, this communal council also decided on a plan to replace the roofs of homes in need of repair. At the time of this research, only 10 homes had benefited from the program. This represents a relatively low number of families and individuals affected compared with the Sucre and Guacara cases. At least 10 more homes were slated to be repaired, but owners had been waiting for over a year. Members also elected to pursue a scholarship

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100 Interviews with Marbella, former council president, Nov. 4, 2012; Maryenella, council participant, Nov. 9, 2012; Noé, council participant, Nov. 9; Victoria, council participant, Nov. 17, 2012.
102 Interview with Oscar, council participant, Mérida, Nov. 21, 2012.
program that provides grants to young people in the represented area. At the time of this research, about 20 individuals had benefited from this program, many of whom are studying at the nearby Universidad de los Andes (ULA).  

*Process*

Residents identified the neighbourhood sports facility as a priority through the citizens’ assembly as it provides not only a physical place for young people to go but activities to keep them “out of trouble”. The council’s financial organ held a competition to select people to work on the project and purchase materials, while a separate elected working group was established to carry it forward and report back to the assembly. Again, the council accepted proposals from local groups of workers and chose what they considered to be the best proposal.

For the housing improvement process, the council undertook a census in order to identify families in a situation of risk; their homes and were chosen as beneficiaries of the project. The process here was somewhat less participatory and dynamic than those observed in the other two cases. Whereas those cases involved a participatory process including those from families that would potentially benefit from the proposed projects, in this case the council’s financial organ (consisting of 5 individuals elected by the Assembly) selected the homes based on the results of the census. As in the other two cases, the funding process involved officials from state agencies charged with supporting participatory projects as well as citizen representatives. In these cases, the council forwarded the priorities voted on by members to CORPOANDES, a body responsible for regional economic development that has a set budget for communal council funding. Each project was put into an envelope and these were evaluated as part of the “communal power

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103 Interview with Marbella, former council president, Mérida, Nov. 14, 2012.
104 Actas and interviews with Marbella and Reinaldo, Mérida, Nov. 14 and 15, 2012.
The “war room” process during the annual “war room” sessions. The process involves hours of debate and deliberation.\textsuperscript{105} These fora involve representatives from local communal councils evaluating the projects in each envelope based on a determined methodology (essentially a “greatest needs” assessment) and selecting the projects to be funded.

Selection of eligible beneficiaries for scholarships is made by the council’s education committee, whose members are elected by the citizens’ assembly. Awarding of the scholarships is supposed to be based on a needs assessment, with the poorest families first in line. Input is also requested from residents, who are asked to identify young people who should qualify based on need and potential.\textsuperscript{106}

\textit{Perceptions}

The Mérida case exhibits medium-value results with respect to improved and more equitable access to public goods and services. These are less significant in terms of scope and cost of the projects than the two preceding cases, although these outcomes do align with the scale of the alternatives identified through the participatory process. Satisfaction with the outcomes was generally positive but less unanimous than in the other two cases. Of the 12 participants interviewed, 8 indicated a strong satisfaction with these outcomes while the remainder were less pleased. The same number believed that the community’s standard of living had improved when compared with the period prior to the existence of the communal council. Satisfaction with the participatory process was also less favourable than in the other two cases, although a majority of individuals (9 out of 12) claimed that the council allows citizens to play a more significant role

\textsuperscript{105} Interviews with Project Support Agent, CORPOANDES, Mérida, Nov. 21, 2012; and with Marbella, Mérida, Nov. 14, 2012.
\textsuperscript{106} Interview with Reinaldo, council president, Mérida, Nov. 15, 2012.
than in the past. Still, several participants expressed dissatisfaction with the politicized nature of the council, arguing that benefits are sometimes distributed unequally, with known *chavistas* more likely to be favoured. ¹⁰⁷

**Chile**

Despite relatively limited formal powers when compared to Venezuelan communal councils, Chilean neighbourhood councils can also be successful with respect to achieving improvements to the neighbourhoods they represent. Medium-value outcomes were achieved in two of the three cases (see table 4.3). Compared to the two high-value Venezuelan cases, these projects are smaller in scope, were generally completed in a less timely manner and resident satisfaction with both the outcomes and processes is mixed. Still, many of the alternatives proposed by neighbourhood council members through their participatory process were translated into concrete outcomes, and this has had a positive impact on material conditions.

**Table 4.3: Projects, Processes and Outcomes, Chile**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alternatives selected</th>
<th>Process</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>La Pintana</td>
<td>• Homes in need of repair&lt;br&gt;• Improving public lighting&lt;br&gt;• Improving streets and sidewalks&lt;br&gt;• Building sports facilities&lt;br&gt;• Beautification projects (particularly parks)&lt;br&gt;• Access to public transportation</td>
<td>Participants identify needs and select priorities&lt;br&gt;Authorities make final decisions&lt;br&gt;Citizens play a minor role in obtaining funding&lt;br&gt;Housing improvement projects for over 100 families&lt;br&gt;Improvement of public lighting over 30 blocks&lt;br&gt;Improvement of paths and plazas&lt;br&gt;Sports courts and gym built&lt;br&gt;Microbus service extended into the community</td>
</tr>
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¹⁰⁷ Interview with Victor, former council participant, Mérida, Nov. 8, 2012.
Maipú

- Homes in need of repair
- Improving public lighting
- Improving streets and sidewalks
- Removal of polluted canal
- Crime and security issues

Implementation carried out by state agencies

Subordinate role in relationship with authorities, characterized by cooperation and applying pressure

- Housing repairs for 48 families, another 43 approved for the program as of 2012
- Repairs and improvements to sidewalks, lighting, etc.
- Polluted canal paved over
- Liaison program with local police detachment

Cayumapú

- Neighbourhood not connected to municipal water supply
- Most streets unpaved
- Many areas lack public lighting
- Housing improvements (roofing)

- Drinking water extended to homes
- Central street paved (100m)
- Public lighting in central parts
- Housing improvement program for 12 families

La Pintana

The La Pintana neighbourhood council represents one of Chile’s poorest urban districts but exhibits the most significant outcomes of the three Chilean cases studied. Founded in the 1970s, this council is also the oldest of the participatory mechanisms studied in this thesis. Unlike similar neighbourhoods in Venezuela, both residents and local officials insisted that the commune is covered by basic services and paved streets. Original residents claimed that when they arrived in the 1970s, the sector did not have access to drinking water or electricity. These services were installed in the late 1970s, followed by the paving of local streets, with the

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108 La Pintana, Revista 6 de Mayo Edición Aniversario; and Interview with Gloria, council president, La Pintana, March 22, 2013.
participation of residents through the neighbourhood council. Residents also mentioned that in these early years the council was instrumental in establishing and running community kitchens for the poorest families.

For comparative purposes, research for this case focused on more recent projects for which documentation was available. The alternatives identified by residents through assemblies convened by the council’s leaders included: housing improvement projects, improving public lighting (a need which many linked to the area’s relatively high crime rate), improving streets and sidewalks, building sports facilities, beautification projects (particularly parks) and obtaining better public transportation. The outcomes have been categorized as medium-value; they are fairly well aligned with citizens’ preferred alternatives, are significant in scope and have had a positive impact on residents’ standard of living.

Outcomes

The most significant initiative undertaken since 2009 was a housing improvement project that has benefited over 100 families. These improvements involved not only structural upgrades such as roofing, but renovations to kitchens, bathrooms and plumbing systems. In many cases, these upgrades allowed houses in poor condition to become “like new.” Collectively, the residents received 115,000,000 CLP (just under $212,500 USD at 2009 exchange rates). This amounted to about 1,150,000 CLP (just over $2,000 USD) per selected family.

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109 Interviews with Monica Jarra, Head of Community Organizations division, Municipalidad de La Pintana, March 19, 2013 and Gloria, council president, La Pintana, March 22, 2013.
110 Interviews with Gloria and Luis, council president and vice-president, La Pintana, March 22 and 23, 2013.
A number of neighbourhood infrastructure projects were also spearheaded by the council. These include the construction of several sports courts and of a community gymnasium. A park was later developed in which local residents can create their own gardens and other parks, plazas and paths were repaired and updated. Street lighting was installed in over 30 blocks within the neighbourhood. Finally, the council successfully worked to improve public transportation to and from the neighbourhood. Well beyond the furthest reaches of the Santiago metro system, residents complained that the neighbourhood was not adequately covered by the system of small buses (micros) that operate in the less central areas of the city. The situation has been dramatically improved, with two micro lines serving the area, beginning at 5:00am as requested by locals who must travel long distances to work.

**Process**

The housing improvement project exhibits some similarities with similar initiatives in Venezuela at the earlier stages, yet it diverges from these cases with respect to the level of community involvement in decision-making and (especially) implementation. Housing renovations were identified as the most pressing need by residents during a series of assemblies convened by the council’s president. The council’s leadership subsequently applied for funding from a housing improvement fund administered by the national Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MINVU), using the community’s engagement through the council to support their application for a group subsidy. All residents represented by the council were invited to apply, although selection criteria established by the MINVU require that eligible families must demonstrate a certain level of need (the ministry applies a formula to determine this). Specific homes were

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112 La Pintana, Revista 6 de Mayo.
identified in the application procedure based on these criteria. While community involvement was active during the early stages and was essential in supporting the group subsidy application, technocrats from the MINVU ultimately decided on which homes were eligible for funding and were also responsible for implementing the projects (while residents certainly were consulted with respect to what they wanted the money used for, MINVU agents oversaw all aspects of the work carried out). ¹¹⁴

The community improvement projects (street lighting, sidewalks, sports courts and beautification projects) proceeded in a similar fashion. These needs were determined in a community forum during which neighbours were asked to identify the most pressing collective problems faced by their community. All residents were invited to attend and to vote on priorities based on proposals put forward by council leadership. The council then established a list of priorities and applied for funding through the *Quiero mi Barrio* program, an initiative of the Bachelet administration intended to “contribute to improving the quality of life for residents of neighborhoods faced with deteriorating public spaces, public property, urban environments and problems of segregation and / or vulnerability through a participatory and sustainable process”. ¹¹⁵ Administered by the MINVU, the program is intended to be participatory and to involve residents in the identification of priorities. While applications do not have to be channelled through a neighbourhood council, this particular council did play a leading role and as a result, the neighbourhood was one of a limited number in the country selected each year to benefit from the program.

¹¹⁴ Interviews with Gloria, council president, La Pintana, March 22, 2013; Luis, council vice-president, March 23, 2013; Housing Services Agent, MINVU, Santiago, April 7, 2012.
Extending microbus service to the neighbourhood also involved applying pressure to the municipal government and is an interesting example of how Chile’s neighbourhood councils work. A series of assemblies were convened by the council’s leaders during which local residents discussed transportation needs and solutions (including service routes, schedules, etc). Using this feedback, council leaders established a “sectorial roundtable” consisting of council members, other local groups (representing the elderly, environmental issues, etc.) and officials from La Pintana’s municipal transportation department. When they did not receive the desired response, leaders used the neighbourhood council to seek support from, and mobilize, the population. The community responded in large numbers and this mobilization exerted sufficient pressure on the municipal office to elicit a positive response. Representatives of the roundtable met with the municipal director of transportation armed with evidence of this community support, and plans were soon drawn up (by the transportation department) to extend micro service to the neighbourhood based on the proposal originally submitted by the neighbourhood council.

Perceptions
A majority of the subjects interviewed agreed that their standard of living has improved as a result of the work of their neighbourhood council. Unlike in Venezuela, requests for access to funding programs, such as the MINVU housing improvement subsidies and Quiero mi Barrio, are not required to be channelled through the neighbourhood councils. Still, residents were of the opinion that the council was instrumental in ensuring that the community received the maximum amount. Of the 17 participants interviewed, 15 expressed satisfaction with the outcomes achieved and believed that the council played a key role, with most pointing to less favourable
results in neighbouring areas without an effective council. While the MINVU housing subsidy is offered on an individual or group basis, residents felt that their chances of obtaining funding were improved due to the collective pressure exercised through their participatory mechanism. Municipal officials also pointed to this case as a positive example of how a neighbourhood council should work, although unlike in Venezuela, they attributed the outcomes to a combination of public participation and the openness of municipal officials.\textsuperscript{116}

Despite a more restrained role in the overall process, participants were generally pleased with their experience. Of the four more active members and members of the directive, all insisted that they have a good relationship with the municipality and that municipal officials demonstrate an “openness” and a willingness to work with the council.\textsuperscript{117} Further, in contrast to the Venezuelan cases, respondents demonstrated an eagerness to work with groups outside of their participatory mechanism: leaders mentioned that they have been involved in numerous “sectoral roundtables” with organizations representing the elderly and sports associations among others.

\textit{Maipú}

A primarily middle-income Santiago suburb, Maipú is considerably more developed than La Pintana and enjoys good infrastructure and public services. The alternatives identified by residents through their neighbourhood council primarily consist of housing renovations, and relatively minor repairs to public goods such as street lighting, sidewalks and parks. The removal of a watercourse creating pollution problems was also deemed necessary.\textsuperscript{118} The outcomes are

\textsuperscript{116} Interviews with Councillor, Municipalidad de La Pintana, April 15, 2013 and Monica Jarra, Head of Community Organizations Division, Municipalidad de La Pintana, March 19, 2013.

\textsuperscript{117} Interviews with Gloria, March 22, 2013; Luis, Elsa, Alicia, council participants, La Pintana, March 23, 2013.

\textsuperscript{118} Interviews with Sandra and Maria Teresa, council president and secretary, Maipú, March 14, 2013; Roxanna, council treasurer, Maipu, March 16, 2013.
less significant in scope than in the previous case, but generally reflect the alternatives selected by participants and have had a positive impact on quality of life.

**Outcomes**

As in La Pintana, the council undertook a collective housing improvement project, although the types of renovations requested by residents were relatively minor compared with those in the poorer municipality. From 2009 to 2012, 48 families registered for, and received funding, to repair and upgrade their homes, with another 43 approved for the program at the time of research.\(^{119}\) Amounts received were smaller than in the La Pintana case, ranging from 60,000 to 590,000 CLP ($100 to $1000 USD). The types of repairs conducted ranged from replacing bathroom fixtures to installing new flooring.\(^{120}\)

The council was also instrumental in tackling a pollution problem caused by an untreated watercourse that crossed the neighbourhood. Residents complained that the stagnant water produced unpleasant odours and constituted a health concern; through the work of the council this canal was filled with concrete. Other projects successfully carried out include repairs to sidewalks, storm drains and street lights; purchase and distribution of burglar alarms and distribution of waste containers. More so than in the other cases, this council has taken a role in ensuring public security in the neighbourhood; the council president claimed that she and her fellow leaders have established (at the request of residents) a strong working relationship with local police and are in contact regularly.\(^{121}\)

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\(^{120}\) Interviews with council participants Francisco, March 13; Daniela, March 15; Estrella, March 17, 2013, Maipú.

\(^{121}\) Interview with Sandra, council president, Maipú, March 14, 2013.
Process

The agenda setting, decision-making and implementation processes closely mirror those observed in La Pintana. The council holds regular assemblies with members of the community; meetings times and locations are posted throughout the neighbourhood and all residents (whether registered with the council or not) may attend, participate and vote on matters. Some of these meetings focus on identifying and prioritizing problems while others involve proposing solutions. Proposals are generally put forward by the council’s leaders based on priorities established at the previous meeting. Attendees then discuss and debate these proposals, followed by a vote, the details of which are recorded by the council’s secretary. Once the vote has taken place and the council’s leaders have been given a mandate to pursue a particular policy, they take this forward to the department or individual most likely to help them implement the proposals. This may be the head of the relevant municipal (or central government) department, a municipal councillor, or even the commune’s mayor.122

It is through this process that housing repairs were identified as the most pressing issue facing neighbours in 2009. Once the decision had been made through the council to make this a priority, the leaders identified a promising funding program but rather than apply for funding as a group, they chose to assist families to apply for individual subsidies. Successful applicants must demonstrate a certain level of need based on a point system; the council played a liaison role between members and the MINVU to ensure that eligible families were identified and that successful applicants received the money. The families were free to work with MINVU officials to decide how they wanted the funds to be used. Similar to La Pintana then, but in contrast to the

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122 Interview with Sandra, council president, Maria Teresa, council secretary, Maipú, March 14, 2013; and Roxanna, council treasurer, Maipú, March 16; Interviews with Ana María and Mirtha, council members, Maipú, April 2, 2013; Community Organizations Unit, Maipú, April 14, 2013.
Venezuelan cases, the council’s part in the administration of the housing subsidies was primarily an oversight role once the application was accepted. SERVIU (the technical service department of MINVU) oversees the projects, sending inspectors from house to house to assess the work and authorizes the release of funds.

The other major community projects were primarily the result of negotiations between the council’s leaders and municipal officials. Armed with decisions and voting records, leaders scheduled meetings with planning agents of the relevant departments such as Public Works and negotiated what they wanted, but final decisions lie with the officials.123

Experiences

Of the 14 residents interviewed, 10 were satisfied with the outcomes discussed above and nine felt that the council was instrumental in achieving these outcomes, while the remainder attributed these benefits to the municipality. Most residents demonstrated support and appreciation for the neighbourhood council and its leaders, yet this result demonstrates that participants see it playing less of a key role. Municipal councillors and civil servants tended to describe neighbourhood councils as important partners in local governance and attribute the outcomes to both the neighbourhood council and willingness of the municipality to work with citizens.124 They argue that they receive essential information about community needs and preferences from these mechanisms. Those who did benefit directly from the programs (about half of the individuals interviewed) believed that their material conditions had improved as a result, although other residents felt that they had not seen a significant improvement in their standard of living. Similar

123 Interviews with Sandra and Maria Teresa, Maipú, March 14, 2013; Roxanna, Maipu, March 16, 2013; Community Organizations Unit, Maipú, April 14, 2013.
to the Mérida, Venezuela case, the problems identified were less acute than in the other two
Chilean cases.

**Cayumapú**

This rural community differs from the other two Chilean cases in that parts of the area lack basic
services and infrastructure. The needs identified by residents reflect this relative
underdevelopment: residents want streets paved, lighting installed and plumbing extended to all
homes (many still do not have indoor washrooms). The outcomes have been rated as low-value.
Most of the desired improvements have not yet materialized; there is therefore an important gap
between outcomes and the alternatives deemed important by participants. The scope of the
outcomes is limited and residents have seen only a modest improvement to their standard of
living.

**Outcomes**

While one major project (water) was successful, other alternatives decided on in the council’s
assembly have not yet materialized to the extent that residents were hoping for. The most
important project in recent years involved bringing drinking water to the community by
extending service from the city of Valdivia to Cayumapú. This was only achieved in 2008; prior
to this, residents extracted water from local wells. Drinking water is now available to 90% of
residents represented by the council. The other partially successful project consisted of installing
lighting in parts of the sector, although this fell well below participants’ expectations.125 Only
areas around the main square and a couple of main arteries are now illuminated. Paving

125 Interviews with Pablo, council president, Valdivia, April 20, 2013; Luisa, Ariel, Marisol, council participants,
Cayumapú, April 21, 2013.
residential streets was another major priority identified by residents but at the time of research, only a single central street (on which the council headquarters is located) had been paved. This amounted to 100 m of paving. Finally, as in the other two Chilean cases, the council coordinated a home improvement campaign in the sector. Given the relatively underdeveloped character of the neighbourhood, benefits were modest. Only 12 families benefited and the average amount received was 330,000 CLP (about $625 USD). These families applied this to bringing basic amenities into their home, particularly installing modern bathrooms.126

Process

The Cayumapú neighbourhood council’s policy process shares much in common with the other two Chilean cases. Discussion and debate takes place at regular citizens’ assemblies where participants present problems and attempt to find solutions. Proposals are presented by council leaders and voted on by citizens and these are then taken forward to the appropriate authorities. This procedure was employed for the various projects mentioned above, including public lighting and street paving, although the results have been disappointing compared to the other two Chilean cases. Interestingly, both participants and local officials attribute this not to the failure of citizen participation but to the lack of funding in this relatively poor region and to logistical complexities of extending services to a rural region with a relatively dispersed population. For example, with respect to street lighting, municipal agents argued that it is simply not possible to provide the service to every street at this time but that priorities must be developed. They prefer to focus on areas where the maximum number of residents will benefit

126 Junta de Vecinos Camino Real, Informe 2012
and/or on key arteries, but identifying these is time consuming and requires careful planning, all of which creates delays. Council leaders tended to agree with this assessment.127

The council differs in that it has made use of larger organizations to pursue its interests. Because councils in the region represent relatively small populations and are dispersed throughout a large area, residents have long felt that their neighbourhood councils were insufficient to promote their interests and that the needs of a widespread area would be better served by uniting under larger organizations. Leaders also viewed the scope of neighbourhood councils as too limited to pursue regional policy goals such as access to water, claiming that there are restrictions with respect to what types of funds they may apply for. Thus, when neighbourhood council participants decided through the discussion and debate process in the mid-2000s to make water a priority, they approached other councils in the area to establish a water committee to apply for funding to install water. From that point on, the water committee worked with the municipal technical assistance unit to prepare a strong proposal (including the number of homes to be connected to the water system, costs, and other details). The proposal was presented to decision-makers from the municipal (Valdivia) and regional (XIV, Los Ríos) governments, both of which have infrastructure funds to support this type of investment. The entire process took a couple of years. Council leaders insist (and participants agree) that water committee representatives maintained strong ties to the neighbourhood councils by providing regular updates at citizen assemblies.128

127 Interviews with Pablo, council president, Valdivia, April 20, 2013; Renan, council executive member, Cayumapú, April 21, 2013; and Official, Office of the Mayor of Valdivia, April 26, 2013; Support Agent, Public Works, Valdivia, April 26, 2013.
128 Interviews with Pablo, council president, Valdivia, April 20, 2013; Ariel, council executive member, Cayumapú, April 21, 2013; Lorena, council participant, April 23, 2013.
The council has also participated in a new structure created by the 2011 Popular Participation Law. Community organizations (including neighbourhood councils) may establish a Communal Council of Civil Society Organizations (Consejo Comunal de Organizaciones de la Sociedad Civil, COSOC) to represent, aggregate and pursue the interests of multiple councils or other civil society groups in a given territory. The president of the Cayumapú neighbourhood council sits on the local COSCO and in this capacity is expected to represent the demands of all neighbourhood councils represented by this body. His role is to present problems and proposals decided on by neighbourhood councils to the municipal and regional governments. Participants hope that this new structure will enhance their ability to use pressure to achieve larger-scale goals by presenting the demands of multiple councils to local and regional decision-makers.

**Perspectives**

Participants expressed mixed feelings with respect to the benefits they had achieved through their neighbourhood council. Over half of respondents (7 out of 10) were pleased with the progress that has been made so far (particularly the extension of water services to their neighbourhood) yet all expressed impatience with the progress of other infrastructure projects. Still, when asked about the projects that have been completed, 9 of 10 interviewed subjects believed that community participation was essential in achieving these outcomes, with most arguing that their area would still be without water services if it were not for the pressure exerted by the neighbourhood council, water committee and other participatory mechanisms. Local officials from the municipal and regional governments agreed, although they framed their
perspective differently, arguing that participatory mechanisms help them to know what the public wants and therefore to develop policy priorities.\(^{129}\)

**Ecuador**

While Ecuador’s system of participatory mechanisms is inspired by the Venezuelan prototype, the three cases studied here have been less successful with respect to achieving significant outcomes. In one of the three cases, the benefits can be considered medium-value, while the other two cases demonstrate low-value and no-value outcomes (see Table 4.4). Perhaps surprisingly, the outcomes are generally less significant than those observed in the Chilean cases, despite the more limited “on paper” design of that country’s neighbourhood councils. In these cases, there is weak alignment between outcomes and participants’ preferred alternatives, scope is limited, and the material conditions of residents have not improved significantly. As we shall see, the process that residents describe is very different from that observed in Venezuela and restricts citizens to a secondary role in decision-making and implementation.

**Table 4.4: Projects, Processes and Outcomes, Ecuador**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alternatives selected</th>
<th>Process</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tarqui</td>
<td>Participants identify needs and select priorities</td>
<td>• Construction or reconstruction of streets and sidewalks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Construction of streets and sidewalks</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Beautification projects for parks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Construction and beautification of parks and public spaces</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Updating the water system</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Clean up pollution in the 2 rivers that cross the parish</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Structural improvements to schools in poor condition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{129}\) Interview with Official, Office of the Mayor of Valdivia, April 26, 2013; Community Organizations Division, Valdivia, April 24, 2013.
| Montúfar | • More equitable distribution of essential resources such as gas and water  
• Identifying needs for the purposes of targeting social spending  
• Support for small businesses  
• Housing improvements  
• Extension of utilities to areas not covered | Authorities make final decisions  
Citizens play no role in obtaining funding  
Implementation carried out by state agencies  
Relationship with authorities characterized by conflict | • Distribution of gas through the assembly  
• Database established for targeting social spending  
• Development funds for small and medium businesses |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Calderón | • Lack of public services for many homes: water, sanitation, electricity  
• Streets not paved  
• Access to public transportation  
• Community facilities: medical facilities, sports facilities, etc.  
• Families require deeds for their land |  | • Community centre built  
• One street paved |

**Tarqui**

The Tarqui citizens’ assembly demonstrated modest outcomes in comparison to the high-value Venezuelan cases. Citizens in this working-class urban parish identified a number of alternatives through their participatory process, many related to deteriorating public infrastructure. These include construction or re-construction of streets and sidewalks, installing public lighting, beautification projects such as building parks and repairing storm drains. The most pressing priorities defined by citizen participants, however, involved specific problems that affect residents’ quality of life. The two river channels that cross the parish and empty into the city’s port suffer from high levels of pollution. This, combined with a sewage system that has deteriorated in some sections of the parish, is seen as a major health concern. The drinking water system is considered “uneven”, with some families requiring “alternative means” of securing...
drinking water. Residents also believe that the main public primary school in the parish is in poor physical condition and that this presents health and safety issues for the children who attend.  

Outcomes

At the time of research, modest infrastructure outcomes could be traced to the work of the council. The public works projects cost just over 1,400,000 USD. These included street paving, building and repairing sidewalks, creating parks, and finishing the construction of a community centre used for citizen participation. The water distribution system was in the process of being updated in parts of the parish. Municipal documents demonstrate that while Tarqui is not the most populous sector of the city, more money was spent on average than in Manta’s other urban parishes. However, residents had not made significant progress on the alternatives they had voted to prioritize in their local assembly. At the time of research, no attempts to address the pollution issue had been made, the sewage and water systems continued to deteriorate in some sectors of the parish, and the schools had not been renovated.

Process

The agenda-setting phase resembles that observed in Chile. Assemblies were convened by communicating with residents through local media. Beyond this phase, the process diverges from those observed in both Venezuela and Chile. While the assembly itself engaged in a deliberative process and produced decisions that most participants agreed with, it was only able to move its

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131 GAD de Manta, Plan de Obra Anual 2013.
132 GAD de Manta, Plan de Obra Anual 2013.
decisions forward to obtain funding on the projects mentioned above; it failed in achieving the assembly’s more highly prioritized goals. Unlike in the Venezuelan cases, the assembly does not have implementation and oversight powers and must depend on the will of local authorities. In contrast to the Chilean cases, where participatory mechanisms have relatively limited powers, the relationship between the assembly and local authorities in Tarqui is characterized by conflict and mistrust. Manta’s decision-makers did provide funding for a number of the alternatives residents had identified, but opted to invest in a series of smaller-scale capital projects, a position which residents attribute to the visibility and “photo-op” possibilities of these types of projects. Municipal officials claim that they do respect the participatory process and point to the fact that completed projects were in fact based on the Tarqui assembly’s list of alternatives but argue that parish-level citizens’ assemblies cannot see the bigger picture and that authorities must balance priorities.

Attempts to engage the municipality occur through the Manta Citizens’ Assembly, which includes members of local assemblies from the various parishes in Manta as well as other civil society representatives from the city. The latter, according to participants, are appointed by the mayor as opposed to being elected by citizens, which is contrary to the stipulations of the enabling legislation. While representatives from the local parish assemblies (including Tarqui) are selected by participants of those mechanisms, the civil society representatives are allied with the mayor. This produces a dynamic in which both deliberation and voting are controlled by the municipality as opposed to citizens. Furthermore, unlike in the Venezuelan cases, the Tarqui

133 Interviews with José, Victor, Franklin, assembly executive members, Manta, Feb. 4, 2013.
134 Interviews with Councillor, Municipio de Manta, Manta, Feb. 6, 2013; Advisor, Office of the Mayor, Manta, Feb. 18, 2013.
135 GAD de Manta, Boletín informativo del Gobierno Autónomo Descentralizado del Cantón Manta (GAD-Manta).
136 Interviews with assembly participants José, Feb. 4, 2013; Ketty, Manta, Feb. 9, 2013; Betty, Manta, Feb. 11, 2013; and see Manta, Ordenanza que crea y regula el sistema de participación de Manta (2011).
assembly does not have access to specific funds allotted to participatory mechanisms and citizen representatives do not play a role in the allocation of these funds. Rather, they must depend on funds from the municipal government once they have submitted their priorities.137

**Perspectives**

Citizens emphasized that while these outcomes were encouraging, they fell well below the community’s expectations and were not achieved according to the type of equal relationship that should exist between the assembly and the municipality. Still, they do recognize that their parish has had more success than others. Participants attribute this relative success to the efforts of the local assembly while municipal officials believe that a combined effort (citizens and municipal officials) was most effective.138 The latter tended to frame this as a positive example of popular participation. A majority (12 of 14) of participants agreed that the modest results they managed to achieve could be attributed to the local assembly, with respondents agreeing that things were even worse before the existence of participatory mechanisms. The CPCCS participation specialist for Manabí province, who claimed that the participatory process is new and evolving but that the moderate gains observed here are a result of a devoted citizens’ assembly, corroborated participants’ beliefs.139

However, 13 out of 14 participants interviewed were not satisfied with the outcomes produced by the participatory process, insisting that they had voted to prioritize two issues that would have improved the quality of life of residents and their children.

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137 Interviews with José, Victor, Franklin, assembly executive members, Manta, Feb. 4, 2013.
138 Interview with Councillor, Municipio de Manta, Manta, Feb. 6, 2013; Technical Agent, Department of Public Works, Municipio de Manta, Feb. 10, 2013.
Montúfar

The citizens’ assembly of the Canton of Montúfar is distinct from the other two Ecuadorian cases in that it predates the 2010 Citizen Participation Law. First established in 2003 by a mayor who campaigned on the theme of popular participation, the assembly was in fact a model for the type of mechanism envisaged in article 56 of the new national legislation.\(^{140}\) While originally given legal status through a municipal ordinance, the assembly became regulated by this law from 2010 onward. Alternatives identified and selected through the assembly include public control and distribution of resources such as water and gas, housing improvements and support for small agricultural businesses prevalent in the canton.\(^{141}\) The assembly has also identified a number of other infrastructure projects intended to raise the quality of life of residents in this primarily rural district: extending utilities to homes outside of populated areas and paving streets.

Outcomes

Participants identify the establishment of a participatory budgeting program in Montúfar as a significant achievement of the assembly. While past practice involved elected councillors making decisions behind closed doors (and often misappropriating funds), the municipality now recognizes the right of the citizens’ assembly to participate directly in the process.\(^{142}\) A senior municipal councillor supported participants’ recollection that the impetus to have the assembly play a recognized role in budgeting was an achievement of the assembly members themselves.\(^{143}\) Of the 17 individuals interviewed, 12 agreed that the transparency generated through public

\(^{140}\) Interview with Rubén Boada, Participation Consultant, CPCCS Quito, Sept. 22, 2012.


\(^{143}\) Interview with Municipal Councillor, San Gabriel (Carchi), Oct. 15, 2012.
participation has ensured that available funds are far more likely to be dedicated to “the common good” than in the past. While this arrangement has allowed the assembly a role in identifying alternatives, only 5 respondents were satisfied with the tangible outcomes this has produced. This is elaborated on in the “process” section below.

The most significant concrete outcome mentioned by the assembly’s leaders and participants involves the distribution of gas. Used for cooking and heating, this was selected by residents as a priority through a participatory and deliberative process. Distribution of gas is now coordinated through the assembly, in collaboration with the municipality, according to a needs assessment carried out by residents.\textsuperscript{144} This has reduced the cost of this essential resource and ensured that it is distributed equitably. The assembly was applying a similar model for other basic services at the time of research. The assembly has also established a database of all the families who live in the canton for the purposes of targeting social programs and ensuring that rates for services aligned with what they are able to pay.\textsuperscript{145} Finally, the assembly has established a program of loans and grants for small businesses (including agribusinesses) in the canton. In 2011, this program distributed loans to 31 families to support small businesses from artisanal items to cheese production.\textsuperscript{146}

\textit{Process}

According to residents, the implementation of participatory budgeting and the gas project occurred under a former municipal administration (predating the 2010 law) that demonstrated a willingness to work with the citizens’ assembly. These priorities were identified by residents in

\textsuperscript{144} Asamblea de Unidad Cantonal de Montúfar, \textit{Evaluación de las necesidades comunitarias}, 2007.
\textsuperscript{145} Interview with assembly executive member, San Gabriel, Oct. 14, 2012
\textsuperscript{146} Asamblea de Unidad Cantonal de Montúfar, \textit{Informe Coordinación general AUCM}, Oct. 2011.
the assembly and then conveyed to local elected authorities and municipal departments in meetings that included both citizen and local government representatives. Residents describe the process as deliberative and productive.\(^{147}\) Despite the 2010 legislation that theoretically provides citizens’ assemblies with greater recognition and more concrete powers, residents claim that resistance to citizen participation has characterized more recent relationships with the local government. The current conflictual relationship with local officials resembles the Tarqui case described above. Thus, while the citizens’ assembly had put forward a number of proposals for infrastructure and access to public services projects, many have either been rejected or replaced with initiatives selected by authorities. Assembly members point out that this is possible in large part because there are no enforcement mechanisms to require officials to respect participatory rights and because citizens’ assemblies are not entitled to funds but must seek support from elected officials.\(^{148}\) The program of grants for small business was established (following a debate and vote in the assembly) in cooperation with the national development agency, SENPLADES. Participants argue that central government departments are more open to citizen participation than local authorities and it is preferable to work directly with state agencies when possible.\(^{149}\)

The unique feature of this assembly is its integration into the canton’s participatory budgeting process. The earlier stages proceed in a similar fashion to PB processes in other jurisdictions: plenary assemblies are held on an annual basis to discuss and debate needs, followed by another round of public sessions intended to establish and vote on priorities. While

\(^{149}\) Interviews with assembly executive members, San Gabriel, Oct. 14, 2012; and assembly participant Hilda, San Gabriel, Oct. 20, 2012
all residents can participate in the process, the citizens’ assembly has an “oversight” role to ensure the process is inclusive and deliberative and may elect delegates to committees and working groups. However, interviews with all of the participants revealed less consensus over the preferred alternatives than was observed in most of the cases studied thus far. Even though the assembly did opt to support the social development alternatives discussed above, the nature of this canton (primarily rural but with some citizens living in a more established town) created important divisions over priorities in the deliberative process.

**Perspectives**

Participants’ description of the participatory process reveals both positive and negative experiences. Most participants express pride with the accomplishments of their assembly, comparing the current role that citizens play in local government to the more passive role in the past. Yet only 5 out of 17 claimed to be satisfied. While 13 of the 17 respondents believe they have achieved some positive gains in terms of governance and tangible outcomes such as implementation of participatory budgeting and gas distribution, they feel that achieving these goals has required residents to “fight” local officials every step of the way and believe that the outcomes are constantly in danger of being undermined by authorities who do not understand or respect the role of public participation.\(^{150}\) There is therefore a sense that any outcomes achieved are tenuous and dependant on the openness of local authorities. Residents describe the PB process, for example, as an improvement, yet many (particularly those who are most engaged in the citizens’ assembly) still lament that local officials are not always inclined to adopt decisions made through the PB process, or must be pressured to do so. Of the 17 subjects interviewed, 15

expressed considerable frustration with what they see as the gap between participatory rights on paper, and how these are translated into practice. These sentiments are reflected in the following statement made by one of the assembly leaders:

“Participation is established as the Fifth Power (in the Constitution) but there is no real support for these processes. When we demand what is written on paper, there is confrontation with authorities who still work in the framework of representative, delegate democracy. We have created a number of mechanisms that have a lot of potential but not many things are being practiced. The authorities do not want to understand. We need to get the local authorities to actually read the laws on citizen participation.”

It should also be noted that while most residents expressed similar frustration, participants who identify as indigenous expressed an additional dissatisfaction with their own role in the assembly itself, insisting that their views were not always taken seriously by mestizo members. These individuals stated that they had hoped this attitude, so prevalent in Ecuadorian society, would not be reproduced within institutions intended to be more inclusive and deliberative. Still, of the 5 indigenous participants interviewed, 4 believed that having the citizens’ assembly has provided them with more opportunities to express their opinions than in the past and that fellow participants are at least somewhat more respectful than elected officials and civil servants.

**Calderón**

The local assembly located in the Quito suburb of Calderón represents a part of that parish that was recently settled. Various needs and alternatives were identified by participants but even more so than in the previous case, there was little consensus among participants as to what the priorities should be. Infrastructure and transportation was considered important by some, while others preferred beautification projects and building community facilities. One of the most

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divisive issues was related to obtaining deeds for land. Some residents have sought to obtain legal ownership of land they have established their homes on (mostly indigenous families and single women) and hoped that the participatory process engendered by the existence of a citizens’ assembly would help them meet these goals, while other residents participating in the same assembly claimed ownership of large parcels of land.

Outcomes

The assembly has produced few meaningful outcomes. The only significant project completed involves the building of a community centre in a part of the neighbourhood characterized by more established residences. Transportation, a need identified by many of the women who work as domestic workers and must travel daily to wealthier parts of Quito, is still lacking. Only a single street had been paved, which makes access difficult. Residents must walk long distances (through muddy streets during rainy periods) to access bus routes. Basic infrastructure is still lacking in parts of the area and services have not been extended to most of the homes that require them. The poorest residents do not have water in their homes and streets remained unpaved and unlit. Services such as water and electricity have been installed for some homes, but this has been paid for by landowners. The utilities are therefore localized and in private hands, contrary to the wishes of residents who hoped for public municipal utilities to be extended to their homes. Much of the land on which the neighbourhood was built belongs to one individual (himself a member of the assembly) who charges residents who wish to be connected to these services; those who cannot afford installation (or choose not to pay it because they believe the municipality should do so) remain without utilities. According to residents, a number

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152 Interviews with assembly members Maria, Quito, Sept 23, 2012; Miriam, Salomé, Rosita, Juan, Natalie, Carcelén, Oct. 3, 2012.
of “foreign” engineers were invited to the neighbourhood by the assembly in 2012 in order to develop infrastructure projects but these had not come to fruition at the time of a follow up visit in July 2014.\footnote{Interviews with Miriam, Salomé, Rosita, assembly participants, Carcelén, Oct. 3, 2012.} Meanwhile, residents living in more established parts of the neighbourhood do have access to municipal services.\footnote{Interviews with assembly participants Chani, Quito, Sept. 21, 2012; David, Calderón, Sept. 25, 2012.}

Finally, there has been little progress with respect to obtaining land titles. A number of residents, primarily indigenous women, claim to have paid the landowner to purchase the lots their homes were built on but claim that they were not provided with the titles. Funding for housing improving projects has been distributed unevenly. Obtaining funding for housing improvement requires proof of home ownership and the assembly has not made an effort to help fellow participants to obtain these documents or the funding.

\textit{Process}

The process of decision-making observed in this assembly is characterized by conflict and exclusion, although in contrast to the two other Ecuadorian cases, these struggles tend to take place within the participatory mechanism itself and not between the assembly and local authorities. While regular sessions are held and all residents may participate, there is considerable disagreement with respect to how these function. The indigenous residents interviewed (mostly women) unanimously agreed that their interventions are ignored or mocked and that a handful of individuals dictate assembly decisions in a paternalistic manner. Meetings tend to proceed in a similar manner: residents are told by the assembly president about alternatives that have been selected as priorities. These have included street paving, sports facilities and the construction of a medical clinic and a day care centre. Some discussion takes
place following the presentation of projects, although participants (particularly indigenous members) insist that this is strictly controlled by the (mestizo) assembly leaders and that contrary opinions are dismissed.\textsuperscript{155} The council’s leaders deny this, arguing that all residents’ opinions are heard and taken into consideration but that they must rely on technical and financial information in order to make sound decisions and present well-conceived plans to the municipal authorities.\textsuperscript{156} Participants were unable to provide information on what happens beyond the assembly meetings themselves. The council’s leaders, meanwhile, claim that they are continuing to work on obtaining funding for the infrastructure projects mentioned above.\textsuperscript{157}

\textit{Experiences}

Not surprisingly, the majority of participants are not satisfied with either the outcomes or the process. Of the 15 subjects interviewed, only 3 (none of the indigenous members) were positive about the assembly. Most suggested that while many promises were made regarding various infrastructure projects, they have seen no results other than a single paved road and that in any case, most members were not involved in the development of community priorities. Most attribute these failures to the undemocratic nature of the citizens’ assembly. Typical of the sentiments expressed, an indigenous domestic worker stated that:

\begin{quote}
“The in the assembly…the president has the last word, never the members. If we suggest ‘can we do things this way?’ he’ll say ‘no, we are doing things the way I said, I have experience and I know what is best’. I’m pretty sure this isn’t what participatory democracy is supposed to be.”\textsuperscript{158}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{155} Interviews with assembly participants Miriam, Salomé, Rosita, Carcelén, Oct. 3, 2012; Rosa, Clotilde, Calderón, Oct. 9, 2012.

\textsuperscript{156} Interviews with assembly executive members, Calderón, Oct. 12, 2012.

\textsuperscript{157} Interviews with assembly executive members, Calderón, Oct. 12, 2012.

\textsuperscript{158} Interview with Maria, assembly participant, Quito, Sept. 23, 2012
The Calderón case therefore demonstrates the possibility that entrenched power relations may be reproduced within mechanisms designed to foster more inclusive deliberation and decision-making. Yet the individuals who expressed disappointment with the process were not entirely discouraged. Most believed that while their experience has not been positive, they have gained experience in public speaking and (paradoxically) feel more confident about expressing themselves than in the past. All of these individuals also expressed a continued belief in the principles of participatory democracy, attributing their negative experiences to corrupt officials or racist attitudes rather than to a failure of participatory democracy per se.

Conclusions
While there is important within-country and cross-national variation, at least some positive outcomes were observed in all but one of the cases studied (see Table 4.5).

The evidence demonstrates that the participatory mechanisms in Venezuela, designed and promoted according to radical participatory democracy principles, have generated significant tangible outcomes. All three of these communal councils have produced concrete benefits in the form of infrastructure modernization, housing improvements, and other social development programs intended to augment residents’ quality of life. In all cases, residents, local officials and available documentation link these gains to the communal councils and individuals interviewed almost unanimously feel that such benefits are more equitably distributed than in the past. Communities are using these institutions to resolve long-standing infrastructure problems (access to treated water and sewage and electricity, among others) that municipal governments prior to the establishment of councils tended to ignore. Activists who claim that municipal and regional governments of the past only devoted resources to middle-class and wealthy neighbourhoods
believe that the communal councils have allowed inhabitants of poorer neighbourhoods and rural areas access to public goods they were denied in the past. The processes through which these outcomes were achieved demonstrate that participants have decision-making powers, dedicated funding as well as the capacity to participate in the implementation and evaluation of their initiatives. There is some variation between the cases, however, particularly with respect to the council located in Mérida which has thus far produce medium-value outcomes, although needs identified were less acute and smaller in scope.

Table 4.5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Tangible outcomes</th>
<th>Alignment with alternatives</th>
<th>Scope</th>
<th>Improvement to quality of life</th>
<th>Participants’ role in participatory relationship</th>
<th>Participants’ role aligns with institutional design</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sucre</td>
<td>High value</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>Significant</td>
<td>Dominant</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guacara</td>
<td>High value</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>Significant</td>
<td>Dominant</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mérida</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Strong-Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Mostly dominant</td>
<td>Mostly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Pintana</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Strong-Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Subordinate, primarily cooperative</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maipú</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Strong-Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Subordinate, primarily cooperative</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cayumapú</td>
<td>Low value</td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>Small-Moderate</td>
<td>Minimal</td>
<td>Subordinate, sometimes conflictual</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tarqui</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Weak-Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Subordinate, mostly conflictual</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montúfar</td>
<td>Low value</td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>Small</td>
<td>Minimal</td>
<td>Subordinate, conflictual</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calderón</td>
<td>No value</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Subordinate, conflictual (and conflictual between participants)</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Chilean cases have also provided residents with important tangible outcomes despite the more “pragmatic” conception of citizen participation and the limited powers that characterize participatory mechanisms in that country. Most neighbourhood council leaders and participants argue that they have had an impact on their communities through participation. In all cases, residents, local officials and available documentation suggest that participatory mechanisms did play an important role in achieving these gains although in contrast to the Venezuelan cases, outcomes are attributed to both the efforts of participatory mechanisms and municipal governments. Communities are therefore using these institutions to resolve long-standing infrastructure problems that municipal governments may otherwise ignore, but they are using them in very different ways from their Venezuelan communal councils.

The tangible outcomes observed in the Ecuadorian cases are more modest. Here, there is a contrast with cases in the other two countries. Venezuelan communal council participants used the powers available to them to translate their decisions into practice, while Chileans used their neighbourhood councils to exert pressure and represent collective demands. In contrast, there is a conflict between participants and local authorities in the Ecuadorian cases. Having internalized the central government’s discourse, which is similar in nature to Venezuela, participants are aware of their “on paper” rights and expect to be able to exercise them. This message has not been embraced by local level politicians and bureaucrats, who see decision-making and implementation as their responsibility and view participation as primarily consultative. This contrast between local officials (who control resources) and participants creates hostility and ultimately deadlock, as assembly leaders are less inclined to work with officials than their counterparts in Chile, while local authorities perceive assembly leaders as attempting to usurp their authority.
Still, there is evidence that eight of the nine participatory mechanisms have had some impact on local policy. While there is variation among the three countries with respect to tangible outcomes, this variation is not as great as one might expect and does not play out according to expectations. We see that while the “radical democracy” Venezuelan cases fare better (two are high-value), the “pragmatic participation” Chilean cases demonstrate two medium-value outcome cases. Thus, while there are important differences with respect to the powers that citizens have through the participatory processes, this alone is not sufficient to explain the variation between outcomes. It is therefore necessary to explore the factors that contribute to this variation. In other words, why have some cases fared better than others? It is also necessary to understand why the variation between Venezuela and Chile is not as great as expected given the more subordinate role of participatory mechanisms in the latter country and why the Ecuadorian cases (promoted according to “radical” principles) do not fare as well as those in Chile. Chapter 6 will further explore these questions, focusing on the variation between the cases and the factors that account for the different outcomes. The following chapter (Chapter 5) will first look at the spillover effects generated by the participatory mechanisms.
This chapter engages with another common claim made by participatory democracy theorists: that participation in the public sphere serves as a learning process and encourages citizens to develop more positive perceptions of democracy and a stronger sense of political efficacy. As discussed in Chapter 2, a common concern expressed in the literature on Latin America is that public support and enthusiasm for democracy is weak and that citizens manifest high rates of ambivalence toward democratic institutions. An influential current of the literature suggests that direct participation in decision-making promotes more positive attitudes toward politics and democracy, enhances participants’ sense of political efficacy, and allows them to learn important skills that should help them to exercise more effective democratic citizenship. Involvement at the local level is seen as a good place to begin; participation in local decision-making is seen as a means of learning democracy, as it fosters “psychological qualities” required for participation at the national level.

The research presented in this chapter primarily relies on a mixed (quantitative and qualitative) survey administered to individuals involved in participatory mechanisms. It uses Latinobarometer national opinion data for the purposes of comparing respondents’ perspectives with those of their compatriots. The chapter also draws on interview content to provide a more in-depth understanding of respondents’ perceptions by examining how they internalize conceptions of democracy promoted by the state and to what extent their discursive repertoires align with those produced by state institutions.

The findings suggest that active involvement in participatory mechanisms does generate positive spillover effects for significant numbers of participants. Comparing the survey responses to the national data for each country reveals that participants have more positive perceptions of
democracy and a stronger sense of empowerment than their compatriots. Significant numbers of participants also claim to have acquired various sets of skills through participation. There is significant variation between the cases, however, with participants from some mechanisms experiencing far more positive effects than others. There are two important considerations. First, within-country variation reveals a noticeable association between these spillover effects and the tangible outcomes presented in Chapter 4. Overall, participants associated with the high-value outcome cases demonstrate more positive spillover effects. It is not yet clear, however, whether these positive spillover effects are entirely related to the material benefits participants receive or whether they are generated by other factors such as quality of deliberation and inclusiveness. This will be further explored in Chapter 6.

Second, in more politically polarized environments such as Venezuela and Ecuador, at least some of the positive effects can be attributed to party affiliation. Participants who support the governments that initiated the “radical” participatory democracy agenda are more likely than non-supporters to experience positive spillover effects. Still, while these two factors may be important in the generation of positive spillover effects, qualitative survey responses and interviews demonstrate that participants highly value the experience of participation in and of itself. Individuals, particularly in Venezuela, claim that they feel more positive about democracy and their ability to have a say than in the past. Many have also acquired skills, including administrative, technical and political, which reinforces the “schools for democracy” concept reviewed in the theoretical literature. Skills acquisition does not appear to be strongly dependent on tangible outcomes or government support.

It is important to note, however, that state discourse surrounding participatory democracy also shapes people’s perceptions on these issues and may therefore have an important impact on
spillover effects. In all three countries, citizens’ conceptualizations align closely with the discourse on citizenship produced by the state agencies charged with oversight of citizen participation systems. The more active and “radical” conceptualizations observed in Venezuela and (to a lesser extent) Ecuador appear to produce optimism and a sense of empowerment even where tangible outcomes are less than optimal.

Perceptions of and Satisfaction with Democracy

Participants were asked a number of questions about their level of satisfaction with democracy in their country, how they would rate their country on a scale and how they would compare it to other countries in the region. Support for democracy is very high among participants in all three countries. When asked whether democracy is preferable to any other form of government, 89% (n=167) of Venezuelan, 81% (n=126) of Ecuadorian and 76% (n=78) of Chilean respondents agreed. In the most recent national survey (2013) that asked the same question, Venezuelans demonstrated the highest levels of support for democracy in the region at 87%, with Ecuadorians and Chileans coming in at 62% and 63% respectively.159 These are all above the regional average, which stands at 56% support for democracy. Respondents who participate in Venezuela’s communal councils are either satisfied or very satisfied (78%, n=147) with the quality of democracy in their country. This compares with 45% of Venezuelans as a whole.160 A smaller majority, 57% (n=88) of respondents from Ecuador’s local citizen assemblies are either satisfied or very satisfied with the quality of democracy in their country, as opposed to 49% of the general population. Only 48% (n=49) of Chilean respondents expressed satisfaction, yet this

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159 Latinobarómetro, *Informe Latinobarómetro 2013.*
160 Unless otherwise noted, national numbers in the following section are taken from Latinobarómetro data for 2011, the most recent data available at the time of writing through the online analysis tool at http://www.latinobarometro.org/latino/LATAnalize.jsp.
remains higher than the population as a whole (32%). Interestingly, women participants are more likely than men to express satisfaction. These numbers compare favourably with the national numbers, which suggest that men are slightly more satisfied with democracy than women (see Table 5.1).

**Table 5.1: Satisfaction with Democracy**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Venezuela, participants</th>
<th>Venezuela, national data</th>
<th>Ecuador, participants</th>
<th>Ecuador, national data</th>
<th>Chile, participants</th>
<th>Chile, national data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>72% (n=66)</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>51% (n=35)</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>46% (n=22)</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>84% (n=81)</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>60% (n=53)</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>50% (n=27)</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Responses to question: In general, would you say that you are very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied or not at all satisfied with the way democracy works in [nation]? Here answers for “satisfied or very satisfied”

As noted in Chapter 2, younger people are underrepresented in participatory mechanisms when compared to the general population, which potentially makes comparisons with the national data problematic. However, age does not appear to be a significant factor either in the national data or in the survey presented here (see Table 5.2). Satisfaction remains relatively consistent across age groups. The age groups most represented in this sample (40+) demonstrate a level of satisfaction consistent with the overall results presented above.

**Table 5.2: Satisfaction with Democracy by Age**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Venezuela, participants</th>
<th>Venezuela, national data</th>
<th>Ecuador, participants</th>
<th>Ecuador, national data</th>
<th>Chile, participants</th>
<th>Chile, national data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16-25</td>
<td>78% (n=7)</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>50% (n=4)</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-40</td>
<td>82% (n=36)</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>52% (n=15)</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>42% (n=8)</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-60</td>
<td>79% (n=66)</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>58% (n=42)</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>49% (n=21)</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61+</td>
<td>76% (n=38)</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>57% (n=27)</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>51% (n=20)</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*In general, would you say that you are very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied or not at all satisfied with the way democracy works in [nation]? Here answers for “satisfied or very satisfied”
Similar patterns can be found when analyzing other questions related to how participants perceive of democracy in their country. On a scale of 1-10 (1 being not a democracy and 10 being a full democracy), participants tended to rate their country quite high, with 87% in Venezuela, 60% in Ecuador and 52% in Chile rating their country as 9 or 10, or full democracy. In contrast, 36% of Venezuelans, 12% of Ecuadorians and 21% of Chileans rated their country as 9 or 10 according to the national data, with most likely to rate their country in the 6-8 range. On the bottom end of the scale, 4% of Venezuelans, 3% of Ecuadorians and 1% of Chileans rated their country as 1 or 2 (not a democracy) in the national survey, whereas none of the survey participants did (including those who are not supporters of the governing party). In the Venezuelan and Ecuadorian cases, the percentage of participants who rated their country as a full democracy, or close, exceeds the percentage of government supporters, meaning that many of the non-supporters rated their country fairly high.

A strong majority of participants in all three countries tended to feel that democracy works better in their country than in the rest of Latin America, with 77% of communal council participants in Venezuela and 69% of local assembly participants in Ecuador and 61% of Chilean neighbourhood council participants expressing this view, while only 5%, 8% and 8% respectively felt that the quality of democracy in their country is inferior compared with the rest of the region (see table 5.3). In all three countries, the percentage of respondents who feel the quality of democracy in their country compares favourably in the region is significantly higher than the national averages.\textsuperscript{161}

\textsuperscript{161} For this question, survey results are compared with 2008 Latinobarómetro data.
Table 5.3: Comparing Democracy to Other Countries in the Region*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Venezuela, participants</th>
<th>Venezuela, national</th>
<th>Ecuador, participants</th>
<th>Ecuador, national</th>
<th>Chile, participants</th>
<th>Chile, national</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Better</td>
<td>77% (n=145)</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>69% (n=108)</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>61% (n=62)</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same</td>
<td>15% (n=29)</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>17% (n=27)</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>29% (n=30)</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worse</td>
<td>5% (n=10)</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>8% (n=12)</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>8% (n=8)</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know/no response</td>
<td>2% (n=4)</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>4% (n=9)</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>2% (n=2)</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Would you say that quality of democracy in your country is better, the same or worse than in other Latin American countries?

In order to understand their perspective, participants were asked why they are satisfied (or not satisfied) with the quality of democracy in their country. They were able to identify more than one reason, and most did so. Given the open-ended nature of the question, the responses obviously vary considerably, yet at the same time there is remarkable consistency amongst Venezuelan and Ecuadorian participants. Citizen participation, the existence of participatory mechanisms and the related ability to participate in decisions affecting their lives was most often cited as the reason participants believed the quality of democracy is high. Of those who did express a positive assessment of the state of democracy in their country, an overwhelming 89% (n=131) of Venezuelans and 74% (n=65) in Ecuador provided some variation on this theme. Most simply wrote “citizen participation” or “popular participation” (participación ciudadana, participación popular), others were more specific (i.e. “we can participate in the decision-making process”). This is perhaps not surprising considering the involvement of the surveyed individuals in participatory institutions, but it does attest to the importance that they place on citizen participation in decision-making. This is also evident in the negative responses. Of the significant minority of Ecuadorian respondents not satisfied with the quality of democracy
(42%), over half cited that participatory rights are not being fully respected by all levels of government or that there is a gap between what is on paper and how things work in practice.

The next most common response provided by those who did express satisfaction was related to economic redistribution and the more equitable access to public goods and services provided in recent years, with 76% (n=112) of Venezuelan respondents and 69% (n=61) in Ecuador providing some version of this theme. Examples include “more equitable distribution of wealth”, and “services and infrastructure expanded to everyone”, while many referred to the existence of new social investment and/or specific programs. Many linked this directly to citizen participation (stating that participation has led to more equitable access to infrastructure projects or improvements in health and education). Another 64% (n=94) of participants in Venezuela and 62% (n=55) in Ecuador identified expanded inclusion as significant. This centers around the belief that a wider segment of the population is able to exert influence on government than in the past. About half of respondents in both countries mentioned specific representative institutions as being exclusionary.

In contrast, of the minority who expressed satisfaction with the state of Chilean democracy, the most common response (48%, n=24) was related to the strength of the country’s political institutions, while 32% (n=16) cited free and fair elections. Yet of the majority of Chilean neighbourhood council participants who were not satisfied with democracy, 67% (n=35) mentioned the unequal distribution of wealth and resources while 63% (n=33) provided lack of meaningful participation as their primary reason for this perspective. Chileans therefore appear to base their satisfaction with democracy on different criteria but share a common concern with Ecuadorian respondents about how public participation works in practice.
The importance participants place on participation as a core element of democracy is confirmed by the next question. When asked to select from a list of what they believe to be the most important characteristic of democracy, respondents in Venezuela and Ecuador prioritize citizen participation and socioeconomic equality, factors that do not align with the dominant liberal conception of democracy. Across both countries, close to two thirds of participants chose citizen participation as the most important ingredient in a democracy: 67% (n=126) in Venezuela and 54% (n=84) in Ecuador chose citizen participation as their first choice when asked to select the most important characteristic of democracy (they were asked to select one option). Close to a quarter of respondents in both countries chose being able to satisfy basic economic needs as their first choice. Only 4% of participants in Venezuela and 5% in Ecuador chose being able to vote for representatives in elections as their first choice, while none selected the existence of political parties (see Table 5.4). This compares with a national result in which voting in open and fair elections was the most commonly selected first choice (36% of Venezuelans and 29% of Ecuadorians) followed by an economic system that allows for a decent income (19% and 20% respectively).\footnote{162 Latinobarómetro 2001, 2005, 2006 aggregated data.} National results also demonstrate a relatively low priority given to a competitive party system (9% and 6%).

Survey results from Chilean respondents demonstrate that participation is less likely to be seen as the defining characteristic of a health democracy. Participants were more evenly split between various characteristics, with the largest number selected free and fair elections (24%). Chilean participants’ responses align very closely with the national data.\footnote{163 Ibid.}
Unfortunately, the Latinobarómetro surveys did not include citizen participation as an option so it is impossible to know how this would have affected the national data, but the results reported above demonstrate that participants place a greater importance on participation when compared with the broader population than on the components of liberal democracy, such as elections and party systems.

One of the criticisms levelled against participatory innovations introduced by the more “radical” leftist regimes (Venezuela and Ecuador) is that they are highly partisan in nature. As discussed in Chapter 2, the composition of the nine cases does reflect the partisan nature of the participatory institutions in that most respondents are government supporters. It also appears that party affiliation is a factor with respect to positive perceptions of democracy. Controlling for this variable, it is clear that participants who do not identify strongly with the party in power are less
inclined to hold the favourable views expressed in the broader sample. Thus, only 58% of Venezuelan respondents who do not support the PSUV and 49% of non-AP aligned Ecuadorian subjects agree that they are satisfied or very satisfied with democracy in their country. The percentage of Venezuelan and Ecuadorian respondents who support this view rises to 83% and 60% respectively when only looking at government supporters (see Table 5.5). While non-supporters have not experienced the same positive spillover effects with respect to satisfaction with democracy, their perceptions are similar to or (in Venezuela) above the national averages.

Table 5.5: Satisfaction with democracy by political support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political Support</th>
<th>Venezuela</th>
<th>Ecuador</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government Supporters</td>
<td>83% (n=126)</td>
<td>60% (n=63)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-supporters</td>
<td>58% (n=21)</td>
<td>49% (n=25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Data</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The findings suggest that, at least to some extent, participation has a positive influence on perceptions of democracy. But to what extent are these effects linked directly to tangible outcomes as opposed to the experience of participation per se? Comparing the results across the nine cases reveals a clear alignment with the outcomes observed in the preceding chapter. In Venezuela, participants from the Sucre and Guacara (high-value outcome) councils had extremely positive perceptions of the state of democracy in their country and believed that they are able to have an impact on decision-making while those associated with the Mérida (medium-value) case were somewhat less enthusiastic. The Chilean and Ecuadorian cases are characterized by the same pattern (see Table 5.6). This is not particularly surprising, but suggests
that tangible outcomes play an important role with respect to spillover effects. Still, rates of satisfaction are higher in all cases than the national average.

Table 5.6: Satisfaction with democracy by case*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very/fairly</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>91% (n=55)</td>
<td>87% (n=34)</td>
<td>62% (n=24)</td>
<td>55% (n=18)</td>
<td>50% (n=15)</td>
<td>36% (n=9)</td>
<td>62% (n=23)</td>
<td>56% (n=23)</td>
<td>44% (n=15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National data</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td></td>
<td>32%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Here, survey results are only presented from the nine cases studied in this thesis and not from the additional surveyed cases

**Sense of Empowerment and Political Efficacy**

The findings also reveal that involvement in communal councils or citizen assemblies has improved the sense of empowerment and political efficacy of participants. A number of questions were asked to gauge this. Participants were asked the extent to which they feel they have freedom of choice and control over their lives. They were asked to rate this on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 indicating a great deal of control and 1 meaning no control over their lives. A strong majority of respondents in Venezuela and a majority in Ecuador (73% and 53%) felt they had considerable freedom of choice and control over their lives, selecting 8-10 (compared to 37% and 23% respectively in the national survey)\(^\text{164}\), while 2% in Venezuela and 31% in Ecuador chose the middle range (some control), and only 3% of Venezuelan and 15% of Ecuadorian participants felt they had little or no control (1-4). Only 31% of Chilean

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\(^{164}\) Latinobarometro 2008 was the last year for which data is available
neighbourhood council participants felt they had considerable freedom of choice (compared with 25% in the most recent national survey), while 62% selected the middle range.

Similarly high numbers of respondents felt they are able to have political influence. When asked whether they believe that they and their neighbours are able to be heard and to influence political decisions, 72% of Venezuelan respondents and 56% of Ecuadorians strongly agree that they are. This number drops significantly when only looking only at non-government supporters in both countries, as only 46% of non PSUV supporters and 45% of non AP supporters feel that they are able to exert political influence. Nevertheless, this number is still relatively high, as only 18% of non PSUV supporters and 15% of non-AP supporters strongly disagree with the statement (see Table 5.7). In contrast, only 29% of Chilean neighbourhood council participants agree that they are able to make themselves heard and influence decision-making, while 47% somewhat agree and 24% disagree.

Table 5.7: Empowerment, Influence on Decision-Making*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Venezuela, PSUV supporters</th>
<th>Venezuela, non-PSUV supporters</th>
<th>Ecuador, AP supporters</th>
<th>Ecuador, non-AP supporters</th>
<th>Chile</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>78% (n=119)</td>
<td>46% (n=17)</td>
<td>62% (n=64)</td>
<td>45% (n=23)</td>
<td>29% (n=30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat agree</td>
<td>21% (n=32)</td>
<td>36% (n=13)</td>
<td>35% (n=37)</td>
<td>34% (n=17)</td>
<td>47% (n=47)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>1% (n=1)</td>
<td>18% (n=6)</td>
<td>3% (n=3)</td>
<td>21% (n=11)</td>
<td>24% (n=23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*My neighbours and I can influence decision-making and make our voices heard

Respondents associate this sense of political efficacy with participation. In Venezuela, a clear majority (82%) responded that they have more influence than before the expansion of participatory mechanisms. This sentiment extends to non-government supporters, albeit to a
lesser degree. Chilean respondents were fairly evenly divided, with the largest number believing that their ability to influence decisions is about the same before and after involvement in their neighbourhood councils (table 5.8).

Table 5.8: Empowerment, Before and After Participation*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Venezuela, PSUV supporters</th>
<th>Venezuela, non-PSUV supporters</th>
<th>Ecuador, AP supporters</th>
<th>Ecuador, non-AP supporters</th>
<th>Chile</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More than before</td>
<td>88% (n=134)</td>
<td>58% (n=21)</td>
<td>67% (n=70)</td>
<td>53% (n=27)</td>
<td>31%   (n=32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same</td>
<td>12% (n=18)</td>
<td>28% (n=10)</td>
<td>33% (n=35)</td>
<td>37% (n=19)</td>
<td>47%   (n=48)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than before</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16% (n=5)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9% (n=5)</td>
<td>24%   (n=22)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Do you feel you have more or less influence when compared to before participation in (participatory mechanism)?

Breaking down the results by participatory mechanism reveals a familiar pattern. Within-country comparisons reveal that respondents who have experienced more significant tangible outcomes are more likely to feel they have an influence on decision-making, yet a majority feel this way in all cases (Table 5.9).

Table 5.9: Empowerment, Influence on Decision-Making, by case*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>85%   (n=51)</td>
<td>77%   (n=30)</td>
<td>61%   (n=23)</td>
<td>40%   (n=12)</td>
<td>33%   (n=11)</td>
<td>16%   (n=4)</td>
<td>62%   (n=23)</td>
<td>51%   (n=20)</td>
<td>38%   (n=13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat agree</td>
<td>15%   (n=9)</td>
<td>23%   (n=9)</td>
<td>32%   (n=12)</td>
<td>43%   (n=13)</td>
<td>48%   (n=16)</td>
<td>44%   (n=11)</td>
<td>32%   (n=12)</td>
<td>36%   (n=14)</td>
<td>32%   (n=11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8%    (n=3)</td>
<td>17%    (n=5)</td>
<td>18%    (n=6)</td>
<td>40%    (n=10)</td>
<td>5%    (n=2)</td>
<td>13%    (n=5)</td>
<td>29%    (n=10)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Here, survey results are only presented from the nine cases studied in this thesis and not from the additional surveyed cases
Skills acquisition

Participants were asked to determine whether they possessed a given skill before and after involvement in their local participatory mechanisms. The rate of increase was significant in all three countries, although more positive in Venezuela: 88% (n=165) of Venezuelan respondents, 73% (n=114) of Ecuadorians and 60% (n=61) of Chileans report having learned at least one skill. For the purposes of comparison and analysis, the skills have been divided into three types. Organizational and administrative skills are fairly basic and involve organizing meetings, working in groups, effective public speaking (participating in deliberation), developing meeting agendas and documenting meetings. Technical skills include using computers and the Internet but also preparing budgets and project proposals. Political skills are related to knowledge of rights, legislation and “how things work”. This includes understanding how to seek support for a project, knowing which institutions and agencies do what, and understanding procedures such as making a formal complaint or obtaining funding.

Organizational/administrative

Organizational and administrative skills were the most commonly identified by respondents. Most respondents reported knowing how to call and participate effectively in meetings and to work in groups. Responses demonstrate that participants were more likely to have these skills after than before their experience in participatory mechanisms, with significant increases across the board (see Table 5.10).
Table 5.10: Organizational/Administrative Skills Acquisition Before and After Involvement in Participatory Mechanism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Venezuela before</th>
<th>Venezuela after</th>
<th>Ecuador before</th>
<th>Ecuador after</th>
<th>Chile before</th>
<th>Chile after</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organizing/managing a meeting</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participating in a meeting</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working in groups</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public speaking</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating meeting agendas, taking minutes, etc.</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Venezuela, the baseline was higher in all cases, which can probably be explained by the fact that that country has (at least in its recent history) a stronger tradition of social organization in popular neighbourhoods. Over two thirds of respondents already felt they had strong skills and experience participating in meetings and working in groups, one third felt they had public speaking skills and a quarter knew how to organize and manage a meeting. The average rate of increase across the five categories was an impressive 82%, with the most dramatic increases observed in organizing meetings and recording the results of meetings (113% and 180% respectively). Thus, while only 23% of informants felt comfortable calling and managing meetings before their involvement in their council, nearly half did so following their participatory experience.

Fewer respondents from the Ecuadorian cases already felt they had strong skills and experience participating in meetings and working in groups (55% and 48% respectively), just over a quarter felt they had public speaking skills and only 16% knew how to organize a meeting. Responses show that many participants did develop these skills through participation in their local assembly, although at 45%, the average rate of increase was about half that of their
Venezuelan counterparts (in spite of the already lower baseline). As in Venezuela, the most dramatic increase involved creating meeting agendas and proceedings. While only 9% of participants felt they were able to do these things before participating in the council, 17% now felt they had acquired these skills, an increase of 89%. The Chilean respondents demonstrate a modest rate of skills acquisition. Only in two areas (participating in meetings and working in groups) did more than half of participants emerge with new skills, although the baseline was lower than in the other two countries. Still, we can observe a rate of increase of 64% across the five skill sets.

**Technical skills**

In terms of technical skills, we see a lower baseline for the four sets of skills addressed in the survey, with the exception of Internet skills, for which the baseline is relatively high in all cases. The results are relatively positive in Venezuela; 34% of communal council participants feel comfortable preparing budgets to manage money their communal councils have received and 26% writing proposals to request funding for projects (see table 5.11). This is an increase from 23% and 18% respectively. Close to 19% agree that they have developed project management skills.

**Table 5.11: Technical Skills Acquisition Before and After Involvement in Participatory Mechanism**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Venezuela before</th>
<th>Venezuela after</th>
<th>Ecuador before</th>
<th>Ecuador after</th>
<th>Chile before</th>
<th>Chile after</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Computer/Internet</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparing budgets</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing proposals</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project management</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The rate of increase for Ecuadorian citizen assembly participants was only slightly less, but both the baseline and the percentage of participants who acquired these skills through their involvement in a local assembly are modest. Only 17% and 18% of participants felt able to prepare budgets and write proposals, an increase from 13% and 11% respectively. Even fewer participants felt comfortable managing projects. Chilean respondents started with a slightly higher baseline than their Ecuadorian counterparts but lower than the Venezuelans in all areas except for Internet skills. They experienced an average rate of increase of 31% across the four skill sets, with the most significant skills acquisition related to preparing budgets.

**Political Skills**

Political skills include understanding how to seek political support, submitting a complaint (*denuncia*), understanding how procedures and institutions work at various levels of government in order to be able to engage as a citizen, and knowledge of relevant legislation and rights. Most citizens indicated that they lacked this knowledge prior to their involvement.

We again see a higher baseline in Venezuela but significant skills acquisition in all three countries. This category is also where we see the greatest rate of increase for Ecuadorian and Chilean participants, an average of 119% and 158% respectively across the four skills. The highest rates involve understanding how and from whom to seek political support for a given demand or project. Venezuelan communal council participants had a higher baseline of knowledge in these four areas (again, likely due to higher levels of civil society engagement in that country) and also demonstrated a rate of increase of 102%. Over half of Venezuelans had acquired skills in each of these four areas through communal council participation, a significantly higher result than that observed among their Ecuadorian counterparts. Chileans
demonstrated the lowest baseline, which is not surprising given the relative lack of experience in civil society organizations, but demonstrated a significant rate of increase ranging from 220% for seeking political support to 114% for knowledge of legislation and rights. Still, the proportion of participants who had acquired these skills remains low compared to the Venezuelan cases.

Table 5.12: Political Skills Acquisition Before and After Involvement in Participatory Mechanism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Venezuela before</th>
<th>Venezuela after</th>
<th>Ecuador before</th>
<th>Ecuador after</th>
<th>Chile before</th>
<th>Chile after</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seeking political support</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submitting a complaint</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding of procedures and institutions</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of legislation and rights</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When looking at skills acquisition across the five skill sets, there is little difference between government supporters and non-supporters in the Venezuelan and Ecuadorian cases (Table 5.13).

Table 5.13: Political Skills Acquisition Post-Participation, by political support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Venezuela, PSUV supporters</th>
<th>Venezuela, non-PSUV supporters</th>
<th>Ecuador, AP supporters</th>
<th>Ecuador, non-AP supporters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seeking political support</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submitting a complaint</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding of procedures and institutions</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of legislation and rights</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Breaking the numbers down by individual case reveals that skills acquisition is relatively evenly distributed across within-country cases, although slightly higher for seeking political support in those that demonstrate more significant tangible outcomes.

Table 5.14: Political Skills Acquisition Post-Participation, by case

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seeking political support</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submitting a complaint</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding of procedures and institutions</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of legislation and rights</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Citizens’ Conceptualization of Democracy and Citizenship

While the survey data provide important insights with respect to spillover effects, discourse analysis of the interviews sheds additional light on participants’ conceptions of democracy. As observed in the survey responses, individuals in Venezuela and Ecuador have a particular understanding of what democracy is and is not. Throughout the interviews, popular participation is contrasted with representative democracy in a manner that frames the former as noble and productive and the latter as corrupt and ineffective. Not surprisingly, Venezuelan respondents were more likely to argue that the current model represents an improvement over the way things used to work. Ecuadorians generally framed their discussion in terms of the participatory rights they have on paper, but most believe that these constitute a positive first step.
Democracy itself is conceived of in terms of its variants in Venezuela and Ecuador. References to democracy are preceded or followed by qualifiers such as ‘participatory’, ‘real’, ‘social’ and ‘popular’ on the one hand or ‘representative’, ‘past’, ‘false’ and ‘elite’ on the other. The former terms are associated with the ability of citizens to exercise agency while the latter are linked discursively to passive citizenship and exclusion. The use of ‘popular’ as a positive descriptor was common in Venezuela and Ecuador and virtually absent in Chile. Uses include popular will (often contrasted with ‘selfish’ private interests), popular sovereignty (often contrasted with elite dominance) and popular power (often contrasted with rule by the few). These terms were generally applied in an adversarial context in which ‘el pueblo’ is required to defend itself against right-wing and/or elite forces determined to strip the average citizen of her power, as in the assertion that ‘the right constantly tries to block popular power’, commonly expressed in both countries. In sharp contrast to the other two countries, there are no mentions of ‘popular’ as a descriptor in Chile, suggesting that this term is not part of the discursive repertoire of the Chilean state or of its citizens.

In Venezuela and Ecuador, many interviewees fused the concepts of participation and economic equality and contrasted them with representative institutions, as in the following observation by a domestic worker:

“Representative institutions can’t and don’t represent everyone equally, no matter how they are designed, those with more money and better contacts will always be able to interact with them in different ways than the rest of us. Democracy requires dignity and that means ensuring equality and that everyone’s participation has the same weight.”

This Rousseauian conception of democracy closely mirrors the discursive patterns found both in legislation and participatory training materials in these two countries, which emphasize citizen involvement in decision-making and socioeconomic equality over procedural quality.

165 Interview with Maria, assembly participant, Quito, Sept. 23, 2012.
Chilean respondents did not qualify democracy by referring to variants. Many respondents were critical about the quality of democracy in their country due to the limited opportunities for citizen participation, but when discussing the concept the common themes that emerged were ‘free elections’, ‘freedom to do as one pleases’, ‘free speech’ and ‘stability’. In the case of the other two cases, these conceptions reflect the discursive repertoire found in texts produced by the Chilean state.

There were 83 occurrences in Ecuador of ‘representatives’ or related terms. There is a distinction made in the discourse between citizen representatives (those who represent citizens in participatory mechanisms or act as people’s delegates in regional or national institutions) and ‘traditional’ elected representatives. The former are generally assumed to be noble and to actually represent citizens’ interests. With respect to the latter, at least 90% of references were framed in a negative light either by descriptors proceeding or following the term, or by the adversarial context of the phrase in which they appear. The most commonly used phase was ‘do not fulfil (their promises or duties)’ (no cumplen), followed by ‘do not understand’ (no entienden), ‘do not listen’ (no escuchan) and ‘do not represent’. Verbs used include ‘demand’, ‘insist’ and ‘force’. Much of the discourse assumes the representation is a farce and that citizenship can only be achieved through participation, as exemplified in the following statement offered by a participant from the Tarqui assembly:

“Those who get elected cannot represent citizens. They represent themselves, they represent their parties, they represent those that give them funding and support, they don’t represent us citizens. Only we can represent ourselves by participating in the process (of decision-making), by demanding that these rights be recognized.”166

In Venezuela, there are fewer references to representatives (39), in part because the distinction between citizen and elected representatives common in the Ecuadorian interviews

166 Interview with Franklin, citizens’ assembly executive member, Manta, Feb. 4, 2013.
does not appear as frequently. Instead, representatives are almost exclusively associated with
elected officials. Citizen or communal council delegates are generally referred to as
spokespeople (voceros), and in many cases respondents are careful to point out the difference
between the two. With respect to elected officials and representatives, the discourse indicates a
need for citizens to make decisions autonomously. The most common phrases linked to elected
representatives include ‘without’ (the interference of), ‘to not depend on’, ‘autonomous from’
and ‘independence from’. Here again, then, the relationship is framed as adversarial, elected
officials and the institutions they work in are considered problematic obstacles that citizens can
and should avoid through direct participation. There is a consistent theme in the popular
discourse that compares the pre-Chávez past (where decision-making was in the hands of
representatives) with the present (where decisions are in the hands of citizens). The following
statement, provided by a teacher in Guacara is typical of the sentiments expressed:

“It used to be that communities had to wait for everything to be solved by elected
authorities at the national level or in the mayor’s office. Maybe we would benefit from their
decisions, but more often we wouldn’t. Not anymore. Now, if citizens have the time and good
will, we can make our own decisions, we can go and participate and have a voice.”

In Chile, participation is linked to both participatory mechanisms such as neighbourhood
councils and traditional forms of participation (voting in elections, interacting with elected
officials). A more passive and cooperative attitude is expressed with respect to the latter. For
example, many respondents said something similar to the following statement offered by an
activist in low-income La Pintana (Santiago):

“The primary, and most important act of participation in Chile is voting in national and
municipal elections. Participation in the (neighbourhood) council is important yes, but it is
equally important that we have elected representatives who care about working with us and
helping our communities to develop.”

167 Interview with Yelitza, communal council participant, Guacara, Nov. 27, 2012
168 Interview with Luis A., neighbourhood council vice-president, La Pintana, March 23, 2013
When participation is brought up, it is usually linked to elected representatives and using participation to influence and pressure them (as opposed to direct citizen decision-making), as summarized by a participant from Maipú.

“What has come out of this talk about participation is that people are now more likely to have expectations and pressure and make demands of their representatives. This is the most valuable aspect of participation.”169

Examining how participants understand the role of citizens in the context of participatory democracy also reveals certain patterns. Analysis first focused on how participants refer to themselves and their peers when discussing their role in participatory mechanisms and in politics more broadly. Different meaning-laden terms are used consistently: informants in Chile prefer the term ‘vecino/as’ (neighbours) while those in Venezuela and Ecuador identify each other as ‘ciudadano/as’, or citizens (see Table 5.15). In all three cases, the term that appears most frequently in participants’ discourse is also the term preferred in texts produced by state agencies that promote public participation. While participants rarely engaged directly with how they understand these concepts, the context in which they discuss them does provide some clues. In both Venezuela and Ecuador, ‘the citizen’ was most frequently framed in collective terms and linked discursively to participation, dignity and equality. Common examples include assertions that the citizen ‘unites around objectives aimed at the common good’, ‘feels a commitment to achieving community goals’, ‘participates in decisions that affect their lives and their communities’ and ‘should be equal to everyone else’. As mentioned above, Chilean respondents rarely used the term ‘citizen’ at all and their conception of ‘neighbours’ (the term used by the state in its participatory discourse) is limited to place (those who live in close proximity) and is

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169 Interview with Maria Teresa, neighbourhood council secretary, Maipú, March 14, 2013
not tied discursively to either participation or equality. In the three cases, then, these meanings tend to comply with state discourse on the role of the citizen. The implications of this are significant; ‘citizen’ is a complex concept which entails a series of rights and obligations and suggests belonging to a political community, while ‘neighbour’ refers to individuals who live in close proximity to each other.

Table 5.15: How Participants Refer to Themselves and to Others, by country and # of occurrences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Venezuela</th>
<th>Ecuador</th>
<th>Chile</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary terms used:</td>
<td>citizen (378); The People, <em>El pueblo</em> (242)</td>
<td>citizen (286); The People, <em>El pueblo</em> (198)</td>
<td>people, <em>la gente</em> (246); neighbour (222)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coupled with terms</td>
<td>Active citizenship (353) Duties (130) Collaboration (11)</td>
<td>Active citizenship (252) Duties (82) Collaboration (48)</td>
<td>Collaboration (225) Duties (88) Active citizenship (52)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>suggesting:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other terms used:</td>
<td>member (58); people, <em>la gente</em> (54); participant (32); neighbour (28)</td>
<td>people, <em>la gente</em> (68); participant (53); member (21); neighbour (19)</td>
<td>member (94); citizen (89); participant (44); The People, <em>El pueblo</em> (0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A similar trend can be found when looking at how respondents refer to their fellow citizens (regardless of whether or not they are involved in participatory mechanisms). In Chile, the most common term used by participants was ‘la gente’. This is a neutral term that can be roughly translated into English as ‘people’ but does not necessarily imply collective will or shared goals and was generally used in a manner that implies individuals. In Venezuela and Ecuador, compatriots were most frequently referred to using the term ‘el pueblo’, which alludes to a collective reality. The context in which these terms are used provides more insight on how respondents understand them. When using the term ‘el pueblo’, Venezuelan and Ecuadorian respondents tended to reproduce the discursive patterns of state actors and institutions that
identify ‘good’ and ‘bad’ categories. They associate ‘el pueblo’ with ‘real people’, ‘working people’ and ‘simple people’ but their responses were almost always presented in contrast to The Other. Typical of the responses provided, a school cafeteria worker from Guacara explains:

“Those of us from the popular areas, simple people, those of us who work for a living but were never given a voice. We are the majority”. The Other is often defined as the ‘elite’ but just as frequently as ‘the opposition’ and participants rarely distinguished between leaders and followers of ‘the opposition’. Such people (not included in ‘el pueblo’) are generally discussed in antagonistic terms.”

The analysis also looked at the context in which these and other relevant terms (participation, rights, citizenship, democracy) appeared in order to better understand how participants engaged with the concepts. In Venezuela and Ecuador, co-occurrences of these words with terms that suggest active citizenship predominate. Citizenship, rights, participation and democracy are closely linked in the discursive repertoires of respondents. Citizen rights are also more closely linked with social development and equality. In Chile, instances of these same terms are rarely accompanied by co-occurrences that imply active citizenship as it is understood in the other two countries. For example, the most frequent occurrences of ‘neighbour’ are associated with terms such as represent/representation (participatory mechanisms representing the interests of neighbours to local authorities), presenting problems or concerns to municipal officials and discussing local needs in a public forum. Participation is framed as a right of citizens in the discursive repertoires of Venezuelan and Ecuadorian informants, and rights are linked more frequently to participation than to any other term. Participation was rarely framed as a right by Chilean participants; the majority of occurrences of participation are tempered by descriptors that imply the limited scope of participation.

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170 Interview with Anita, council participant, Guacara, Nov. 29, 2012.
Analysis of the qualitative survey data and interviews also sheds light on why women who participate are more likely to develop positive feelings about democracy and a greater sense of political efficacy than men. In part, this may be related to the issue of partisan support and can perhaps be attributed to the sample itself, as more women surveyed in both Venezuela and Ecuador identified themselves as government supporters. Still, from the quantity and detail of responses with respect to gender provided in the fill-in questions, it appears that these sentiments go beyond partisan preferences. Of those who held positive views about the quality of democracy in their country, 41% of the female respondents in Venezuela and Ecuador mentioned something to do with the role of women, while 48% did so when answering why they feel more empowered. While a slight minority of Chilean participants expressed satisfaction, those women who did hold positive perceptions also tended to associate this with their ability to participate in neighbourhood councils.

Certain common themes emerged from these women’s responses. The respondents claimed that representative institutions (national assemblies, municipal councils) are and have always been dominated by men; participatory mechanisms allow women the opportunity to make their voices heard. Also, many female respondents claimed that they feel more comfortable speaking and participating in a group that includes as many or more women than men. They feel they are more likely to be taken seriously, less likely to have their opinions dismissed and that participatory mechanisms provide such a forum due to high participation rates among women. Many of the women use the past as a reference point, arguing that they have a far greater role to play in decision-making through these local mechanisms than they did in a recent past dominated by exclusionary institutions. Women in the Chilean cases also tended to point to the gender ratio in neighbourhood councils compared with established representative institutions as a source of
empowerment, although there were fewer instances of this than in the other two cases. Typical of the sentiments expressed in the interviews is a comment made by a local assembly participant in Tarqui:

“In the local and neighbourhood assemblies, there are a lot of women and many of the leaders are women, the more formal representative institutions are always dominated by men who treat us like children. Maybe because women care more about local issues, but now I participate with my friends and even bring my daughters, we all feel we have a voice in these places because we can speak our minds without being treated like children.”

Interviews also help to shed some light on why spillover effects remain relatively positive even when concrete outcomes have been disappointing. This appears to be influenced by two factors. First, while we have seen that participation in practice does not always meet the expectations created on paper (particularly in Ecuador), participants emphasized the importance of the constitutional and legislative changes providing more “radical” democracy. Most Ecuadorian interviewees believed that, regardless of how well things are currently working in practice, having achieved “on paper” rights is a victory for participatory democracy, arguing that citizens must first have rights in order to exercise them, and expressing optimism that deficiencies will be corrected. Of the 46 respondents interviewed, well over half (32) expressed some variation on this theme. Many respondents spoke in the future tense with respect to seeing the results of participatory democracy and pointed out that it is impossible to transition from a system of representative to participatory democracy in less than a decade and that a full transformation will require far more time and will likely involve many mistakes. As one respondent from Montúfar stated:

“Our representative institutions have been around for almost 200 years and they still don’t work, nobody can expect to build a perfectly functioning participatory democracy in ten years.”

171 Interview with Betty C., citizens’ assembly secretary, Manta, Feb. 11, 2013
Another participant from Tarqui stated that:

“Knowing what our rights are is the first step, you can’t claim rights that you don’t know you have. I think we all feel much more comfortable joining organizations now that we have this knowledge, we can discuss laws at the same level as more educated people, we don’t have to feel intimidated because we have this knowledge, that makes participation so much easier and will ultimately make democracy stronger”. 173

Second, many participants view participation as a good in itself, often relating this to skills acquisition, knowledge and confidence. One of the most common assertions revolved around themes of democratic learning, competence and self-confidence gained through participation in the public sphere. Some attributed their new knowledge directly to the experience of participation, as in the following comment made by a domestic worker from the Calderón assembly:

“At first, it was difficult (to participate) because I didn’t know anything about how things work or even what my own rights were. After spending a few months participating in the assembly, I started to know a lot about the constitution, about laws. I started to feel more confident about myself, so this has helped my personal development even if we have not yet seen the benefits we are hoping for”. 174

**Conclusions**

To this point, findings have demonstrated that participation does produce spillover effects in some cases, including positive perceptions of and support for democracy, a heightened sense of political efficacy and skills acquisition. The findings support to a certain extent the criticism leveled against “radical” initiatives in the Bolivarian countries in that there is a pattern between political support and positive perceptions of democracy, but non-supporters’ perceptions are generally higher than their respective country’s population as a whole. We have also seen that more positive perceptions are linked to better tangible outcomes, yet here too the findings

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173 Interview with José, citizens’ assembly executive member, Manta, Feb. 4, 2013
demonstrate that this is a matter of degree; spillover effects are present (albeit to a lesser extent) even where tangible outcomes are less significant, in part because many individuals view the ability to participate as a good in itself. Venezuelan communal councils come closer to generating the types of effects discussed in the theoretical literature, although they are observable in the other two countries as well. There is variation among and within the three countries, however. This will be further explored in the following chapter, which examines factors that explain both the spillover effects and the tangible outcomes discussed in the preceding chapter.

These results point to a potential for the empowerment of traditionally marginalized sectors. In order to avoid an overly optimistic interpretation of these findings, it is important to highlight that satisfaction with democracy should not be read as uncritical support on the part of participants. Many respondents use the past and/or other countries in the region as reference points; while they may not be entirely pleased with how their participatory mechanisms work in practice, they feel they have more input into decision-making than in the past under a relatively closed representative model and believe that they have a greater capacity to participate than in other Latin American countries, which leads to a certain level of satisfaction.

There is also evidence, however, that evokes the concerns expressed by some critics of participatory democracy. This chapter demonstrates an alignment in all three countries between the discourse on citizenship produced by the state and the perceptions of citizen participants. In Venezuela and Ecuador in particular, this includes how participants conceive of democracy and their role in decision-making and also extends to the parameters established around citizenship with respect to both acceptable forms of participation and the mechanisms through which this should be exercised. While Venezuelan and Ecuadorian participants conceive of citizen participation as a valued right, discourse analysis suggests that the sphere in which they imagine
that this can take place is limited. Participation and the exercise of citizenship are linked to a
prescribed set of core participatory institutions through which citizens should ideally exercise
their rights. In Venezuela, participation is generally equated with communal councils (close to
80% of occurrences that link participation to specific instances) and to a much lesser extent with
comunas (a new level of government that is supposed to represent multiple communal councils
within the same territory) and state-supported social organizations such as urban land
committees. In Ecuador, over half of tangible instances of participation are associated with local
assemblies while the remainder are linked to other mechanisms established by the Citizen
Participation Law. These patterns can be read as establishing a preferred scope of participation
and a distinction between forms that are ‘legitimate’ and those that are framed as either
‘illegitimate’ or ineffective. This represents a different (and potentially negative) side of
spillover effects that are not always anticipated in the literature. These parameters suggest that
spillover effects can be simultaneously empowering and limiting. Ultimately, this may produce
results that both expand and contain citizen engagement.

In Chile, state discourse does limit the scope of participation to enhancing representative
democracy. It contains none of the ‘revolutionary’ discourse found in the other two countries. As
with the other two countries, these conceptions are reflected in the discursive repertoires of
participants. The Chilean state, however, is less prescriptive with respect to preferred
mechanisms. Participation may be exercised through mechanisms established by state legislation
(such as neighbourhood councils) but also civil society organizations autonomous from the state,
including functional (sports clubs, associations representing seniors, etc.) and public interest
(education, health and environmental) organizations. Furthermore, participation is also more
likely to be associated with traditional forms of participation (voting in elections, interacting with
elected officials) and a more passive and cooperative attitude is expressed with respect to the latter.

**Summary of Findings from Chapters 4 and 5**

The evidence presented thus far demonstrates that participatory mechanisms based on both the “radical” and “pragmatic” models produce some of the tangible outcomes and spillover effects discussed in the theoretical literature. While these outcomes are observable in most of the nine cases, they are uneven and there is variation both within and between the three country models. Table 5.16 summarize the findings from this and the preceding chapter.

Certain elements have already emerged as possible explanatory factors but as outlined in Chapter 2, the literature provides us with a list of factors that theorists believe should be present in order for participatory democracy to succeed in producing positive outcomes. In order to understand the variation observed among the nine cases (and to answer the second part of the research question), the following chapter will further explore the factors that explain both the tangible outcomes described in Chapter 4 as well as the spillover effects discussed in this section. By analyzing these factors in comparative perspective, we will see which factors enhance the capacity of participatory mechanisms to produce outcomes and which are less important.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Tangible outcomes</th>
<th>Spill. Effects</th>
<th>Perceptions of democracy</th>
<th>Sense of political efficacy</th>
<th>Skills acquisition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Venezuela</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sucre</td>
<td>High value</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guacara</td>
<td>High value</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mérida</td>
<td>Medium value</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chile</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Pintana</td>
<td>Medium value</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maipú</td>
<td>Medium value</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cayumapú</td>
<td>Low value</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ecuador</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tarqui</td>
<td>Medium value</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montúfar</td>
<td>Low value</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calderón</td>
<td>No value</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 6: Factors that Affect the Outcomes

The evidence presented thus far demonstrates that participatory mechanisms based on both the “radical” and “pragmatic” models can be successful at producing two of the most common benefits of citizen participation identified in the theoretical literature: improved access to public goods and services, and positive spillover effects. While these outcomes are observable to some extent in most of the participatory mechanisms studied in this thesis, there is variation among the nine cases. We have seen that two cases (Sucre and Guacara) produce high-value tangible outcomes and positive spillover effects, four cases (Mérida, La Pintana, Maipú and Tarqui) produce medium-value tangible benefits and moderate spillover effects and three cases (Cayumapú, Montúfar and Calderón) fall short with respect to both types of outcomes.

The variation observed does not strictly align by country nor with the “radical” vs. “pragmatic” dichotomy. Furthermore, the significant within-country variation suggests that institutional design of participatory mechanism and state discourse on participatory democracy are not necessarily the most important factors in determining outcomes. This chapter draws on interviews with citizen participants and officials to determine what explains this variation by considering factors that enhance or diminish the capacity of participatory mechanisms to produce positive outcomes. It compares several of the most common factors identified in the theoretical literature as essential to achieving significant outcomes: devolution of decision-making and implementation powers to citizens, quality of deliberation within the mechanisms themselves, inclusiveness, levels of participation and sustained commitment among participants. The interviews also revealed another important factor: the nature of relationships between participatory mechanisms and state or municipal institutions.
The analysis reveals important relationships between the outcomes and the factors mentioned above. Cases that produce the highest-value outcomes and most positive spillover effects (top-tier) allow for a real devolution of decision-making to citizens at the local level, provide participants with the opportunity to be involved in implementation, are inclusive of groups formerly excluded from power, are deliberative, and have relatively high and sustained levels of participation. Cases that produce medium-value tangible outcomes and moderate spillover effects (mid-tier) demonstrate moderate levels of deliberation, inclusiveness and participation. While formal devolution and implementation powers are lacking, participants are able to achieve outcomes by establishing effective relationships with local authorities or engaging in mechanisms that interface with local government. Such arrangements allow participants to play an informal role in decision-making and implementation. Cases that generate the lowest-value tangible outcomes and poor spillover effects (bottom-tier) share in common the relative absence of these characteristics. They are not particularly inclusive or deliberative and suffer from low levels of participation and commitment. They lack formal decision-making and implementation powers. In contrast to the mid-tier cases, they have not been successful at establishing effective relationships with local authorities or interfacing with municipal-level government mechanisms. The relationships are generally conflictual, meaning that participants are less likely to play an informal observer role in the process. Table 6.1 summarizes the three categories and the relationships between the factors and the outcomes.

Regardless of the “radical” or “pragmatic” institutional design of these mechanisms or of state discourse on participatory democracy, it is the strength or weakness of these factors that determines outcomes. Those mechanisms that fare well with respect to the relative strength of these factors generate the highest-value tangible outcomes and the most positive spillover effects
while cases that generate low-value outcomes are characterized by the relative absence of these characteristics. The chapter is divided into sections that examine the factors discussed above. Each section first outlines how these factors figure into the institutional design and state discourse of the three countries studied in this thesis and then analyses them according to these outcome categories (top, mid and bottom-tier).

Table 6.1: Cases, Factors and Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Cases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Top</td>
<td>High-value tangible, positive spillover</td>
<td>High levels of deliberation, inclusiveness and participation; decision-making and implementation powers devolved and fully utilized</td>
<td>Sucre, Guacara (Venezuela)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>Medium-value tangible, moderate spillover</td>
<td>Moderate levels of deliberation, inclusiveness and participation; decision-making and implementation powers devolved and partially utilized or lack of formal decision-making and implementation powers but informal “observer” role for participants</td>
<td>Mérida (Venezuela), La Pintana, Maipú (Chile), Tarqui (Ecuador)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bottom</td>
<td>Low-value tangible, moderate to poor spillover</td>
<td>Low levels of deliberation, inclusiveness and participation; lack of formal decision-making and implementation powers, no informal role sometimes consulted</td>
<td>Cayumapú (Chile), Montúfar (Ecuador), Calderón (Ecuador)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Devolution of Decision-Making and Implementation

We have seen in the literature review that one of the most frequently cited “essential ingredients” for successful participatory experiences is that rather than delegating power to a group of elected elites and bureaucrats, decision-making should be devolved to citizens and participatory
mechanisms should be autonomous from state institutions. Many theorists have argued that we must also look at the extent to which citizens can effectively participate in or monitor the implementation of the decisions made through their participatory mechanisms. As discussed in Chapter 3, state discourse and institutional design differ considerably among the three countries with respect to these factors. Discourse produced by state institutions and relevant legislation establish devolution of decision-making power to citizens as the basis of the participatory democracy agenda in Venezuela and to a lesser extent in Ecuador, while in Chile it is not framed as an essential characteristic of public participation. The research presented here suggests that the design and discourse do not necessarily align with how the mechanisms function in practice.

The evidence suggests an association between these factors and the outcomes. The top-tier cases demonstrate a real devolution of power to citizens and have exercised this power the fullest extent. The middle-range cases (“collaborate” and “involve”) present mixed results, with participants playing a more limited role in the process, either because they did not fully utilize the powers available to them (Mérida) or because they lack formal decision-making powers but were able to play an informal role (La Pintana, Maipú and Tarqui). Local government officials in these three cases tend to be relatively open to citizen participation. While they claim that they are ultimately responsible for decision-making and implementation, elected officials and civil servants from the relevant municipalities understand the value of public participation and have worked with participants to some degree. The bottom-tier cases do not demonstrate devolution of power to citizens and were unable to play any meaningful role in the process. Relationships between participants and local officials are marked by conflict; the former question the legitimacy of authorities while the latter are less likely to express openness toward citizen participation.
Design and Discourse

As discussed in Chapter 3, the institutional design of Venezuelan communal councils allows them to make decisions in a number of key policy areas. Former President Chávez set the tone for this in his 2006 speech introducing these mechanisms:

“Mayors, governors, political parties, members of the national assembly…and even myself…we should be facilitators, we should support this force from below. But the people are the boss (el pueblo es el dueño)”

In the first few years following their establishment (2006-2009), communal councils were dependent on funding from municipalities and state governments and had to develop their own means of managing whatever resources they were able to acquire. This led to complaints from citizens who were angry that the decisions they are legally entitled to make through their communal councils were being blocked by mayors and other local authorities who withheld money due to fear of losing their authority. Understanding this to be an impediment to the autonomy of the participatory system, the 2009 reform brought in important changes that provided councils with greater financial autonomy, including the legal status required to manage public funds directly.

Representatives of state agencies charged with overseeing popular participation unanimously contend that it is the government’s intention to devolve decision-making powers to citizens and that the institutionalization of communal councils reflects this goal. All of the 12 bureaucrats interviewed from agencies such as the MPComunas, Fundacomunal, the Consejo Federal de

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175 Hugo Chávez, Alo Presidente, #244, Jan. 15, 2006
177 Interviews with Director of Communal Development, Consejo Federal de Gobierno, Mérida, Nov. 15, 2012;; Steve Ellner, Professor, Universidad de Oriente, Nov. 30, 2012.
Gobierno, municipal works departments and regional development agencies expressed a strong dedication to promoting popular power. Perhaps more surprisingly, most elected officials interviewed also recognize the powers delegated to citizens (5 of the 6 elected officials interviewed were positive and accepting of the idea of full citizen control). The theoretical acceptance of a transfer of power that should affect their own position distinguishes elected officials and civil servants in Venezuela from their counterparts in the other two counties. Planning officials charged with decentralization and supporting participatory projects argue that Venezuela is transitioning to a participatory democracy in which citizens (rather than municipal governments) identify needs that exist within their communities and decide on solutions.178 They present this devolution of power as a radical change that is needed in order to achieve social development and more equitable access to public goods and services. A senior official from the Fundacomunal headquarters in Caracas explained his position in terms similar to those used by most of his colleagues:

"When it comes to decision-making at the local level, power has been transferred to citizens. They [the citizens] introduce proposals through their communal councils and from that point on, a process of participatory democracy is initiated. The role of our agency and others is to serve this process, to support popular power. The people construct their own projects, because they are the ones who understand their communities and needs."179

Venezuelan communal councils are also distinct from participatory mechanisms in the two other countries studied here in that they play an important role in the implementation of their decisions. Decisions made through the participatory process have been translated into action by the participants themselves in all three cases, although to varying degrees. This is written into the institutional design which details a “communal cycle” that includes an implementation phase to

178 Interviews Project Support Agent, CORPOANDES, Mérida, Nov. 21, 2012; Communal Participation Coordinator, Casa de Poder Popular, Office of the Mayor, Caracas, Jan. 30, 2013.
179 Interview with Director for Communal Management, Fundacomunal, Caracas, Jan. 21, 2013.
ensure that councils “not only make and decide on proposals but execute them.”

State officials place considerable emphasis on the ability of citizens to participate beyond the decision-making stage. They argue that communal councils play an important role in terms of executing and managing projects (including hiring labour, purchase of materials, monitoring progress) and point to both the institutional design of the councils and the training provided to support participants in these roles.

An agent from the Corporación de los Andes development agency explained:

“The community’s engagement in this process does not end when a decision has been made, it follows the policy process. So, the community must be involved in implementing the decisions they have made, evaluating and assessing the results, that is an essential part of the process, that is how people learn democracy. This also ensures accountability.”

All Venezuelan communal councils are granted these powers, although officials admit that there is variation with respect to the extent that they are used. They suggest that in some municipalities local officials may put up more resistance while in others, participants themselves may be less willing to exercise these powers fully, preferring to rely on state agents to do the work.

While local officials in Guacara and Libertador (the municipality in which Sucre is located) were extremely enthusiastic about the role of communal councils in the decision-making and implementation processes, those from Mérida (a non-PSUV controlled municipality) were

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180 Ministerio de Planificación y Desarrollo, Fondo Intergubernamental para la Descentralización (FIDES), Guía de formulación de proyectos.

181 Interviews with Defensoría del Pueblo del Estado de Mérida, Nov. 9, 2012; Project Support Agent, CORPOANDES, Mérida, Nov. 21, 2012; Senior Official, Banco del Pueblo, Caracas, Jan. 24, 2013.

182 Interview with Project Support Agent, CORPOANDES, Mérida, Nov. 21, 2012.

183 Interviews with Director for Communal Management, Fundacomunal, Caracas, Jan. 21, 2013; Francois Albarrán, Coordinator of “Taquilla Unica”, Fundacomunal, Mérida, Nov. 11, 2012; Steve Ellner, Professor, Universidad de Oriente, Nov. 30, 2012.
more likely to express concern. These officials argued that they too have an important role to play and that not everything can be left up to citizen participants.\textsuperscript{184}

It should also be noted that all of the interviewed officials representing opposition parties or non-PSUV social movement groups expressed concerns about devolution of power to communal councils due to the possibility of majority domination. A member of the Democratic Action (\textit{Acción Democrática}, AD) party expressed a common theme that emerged in interviews with these individuals:

“We are not against the communal councils, we think that they can actually produce better, more transparent government by giving power to the average citizen. What we are worried about is how they are being used. If the majority in a given community is to be given power, then like any group in power, there must be balances to avoid using that power to trample over the rights of minorities.”\textsuperscript{185}

A leader of an opposition-oriented social movement argued that:

“The CCs are the continuation of a model that was already developing within civil society, the neighbourhood associations but they have a more political character which allows them to be manipulated. On paper and in some ways, they have autonomy but at the same time this politicization undermines their autonomy.”\textsuperscript{186}

Individuals charged with promoting the Ecuadorian government’s participatory democracy agenda maintained a discourse reminiscent of the “radical” model found in Venezuela and invariably blamed local governments for the failure of this vision to be implemented. Of the 22 civil servants interviewed, over half (14) expressed some variation on this theme. Yet while this conceptualization of citizen participation is similar to that of their Venezuelan counterparts, the design and functioning of participatory mechanisms as described

\textsuperscript{184} Interviews with Communal Participation Coordinator, Casa de Poder Popular, Office of the Mayor, Caracas, Jan. 30, 2013; Planning Agent, Servicio Comunitario de Atención al Ciudadano, Municipio Socialista de Guacara, Dec. 8, 2012; two officials, one from the Parish of Arias (Mérida) and one from the Municipality of Mérida, Nov. 9, 2012.

\textsuperscript{185} Interview Sectional Executive Committee, Acción Democrática (AD), Mérida, Nov. 11, 2012.

\textsuperscript{186} Interview with Erik Uzcategui, Leader of the Movimiento 13 de Marzo, Mérida, Nov. 8, 2012.
by Ecuadorian officials differs. It is depicted as a process in which public participation is but one aspect of the policy process and is shared with elected authorities and local government departments. First, officials stressed that public participation must follow the guidelines established by the government. As the Deputy Minister for Citizen Participation explained, citizens are supposed to decide through participatory mechanisms what the priorities should be in a given locality, but priorities have to comply with the National Plan for the Quality of Life (Buen Vivir). Another official explained that while citizen participation is an evolving process, the current reality with respect to citizens’ assemblies is that they have an “indirect” power to make decisions but they can participate in a more effective manner and can hold public officials accountable for decisions when they are familiar with the projects, the budget and the resources available.

Representatives of central state agencies also argue that they attempted to give participatory mechanisms joint powers to implement projects collaboratively with local governments. Assemblies can appoint citizen representatives to work with elected officials and representatives of public or private companies to implement projects, co-manage public services or discuss development plans, public policies, and budgets. All of this should in theory provide people with a role in implementation and evaluation. Officials admit that the result has been uneven, with some local assemblies actively involved in project management while others have not achieved this goal, either due to resistance from local authorities or because citizens themselves are unable or unwilling to take on this role. The mechanics of participation, then,

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187 Interview with Isabel Terán, Deputy Minister, Secretaría Nacional de Gestión de la Política, Quito, Oct. 11, 2012.
188 Interview with Jario López, Participation Specialist, CPCCS, Quito, Oct. 22, 2012.
189 Interview with Coordinator of Citizen Participation, SENPLADES, Quito, Sept. 14, 2012.
190 Interviews with Deputy Minister, SENPLADES, Quito, Oct. 25, 2012; Byron Obando, Advisor, Citizen Initiatives, Secretaría de Pueblos, Quito, Oct. 9, 2012; Emilifran Pazmiño and Marlene Jarrin, Participation Advisors, CPCCS, Quito, Oct. 28, 2012.
appear to deviate somewhat from the overreaching “citizens’ revolution” discourse in that “people’s power” gives legitimacy to rather than replaces representatives. While the higher-level discourse is framed as “radical” democracy in terms of devolution of decision-making and project implementation, the day to day working of participatory mechanisms looks more like the “pragmatic” model. Government officials do not always recognize the discrepancy between the higher-level discourse and the model as it has been designed in practice.

Municipal officials from Manta (the city where the Tarqui case is located) argued that the municipality has been very open to citizen participation, dutifully setting up the city-wide Citizens’ Assembly to allow parish assemblies to have their say. They point out that this municipal-level Assembly is an institution through which representatives from parish-level assemblies such as Tarqui can engage with each other and with municipal officials.191 Overall, however, local municipal officials do not engage in the “radical” democracy discourse observed among state officials. Both elected representatives and municipal bureaucrats understand participation as a consultative process through which they may solicit community feedback for more informed decision-making and provide information to citizens about projects and budget matters. They contend, however, that it is their role to make final decisions and they must do so based on overall needs of the city and available resources, something which citizens do not understand.192

Elected officials and civil servants in Chile almost unanimously understood participation as a means of achieving better and more efficient governance. Of the 18 officials interviewed, none framed popular participation as involving devolution of power to the people but rather as a

191 Interviews with two Councillors, Municipio de Manta, Manta, Feb. 6, 2013 and Feb. 23, 2013; Advisor, Office of the Mayor, Manta, Feb. 18, 2013.

means of giving citizens an expanded role in the process and consulting “neighbours” in order to make more informed decisions. The advisor on Citizen Participation to the Minister Secretary General of Government (MSGG, the department charged with implementing participatory governance initiatives) was clear on this point, stating that the 2010 Participation Law and the participatory policy of the government are focused on “consultation and provision of information” and that participatory mechanisms “do not have decision-making powers.” She insisted, however, that the government was working toward the “institutionalization of citizen participation in Chile” and while people can be “critical with respect to the achievements thus far, it is an important first step.”

The former director of the Social Organizations Division of the MSGG under the Bachelet administration concurred with this assessment, but argued that the law has not been implemented to its fullest extent and that the original intention was to allow citizens more involvement in the decision-making process.

In contrast to the Venezuelan model, Chilean neighbourhood assemblies do not have implementation powers. While the enabling legislation does state that the councils are intended to “propose and execute projects that benefit the community” representatives of the central government stressed the concept of co-management, by which they meant that council members may “observe” the implementation of projects in collaboration with state and local officials. One of the government lawyers responsible for citizen participation policy explained the understanding of “implementation” with respect to participatory mechanisms in Chile is to

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193 Interview with Carla Parraguez, Citizen Participation Advisor, Ministerio Secretaría General de Gobierno, La Moneda, Santiago, March 19, 2013.
194 Interview with Francisco Estévez, Former Director of the Social Organizations Division, Ministry of the Government, Santiago, March 18, 2013.
195 Biblioteca nacional de Chile, Guía legal sobre Juntas de vecinos.
ensure transparency and accountability to the community by allowing neighbourhood council leaders the right to “observe.”197 This presents a contrast with the more active leadership role played by Venezuelan participants in decision-making and implementation, particularly in the Sucre and Guacara cases.

Elected officials from the La Pintana and Maipú municipal governments confirmed the consultative nature of the role of neighbourhood councils and other participatory institutions, yet demonstrated a willingness to work with representatives from neighbourhood councils. These individuals insisted that it is their responsibility to make decisions and use the resources with which they are entrusted, stressing that this is what they were elected to do and that they would be neglecting their responsibilities if they did not take their role seriously. However, they did stress that they value participation and consider citizen feedback valuable and beneficial to both sides.198 As summarized by one municipal councillor:

“Having them (neighbourhood council representatives) involved not only helps to ensure that what we do responds to community needs, but also creates a greater sense of trust between us and the community; they are able to feel that they have played some part in the decisions made and therefore are more invested in these decisions, which in turn provides our actions with more legitimacy.”199

Individuals outside of the political system who study public participation provided a similar perspective, arguing that more significant outcomes have been observed in municipalities that are more open to participation. They stressed that outcomes (particularly spillover effects) would be further improved if participatory mechanisms were able to play a more formal decision-making and implementation role but tended to blame the Chilean political system for

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198 Based on interviews with Municipal Councillor, Maipú, April 2, 2013; Municipal Councillor, Maipú, April 5, 2013; Councillor, Municipalidad de La Pintana, April 15, 2013.
199 Interview with Municipal Councillor, Maipú, April 5, 2013.
concentrating power in the hands of mayors at the local level, pointing out that mayors resisted any measures that would diminish their own powers.\textsuperscript{200}

In sum, the “radical” participatory democracy design of Venezuela communal councils provides them with decision-making and implementation powers and relevant legislation ensures that participants are able to use them. Still, it is understood that these powers may be used to varying degrees from one council to the next. The Ecuadorian state promotes a “radical democracy” discourse yet the design of local assemblies does not grant citizens the extensive decision-making and implementation powers that their Venezuelan counterparts enjoy. The “pragmatic” participation design of Chile’s neighbourhood councils emphasizes co-governance over devolution of powers. Regardless of the institutional design, the best outcomes are generated when these powers are formally devolved and are fully utilized. Where they are not, the willingness of citizen participants and to local authorities to work together and the ability of citizens to monitor the implementation process have an important impact on the capacity of participatory mechanisms to produce outcomes.

\textit{Top-tier Cases: Sucre and Guacara}

Interviews with citizen participants reveal an alignment among both citizens and state officials with respect to the powers that these mechanisms should have on paper and do have in reality. Both groups agree that these are considerable, at least within the scope of local affairs. Of the 37 communal council participants interviewed from these two councils, 86\% of participants agreed that they have real powers to make decisions about matters that affect their lives. Only one individual claimed that state institutions have made final decisions on approved projects. In both

\textsuperscript{200} Interviews with Gonzalo Delamaza, Professor, Universidad de Los Lagos, Santiago, March 14, 2013; Juan Salinas, Coordinator, Association of Chilean Municipalities, March 18, 2013.
cases, participants were unanimous in recalling that the initiative to form a communal council originated with community members and not with state representatives.

Closely related to the extent to which power has been devolved to communal councils is the question of their autonomy with respect to the state and/or local government, at least in terms of their defined scope of influence. We have seen that politicians and government officials (central or local) are not permitted to intervene in the decision-making process of communal councils and 78% of participants said that the relationship between their council and state institutions is characterized by mutual respect. A large majority (89%) believed that their council was sufficiently independent from any level of government. While technicians from various departments are deployed to support council members with the development of their projects, all of those involved insist that they do so under the direction of the communal council.\textsuperscript{201} The majority of participants interviewed (71%) also felt that based on their experience, communal councils have sufficient implementation powers and that these have been fully exercised. A majority across the two cases (76%) were satisfied that their communal council has the necessary access to, and control over, their own financial resources to exercise the desired level of autonomy from local government. As a member of the Sucre council’s financial committee put it:

“It is one thing to have these powers on paper, but they wouldn’t mean much if we didn’t have access to money, if we couldn’t control our financial resources. It is the most important thing to make sure that we are independent. Having access to these funds has made a big difference in our ability to achieve real participatory democracy.”\textsuperscript{202}

\textsuperscript{201} Interviews with Blanca, communal council president; Francisco, communal council executive member, Caracas, Jan. 8, 2013; interviews with Helen and Raquel, council executive members, Guacara, Nov. 26 and 27, 2012.

\textsuperscript{202} Interview with Fer, council participant, Caracas, Jan. 7, 2013.
Table 6.2: Devolution of Decision-Making and Implementation, Top-Tier

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decision-Making</th>
<th>Sucre (21)</th>
<th>Guacara (16)</th>
<th>Total (37)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tangible outcomes</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spillover effects</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomous</td>
<td>90% (n=19)</td>
<td>86% (n=14)</td>
<td>89% (n=33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real Powers</td>
<td>87% (n=18)</td>
<td>86% (n=14)</td>
<td>86% (n=32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good council – state/local institution relationship</td>
<td>82% (n=17)</td>
<td>76% (n=12)</td>
<td>78% (n=29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State institutions make final decisions</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>n=1</td>
<td>n=1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council has sufficient direct control of funding</td>
<td>76% (n=16)</td>
<td>76% (n=12)</td>
<td>76% (n=28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants role</td>
<td>Dominant</td>
<td>Dominant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall: Devolution of Power</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Implementation                                                                   |            |              |
| Control of the budget                                                            | Yes        | Yes          |
| Awarding contracts and hiring labour                                             | Yes        | Yes          |
| Supervising work                                                                | Yes        | Yes          |
| Overall: Implementation                                                          | Yes        | Yes          |

To understand the extent of this devolution of powers, participants were also asked to describe the process as they have witnessed it. The vast majority (30 of 37) of individuals interviewed were able to explain the process in detail and their responses depict a system in which citizens do play a key role. The following excerpt is representative of the processes related by the respondents:

“Once the decision has been made to do something in the assembly, we then need to seek technical support and money, but this too is a participatory process that involves citizens, it doesn’t happen in a closed government office. All local council proposals are debated in the “war room” where spokespeople from the councils involved promote and debate their
proposals. They are the ones who prioritize, not government officials, there are technicians there from Fundacomunal or other bodies but only to provide support.”

A majority of respondents linked this devolution of power directly to the improved services and major infrastructure projects carried out in their neighbourhood. The following statement is typical of the sentiments expressed:

“Of course, all of what we have gained is because we had the power to do it ourselves. Municipal authorities never used to listen when they held power, they did what they wanted to do, they had no idea of what we needed and didn’t care. We started seeing benefits in our community only once we could take things into our own hands, and we won’t go back to being represented by elites, enough of that!”

In the Sucre and Guacara cases, participants were actively engaged at every level of implementing the projects discussed in Chapter 4 (improvement of the sewage and water systems, structural improvements to homes). Nearly three-fourths of members interviewed (both spokespersons and regular participants) were involved in some aspect of implementation, including oversight of the budget, determining costs and materials to be purchased, working with engineers to design plans and maps of work to be carried out, hiring and supervision of labour and other personnel and inspection of work completed. Participants relied on support and advice from engineers and technicians but were responsible for oversight and day to day decisions (a claim corroborated by the technicians).

\[203\] Interview with Henrick, council participant, Caracas, Jan 10, 2013.
\[204\] Interview with Martín, council participant, Caracas, Jan. 8, 2013
\[205\] Interviews with Blanca, communal council president and Alina, communal council participant, Caracas, Jan. 8 and 11, 2013; Francisco, communal council executive member, Caracas, Jan. 8, 2013; interviews with Helen, Raquel, Maria and Maricruz, council executive members, Nov. 26 and 27, 2012.
Participants placed considerable importance on the role of communal councils in the implementation stage, generally linking these powers to the outcomes and arguing that decision-making powers would be useless if they could not subsequently operationalize their decisions. Members of the executive organs of all three councils argued that they have been successful because they participate in the implementation of the decisions their communities make, as this allows them to ensure that things are carried out as the people intended. They also referred to the Local Planning councils that existed prior to the communal system, insisting that the elected representatives and the bureaucracy implemented what they wanted and altered the decisions that the people made. The communal councils, in contrast, allow the people to participate all the way through to the implementation and evaluation stages.

Almost all of the participants who addressed the topic pointed to the efficiency of councils in implementing their own decisions and linked it to better outcomes. The following statements summarize the opinions expressed:

"Projects end up costing half as much as when the municipalities managed them. Communal councils are more efficient. Why? Because the people know what things cost, poorer people know this because they have to. They know where to go for the lowest cost materials and they will go locally if possible. Also, they know how to do the work, to build things. We can do it ourselves better than those who don’t know these things."

While we have seen that some opposition actors expressed concern about the influence of the central government (and in particular the PSUV itself) on communal council matters, over

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207 Interview with Helen, communal council president, Guacara, Nov. 26, 2012; Blanca, council president, Caracas, Jan. 8, 2013; Marbella and Reinaldo, former and current council presidents, Mérida, Nov. 14 and 15, 2012.
208 The Local Planning Councils were a first effort by the Chávez government to introduce participatory mechanisms at the local level but were deemed insufficient because they had to rely on municipalities for budgets and implementation; they were replaced by communal councils from 2006 onward.
209 Interview with Helen, council president, Guacara, Nov. 26, 2012; Blanca, council president, Caracas, Jan. 8, 2013; Marbella and Reinaldo, former and current council presidents, Mérida, Nov. 14 and 15, 2012.
210 Interview with Henrick, council participant, Caracas, Jan. 10, 2013
80% of participants from these two cases rejected the idea that communal councils are controlled or manipulated in any way by the government or party (this includes many of the participants who do not identify as chavistas). Respondents tended to feel that such views are propagated to de-legitimize participatory mechanisms and to depict their members as unintelligent and therefore easily manipulated. These individuals tended to assert that the government does have certain lines they want communal councils to follow (deliberation and decisions are expected to focus on “common needs” and “community building” rather than on private interests) but reject that this should be read as state control of these mechanisms.\textsuperscript{211}

\textit{Mid-Tier Cases: Mérida, La Pintana, Maipú, Tarqui}

In contrast to the highest-tier cases, these mechanisms have been indirectly involved in the decision-making process. Citizens are less likely to describe them as having real powers to make decisions about local matters and more likely to observe that government institutions make the final decisions. There is a distinction between the Mérida communal council and the three cases in Chile and Ecuador. While Mérida has the same powers on paper, participants have not exercised these to the same extent as their counterparts in Sucre and Guacara. Direct devolution of decision-making and implementation power is not observable in any of the Chilean or Ecuadorian cases. In contrast to the lower-tier cases, however, participants were able to play at least a limited role in decision-making and implementation through an indirect role in the decision-making process even when such power has not been formally devolved. They were also generally able to “monitor” the implementation of projects. They are able to play this role by establishing effective relationships with relevant authorities or engaging in mechanisms that

\textsuperscript{211} This perspective was expressed by about 80\% of participants in response to a specific interview question about state/PSUV control of communal councils.
interface with local government. What these four cases share in common, then, is a limited role in decision-making and implementation when compared to the highest-value cases, yet participants (or at least the leaders of these mechanisms) are engaged with local government and authorities in turn express some degree of openness toward citizen participation.

In contrast to Sucre and Guacara, the experience of the Mérida case does not entirely align with how state agents describe the design of communal councils. While participants in the two top-ranked cases agree that their councils exercise the powers they have on paper, responses from this case reveal a more complex situation. Respondents from Mérida were more likely to question the extent of their council’s real powers. Of the 12 participants interviewed from these two councils, two-thirds (as compared will almost all of the participants from the other two Venezuelan cases) agreed that they have real powers to make decisions about matters that affect their lives and that their council was sufficiently independent from any level of government. A third of respondents claimed that state institutions have made final decisions on approved projects, whereas this observation was practically absent in Sucre and Guacara. When asked about the relationship between local government and the council, those from the Mérida case were less enthusiastic than participants in the other Venezuelan cases: just over half claimed that the relationship is fully respected, whereas over two thirds of respondents in the other cases felt this way.

While almost all participants from Sucre and Guacara were able to explain the decision-making process in detail, only half of those from Mérida were able to do so. These respondents described their experience differently in that there has been some resistance on the part of municipal or parish-level officials. This is likely due to the fact that the municipality was
controlled by an opposition party administration. The position of the municipal government is that while it supports communal council power, it also has certain responsibilities as an elected representative government and must ensure that non-PSUV supporters are not shut out of the process. The council’s spokespeople also described a decision-making process in which technicians from agencies such as Corporación de los Andes (Corpoandes, a state development agency) played a more central role in advising and guiding participants than the process that was observed in the other Venezuelan cases.

In terms of implementation, the projects for the Mérida case demonstrated a lower level of involvement than in the other Venezuelan cases. For the sports court and school kitchen, for example, members of the communal council held a public competition for the purposes of hiring labour and purchasing resources and equipment. For both projects, committees reviewed the proposals, selected the ones they felt to offer the best value, and presented these to the citizens’ assembly for a vote. Beyond this, residents of this council tended to rely more on technicians from Fundacomunal and Corpoandes for the development of plans and blueprints. Council leaders attribute this to the relatively low levels of engagement among its membership.

Respondents were also more likely to express concern over the influence of the central government and the PSUV on communal council matters. In contrast to Sucre and Guacara, about a third of Mérida respondents felt this influence may be exercised indirectly, through state

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212 Interviews with Marbella and Reinaldo, former and current council presidents, Mérida, Nov. 14 and 15, 2012.
213 Interviews with two officials, one from the Parish of Arias (Mérida) and one from the Municipality of Mérida, Nov. 9, 2012.
215 Interviews with Marbella, former council president, Nov. 4, 2012; Maryenella, council participant, Nov. 9, 2012; Noé, council participant, Nov. 9; Victoria, council participant, Nov. 17, 2012; Project Support Agent, CORPOANDES, Mérida, Nov. 21, 2012.
216 Interviews with Marbella and Reinaldo, Mérida, Nov. 14 and 15, 2012.
discourse and training programs for council participants. A doctor from the Mérida case summed up what other non-Chavista participants argued:

“I think there are certainly certain lines that councils have to follow to get funding, there are criteria set out by the central government. Does this mean that councils are not really autonomous and are instruments of the government? I have not seen direct intervention from a central or local government official or any attempt to impose a particular direction or decision. People wouldn’t allow that…but does the party influence how communal council participants think about politics? Yes, I think so.”

Overall, then, while relevant legislation grants the Mérida communal council the same powers as councils across Venezuela, it has played a relatively limited role in decision-making due to lower levels of participation and commitment and to a more conflictual relationship with local government.

The remainder of the medium-value outcomes cases reveal a slightly different pattern. Despite a lack of formal decision-making power, citizens are able to achieve outcomes by leveraging their relationship with (or exerting pressure on) officials or through engagement with higher-level institutions that link citizens with local authorities. Citizens can thus use their participatory mechanisms to get what they want by exercising an indirect role in decision-making. Citizens in all of these cases believe that decisions made through the participatory process have more legitimacy than those made by officials alone (32 of the 45 individuals interviewed from these three cases expressed some variation on this theme). They also believe that this gives them the right to use participatory mechanisms to pressure elected officials and relevant departments to implement neighbourhood council decisions. However, the most effective outcomes are

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217 Interview with Reinaldo, council president, Mérida, Nov. 15, 2012.
218 Interviews with Sandra, council president, Maria Teresa, council secretary, Maipú, March 14, 2013; Ana María and Mirtha, council members, Maipú, April 2, 2013; Gloria, council president, La Pintana, March 22, 2013; Luis, council vice-president, March 23, 2013; José, Franklin, assembly executive members, Manta, Feb. 4, 2013; Betty, assembly secretary, Manta, Feb. 11, 2013.
produced when council participants develop and maintain strong relationships based on mutual trust and respect with local officials.

Participants describe the powers of their participatory mechanisms as limited and understand that they must work with and develop good relationships with municipal officials if they are to have any hope of having internal decisions translated into action. Of the 45 individuals interviewed from these three cases, only 22% felt that their council is autonomous from central or local governments and 15% agreed that they have real powers to make decisions about matters that affect their lives. Most (87%) claim that state institutions make final decisions on approved projects, although in contrast to the lower-tier cases, 67% believed that their participatory mechanism does have an influence on decisions about local projects. These numbers present a significant contrast with the two top-level cases, in which over 90% of respondents described their councils as autonomous and only 87% agreed that they have real decision-making authority. Most (76%) also mentioned the lack of directly controlled funding. Unlike the top-tier cases, these mechanisms do not have access to their own sources of funding but must request financial support from municipal or central government agencies. This involves either meeting with municipal officials to present requests for specific projects or identifying national programs aimed at specific goals (such as infrastructure) and applying for funds. Participatory mechanisms are required to meet the criteria of the funding agencies and have little control over the money. Still, in contrast to the lower-tier cases, over half (58%) believed they have a role in monitoring the implementation of local projects.

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219 Interviews with Gloria, council president, La Pintana, March 22, 2013; Luis, council vice-president, March 23, 2013; Housing Services Agent, MINVU, Santiago, April 7, 2012; Sandra, council president, Maria Teresa, council secretary, Maipú, March 14, 2013; and Roxanna, council treasurer, Maipú, March 16; Interviews with Ana María and Mirtha, council members, Maipú, April 2, 2013; Community Organizations Unit, Maipú, April 14, 2013; Pablo, council president, Valdivia, April 20, 2013; Renan, council executive member, Cayumapú, April 21, 2013; Official, Office of the Mayor of Valdivia, April 26, 2013; Support Agent, Public Works, Valdivia, April 26, 2013.
Table 6.3: Devolution of Decision-Making and Implementation, Mid-Tier

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decision-Making</th>
<th>Mérida (12)</th>
<th>La Pintana (17)</th>
<th>Maipú (14)</th>
<th>Tarqui (14)</th>
<th>Total (57)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tangible outcomes</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spillover effects</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomous</td>
<td>66% (n=8)</td>
<td>24% (n=4)</td>
<td>14% (n=2)</td>
<td>28% (n=4)</td>
<td>32% (n=18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real Powers</td>
<td>67% (n=8)</td>
<td>18% (n=3)</td>
<td>7% (n=1)</td>
<td>20% (n=3)</td>
<td>26% (n=15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good council – state/local institution relationship</td>
<td>58% (n=7)</td>
<td>71% (n=12)</td>
<td>64% (n=9)</td>
<td>35% (n=5)</td>
<td>46% (n=26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State institutions make final decisions</td>
<td>33% (n=4)</td>
<td>82% (n=14)</td>
<td>93% (n=13)</td>
<td>86% (n=12)</td>
<td>75% (n=43)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council has sufficient direct control of funding</td>
<td>58% (n=7)</td>
<td>23% (n=4)</td>
<td>21% (n=3)</td>
<td>28% (n=4)</td>
<td>32% (n=18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants role</td>
<td>Mostly</td>
<td>Mostly</td>
<td>Mostly</td>
<td>Subordinate,</td>
<td>Subordinat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dominant</td>
<td>Mostly</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Mostly</td>
<td>e, Somewhat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mostly</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>confictual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall: Devolution of Power</td>
<td>Yes, but not</td>
<td>No, but</td>
<td>No, but</td>
<td>No, but</td>
<td>No, but</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>fully exercised</td>
<td>informal</td>
<td>works with</td>
<td>some input</td>
<td>some input</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>observation</td>
<td>municipal</td>
<td></td>
<td>through</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>departments</td>
<td></td>
<td>city-wide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No, but</td>
<td>No, but</td>
<td>No, but</td>
<td>No, but</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>informal</td>
<td>some input</td>
<td>some input</td>
<td>some input</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>observation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>through</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>city-wide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awarding contracts and hiring labour</td>
<td>Yes, but not</td>
<td>No, but</td>
<td>No, but</td>
<td>No, but</td>
<td>No, but</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>fully exercised</td>
<td>some input</td>
<td>some input</td>
<td>some input</td>
<td>some input</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervising work</td>
<td>Yes, but not</td>
<td>No, but</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>fully exercised</td>
<td>informal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall: Implementation</td>
<td>Yes, but not</td>
<td>No, but</td>
<td>No, but</td>
<td>No, but</td>
<td>No, but</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>fully exercised</td>
<td>informal</td>
<td>some input</td>
<td>some input</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>observation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>through</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>city-wide</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A majority of participants (68%) from the two Chilean cases said that the relationship between their council and state and municipal institutions that support and fund participation is good. It is on this point that we see the greatest variation between Tarqui (where only 5 of 14 participants described the relationship in positive terms) and the Chilean cases. This is most
likely a result of the differing state discourses on public participation. Chilean participants generally perceived a subordinate relationship as natural and likely to continue. While about half of the respondents did express a desire for enhanced devolution of powers to participatory mechanisms, even those who expressed dissatisfaction with the powers their mechanisms have were generally resigned to this reality.\textsuperscript{220} Tarqui participants are generally aware of the gap between what is on paper (Ecuador’s Citizen Participation Law) and what happens in practice, which leads to higher expectations with respect to the role that citizens should play in decision-making and implementation.\textsuperscript{221}

Despite this important distinction, participants in all of these cases have addressed the lack of devolved decision-making by developing a relationship with local authorities, agencies or other participatory mechanisms. The La Pintana council played an important informal oversight role throughout the process. This involved regular communication between council leaders and both elected municipal councillors, a relationship in which feedback was solicited from the former based on decisions made by neighbourhood assembly participants.\textsuperscript{222} This, along with the relative openness of the municipal administration to citizen involvement, allowed them to exercise some direct influence.\textsuperscript{223} Most (11 of the 17) participants were positive about the relationship and their capacity to use this to achieve goals. The relationship is not entirely subordinate, however, and council leaders expressed a willingness to use both collaborative and pressure tactics when the need arises. As the council president stated:

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{220} Inteviews with Sandra and Maria Teresa, council president and secretary, Maipú, March 14, 2013; Mercedes, March 28, 2012; Romelia March 30, 2012; Christian, April 3, 2012, La Pintana.
  \item \textsuperscript{221} Interviews with José, Victor, Franklin, assembly executive members, Manta, Feb. 4, 2013; Consuelo, Ketty, assembly participants, Manta, Feb. 5 and 9, 2013.
  \item \textsuperscript{222} Interview with Monica Jarra, Head of Community Organizations division, Municipalidad de La Pintana, March 19, 2013; Gloria, Luis, council executive members, La Pintana, March 23, 2013.
  \item \textsuperscript{223} Interviews with Gloria, Luis, council executive members, La Pintana, March 23, 2013.
\end{itemize}
“We demand respect. We have talked to people from all levels of government who come here with their fancy discourse but we tell them that we don’t want to hear these words, we want results. That just because we are not highly educated doesn’t mean we don’t think. Life has taught us much, we know what our community’s needs are and we expect to have some say. So, we will work with them but in a relationship of mutual respect”.  

Those responsible for promoting and supporting public participation in La Pintana were generally pleased with the results the commune had achieved and link these outcomes to the relationship between participation and improved governance. Arguing that La Pintana was one of the first Santiago communes to establish an office dedicated to participation, the program director stated that popular participation helps the municipality to better understand and respond to residents’ and to work more effectively.

Similarly, Maipú residents conceived of participation in terms of being consulted and as a means of applying pressure to local officials. Council leaders were regularly invited to meetings with municipal councillors and the mayor in order to provide feedback with respect to the demands of neighbourhood assembly members. Most participants were satisfied with their experience, with 12 out of 14 agreeing that they appreciate having a say in matters related to their community. Participants also stressed the importance of developing good relationships with both civil servants and elected officials. They pointed out that it is important to maintain these because they cannot simply make demands, as authorities are not obliged to comply regardless of neighbourhood council support. The council’s secretary expressed what other members of the directive explained:

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224 Interview with Gloria, council president, La Pintana, March 22, 2013.
225 Interview with Monica Jarra, Head of Community Organizations division, Municipalidad de La Pintana, March 19, 2013.
226 Municipal Councillor, Maipú, April 2, 2013; Municipal Councillor, Maipú, April 5, 2013; Sandra and Maria Teresa, council president and secretary, Maipú, March 14, 2013.
“If we go in making demands, they don’t have to listen and we could damage the relationship. It works better to write a nice letter requesting a meeting and then go in there with a reasonable proposal that we can say has the support of the community.”

Officials from the municipality of Maipú were generally in agreement with the participants and council leaders. Elected councillors and civil servants felt that they had a good working relationship with the neighbourhood councils and that this interaction was essential to ensuring that the community’s demands are met, suggesting that they rely on input for decision-making. Their responses did reflect, however, the perceptions held by most participants in terms of where final decisions are made.

Once decisions have been made and a council has received funding from a relevant program or convinced municipal officials to implement a project, the role of participants in the Chilean cases becomes relatively passive yet they are generally able to monitor implementation processes. The municipality is responsible, for example for selecting the company that will carry out a project, purchasing materials, and so forth. Technocrats from the relevant municipal department or central government agency (such as the MINVU for housing projects) take over and carry the projects through. Input from the affected community members is often sought by MINVU agents or by municipal development officers throughout the implementation phase, however. This may involve families working with technicians to decide how they want the funds to be used. In contrast to the top-tier cases, however, the council’s part in the administration of

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227 Interview with Maria Teresa, council treasurer, Maipú, March 14, 2013.
229 Based on the information about neighbourhood council processes presented in Chapter 4.
230 Interviews with Gloria, council president, La Pintana, March 22, 2013; Luis, council vice-president, March 23, 2013; Monica Jarra, Municipalidad de La Pintana, March 19, 2013; Housing Services Agent, MINVU, Santiago, April 7, 2012; Sandra and Maria Teresa, council president and secretary, Maipú, March 14, 2013.
231 Based on interviews with Monica Jarra, Head of Community Organizations division, Municipalidad de La Pintana, March 19, 2013; Official, Legal Unit, Community Organizations, Municipalidad de La Pintana, April 16, 2013; of Community Organizations Division, Municipalidad de Valdivia, April 24, 2013; Gloria, council president, La Pintana, March 22, 2013; Sandra, council president, Maipú, March 14, 2013;
the housing subsidies is primarily an observer role. Technocrats manage the projects but council leaders monitor the process, receiving updates on the projects and stages of construction, as well as the materials used. The president of the La Pintana council describes how they received training in order to acquire the knowledge they required to efficiently supervise the projects to ensure they were implemented as intended by community members. In Maipú, SERVIU selected the company to do the work and evaluates the project by sending an inspector to assess the job, authorizes the release of funds, and then pays the company directly. The neighbourhood council’s role involves engaging in regular communication with SERVIU officials, and council leaders describe this relationship as allowing for meaningful input into the process.

The fact that municipal or state officials and technocrats generally take over once projects were decided on did not appear to be a concern for most participants in these two mid-tier Chilean cases. Of the 31 individuals interviewed, only 9 felt that neighbourhood councils should have expanded direct powers to implement their own projects. Furthermore, the councils’ leaders explained that they would simply not have the time to dedicate to this as most of their neighbours have jobs and families to care for. They explained that they feel their role is to promote the interests of their neighbours by working with and/or pressuring relevant officials into adopting their councils’ decisions, but felt that the implementation work is the responsibility of state officials. They also felt that they are able to use their participatory mechanism to pressure technicians responsible for the projects if they are not carried out according to plan. As one council president put it, if the planning agents and workers are not fulfilling their obligations:

232 Interview with Gloria, council president, La Pintana, March 22, 2013.
233 Interview with Sandra, council president, Maipú, March 14, 2013.
234 Interviews with Gloria, council president, La Pintana, March 22, 2013; Luis, council vice-president, La Pintana, March 23, 2013; Sandra and Maria Teresa, council president and secretary, Maipú, March 14, 2013; Roxanna, council treasurer, Maipu, March 16, 2013; Pablo, council president, Valdivia, April 20, 2013.
“I can go above them, to the head of the department, to the municipal councillors, and these people will listen because they know it is not just me complaining, that I have the entire neighbourhood council behind me, and their support. They will generally put pressure on the technicians to make sure things get done.”

The council leaders also stated that the council oversight, even if passive, ensures accountability in that those who are implementing the projects (and managing the funds) “know they are being watched by many eyes.” Participants themselves who had benefited from the projects were generally pleased with the projects as implemented by MINVU and their municipal departments. Most in La Pintana and to a lesser extent Maipú claimed that they were directly consulted with respect to how money was to be used for neighbourhood improvement projects and that this was a sufficient implementation role as far as they are concerned.

While the relationship between members of the Tarqui citizens’ assembly and the Municipality of Manta is more conflictual than the Chilean cases, there is nevertheless an ongoing and institutionalized relationship that brings both sides together. In Tarqui, citizens were able to have a voice in decision-making and observe the implementation process through the Manta Citizens’ Assembly, which integrates representatives from each parish assembly as well as other community and social organizations in the city with elected officials and civil servants. Through regular meetings, leaders of the Tarqui assembly are able to exert pressure, vote on projects to be funded (including at the parish level) and “oversee” the implementation of

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235 Interview with Sandra, council president, Maipú, March 14, 2013.
236 Interview with Luis, council vice-president, La Pintana, March 23, 2013.
237 Interviews with Elsa, Alicia, council participants, La Pintana, March 23, 2013; Maipú council participants Francisco, March 13; Daniela, March 15; Estrella, March 17, 2013, Maipú; Luisa, Ariel, Marisol, council participants, Cayumapú, April 21, 2013.
238 Interviews with assembly participants José, Feb. 4, 2013; Ketty, Manta, Feb. 9, 2013; Betty, Manta, Feb. 11, 2013; and see Manta, Ordenanza que crea y regula el sistema de participación de Manta (2011); GAD de Manta, Boletín informativo del Gobierno Autónomo Descentralizado del Cantón Manta (GAD-Manta).
projects in their respective parishes.\textsuperscript{239} Devolution of power has barely moved beyond the consultation and observation stage, yet both participants and municipal officials agree that citizen participation has had an impact on the outcomes of the Tarqui local assembly.\textsuperscript{240} The mayor retains considerable control of the process, but representatives from the local parish assemblies have the ability to observe, intervene and demand accountability.\textsuperscript{241} While participants continue to perceive citizen participation in different terms, the case resembles La Pintana and Maipú in that residents are able to use participatory mechanisms to engage with local officials to get what they want.

Unlike the two lower-tier Ecuadorian cases, individuals from the Tarqui case were likely to express optimism and describe participation as a developing process. As one of the council leaders expressed:

“It is a process that must continue to develop. But we are much more developed with respect to participation than most countries in Latin America. So we’re not going to back down, but those in power will always try to protect their interests. We have not fully used the tool that is participation yet, but we know we have the tool as a right and we will learn to use it in time whether they like it or not. I think that in another four years or so, it will be stronger.”\textsuperscript{242}

\textit{Bottom-Tier Cases: Montúfar, Calderón and Cayumapú}

These cases do not demonstrate devolution of power to citizens and were unable to play any meaningful role in the policy process. Relationships between participants and local officials are marked by conflict. Authorities are less likely than in the middle-tier cases to express openness

\textsuperscript{239} José, Victor, Franklin, assembly executive members, Manta, Feb. 4, 2013; Betty, assembly secretary, Manta, Feb. 11, 2013; Adviser, Office of the Mayor, Manta, Feb. 18, 2013.
\textsuperscript{240} Interviews with Councillor, Municipio de Manta, Manta, Feb. 6, 2013; Adviser, Office of the Mayor, Manta, Feb. 18, 2013; José, Victor, Franklin, assembly executive members, Manta, Feb. 4, 2013; Betty, assembly secretary, Manta, Feb. 11, 2013.
\textsuperscript{241} Interviews with José, Victor, Franklin, assembly executive members, Manta, Feb. 4, 2013.
\textsuperscript{242} Interview with José, Manta, Feb. 4, 2013.
toward public participation and citizens are pessimistic about the participatory process and express hostility toward local officials. In the two Ecuadorian cases, this tension is related to the gap between their expectations and reality. When participants expect radical democracy but must work through mechanisms that do not provide such powers, these relationships become conflictual which results in participants being left out of an informal or “observer” role. The association between the absence of these factors and the poor outcomes produced by these cases confirms the importance of positive relationships between participatory mechanisms and local government when formal decision-making and implementation powers are lacking.

According to most of the 42 individuals interviewed from these three cases, decision-making power has not been devolved to their citizens’ assemblies. Only 11% felt that that their mechanism is autonomous from central or local governments and 7% agreed that they have real powers to make decisions about matters that affect their lives. Nearly 80% felt that the relationship between their mechanism and municipal institutions is poor with most basing this perception on the lack of recognition on the part of local officials. Again, there is a contrast between the Chilean and Ecuadorian cases here, with nearly half of the former describing the relationship as positive while this perception was practically absent from the latter cases. An overwhelming majority (93%) claim that state institutions make final decisions on approved projects and only 15% believed that their participatory mechanism has any an influence on decisions about local projects (as opposed to 67% for the mid-tier cases). Most (93%) mentioned the lack of directly controlled funding as problematic and felt that participatory democracy could not be achieved in its absence. In contrast to the mid-tier cases, few (12%) believed they have any role in monitoring the implementation of local projects. There is relatively little variation between the three cases other than the aforementioned issue of relationships with local
government (see Table 6.4). These numbers demonstrate poor results even when compared to the mid-tier cases.

| Table 6.4: Devolution of Decision-Making and Implementation, Bottom-Tier |
|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Cayumapú (10)                                | Montúfar (17)   | Calderón (15)   | Total (42)       |
| **Decision-Making**                           |                 |                 |                 |
| Tangible outcomes                            | Low             | Low             | None            |
| Spillover effects                            | Poor            | Moderate        | Poor            |
| Autonomous                                   | 0               | 17% (n=3)       | 13% (n=2)       | 11% (n=5)       |
| Real Powers                                   | 0               | 12% (n=2)       | n=1             | 7% (n=3)        |
| Good council – state/local institution relation | 40% (n=4)       | 12% (n=2)       | n=1             | 17% (n=7)       |
| State institutions make final decisions       | 90% (n=9)       | 94% (n=16)      | 93% (n=14)      | 93% (n=39)      |
| Council has sufficient direct control of funding | n=2             | 17% (n=3)       | 13% (n=2)       | 17% (n=7)       |
| Participants’ role                            | Subordinate, Sometimes conflictual | Subordinate, Conflictual | Subordinate, Conflictual |
| **Overall: Devolution of Power**              | No              | No              | No              |
| **Implementation**                            |                 |                 |                 |
| Control of the budget                        | No              | No              | No              |
| Awarding contracts and hiring labour         | No              | No              | No              |
| Supervising work                             | No, but some input | No              | No              |
| **Overall: Implementation**                  | No, but some input | No              | No              |

In contrast to the mid-tier cases, participants were more likely to describe the relationship with the municipality as conflictual and express hostility toward local officials. While more positive than the Ecuadorian cases in this category, Cayumapú reveals a more conflictual relationship in comparison to La Pintana and Maipú. In recent years, council leaders and
participants have expressed strong dissatisfaction with both the progress of community projects and with the responsiveness of municipal agents.\textsuperscript{243} This has resulted in a considerable degree of conflict that has led some council leaders to consider challenging municipal councils in upcoming elections.\textsuperscript{244} The mayor and local civil servants stressed that they are sometimes unable to accept alternatives decided on by citizens due to lack or resources rather than lack of will to do so. The fact that some of the council’s demands have not seen movement is, according to them, due more to the area’s relative isolation which makes infrastructure projects more complicated and expensive.\textsuperscript{245} While their counterparts in La Pintana and Maipú worked with local officials and state agencies to have a say in implementation of projects, in Cayumapú, it was made clear to residents that once a project had been approved, their role would be reduced to receiving updates and information about the progress.\textsuperscript{246}

Devolution of decision-making power is the factor that produces the most conflict in the three Ecuadorian cases. The research reveals conflict between citizens and local authorities over the meaning and scope of public decision-making. In contrast to the Venezuelan participants, citizens do not feel that power has been devolved and believe that local authorities continue to exercise the functions that are supposed to have been transferred to participatory mechanisms. Participants have developed high expectations surrounding this factor due to the participatory democracy discourse of the central government, and particularly that of President Rafael Correa (2007-present). They do not view local elected representatives as legitimate actors in a co-

\textsuperscript{243} Interviews with Pablo, council president, Valdivia, April 20, 2013 and with Mauro, Lorena, Octavio, council participants, Cayumapú, April 23, 2013.
\textsuperscript{244} Interview with Pablo, council president, Valdivia, April 20, 2013; Renan, council executive member, April 21, 2013.
\textsuperscript{245} Interview with Official, Office of the Mayor of Valdivia, April 26, 2013; Support Agent, Public Works, Valdivia, April 26, 2013.
\textsuperscript{246} Interview with Pablo, council president, Valdivia, April 20, 2013.
governance relationship, but believe that they should exercise these powers directly.247 The mechanisms do not yet provide the resources they require to do this, however and their design reveals a lack of alignment with the discourse. Meanwhile, local authorities believe that they were elected to make decisions and question the role of participatory mechanisms.248 Thus, neither side is prepared to recognize the other’s legitimacy in terms of local decision-making. The resulting conflict between local governments and participatory mechanisms creates a stalemate that appears to have a detrimental effect on outcomes.

Participants complain that while authorities are supposed to appoint citizens selected by the people themselves (through local assemblies or other mechanisms), they tend to appoint their own candidates and label these as citizen representatives. In this way, they shape and maintain control over the implementation process.249 Some participants also blame citizens themselves, however, arguing that many are indifferent and ignorant about their participatory rights.250 Others stress that while agencies such as the CPCCS provide useful training, the assemblies lack the resources to effectively engage in managing their projects and citizens lack time due to work and family obligations.251

Montúfar was marked by considerable conflict between elected officials and participants at the time this research was conducted. While previous municipal governments actively promoted participation, more recent officials have resisted. Of the 17 individuals interviewed from this case, all but one claimed that the current municipal government does not listen and

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251 Interviews with assembly participants Chani, Quito, Sept. 21, 2012; David, Calderón, Sept. 25, 2012
linked the recent lack of progress to this factor. Participants in the Montúfar assembly claim that they are able to participate in a municipal-level Assembly that brings together the various actors involved (as in the Tarqui case). Participants pointed out, however, that outcomes (those discussed in Chapter 4) were achieved under the past administration which was open to participation. In the past, this allowed residents to observe implementation processes and convey their feedback to local elected authorities and public works officials, but recent relationships with the local government have been characterized by resistance to citizen participation. The process has thus become less productive (and outcomes have diminished accordingly). At the time of writing, the poor relationship observed between local assembly and municipal officials had deteriorated even further, and both sides were engaged in a battle over citizens’ participatory rights and funds that the assembly believes it should control. This hinders the type of relationship observed in Tarqui and in the more successful Chilean cases, thus leaving participants out of decision-making altogether. Council leaders acknowledged that no further outcomes had been achieved due to this stalemate.

“\[The problem is that we now have all of these participatory mechanisms such as the assemblies, which is good, but they aren’t taken seriously by local authorities who still have final decision-making power and the resources. So we can all decide on something here but they may still say no. What we need is decision-making power, resources and the institutionalization of participation so that they can’t just say no.\]”

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255 Personal communication with assembly coordinator, Nov. 11, 2014.
The lowest-value outcome case (Calderón) does not have such a mechanism, as the parish had not yet convened a locality-wide assembly at the time of research despite being obligated to do so according to the 2010 Citizen Participation Law. The Calderón case is marked by conflict within the local assembly itself as well as between participants and the parish administration (administración zonal) but closely resembles the Montúfar case in that relationships between all parties have deteriorated to the extent that no effective relationship between the citizens’ assembly and relevant local government agencies is possible.

The conflictual relationships observed in these cases confirms the importance of establishing effective working relationships between participatory mechanisms and authorities. Where those relationships work well and local officials are open to the value of participation (as in the mid-range cases), participants are able to play an indirect decision-making role even though such powers have not been formally devolved to neighbourhood councils. The ability to play such a role also allows participants more of a say in how funding is distributed, an important factor given that participatory mechanisms lack the autonomous funding that their Venezuelan counterparts have access to.

**Deliberation**

We have seen that many theorists argue that if participatory mechanisms are to provide opportunities for effective participation, they must generate a process of meaningful internal deliberation. The evidence presented here demonstrates an association between deliberation and the tangible outcomes and a particularly important impact on spillover effects. The higher-value

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257 Interviews with Maria and Chani, council participants, Quito, Sept. 3, 2012; and confirmed by Emilifran Pazmiño, participation advisor for Pichincha, CPCCS, Quito, Oct. 28, 2012.

258 Interview with Maria and Chani, council participant, Quito, Oct. 8, 2012 and follow-up personal communication, July 23, 2014.
outcomes cases are judged by participants to produce a more deliberative internal process while the lower-value cases generate an environment that is not conducive to effective discussion and debate.

*Design and Discourse*

State discourse and relevant legislation varies among the three countries with respect to this factor. The Venezuelan communal councils were intentionally designed to provide a forum for citizens to engage in deliberative discussion about their community. $^{259}$ Officials charged with oversight of popular participation in Venezuela stressed this point: 9 of the 12 civil servants and 5 of the 6 elected officials interviewed specifically mentioned the deliberation as a key factor in determining the success of individual communal councils, with most referencing some variation of the “force of the better argument”. A director of Fundacomunal explained:

“We designed the communal councils to be deliberative, they are designed to provide a forum for discussion among equals. We provide training to citizens so that they understand what deliberation means and how to engage in this type of discussion: it is about speaking your mind, listening to others and making decisions based on the best arguments.”$^{260}$

Venezuelan officials stressed, however, that while they are designed to encourage open deliberation, the capacity of councils to do so depends on the commitment of the individuals involved and the dynamic varies from one council to another. These officials insisted on the importance of deliberation, arguing that even if councils are able to exercise decision-making

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$^{259}$ Venezuela, *Proyecto de Ley de Reforma de la Ley de los Consejos Comunales (2009); Escuela Fortalecimiento del Poder Popular; Manual de participación ciudadana y gestión comunitaria; Ministerio del Poder Popular para las Comunas y Protección Social, El poder popular, Metodología revolucionaria para el trabajo y la organización comunal; Fundación escuela de gerencia social, Herramientas de participación ciudadana y controlaría social.*

$^{260}$ Interview with Francois Albarrán, Coordinator of “Taquilla Unica”, Fundacomunal, Mérida, Nov. 11, 2012.
and implementation powers, the intended outcomes cannot reflect citizens’ demands unless the quality of internal deliberation is high.\textsuperscript{261}

Like their Venezuelan counterparts, Ecuadorian citizens’ assemblies are designed to provide an environment for deliberation. Representatives interviewed from the agencies charged with supporting and promoting citizen participation focused heavily on this factor as an essential ingredient of participatory democracy. CPCCS participation advisors claimed that they support this through facilitating early meetings of newly established participatory mechanisms and offering training on how to conduct deliberative discussions (including training on how to facilitate meetings and ensure everyone is included).\textsuperscript{262} All of the CPCCS participation specialists interviewed had attended local citizens’ assembly meetings in their assigned provinces. They observed that some individuals are naturally inclined to attempt to dominate the conversations and that those who are better educated, more articulate or more knowledgeable about politics are more likely to impose their views by convincing others. They insist that they are working with the assemblies, however, to “teach deliberative skills” which involves ensuring that everyone’s perspective is given equal weight.\textsuperscript{263}

Chilean neighbourhood councils were designed to provide all members with the right to express themselves and to propose initiatives, but there is little mention in the enabling legislation on the internal process of deliberation.\textsuperscript{264} Unlike in Venezuela, none of the central

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Project Support Agent, CORPOANDES, Mérida, Nov. 21, 2012; Communal Participation Coordinator, Casa de Poder Popular, Office of the Mayor, Caracas, Jan. 30, 2013
\item Interview with Rubén Boada, Participation Advisor, CPCSS, Quito, Sept. 22, 2012.
\item Interviews with Pamela Troya, Participation Advisor, CPCSS, Quito, Oct. 12, 2012; Emilifran Pazmiño and Marlene Jarrin, Participation Advisors, CPCCS, Quito, Oct. 28, 2012.
\item Biblioteca nacional de Chile, \textit{Guía legal sobre Juntas de vecinos}; Chile, \textit{Ley sobre asociaciones y participación ciudadana en la gestión pública}; Gobierno de Chile, \textit{Participación Ciudadana}, \url{http://www.participacionciudadana.gob.cl}; Ministerio Secretaría general de gobierno, División de Organizaciones Sociales, \textit{La Participación Ciudadana como Eje de Gestión del Gobierno, Política para la participación ciudadana en el marco de la corresponsabilidad}.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
government officials addressed the quality of deliberation. Most focused on the concepts of co-
management and improved governance as discussed in the previous section, but state officials
seemed unfamiliar with how neighbourhood councils function on a day-to-day basis. A few
municipal representatives charged with promoting participation and who have more direct
contact with the mechanisms tended to be critical of the internal functioning the councils. While
insisting that there is variation in terms of how deliberative these bodies are, they felt that there
has not been enough work done to promote internal democracy and deliberation. They attribute
the problem to a lack of an institutional framework that encourages and enables the kind of
internal democracy that could lead to a better quality of deliberation.\textsuperscript{265}

\textit{Top-Tier Cases: Sucre and Guacara}

The Sucre and Guacara communal councils demonstrate a clear relationship between outcomes
and quality of deliberation. The evidence collected from participants in the communal councils
studied here suggests that they perceive the internal process to be highly deliberative.
Approximately 85\% of those interviewed characterize the discussion process in communal
council assemblies and the various working groups as open and tolerant. Participants agreed that
their council meetings meet the most important criteria of deliberation: that all who wish to
speak may do so, that people are generally listened to when expressing their opinion (83\%) and
that a variety of ideas are discussed and weighed (76\%). Most (69\%) agree that the active
council members (as opposed to spokespeople) are the ones who participate in the elaboration of
community projects. People felt this way both with respect to their own interventions in council

\textsuperscript{265} Interview with Thomás Marín, Director of Citizen Participation, Municipalidad de Providencia, March 14, 2013; Community Organizations Unit, Maipú, April 14, 2013; Community Organizations Division, Municipalidad de Valdivia, April 24, 2013.
business as well as their observations of how others were treated. These positive experiences with respect to what they see as a rich deliberative process were expressed by both men and women and across age groups and occupation/education levels.

Table 6.5: Quality of Deliberation, Top-Tier

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sucre (21)</th>
<th>Guacara (16)</th>
<th>Total (37)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tangible outcomes</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spillover effects</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open discussion</td>
<td>95% (n=20)</td>
<td>87% (n=14)</td>
<td>91% (n=34)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People listened to</td>
<td>95% (n=20)</td>
<td>87% (n=14)</td>
<td>91% (n=34)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variety of ideas</td>
<td>86% (n=18)</td>
<td>81% (n=13)</td>
<td>83% (n=31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All members participate</td>
<td>80% (n=17)</td>
<td>75% (n=12)</td>
<td>78% (n=29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some people dominate</td>
<td>14% (n=3)</td>
<td>25% (n=4)</td>
<td>19% (n=7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overall: Quality of Deliberation</strong></td>
<td><strong>High</strong></td>
<td><strong>High</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When asked directly about their experience, most pointed to the communal councils’ lack of hierarchies which places all participants on the same level, in contrast to formal representative institutions which are characterized by hierarchical relationships detrimental to deliberation.266 Many respondents also provided more detail about the nature of deliberation itself, and while they do not engage directly with Habermasian concepts, responses revolve around the “force of the better argument”, as exemplified by the following statement:

“There has to be deliberation because we must determine what the most important common problems are in order to move forward, this requires people to propose arguments based on what is best for everyone. This is much more deliberative than representative institutions where everyone just argues for their own interests, that is easy enough to do. But making an argument on what is best for everyone, that is much harder, that requires real deliberation.” 267

266 This was the most common response provide by the 37 participants to a specific interview question on the deliberative nature of communal councils.

267 Interview with Alina, council participant, Caracas, Jan. 11, 2013.
Council spokespeople also recognized their role in ensuring a deliberative environment, insisting that they must follow a set of rules and norms and that the group dynamic will not allow them (or particular participants) to impose their own agenda, as participants have been trained to understand that they have the right to be heard and listened to.268

Participants were also asked specifically about whether or not leaders emerge (informally if not formally) within the councils and to what extent these individuals may dominate the debate and therefore pose a threat to the deliberative nature of the process. The vast majority of respondents (73%) did not see this as a problem based on their own experience. While many admitted that informal leaders emerge and that some individuals occasionally attempt to impose their will, these participants argued that the participatory nature of the mechanisms, the lack of formal hierarchies and the group dynamic are all factors that prevent one or more individuals from dominating the process. Many respondents referred to the self-regulating nature of the councils:

“There are people who try to dominate sometimes, that is how people are. But they can’t dominate the entire process because they don’t make decisions, they can only put their ideas forward and there are procedures in place to make sure everyone gets a chance to talk. In any case, the actual decisions are made in the citizens’ assembly so even if someone is louder than everyone else, the group dynamic won’t allow that”.269

Mid-Tier Cases: Mérida, La Pintana, Maipú, and Tarqui

The evidence collected from participants in the four middle-range participatory mechanisms suggests that the internal process is relatively deliberative, although less so than in the top-tier

268 Interview with Helen, council president, Guacara, Nov. 26, 2012; Blanca, council president, Caracas, Jan. 8, 2013.
269 Interview with Francisco, council participant, Caracas, Jan. 8, 2013.
cases. About 65% of those interviewed agreed that an open, tolerant discussion process characterizes fora such as the community assemblies and the various working groups in which they have participated. This compares with 85% in the high-range cases and 45% for the lower-tier mechanisms. Over 60% of participants in all four cases agreed that meetings meet the most important criteria of deliberation: that all who wish to speak may do so, that people are generally listened to when expressing their opinion, and that a variety of ideas are discussed and weighed. About half agree that the active members (as opposed to leaders) are the ones who participate in the elaboration of community projects; only in one case (Maipú) does this number fall below 50%. Yet about the same number have observed that some members tend to dominate the discussion that takes places within their participatory mechanism. There is relatively little variation among the four cases, despite the fact that they are drawn from three different countries with different institutional design (see Table 6.6).

Table 6.6: Quality of Deliberation, Mid-Tier

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mérida (12)</th>
<th>La Pintana (17)</th>
<th>Maipú (14)</th>
<th>Tarqui (14)</th>
<th>Total (57)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tangible outcomes</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spillover effects</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open discussion</td>
<td>68% (n=8)</td>
<td>64% (n=11)</td>
<td>57% (n=8)</td>
<td>71% (n=10)</td>
<td>65% (n=37)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People listened to</td>
<td>58% (n=7)</td>
<td>64% (n=11)</td>
<td>57% (n=8)</td>
<td>64% (n=9)</td>
<td>61% (n=35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variety of ideas</td>
<td>50% (n=6)</td>
<td>59% (n=10)</td>
<td>50% (n=7)</td>
<td>64% (n=9)</td>
<td>56% (n=32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All members participate</td>
<td>53% (n=5)</td>
<td>59% (n=10)</td>
<td>42% (n=6)</td>
<td>57% (n=8)</td>
<td>51% (n=29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some people dominate</td>
<td>50% (n=6)</td>
<td>52% (n=9)</td>
<td>50% (n=8)</td>
<td>43% (n=6)</td>
<td>51% (n=29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall: Quality of Deliberation</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Among those who were satisfied with the internal workings of their council, most described a process in which people are able to discuss and work with their neighbours in an
egalitarian setting. They attribute “real deliberation” to the absence of hierarchies found in so many other political institutions and groups, often arguing that in dealing with any of the formal institutions, people are made aware of their place, which makes the participatory mechanisms a refreshing change. Respondents from La Pintana, for example, tended to focus on the collaborative nature of their assemblies and the lack of hierarchy within the council structure. Many referred to specific examples, such as the project to bring bus service to the neighbourhood, which involved deliberation with fellow council participants and other stakeholders to determine schedules and routes. The description of the deliberative process provided by the president of the Maipú case is similar to that observed in the other cases:

“We call assemblies, the assemblies decide but always after a good discussion. We propose, we tell the neighbours what we suggest but only the assembly can make the decision about what we will bring forward. There can be as much or as little discussion as people want to have, there are no time limits, usually there is friendly disagreement and debate.”

While the majority of participants in these four cases felt that their council provides a deliberative environment for discussion and decision making, the numbers also tell us that some interviewees (over 40%) expressed less positive perspectives with respect to this factor. These concerns tended to fall into two categories: that personal and group rivalries sometimes have a negative impact on internal deliberation and a belief that some individuals tend to dominate.

With respect to rivalries, a number of respondents acknowledge that despite the “common good” focus of communal councils, individuals do have personal goals and some try to use these

270 Interviews with Sandra, council president, Maipú, March 14, 2013; Vivian, Daniela, Mauricio, council participants, Maipú, March 15, 2013; Mirtha, council participant, Maipú, April 2, 2013; with Gloria, council president, La Pintana, March 22, 2013; Romelia, Angelica, council participants, La Pintana, March 30, 2013; Ariel, Mauro, Cayumapú, April 21 and 23, 2013.
272 Interview with Sandra, council president, Maipú, March 14, 2013.
spaces to advance those. This creates rivalries that can harm the deliberative process as arguments are not based on needs but on individual interests.273

Others who did not view the councils as a deliberative environment tended to argue that certain individuals dominate the process because they have been involved for many years and are more familiar with municipal politics. Such individuals are in a better position to steer the conversations and impose their will, which in turn limits the variety of ideas discussed and the scope of debate. Typical of these sentiments is the following comment from a participant in Maipú:

“They are deliberative in the sense that everyone has the right to participate, to speak and to express opinions, but I’m not sure this is real deliberation because some people—especially the directors and those who have been involved for a long time—know much more than the rest of us about local policies, about how to get things done. We sometimes feel like we don’t know what we are talking about, so it is better not to speak and they often seem to assume they know best.”274

This perspective was more common among participants in the Mérida case when compared with the two other Venezuelan examples; some current and former participants argued that despite the formal rules and procedures, some people do manage to dominate the discussion and influence decision-making more than others.275 Many individuals from Mérida expressed sentiments similar to this:

“There is a group of people who…try to dominate the decision-making process and sometimes this happens because they have influence over people, people will listen to them and repeat what they say. But often this is because they participate more and know more about what is going on, so it sounds like they know what they are talking about”.276

273 Interview with Marbella, former council president, Mérida, Nov. 14, 2012; Victor, council participant, Mérida, Nov. 8, 2012; Chela, former council participant, Mérida, Nov. 8, 2012; Ana María and Mirtha, council members, Maipú, April 2, 2013; Consuelo, Ketty, assembly participants, Manta, Feb. 5 and 9, 2013.
274 Interview with Estrella, council participant, Maipú, March 17, 2013.
275 Victor, council participant, Mérida, Nov. 8, 2012; Chela, former council participant, Mérida, Nov. 8, 2012; Noe, council participant, Mérida, Nov. 9, 2012.
276 Interview with Chela, former council participant, Mérida, Nov. 8, 2012.
As observed with the high and middle-tier categories, there is a correlation between the percentages of participants who feel positively about the deliberative nature of their council and both types of outcomes. The cases in the lower-tier outcome category do not generate a deliberative environment.

Less than half of the 42 members interviewed believed that their local assembly provides a deliberative forum characterized by an open discussion process and that individuals who wish to speak may do so and are listened to when expressing their opinion (48%). This compares with 64% for the mid-range mechanisms and over 85% for the highest-tier cases. Only 43% agree that a variety of options are discussed and weighed and fewer (35%) feel that the active members (as opposed to leaders) are the ones who participate in the elaboration of community projects within the assembly. A majority (67%) also believed that some individuals tend to dominate the discussions at least some of the time, whereas only half of participants from the mid-range cases felt this way. Not surprisingly, this factor is particularly important in producing positive perceptions of democracy and sense of empowerment; the case that scores the lowest on this spillover effect (Calderón) is also deemed to be the least deliberative while the Montúfar assembly fares somewhat better and enjoys moderate rather than poor spillover effects (Table 6.7).
Table 6.7: Quality of Deliberation, Bottom-Tier

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Cayumapú (10)</th>
<th>Montúfar (17)</th>
<th>Calderón (15)</th>
<th>Total (42)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tangible outcomes</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spillover effects</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open discussion</td>
<td>40% (n=4)</td>
<td>59% (n=10)</td>
<td>33% (n=5)</td>
<td>45% (n=19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People listened to</td>
<td>50% (n=5)</td>
<td>59% (n=10)</td>
<td>33% (n=5)</td>
<td>48% (n=20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variety of ideas</td>
<td>40% (n=4)</td>
<td>53% (n=9)</td>
<td>33% (n=5)</td>
<td>43% (n=18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All members participate</td>
<td>30% (n=3)</td>
<td>47% (n=8)</td>
<td>27% (n=4)</td>
<td>35% (n=15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some people dominate</td>
<td>60% (n=6)</td>
<td>58% (n=10)</td>
<td>73% (n=11)</td>
<td>67% (n=27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall: Quality of Deliberation</td>
<td>Medium-low</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants describe the process in similar terms to their counterparts from the mid-range cases who did not consider their participatory mechanism to be deliberative, but in the bottom-tier cases these perspectives were expressed more frequently and with greater intensity. Over half of respondents (54%) from across the three cases argued that personal and group rivalries sometimes have a negative impact on deliberation within the council. The most common concern, however, was that some individuals tend to dominate the discussion. This was observed by nearly three-fourths of respondents from the Calderón local assembly, two thirds from Cayumapú and just over half from Montúfar. Respondents from the Cayumapú case generally attributed this to the knowledge and expertise that more active and long-term council members had, making these individuals more “authoritative” in council assemblies.277

277 Interviews with Luisa, Ariel, Marison, council participants, Cayumapú, April 21, 2013.
Participants from the Calderón case, with its large indigenous population, were more likely to attribute the lack of meaningful deliberation to racism and paternalism.²⁷⁸ Of the nine cases studied, this one demonstrates the poorest tangible outcomes, the lowest spillover effects and the most negative responses with respect to deliberation. Of the 15 individuals interviewed, 10 felt that the internal process was not deliberative and this includes all of the indigenous participants. It should also be noted that the indigenous participants tended ascribe the lack of deliberation to racism.²⁷⁹ Most distinguished between the indigenous and mestizo participants, claiming that indigenous people were not taken seriously and not listened to, expressing a variation on the following theme:

“The local assembly is dominated by those who already have power in the community, like those who own the lots. These individuals are more educated and often take advantage of this to get their way. They tell us that they know best and the rest of us should follow, like children.”²⁸⁰

In the Montúfar case, some of the indigenous participants described attitudes similar to those discussed above, but such perspectives were less common. Unlike in the Calderón case, those who did describe these negative experiences did not perceive of two blocks, but rather tended to argue that some (but not all) mestizo participants exhibited racist attitudes but that the overall group dynamic generally encourages free deliberation.²⁸¹
Inclusiveness

Inclusiveness, or expanding participation in decision-making to groups that have traditionally been excluded from this process, is another commonly cited “essential ingredient” of effective citizen participation. As outlined in Chapter 3, it is often presented by governments as being one of the most important goals of participatory initiatives. This research reveals that the highest-outcome cases (Sucre and Guacara) demonstrate the greatest degree of inclusion of traditionally marginalized groups (although there is evidence that certain groups self-exclude for political reasons). Not surprisingly, cases that demonstrate higher levels of inclusion produce better spillover effects but there is also a notable relationship between this factor and tangible outcomes. The middle-tier cases demonstrate some inclusion when compared with traditional access to political institutions but less so than the higher value cases, while the low value outcome/poor spillover cases demonstrate little inclusion or even exclusion.

Design and Discourse

State discourse in Venezuela frames inclusiveness as incorporating the participation of those who previously had no access points (the poor, the less educated, women, Afro-Venezuelans). The idea was expressed by Chávez himself; in his earliest speech describing the purpose of these mechanisms, he declared that “communal councils should develop from below, from popular assemblies in the barrios” and that they were part of a re-organization of power intended to include the majority in decision-making as opposed to small elite groups of the past.282 This is the main argument that most politicians and public servants interviewed put forward when asked about communal councils. A number of government officials stressed the contrast between the

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282 Hugo Chávez, Alo Presidente, # 244, Jan. 15, 2006
current system and what they perceive to be an exclusive and exclusionary system of the past, arguing that under representative institutions only a few people made decisions (the socioeconomic elites) and that while everyone had the right to vote, this type of limited participation does not equate with inclusiveness if those elected only represent the interests of a few. They claim that the new system of participation allows average citizens a say in decisions that affect their lives.  

283 An adviser to the minister responsible for communal councils explained:

“This is the most important goal of the Bolivarian Revolution: allowing people who have always been excluded from power to have a say. The communal councils were designed to be in every neighbourhood, to give everyone an equal chance to participate regardless of status, education, gender, skin colour. This is why there are no hierarchal relationships built in to the structure. And we know that even the poorest citizens are represented, we know that women participate in great numbers.”

284

As with the other factors, the discourse produced by the Ecuadorian state resembles that found in Venezuela. The discursive patterns found in texts produced by Ecuadorian state agencies generally associate inclusiveness with interculturalism and promote collective rights for ethnic minorities, including indigenous peoples and Afro-Ecuadorians.  

285 Of the 22 officials interviewed from the relevant state agencies, all but one specifically mentioned including traditionally marginalized sectors as the most important goal of participatory mechanisms. The government’s agenda of recognizing Ecuador’s diversity by creating mechanisms to give everyone a voice emerged as a key theme. Still, these individuals expressed concern about the lack of participation from minority groups, citing low engagement from youth and ethnic


284 Interview with Senior Official, National Strategy for Communes, MPComunas, Caracas, Jan. 25 2013.

285 Ecuador, Ley Orgánica de Participación Ciudadana; Consejo de participación ciudadana y control social (CPCCS), http://www.participacionycontrolsocial.gov.ec/; Conceptos básicos de la participación, Las Asambleas Locales Ciudadanas y el Sistema de participación ciudadana en las localidades; Secretaría Nacional de Planificación y Desarrollo (SENPLADES), Guía de participación ciudadana en la planificación de los GADs, La participación ciudadana para la vida democrática.
minorities in regions where they are underrepresented. They tended to attribute this to a variety of factors, including a lack of “culture of participation” (particularly among these individuals) and lack of time and distance (particularly in rural areas). An advisor for citizen initiatives conceded that racism and other forms of discrimination would continue to act as a barrier to a fully inclusive system, but insisted that his and other departments are working to break down these barriers by training these sectors on “how to participate in politics” and through helping them to build these new participatory mechanisms to provide new access points. The Deputy Minister for Citizen Participation insisted that, “for the first time, women are able to play a leading role in decision-making through the participatory system that, because it is new and developed in part by women, is free of some of the structural barriers found in the traditional institutions.”

Observers tended to argue, however, that while Ecuador’s new participatory mechanisms demonstrated some potential for inclusiveness in what has historically been a highly exclusionary political system, there was still much work to be done. They noted that diversity and inclusion are on the agenda now and these things were not spoken of before, but the concern is that it has all been institutionalized into the state, whereas it used to happen outside of the state. The groups that represent various interests (indigenous, women’s) are in fact becoming weaker because of this; they are being co-opted and absorbed into state institutions. They argued that while there is more inclusion, this inclusion is controlled.

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287 Interview with Byron Obando, Advisor, Citizen Initiatives, Secretaría de Pueblos, Quito, Oct. 9, 2012.
288 Interview with Isabel Terán, Deputy Minister, Secretaría General de la Gobernación, Quito, Oct. 11, 2012.
289 Interviews with Maria Amelia Viteri, Professor, FLACSO Ecuador, Quito, Sept. 24, 2012; Pablo Andrade, Professor, Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar, Quito, Oct. 2, 2012.
The Chilean state discourse surrounding citizen participation bears little resemblance to the other two countries. While the state presents its vision of citizen participation as ensuring that all citizens can participate in decision-making, it does not specifically distinguish traditionally excluded sectors (the poor, women, ethnic minorities) as groups that must benefit from participation. Discourse concentrates on the liberal goal of providing all citizens the same political and civil rights. These perspectives were reflected in the interviews with officials from state agencies. While in Venezuela those charged with implementing participatory policy focused on inclusiveness of groups such as the poor and women as a primary goal of the communal council system, these themes did not emerge in interviews with their Chilean equivalents. Rather, they focused on developing more effective communication and better relationships between government and citizens through participatory mechanisms.

Top-Tier Cases: Sucre and Guacara

Observers and government officials interviewed confirmed that the high-levels of inclusion observed in the Sucre and Guacara participatory mechanisms are representative of communal councils in that participants tend to be disproportionately drawn from the lower socioeconomic sectors and over half are women. The data collected for these two cases demonstrate that the

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292 Interviews with Steve Ellner, Professor, Universidad de Oriente, Nov. 30, 2012; Director of Communal Development, Fundacomunal, Caracas, Jan. 21, 2013; Director of communal development, Consejo federal de gobierno, Mérida, Nov. 15, 2012.
vast majority of participants are from “traditionally excluded” groups. Over half of respondents (51%) were women. With respect to socioeconomic status, the largest number of respondents (26%) can be identified as precarious/unskilled workers (generally in the informal sector). This category included many informal sector construction workers and domestic workers. Other common categories include homemakers (24%), retail workers, education (teachers) and tradespeople. In terms of income, a majority of informants (72%) earned at or below the monthly minimum wage of 2,973 Bs.F. The vast majority of subjects interviewed in Caracas and Guacara believed that the councils are inclusive mechanisms in that they have been successful in engaging economically marginalized groups (95%) and those with little formal education (89%) and that they leverage the experience and abilities of all citizens (84%).

**Table 6.8: Inclusiveness, Top-Tier**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sucre (21)</th>
<th>Guacara (16)</th>
<th>Total (37)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tangible outcomes</strong></td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spillover effects</strong></td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>% of participants at or below minimum wage</strong>*</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>% of women</strong>*</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Voice to the poor</strong></td>
<td>94% (n=20)</td>
<td>92% (n=15)</td>
<td>95% (n=35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Voice to people with little formal education</strong></td>
<td>86% (n=18)</td>
<td>92% (n=15)</td>
<td>89% (n=33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leverage experience of all citizens</strong></td>
<td>86% (n=18)</td>
<td>81% (n=13)</td>
<td>84% (n=31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Exclusion based on political reasons</strong></td>
<td>28% (n=6)</td>
<td>31% (n=5)</td>
<td>30% (n=11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overall: Inclusiveness</strong></td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* data drawn from the survey responses from these 2 cases (n=99)

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293 This was the official minimum wage at the time this research was conducted. It amounts to about $472 USD at the official government exchange rate (which is inaccessible to most Venezuelans) but much less as the market rate.
The opinions expressed in the interviews revolved around the belief that in the past there was no importance placed on the opinion of the average person, the poor, and working people in that all decisions were made behind closed doors and at a higher level. Participants claimed that it was never clear what these individuals discussed or how they made decisions but those directly affected were rarely included. This, they claim, had a predictable impact on local policy outcomes such as access to public goods and services, with those belonging to the same social groups as the decision-makers receiving the benefits.\textsuperscript{294} Class was often brought up as a factor in the interviews; many participants expressed sentiments similar to the follow assertion:

“The essential component of the Bolivarian Revolution and participatory democracy is inclusion, of the masses, the working people, the majority. There has been empowerment through these institutions and others such as the missions, we are not passive anymore. We are conscious of our capacity to change our reality. We can feel it in our communal councils, in our popular organizations. There is class consciousness in the country and communal councils are at the centre of this.”\textsuperscript{295}

Others, particularly in the semi-rural Guacara case, specifically mentioned participation being opened to people with less formal education, as expressed in the following observation:

“There are people in our community, especially older people, who don’t know how to read well, but they love their country, they are committed to their community so why shouldn’t they have as much of a voice as the educated? Now they can through communal councils which are open to everyone.”\textsuperscript{296}

Related to this, a number of participants pointed to the training available to communal council participants as well as the hands-on experience as an essential element of Venezuela’s participatory democracy model. They argue that education and training are important in terms of ensuring inclusiveness in that it helps to even the playing field.\textsuperscript{297} Previously, it was easier for

\textsuperscript{294} Interview with Javier, Martín, Leandro, Nere, council participants, Caracas, Jan. 10, 11 and 16, 2013; Raquel, Geraldina, José Luis, council participants, Guacara, Nov. 26 and 29, Dec. 3, 2012.
\textsuperscript{295} Interview with Fer, council participant, Caracas, Jan. 7, 2013.
\textsuperscript{296} Interview with Juan Carlos, council participant, Guacara, Dec. 8, 2012.
\textsuperscript{297} Interviews with Raquel, Geraldina, Yelitza, José Luis, council participants, Guacara, Nov. 26, 27 and 29, Dec. 3, 2012.
middle-class, educated people to participate because they had the skills, political knowledge and ability to articulate themselves clearly. The communal system provides relevant training and experience to everyone: including how to make a budget, how to write a project proposal and how to participate in meetings. This, they insist, allows everyone to participate, not just those with qualifications (gente preparada) and has resulted in the more equitable local policy outcomes we have seen in Chapter 4.298

The discussion of spillover effects in Chapter 5 revealed that women tend to be highly engaged with and favourable toward the participatory process. This was also evident in the interviews when asked about inclusiveness. A significant majority of women interviewed (80%) believed that women play a leading role in communal councils. Certain common themes emerged from the women interviewed. Many claimed that representative institutions (national assemblies, municipal councils) are and have always been dominated by men; participatory mechanisms allow women the opportunity to make their voices heard. They feel they are more likely to be taken seriously, less likely to have their opinions dismissed and that participatory mechanisms provide such a forum due to high participation rates among women.299 Many claimed that they feel more comfortable speaking and participating in a group that includes as many or more women than men, often making broad statements about the role of women in the Bolivarian Revolution similar to the following affirmation: “There are more women than men in this process. The face of the revolution is the face of a woman; women have played a leading

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298 Interviews with Leandro, Fer, Marisol, council participants, Caracas, Jan. 10, 11 and 16, 2013; Lydia, Anita, council participants, Guacara, Nov. 27 and 29, 2012; Juan Carlos, council participant, Guacara, Dec. 8, 2012; Marbella, ex council president, Mérida, Nov. 14, 2012.

299 Interviews with Carmen, Alina, Marlene, council participants, Caracas, Jan. 11 and 12, 2013; Helen, council president, Guacara, Nov. 26, 2012; Yelitza, Lydia, Geraldina, council participants, Guacara, Nov. 27 and 29, 2012; Maryenella, Victoria, council participants, Mérida, 9 and 17, 2012.
role (*rol protagónico*) in communal councils, but also beyond”. The women tended to use the past as a reference point, arguing that they have a far greater role to play in decision-making through these local mechanisms than they did in a recent past dominated by exclusionary institutions.

While only a handful of respondents (4) self-identified as Afro-Venezuelan, these individuals also claimed that communal councils have provided them with a forum where they can discuss issues with their fellow citizens in a context devoid of the hierarchies and barriers of the traditional political institutions. While the question of race and racism did not come up frequently in the Venezuelan cases (as it did in Ecuador), those individuals who identify as Afro-Venezuelans expressed sentiments similar to the following assertion:

> “Another thing that is not talked about is that there is a lot of racism in Venezuela. Here in Carabobo there has always been a large Afro population but do you think we used to see ourselves represented in the old institutions? Do you think they ever included us? No. I can say that I do feel that we have more of a voice now, I have participated in the communal council since it began and I have the same voice as everyone else, I don’t feel like my neighbours don’t pay attention to us for that reason, not the way the old institutions used to ignore us.”

There is an important caveat to be made with respect to inclusiveness. While participants are clearly drawn from the popular sectors (which is the stated intention of the government’s participatory democracy agenda), they also tend to be individuals who are inclined to support the government. We have already seen that data on participants studied in this project confirm this trend; the majority of participants identify as dedicated *chavistas* and many have participated in

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300 Interview with Laura, council participant, Caracas, Jan. 22, 2013.
301 Interviews with Blanca, Alina, Marta, Iris, council participants, Caracas, Jan. 8, 10, 11, 25 2013; Raquel, Maria S, Yelitza, Maria D, council participants, Guacara, Nov. 26, 27, 29. 2012; Maryenella, Victoria, council participants, Mérida, Nov. 9 and 17, 2012.
302 Interview with Raquel, Yelitza, Max, council participants, Guacara, Nov. 26, 27, 28, 2012; José Luis, council president, Puerto Cabello, Nov. 24, 2012.
303 Interview with Raquel, council executive member, Guacara, Nov. 26, 2012.
other initiatives such as the various missions that provide social services and educational opportunities. Interviews also revealed at while participants are positive about the inclusion of marginalized sectors, nearly one third acknowledge that people may sometimes be excluded for political reasons (not surprisingly, this number rises to 70% when only looking at non-PSUV supporters). While the concerns regarding exclusion based on partisan status are certainly significant, many agree that the political composition of these mechanisms in large part due to self-exclusion on the part of those opposed to the government.304 Most participants stressed that non-chavistas have participated in assembly meetings, that they have not been deliberately excluded and that the benefits (such as infrastructure and community improvement projects) are extended to everyone in the community.305 They argue that government opponents are suspicious of any initiative implemented by the government and therefore self-exclude, which means that many councils are in fact dominated by government supporters.306

Mid-Tier Cases: Mérida, La Pintana, Maipú, and Tarqui

These cases demonstrate different patterns with respect to this factor. Both the demographic composition of these mechanisms and interview material suggest that they are less inclusive than their highest-tier counterparts but more so than those that demonstrate poorer outcomes.

In terms of demographic composition, the Mérida communal council comes closer to the two Chilean cases in this category than it does to the higher-tier Venezuelan cases. It is more middle-income in nature, with a minority (41%) of participants earning less than the monthly

304 Interviews with Marbella, Reinaldo, former and current council presidents, Mérida, Nov. 14, 15, Victor, council participant, Nov. 8, 2012.
305 Interview with Leandro, council participant, Caracas, Jan. 10, 2013
306 Interview with Rogerio, council participant, Caracas, Jan. 17, 2013
minimum wage of 2,973 Bs.F (compared with 72% in Sucre and Guacara). With respect to socioeconomic status, there are fewer precarious/unskilled workers and domestic workers and more professionals and tradespeople. About a third of respondents were university educated professionals, whereas this category was absent from the other two cases. In contrast to the high-tier cases, less than half of Mérida participants were women and none identified as Afro-Venezuelan. Mérida informants were also less likely to perceive their communal council as being fully inclusive than participants from Sucre and Guacara, although the case fares better than the two Chilean councils in this category (see Table 6.8). Only 58% believe that their council leverages the experience of all citizens (compared to over 80% for the high-tier cases) and over 40% have observed exclusion based on political grounds.

The demographic data collected from the surveys for the two Chilean cases reveal that participants are less likely to be drawn from traditionally excluded groups. With respect to socioeconomic status, only 16% can be identified as precarious/unskilled workers (as compared to 26% in Venezuela and only 14% as homemakers (compared to 24%). These neighbourhood council participants were far more likely than their Venezuelan counterparts to be retired (21%) and professional (20% compared to 3%). Less than half of respondents (40%) earned at or below the monthly minimum wage of 193,000 CLP ($409.00 USD at the time of research). Women are fairly well represented and make up slightly more than half of participants. Both council presidents acknowledged, however, that attendance and participation are not necessarily representative of the community in that younger people as well as the poorest families rarely participate.307

307 Interviews with Gloria, council president, La Pintana, March 22, 2013; Sandra, council president, Maipú, March 14, 2013; Pablo, council president, Valdivia, April 20, 2013.
Of the 31 participants interviewed from the two mid-tier Chilean cases, residents were fairly split with respect to whether neighbourhood councils were truly inclusive and act as fora for giving a voice to those traditionally excluded from decision-making. Only 48% felt that these mechanisms provide an expanded role for the poor in decision making, 42% believed they were inclusive of those with little formal education and 39% that they leverage the experience and abilities of all citizens. These numbers present a contrast to those observed in the highest-tier cases, where over 80% of respondents answered affirmatively to all of these questions, but reveal a greater degree of inclusiveness than the low outcome cases. Compared to Venezuela, few respondents from these councils (13%) believed that people are excluded based on political affiliation and a majority (56%) of women believed that they play an important role in these mechanisms. The Tarqui (Ecuador) case reveals similar patterns with slightly more positive numbers: over 60% of respondents believe that the assembly is inclusive of the poor/people with little formal education and leverages the experience of all citizens. A greater number of women (67%) felt that they have an important role to play in the assembly.

Table 6.9: Inclusiveness, Mid-Tier

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mérida (12)</th>
<th>La Pintana (17)</th>
<th>Maipú (14)</th>
<th>Tarqui (14)</th>
<th>Total (57)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tangible outcomes</strong></td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spillover effects</strong></td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of participants at or below minimum wage*</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of women*</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voice to the poor</td>
<td>83% (n=10)</td>
<td>53% (n=9)</td>
<td>43% (n=6)</td>
<td>62% (n=9)</td>
<td>60% (n=34)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voice to people with little formal education</td>
<td>75% (n=9)</td>
<td>47% (n=8)</td>
<td>36% (n=5)</td>
<td>62% (n=9)</td>
<td>54% (n=31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leverage experience of all citizens</td>
<td>58% (n=7)</td>
<td>41% (n=7)</td>
<td>29% (n=4)</td>
<td>64% (n=9)</td>
<td>47% (n=27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exclusion based on political reasons</td>
<td>42% (n=5)</td>
<td>12% (n=2)</td>
<td>14% (n=2)</td>
<td>14% (n=2)</td>
<td>19% (n=11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall: Inclusiveness</td>
<td>Medium-high</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium-low</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* data drawn from the survey responses from these 4 cases (n=137)
Participants expressed mixed perspectives in comparison to the top-tier cases. As mentioned, Mérida participants were more likely to express concern about politically motivated exclusion than their counterparts in Sucre and Guacara. While this does not mean that the council is actually more likely to exclude people, the fact that participants were more concerned about it appears to have a negative impact on spillover effects, as these are lower than in the other Venezuelan cases. The problem may be that while a large segment of society that has traditionally been excluded from decision-making now has opportunities to participate at the local level, a different group of citizens may in fact be excluded (including those from higher socioeconomic groups). While most non-government supporters acknowledged that communal councils have expanded participatory opportunities to the poor and women, several insisted that non-chavistas are effectively excluded from the deliberative process, arguing that communal councils may end up being dominated by those with government sympathies and that these individuals who have contrary opinions. While these concerns were expressed more commonly in Mérida than in the other two Venezuelan cases, not all council members agreed. The Mérida case includes, for example, individuals who described themselves as middle-class, professional and non-chavista yet concur with the majority that the councils have expanded inclusion.

Looking at the other three cases in this category also reveals mixed perspectives. Among those who reported positive impressions with respect to inclusiveness, many respondents pointed to the relatively closed traditional political structures dominated by “the same people” or the “same old families.” Others argued that while the assemblies lack the resources they require to

308 Interview Erik Uzcategui, Leader of the Movimiento 13 de Marzo, Mérida, Nov. 8, 2012; Chela, former council participant, Mérida, Nov. 8, 2012; Víctor, council participant, Mérida, Nov. 8, 2012.
309 Interviews with Reinaldo and Jairo, council executive members, Mérida, Nov. 15, 2012.
310 Interviews with José, Víctor, Franklin, assembly executive members, Manta, Feb. 4, 2013.
fully assume their roles as decision-making bodies, the fact that the poor, or those who have no connections to the political system, have a forum to express themselves is an important step in the development of democracy in Ecuador. As expressed by a participant from the Tarqui case:

“Those of us who don’t have money or connections need a place to start if we want to exercise our rights. Trying to get into the usual government institutions is hard for those of us from humble backgrounds, so yes I think these assemblies have had a positive impact in that sense. We can learn about and discuss laws at the same level as more educated people, this gives us experience in the practice of democracy and knowledge of our rights which will lead to more inclusive politics”.

One of the most frequently expressed concerns of participants from the Chilean cases is that neighbourhood councils cannot be inclusive because their composition simply is not representative of the communities they are supposed to speak for. Of the 31 participants interviewed, over half (17) expressed some variation on this theme. This is primarily based on the observation (particularly among individuals who participate less actively) that the same people run the councils year after year and that many of these are older than the general population. These observations about the average age of participants were made by both younger people who felt the councils were not representative for this reason as well as older people who lamented the lack of participation from younger neighbours. Typical of the comments made by the participants is the following statement:

“In reality neighborhood councils are not very representative of the neighbours. Most of the people who participate regularly are older people, retired people doing a lot of work but that is not necessarily representative of the interests of the whole community. There are very traditional people who have spent many years doing this and have clientelist relations with the mayor.”

Others pointed to the primarily middle-sector representation of most councils’ executive organs, arguing that neighbourhood councils are not representative of the population because the

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311 Interviews with Betty, assembly secretary, Manta, Feb. 11, 2013.
312 Interview with Francisco, council participant, Maipú, March 18, 2013.
poorest families in a given neighbourhood tend not to participate (a concern that is reflected in the survey data collected). Regular participants tend to be a small group of people who probably already have influence in a community, and while all local residents can attend assembly meetings and vote, they are not the ones who run things.\footnote{Interviews with Mercedes, council participant, La Pintana, March 28, 2013; Carlos, council participant, La Pintana, April 3, 2012.} Both participants and municipal officials tend to ascribe this problem to the control that elected leaders hold over the councils. Directors of municipal departments charged with promoting participation argued that while they had made efforts to engage a greater diversity of participation in neighbourhood councils, the fact that council leaders are “always the same” discourages participation.\footnote{Interviews with Monica Jarra, Head of Community Organizations division, Municipalidad de La Pintana, March 19, 2013; Official, Legal Unit, Community Organizations, Municipalidad de La Pintana, April 16, 2013; Community Organizations Division, Municipalidad de Valdivia, April 24, 2013.} Local officials, participants and observers agree that outcomes are likely affected by these patterns; if the local councils are not inclusive, outcomes will not represent the desires and perspectives of a broad range of residents.\footnote{Interviews with Gonzalo Delamaza, Professor, Universidad de Los Lagos, Santiago, March 14, 2013; Thomás Marín, Director of Citizen Participation, Municipalidad de Providencia, March 14, 2013; Juan Salinas, Coordinator of Development, Asociación Chilena de Municipalidades, Santiago, March 18, 2013; Gloria, council president, La Pintana, March 22, 2013 and with members Elsa, Romelia, Fabiola, Pato, La Pintana, March 23, 30 and April 4,5, 2013.}

**Bottom-Tier Cases: Montúfar, Calderón and Cayumapú**

These cases demonstrate relatively poor results with respect to inclusion. The demographic composition of these mechanisms and interview material reveal that while people from marginalized sectors may be members of these mechanisms, they are not necessarily listened to and this often translates into exclusion of certain groups. Furthermore, because these cases tend to be more geographically isolated than the mostly urban mid-tier cases (two are primarily rural
and one is located in the less-developed outskirts of an urban centre) many individuals who live farther from the central areas are unable to participate. We also see a pattern that emerged when examining deliberation: the case that is deemed more inclusive (Montúfar) produces more positive spillover effects whereas the case in which the greatest number of participants felt excluded (Calderón) demonstrates the worst spillover effects.

The data collected from these cases suggest that they have opened participation to individuals who had never before engaged in politics other than through voting. Over half of respondents (56%) were women. The assemblies are less likely to see participation from the poorest sectors than Venezuelan communal councils, yet the largest number of respondents (20%) can be identified as precarious/unskilled workers (generally in the informal sector). Only 8% can be classified as professional. In terms of income, a majority of Ecuadorian respondents 57% of Ecuadorian respondents and 68% of those from Cayumapú earned minimum wage or less. Exclusion based on political loyalties did not emerge as a prominent theme, although 24% of respondents in this category saw this as a problem. This only tells part of the story, however. While members may be drawn from diverse backgrounds, a minority of the participants interviewed (45%) felt that these mechanisms provide an expanded role to the poor in decision making, 40% believed they were inclusive of those with little formal education and 36% that they leverage the experience and abilities of all citizens. There is considerable variation among the cases with respect to this factor (Table 6.10).
Table 6.10: Inclusiveness, Bottom-Tier

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Cayumapú (10)</th>
<th>Montúfar (17)</th>
<th>Calderón (15)</th>
<th>Total (42)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tangible outcomes</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spillover effects</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of participants at or</td>
<td>68% (n=4)</td>
<td>56% (n=21)</td>
<td>68% (n=8?)</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>below minimum wage*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of women*</td>
<td>40% (n=4)</td>
<td>53% (n=21)</td>
<td>56% (n=8?)</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voice to the poor</td>
<td>30% (n=3)</td>
<td>58% (n=10)</td>
<td>40% (n=6)</td>
<td>45% (n=19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voice to people with</td>
<td>20% (n=2)</td>
<td>52% (n=9)</td>
<td>40% (n=6)</td>
<td>40% (n=17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>little formal education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Leverage experience of</td>
<td>20% (n=2)</td>
<td>47% (n=8)</td>
<td>33% (n=5)</td>
<td>36% (n=15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>all citizens</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exclusion based on</td>
<td>30% (n=3)</td>
<td>18% (n=3)</td>
<td>27% (n=4)</td>
<td>24% (n=10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>political reasons</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall: Inclusiveness</td>
<td>Medium-low</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* data drawn from the survey responses from these 3 cases (n=110)

As we have seen when looking at deliberation, ethnic groups do not always feel included in these structures. Even in those cases where indigenous peoples make up a significant proportion of the local population, the assemblies tend to be dominated by mestizos. Indigenous people are underrepresented and feel excluded when they do engage in these mechanisms. Of the 8 respondents interviewed who identify as indigenous from the Calderón case, none believed that the local citizens’ assemblies are truly inclusive. Interestingly, many of these individuals expressed sentiments similar to those of lower-income mestizos in that they believed that participation in these mechanisms was helping them to gain confidence and knowledge that would lead them to more effectively fight for a more inclusive political environment in the future.316 Yet they unanimously expressed that the same racist attitudes they must confront in everyday life are reproduced within the assembly, which they described as yet another form of

exclusion. In Cayumapú, a semi-rural district covering a large territory, residents tended to attribute exclusion to distance they must travel to attend meetings. Those living further from the central area (generally poorer members of the community) rarely participate because the distance and logistics make this inconvenient.

Levels of Participation

As outlined in Chapter 2, the capacity of participatory mechanisms to engage a critical mass of citizens and to sustain participation over a long period is one of the primary concerns of theorists. Comparisons between the nine cases demonstrate the importance of this factor. There is a clear correlation between outcomes and the level of engagement and participation; mechanisms that demonstrate higher levels of participation and commitment produce more significant tangible outcomes and more positive spillover effects.

Design and Discourse

In all three countries, state officials and others tended to agree on the importance of this factor as a determinant of both types of outcomes. Observers of Venezuela’s communal council system argue that the level of participation and engagement is an important factor to consider in understanding the outcomes. If the rate of participation is low or wanes over time, the councils can essentially be taken over by a handful of voceros but high and sustained levels of community involvement encourage the development of the other factors discussed above. They argue that the number of active participants can vary from over 200 to as few as 10 and this is a significant

317 Interviews with Salomé, Miriam, Rosita, Diego, council participants, Carcelén, Oct. 3 and 4, 2012.
318 Interview with Pablo, council president, Valdivia, April 20, 2013; Ariel, Ivan, Lorena, council participants, Cayumapú, April 21, 22, 23, 2013.
factor in terms of the council’s ability to provide a deliberative forum for discussion, to be inclusive as well as its capacity to implement and evaluate projects.319 State officials agree that participation is key to achieving positive outcomes.320 The following comment sums up how most officials view this factor:

“The most important thing is participation and the level of commitment. In some councils, a few people do all the work. If Juan doesn’t do it, nothing gets done. In successful councils, if Juan doesn’t do it, Maria and Pedro will. And in any case, participation is essential to achieving any kind of participatory democracy; if people don’t get involved, it will just become another representative institution.”321

Ecuadorian state officials agree that there is not enough citizen engagement and that this has a negative impact on the ability of councils to produce positive outcomes. The government estimates that less than 10% of the population has been involved in one of the new participatory mechanisms and believes that more significant outcomes will continue to lag unless it can encourage more people to engage.322 The general consensus among state officials and observers is that mass participation did not work in the Ecuadorian Citizen’s Revolution as it did with Venezuela’s Bolivarian Revolution.323 Some attribute this to political culture; Ecuadorians are accustomed to spontaneous and cyclical participation in times of economic or political crisis which has led to the extra-institutional replacement of governments. The type of social organization prevalent prior to the current government’s “Citizens’ Revolution” agenda reflects these patterns and translates into a lack of experience with sustained, institutionalized forms of

319 Interviews with Steve Ellner, Professor, Universidad de Oriente, Nov. 30, 2012; Margarita López Maya, Professor, Universidad Central de Venezuela, personal communication, Jan. 10, 2013.
321 Interview with Project Support Agent, CORPOANDES, Mérida, Nov. 21, 2012.
322 Interview with Coordinator of Citizen Paticipation, SENPLADES, Quito, Sept. 14, 2012.
323 Interview with Dr. Franklin Ramírez, Professor, FLACSO Ecuador, Quito, Sept. 18, 2012; Lawyer, Subsecretaría de Derechos Humanos y Cultos, Ministerio de Justicia, Quito, Sept. 17, 2012.
organization. Others point to “participation fatigue” after years of uprisings and unstable governments and the weakening of social movements that has occurred through co-optation following Correa’s election in 2007. Furthermore, the economy has seen sustained growth along with unprecedented improvements in socioeconomic conditions, rendering participation less necessary. This aligns with the perception expressed by government agents and active participants in Chile, who felt that people tend to view participation as a means of achieving immediate material benefits and do not subscribe to a broader participatory democracy agenda.

While central government representatives in Chile did not engage with this theme, many of the local officials charged with implementing participatory programs expressed concern over low levels of engagement. They argue that effective participation is hampered by a lack of political education, from childhood through university, which translates into people not knowing how to participate in politics and in community life. Most agree that there is a lack of interest and that if people do organize at all it is not around long-term development but around a very functional short-term project. This creates an environment in which participation is cyclical, ephemeral and about “getting something” which is not conducive to building the type of sustained participation that can lead to enhanced governance and an engaged citizenry.

Top-Tier Cases: Sucre and Guacara

Of all of the cases studied in this thesis, Sucre and Guacara enjoy the highest and most sustained levels of participation and commitment. The Sucre case exemplifies a very high level of

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324 Interview with Lawyer, Subsecretaría de Derechos Humanos y Cultos, Ministerio de Justicia, Quito, Sept. 17, 2012; Ana Maria Larrea, Deputy Minister, SENPLADES, Quito, Oct. 25, 2012.
325 Interview with Franklin Ramírez, Professor, FLACSO Ecuador, Quito, Sept. 18, 2012.
326 Interview with Pablo Andrade, Professor, Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar, Quito, Oct. 2, 2012.
328 Community Organizations Unit, Maipú, April 14, 2013; Support Agent, Public Works, Valdivia, April 26, 2013; Thomás Marín, Director of Citizen Participation, Municipalidad de Providencia, March 14, 2013.
participation and commitment. The council represents about 350 families and has 326 regular members. Over one fourth of adults participate or have participated at some point beyond the citizens’ assemblies (in council committees and working groups) and an average of 160 attend the citizens’ assembly although attendance has surpassed 250. These numbers have remained relatively stable over the past four years. This is the highest level of community participation recorded in any of the participatory mechanisms studied in this thesis. We have also seen that this case saw the most significant results and that decisions were most likely to be implemented and projects carried through and sustained. The case of Guacara also demonstrates a high level of participation. Of the 213 families represented, an average of 80-90 people attend the citizens’ assembly on a regular basis. Of the 16 participants interviewed, 10 had at some point been involved in work beyond discussions and voting.

Overall, lack of participation is seen as less of a problem in Venezuela than in Chile and Ecuador (where it tends to be lower), yet it is still identified as one of the most significant factors in the success of a communal council by both observers and active participants. Even in Sucre, participants expressed concerns about the sustainability of citizen participation. While the most enthusiastic supporters foresee a future (promoted by state discourse) in which participatory mechanisms will replace elected institutions, many noted a trend of “participation fatigue” and fear that communities will become less active.

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330 Attendance records and minutes for various months from 2009 to 2012 were also consulted by the researcher. Interviews with Blanca, Alina and Martín, members of the council executive, Caracas, January 8 and 11.

331 Interview with Helen and Raquel, council executive members, Guacara, Nov. 26, 2012. Attendance records for the citizen assembly from 2009-2012 were also consulted by the researcher (in the Guacara cases, these are sheets with names and signatures).

Another factor that emerged in these two cases but was absent in the other two countries involves a strong culture of social organization. As discussed in Chapter 3, the Sucre parish of Caracas, and in particular the Catia district, have a history of social mobilization and civil society organization that predate the Chávez administration. The area represented by this council had established a neighbourhood committee as early as the 1980s, following the events of the period of state repression known as the *caracazo*. The committee was active in a number of initiatives focused on improving living conditions and creating a space for citizen deliberation. Residents of the sector were also deeply involved in other civil society organizations during the 1990s and early 2000s. They were also early to engage with some of the first participatory mechanisms created by the Chávez regime in the early 2000s, including Bolivarian Circles and Local Public Planning Councils (CLPPs). Most of the individuals actively involved in the current communal council were also engaged in these past endeavours and those who originally established the communal council noted that bringing neighbours together in this new mechanism was facilitated by the trust and experience they shared from working together. This suggests the importance of previously existing mobilizing structures to the successful establishment of a strong communal council.

Although more recent, the Guacara case also demonstrates a high level of social organization. While this process looks different due to the semi-rural profile of the district, many residents (including those who established the council) have been actively involved over the 2000s in organizations such as Mision Vivienda, farming cooperatives and water councils.

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333 Interviews with Blanca and Alina, council executive members, Caracas, January 8 and 11; Fer, council participant, Jan. 7, 2013.
334 Interviews with Helen, Raquel, Maria and Maricruz, council executive members, Nov. 26 and 27, 2012; José Luis, council participant, Guacara Dec. 3, 2012.
Mid-Tier Cases: Mérida, La Pintana, Maipú, and Tarqui

These cases are characterized by moderate levels of participation. Commitment is uneven and varies over time, but there is some evidence that the outcomes that are achieved can be tied to upswings in participation.

In the Mérida case, participation has varied over time yet the trend has been for active involvement to decline. According to the council’s leaders, and in contrast to the other two cases, active participation and engagement are relatively low. They feel that Assembly attendance has waned over the years and that most of the work is done by a handful of members of the directive.335 While 7 of the 12 participants interviewed had been actively engaged beyond the assembly at some point, only 2 of these individuals claimed to still be involved at every stage of the process, the remainder limiting themselves to attending assembly meetings. Fewer individuals participate regularly in committees (only 12 individuals from the over 200 families represented have been involved at this level) and attendance at assemblies has also steadily diminished. Only around 20 citizens have attended the past few meetings.336 Voceros attribute this to lack of time and interest on the part of their neighbours. This is problematic from the perspective of the voceros (who must assume the burden) but also confirms some of the concerns raised by skeptics about the feasibility of expecting people to participate in a sustained manner. Unlike the other two Venezuelan cases, a number of active participants lamented the lack of interest from their community. Some insisted that certain neighbours were struggling to make participatory democracy work, but that commitment was limited to a few individuals while others recalled that due to work and other commitments, many people had gradually distanced.

335 Interviews with Marbella, former president and Reinaldo, council president, Mérida, Nov. 14 and 15, 2012.
336 Minutes (Actas de la reunión de la Asamblea Ciudadana) were consulted (4-5 meetings per year from 2010 to 2012).
themselves from the council. The history of social and civil society organizations observed in Sucre and Guacara was noticeably absent in the Mérida case. Few residents were involved in participatory mechanisms prior to the establishment of the council (there was no Bolivarian Circle or neighbourhood committee) and there was limited engagement in civil society organizations. Many respondents attributed this to the middle-income nature of the neighbourhood.

The La Pintana neighbourhood council demonstrates a moderate level of participation and engagement. Just over 900 individuals are registered as members and the directive is made up of four individuals. Participation has been high at certain points; as many as 170 individuals have attended assemblies, although this has subsided over the years and attendance now averages about 60 individuals. Still, as many as 100 residents participate when major projects are proposed or significant needs are identified by the community. This level of participation is high by Chilean standards. Council leaders contend, however, that people are more likely to participate in the social events organized by the council. These encourage people to occupy public space and can sometimes be used to discuss political issues with neighbours, but most of the time, people do not show an interest in day-to-day local politics. Only when there is a tangible need are people more likely to re-engage in neighbourhood council business.

337 Interviews with council participants Yolanda, Mérida, Nov. 16, 2012; Carla, Nov. 17, 2012; Angel, Mérida, Nov. 19, 2012.
338 Interviews with Marbella, former council president, Nov. 4, 2012; Maryenella, council participant, Nov. 9, 2012; Noé, council participant, Nov. 9; Victoria, council participant, Nov. 17, 2012; Carla, council participant, Mérida, Nov. 17, 2012.
339 Junta de vecinos 6 de mayo, Libro de socios
341 Interview with Juan Salinas, Coordinator of Development, Asociación Chilena de Municipalidades, Santiago, March 18, 2013.
director of the citizen participation division for La Pintana confirmed that the number of residents who are actively engaged varies, particularly once basic needs are met, and that this diminishes the effectiveness of participation.\textsuperscript{343} The participation level tends to correlate with outcomes in this case, however. Minutes and attendance records show that significant outcomes were preceded by high levels of participation. In 2009, the year that the council’s largest recent project (housing improvement) was selected, close to 150 individuals attended assemblies in the months prior to the project being adopted. This declined by more than half by the beginning of the following year.\textsuperscript{344} Attendance rose again (although not to the same levels) in 2011, when the issue of bringing public transportation into the neighbourhood was being discussed and over 90 members participated, but had dropped off again at the time of research (March 2013) to less than 30.\textsuperscript{345}

Participation in the Maipú case tends to be more limited over time. While the council’s registry lists about 600 members, only 30-40 individuals participate regularly, although this number can rise to 60 when issues of particular interest to the community arise.\textsuperscript{346} Council directive members believe that this is because most people view participation primarily as a means of “getting something”.\textsuperscript{347}

Another contrast with the Venezuelan cases involves the extent of participation of ordinary members vs. council leaders. In Venezuela, many communal council members (residents of the neighbourhood represented) participated at all stages of the process, from agenda setting to

\textsuperscript{343} Interview with Monica Jarra, Head of Community Organizations division, Municipalidad de La Pintana, March 19, 2013.
\textsuperscript{344} Attendance sheets consulted for Feb, April and June of 2009 and Feb. of 2010.
\textsuperscript{345} Attendance sheets consulted for April and June, 2011 and Feb 2013.
\textsuperscript{346} Registro de socios and interviews with Sandra and Maria Teresa, council president and secretary, Maipú, March 14, 2013; Roxanna, council treasurer, Maipu, March 16, 2013.
\textsuperscript{347} Interviews with Sandra and Maria Teresa, council president and secretary, Maipú, March 14, 2013.
voting to implementation and oversight. In the La Pintana case, relatively few members participated beyond the community assembly vote. Council leaders were almost exclusively responsible for moving decisions ahead. Of the individuals interviewed, only 2 members who were not part of the directive had any role beyond discussing and voting in the assembly.\(^{348}\) The council’s president and finance secretary insisted that they enjoy working for their neighbours but complained that some are extremely “demanding”, treating them as though they were municipal employees rather than colleagues in a participatory process.\(^{349}\) The case also demonstrates some of the generalized concerns discussed above. Those who do participate regularly tend to be older, retired residents.\(^{350}\) Some of these individuals complain that Chileans (particularly of the younger generation) have become increasingly individualistic and that participation in any formal sense is almost anathema.\(^{351}\) Maipú council leaders claimed to enjoy the collective and participatory nature of working through the neighbourhood council, but also expressed views similar to their counterparts in La Pintana, arguing that many residents are more interested in simply receiving benefits than in participatory decision-making. The president insisted, for example, that:

“For some, they see this as paid work, but it is not. We are volunteers. Many do not understand that and they come around demanding things. This work takes a lot of time, and we have a house, kids, husbands, over those responsibilities.”\(^{352}\)

\(^{348}\) Interviews with Mercedes, council participant, La Pintana, March 28, 2013; Christian, council participant, La Pintana, April 3, 2013.

\(^{349}\) Interviews with Gloria, council president, La Pintana, March 22, 2013; Alicia, member of council executive, La Pintana, March 23, 2013.

\(^{350}\) Interviews with Gloria, council president, La Pintana, March 22, 2013 and with members Elsa, Romelia, Fabiola, Pato, La Pintana, March 23, 30 and April 4,5, 2013.

\(^{351}\) Interviews with council members Elsa, Mario, Rodrigo, March 23 and April 4, 8 2013.

\(^{352}\) Interview with Sandra, council president, Maipú. March 14, 2013.
Members of the council’s directive added to this by touching on a related theme that arose frequently in the Chilean cases. They feel that they do much of the work that the municipality should be doing, but without compensation. These tasks include assessing residents’ needs, and fixing problems as mundane as advising the relevant municipal department when a street light burns out. They point out that using these mechanisms for such purposes does not even meet the most basic ideas of citizen participation. It should be noted that in contrast to the two high-participation Venezuelan cases, the neighbourhood represented by the Chilean councils do not have a notable recent history of social organization.

Because Ecuadorian assemblies operate at the parish level (a larger unit than the neighbourhoods represented by participatory mechanisms in Venezuela and Chile), it is more difficult to determine numbers of potential members. While in the other two countries, councils have boundaries defined by local streets and are able to produce figures on how many families live within the delineated area, the potential pool or participants in Ecuador is assumed to be the parish. Available information reveals that less than 20% of residents represented by the Tarqui local assembly have participated at some time, which is above the national average and can be considered a moderate level of participation according to the CPCCS official for the province. Assembly leaders, however, claim that relatively few individuals have participated beyond attending meetings and that levels tend to wax and wane depending on the nature of the projects being discussed.

353 Interviews Sandra and Maria Teresa, council president and secretary, Maipú, March 14, 2013; Roxanna, council treasurer, Maipu, March 16, 2013.
354 Based on discussions with council leaders from the two cases.
356 Interview with Viviana García, Participation Advisor for Manabí, CPCSS, Guayaquil, Feb. 21, 2013.
357 Interviews with José, Victor, Franklin, assembly executive members, Manta, Feb. 4, 2013
Bottom-Tier Cases: Montúfar, Calderón and Cayumapú

These cases suffer from low levels of participation and have not achieved sustained engagement. The Cayumapú case is relatively small as only about 170 individuals are registered as members.\textsuperscript{358} Participation has also varied over time but the current president indicated that at recently convened assemblies, only about 20 people attend.\textsuperscript{359} He also attributes the lack of more recent concrete outcomes to low participation rates, arguing that the lack of involvement diminishes the ability of the council to secure benefits. Active participants identify two reasons for this. If few people participate it is difficult for them to know what their fellow citizens want and what to prioritize and for municipal officials to know which neighbourhood councils have a lot of participation and which ones do not. The heavily supported ones are more likely to achieve outcomes.\textsuperscript{360} The council president also insisted that citizen participation can only make a meaningful difference when it is sustained over time and involves the bigger picture, as opposed to people participating because they want some short-term benefit.\textsuperscript{361} More active participants also acknowledged a number of barriers to participation that particularly affect their area, however. Rural districts that are spread out over a large geographical area present additional barriers in addition to time constraints, in that some people are required to travel long distances to attend meetings.\textsuperscript{362}

Similar to their counterparts in the two Santiago cases, council leaders and the most active members in Cayumapú insisted that some residents are too demanding and treat them as though they were paid municipal agents, behaviour which they felt was not in the spirit of citizen

\textsuperscript{358} Junta de vecinos Camino Real, \textit{Libro de Socios}
\textsuperscript{359} Interview with Pablo, council president, Valdivia, April 20, 2013.
\textsuperscript{360} Interview with Pablo, council president, Valdivia, April 20, 2013; Ariel, Ivan, Lorena, council participants, Cayumapú, April 21, 22, 23, 2013; Official, Office of the Mayor of Valdivia, April 26, 2013; Support Agent, Public Works, Valdivia, April 26, 2013.
\textsuperscript{361} Interview with Pablo, council president, Valdivia, April 20, 2013.
\textsuperscript{362} Interviews with Marisol and Luisa, council members, Cayumapú, April 21, 2013.
participation. More so than in the other two cases, these individuals lamented the limited participation and insisted that success is based on large-scale engagement.\textsuperscript{363} They also felt that participation tends to ebb and flow depending on immediate needs, a pattern which they see as contrary to the “spirit of participation” they would like to see:

“When we wanted water, there was a lot of participation, but after getting the network, there was much less. People are not interested in issues unless they want something. When they need things they participate, but when we are successful, that participation ends for many of them. And that is not what participation is about, if we really want to have a say we need to keep up the pressure and that means ongoing and large-scale participation.”\textsuperscript{364}

Available information for Ecuadorian cases reveals that less than 10% of residents represented by the local assemblies have participated at some time.\textsuperscript{365} There is noticeable lack of interest and reluctance to participate on the part of young people; of the 30 individuals who participate regularly in the Montúfar local assembly and the 40 regular participants from the Calderón assembly, only one individual in each case is under 30 years of age.\textsuperscript{366} Those who do participate are said to be always the same people; some respondents used the term “career participatory citizens” which defeats the purpose.\textsuperscript{367} In both cases, council leaders and more active participants describe a freeloader effect when discussing the nature of participation they have observed and argue many participants themselves do not respect the participatory process. Here, they refer to individuals who only participate sporadically when they want something and

\textsuperscript{363} Interviews with Pablo, Renan, Ariel, Cayumapú, April 20, 21, 2013.
\textsuperscript{364} Interview with Ariel, council participant, Cayumapú, April 21, 2013.
\textsuperscript{365} Based on attendance records and estimations provided by participatory mechanism leaders in each case. Attendance records and minutes were consulted for Montúfar. For Calderón, these were not made available, information about levels of participation is based on: interviews with Chani and Maria M., council participants, Quito, Oct. 8, 2012; council executive members, Calderón, Oct. 12, 2012.
\textsuperscript{366} Interview with Víctor, assembly executive member, Manta, Feb. 4, 2013.
\textsuperscript{367} Interviews with José, Víctor, assembly executive members, Manta, Feb. 4, 2013; two council participants, Montúfar, Oct. 30 and 30, 2012.
whose participation is only aimed at securing personal benefits for their families.\textsuperscript{368} Similar to their counterparts from other cases, these individuals believe that this type of participation is overly instrumental and does not help to build a stronger democracy.

\textsuperscript{368} Two Assembly participants Ibarra, Oct. 18, 2012; Ibarra, Oct. 30, 2012; Maria and Chani, council participants, Quito, Sept. 3, 2012.
Chapter 7: Implications and Conclusions

The research suggests that quality of deliberation, inclusiveness, levels of participation and citizen-local government relationships are most important in determining the capacity of participatory mechanisms to produce desirable outcomes. There are notable associations between these factors and the outcomes (summarized in Table 7.1). These are strongest in the highest-value outcome cases and practically absent in the mechanisms that fall into the lowest tier, yet there is no evidence to suggest that they are inherently unique to the radical model. While the two highest-tier cases are in fact from Venezuela, two of the poorest outcome cases are Ecuadorian citizens’ assemblies which, at least on paper, are designed according to radical participatory principles. Decision-making and implementation powers are also important, as the two highest-tier outcome cases are the only ones that fully exercise these powers. The mid-tier cases, however, reveal that mechanisms that do not have such formal powers can also produce positive outcomes when citizens and local officials recognize each other’s legitimacy in the policy process and are able and willing to work together in productive ways.

Institutional design does have an impact on the formal powers that participatory mechanisms can exercise on paper, but the design itself is less important than the degree to which these factors are present. Therefore, it does not appear as though the “radical” model of participation is necessarily superior to the “pragmatic” model.
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<td>Yes, but not fully used</td>
<td>Medium-high</td>
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<td>Mod.</td>
<td>Participants mostly dominant, Medium quality of deliberation, moderate to low levels of participation, Full powers not used in one case, no real devolution of power to citizens and implementation powers in other cases but informal input role.</td>
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<td>Mod.</td>
<td>Participants subordinate, mostly positive</td>
</tr>
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<td>Medium</td>
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<td>Low</td>
<td>Participants subordinate, mostly positive</td>
</tr>
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<td>No, but some input</td>
<td>No, but some input</td>
<td>Medium</td>
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<td>Mod.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Montúf</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Medium-low</td>
<td>Some</td>
<td>Mod. -low</td>
<td>Subordinate, Mostly conflictual, No real devolution of power to citizens or implementation powers (nor ability to play informal observer role), medium to low quality of deliberation, little inclusiveness, low levels of participation, subordinate and conflictual relationship with local govt.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cayum.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cald.</td>
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<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Subordinate, Mostly conflictual</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Based on analysis of participants’ responses, state officials and analysis of the process*

State discourse on participatory democracy has even less of an impact on the ability of participatory mechanisms to produce positive tangible outcomes and spillover effects. The Ecuadorian state has engaged in a discourse that promotes a “radical” citizen participation agenda, yet these mechanisms have clearly not produced superior outcomes to their Chilean
counterparts, despite the relatively restrained “pragmatic participation” discourse disseminated in that country. Mechanisms that do not demonstrate a high quality of deliberation, inclusiveness, sustained participation and at least some capacity to engage with local government are not likely to produce desirable outcomes regardless of institutional design and state discourse. Furthermore, when participants and authorities both accept the pragmatic model, strong relationships can be created and participants find ways of using their mechanisms to their advantage by playing an indirect “observer” role in the decision-making process even when such power has not been formally devolved. When participants expect radical democracy and find that their expectations are not met (Ecuador), these relationships becomes conflictual and positive outcomes are less likely.

This thesis contributes to the literature by adding to the relatively limited empirical evidence that considers the circumstances under which participatory mechanisms succeed or fail at producing desirable outcomes. It demonstrates the importance of factors commonly identified in the theoretical literature as being essential ingredients for successful participatory institutions and that the presence or absence of these factors is more important than current models of participatory design. This does not mean, however, that institutional design is insignificant. It suggests that policymakers who are serious about promoting citizen participation should pay close attention to these factors rather than to normative, ideologically-charged concepts. While focusing on building these factors into the design of participatory mechanisms, policymakers could also learn from the strengths and weaknesses of the radical and pragmatic models.
Both models demonstrate important strengths but also reveal a number of limitations that support the concerns of critics of participatory democracy. This thesis has demonstrated that participatory mechanisms can, under the right conditions, allow citizens to achieve significant tangible outcomes that improve their communities. The evidence suggests that in many of the lower-income neighbourhoods studied in this project, residents and local officials agree that these benefits were achieved more effectively due to participation. This supports the idea that participation can produce more equitable access to public goods and services. Many citizens also develop a greater respect for democracy, an enhanced sense of empowerment and skills that should allow them to participate more effectively with time. There are also limitations that align with the concerns expressed in the theoretical literature that is skeptical of participatory democracy. Some of the weaknesses are unique to one model, while others are observable in all cases and speak to broader problems with citizen participation.

The radical Venezuelan model demonstrates some benefits, particularly with respect to spillover effects, but also has drawbacks. Where they work as expected, communal councils allow citizens to play a significant role in policy that affects their communities and produce a strong sense of empowerment and these may have a longer-term societal and political impact than tangible outcomes. Certainly, this model comes closest to the ideals promoted by some of the more “radical” democratic theorists. Still, many of the criticisms levelled against radical democracy, and initiatives of the ALBA governments in particular, emerged in this research. We have seen that they are often politicized and that participation among non-government supporters is low. Whether this is due to intolerance or deliberate self-exclusion (or both), it is clear that
there is little room for those who do not share the “radical” Bolivarian ideological agenda and the
related conception of democracy. In an institutional context that provides significant formal
powers to communal councils at the expense of representative organs, this raises the sceptre of
“tyranny of the (local) majority”. Politicization also raises questions about how resources are
distributed across participatory mechanisms. This thesis has studied the various funding sources
that participatory mechanisms may draw on to finance their initiatives and argued that this is an
important factor when it comes to autonomy. In Venezuela, there are clearly examples of
transparent processes at the municipal level that are based on needs assessments and involve
citizen representatives. Still, while a fixed a percentage of the national budget is devoted to
communal councils, there is little information available with respect to how resources are allotted
and divided among the country’s various constituencies. This obviously opens the door to
regional distribution based on political support, a possibility which is difficult to avoid when
funds come from any level of government. While state discourse in the three countries suggests
that resources for participatory mechanisms are distributed according to need, there is little
transparency with respect to how funding is actually divided from region to region.

Both models demonstrate additional weaknesses which speak to the broader problems with
participatory democracy. An important concern involves the scope of influence that participatory
mechanisms can have. The communal councils, for example, have been framed as operating in
two areas of participatory democracy: addressing local needs through solving community
problems in a more inclusive and deliberative manner, and encouraging a broader opening up of
political participation. While participatory mechanisms may provide the first, they do not yet
allow for engagement with broader political issues beyond practical and technical matters. While
the stated intention of these mechanisms is to provide citizens with both a greater role in
everyday decisions that affect their lives and to expand political participation (broadly defined), these experiences have been more successful at achieving the former. The latter goal lags behind, which is not surprising given that it is arguably far more ambitious. It is important to note, however, that these types of institutions are still relatively new and will require time to evolve.

A further problem revolves around the capacity of participants to sustain participation. In many cases, participatory mechanism leaders are taking on a burden that cannot be sustained indefinitely. The implementation and service management components involve the most time consuming and work-intensive responsibilities, and the burden is often disproportionately shared by those who participate actively. It is unclear how this could be sustained if the mechanisms were to be given greater powers in implementation and management over a broader range of policy areas and services. It is also unclear how long and to what extent the most highly engaged individuals will be willing to take on these responsibilities. There is the danger that what we are witnessing is not the transfer to participatory organizations of powers to implement decisions they make, but rather the downloading of responsibilities and services that the state is incapable of providing. New research could focus on why and under what circumstances citizens decide to participate actively in these mechanisms and on the factors that would encourage more people to do so.

Finally, there is evidence that participatory mechanisms can sometimes reproduce some of the problems, such as racism, found in representative institutions. The cases that are deemed to be the least deliberative also suggest that participatory institutions may reproduce domination and hierarchies that exist in the types of institutions they are supposed to improve upon. While these problems did not emerge in the more homogenous Venezuelan cases with higher levels of participation, they are a factor in determining why cases with greater disparities between
participants fared poorly on the quality of deliberation. In particular, the Ecuadorian cases with significant indigenous populations reveal that racist attitudes prevalent in society are reproduced within the citizens’ assemblies. Similarly, there is evidence from at least some of the cases that those with higher levels of education (likely to be more “eloquent”) or those more familiar with politics and procedures will have significant advantages in a deliberative process. This will clearly have a negative impact on spillover effects and also presents the danger that tangible outcomes achieved may not reflect the needs of all citizens.

*Improving Participatory Mechanisms: A Focus on the Key Factors of Success*

Those committed to enhancing the capacity of participatory institutions to produce positive outcomes must focus on the quality of deliberation, inclusiveness, the level of engagement and commitment and relationships between citizen participants and relevant government agencies.

The quality of deliberation is complex, but looking at the more and less successful cases suggests a number of problems that need to be addressed by those who design and promote participation. Top and bottom-tier cases were distinguished by the extent to which participants felt they could express themselves openly and expect others to listen to them. The lower-tier outcome cases were characterized by a narrower range of topics open for discussion, group rivalries and a sense that some members dominate the discussion. In some cases, certain individuals are reluctant to participate because they feel they are less articulate or well-informed than more vocal members of the community.

While these problems are difficult to resolve in any social setting, the importance of ensuring a deliberative environment requires attention from officials who wish to develop stronger participatory mechanisms. First, it is essential to ensure that all citizen participants have
access to the information they require to engage in meaningful deliberation with their peers. In most cases observed in this research, the leaders of participatory mechanisms provide information. This allows certain individuals significant control and advantages. State agencies can assist participatory mechanisms in establishing a system of effective and equal information dissemination. Such a system could involve procedures to ensure that all participants have access to the same information before any deliberation is allowed to commence.

Second, state agencies must establish clear (and systematically enforced) procedures surrounding the deliberative process itself to ensure that participants speak and listen in a respectful manner. This would also include a methodology for weighing different perspectives and making decisions when consensus is not possible. All participants must be allotted equal time and some type of sanction for those who do not play by the rules may be required.

Venezuelan and Ecuadorian state agencies have made some efforts to provide these guidelines. Both have developed workshops to “teach” citizens how to deliberate with others and agencies have distributed training manuals that attempt to establish rules and procedures for effective participatory deliberation. However, there are no mechanisms to ensure that these guidelines are implemented within local institutions, and training is generally provided only when a participatory mechanism is launched. The ability for participants to file a grievance if they find that their local assembly is not producing a deliberative environment could help ensure that procedures are followed. Having a “participation specialist” from a state agency (such as the CPCCS in Ecuador) attend early meetings of newly established local assemblies could help to provide feedback to participants and leaders. Of course, to ensure legitimacy this involvement would need to be restricted to supporting the quality of deliberation and not be seen as intervening in the content of discussions. Training opportunities should be ongoing, although
such efforts must not overburden participants who have busy lives. Additional training for those who feel they require it, including public speaking for individuals who are intimidated about expressing themselves in a public forum, could be beneficial. Finally, alternative means of engaging in deliberation, including the use of online tools, could expand opportunities to participate, providing that adequate training and access to technology are provided to all members.

Inclusiveness is clearly a key factor in the success of participatory institutions, but is difficult to ensure in practice due to a number of barriers identified in this research. Participatory mechanisms in the three countries have been successful at attracting large numbers of people from groups that have been traditionally excluded from the policymaking process, particularly women and the poor. The fact that these groups are members of these institutions is only one part of the story, however. In the cases that produced the most disappointing tangible outcomes and spillover effects, we find that power relations that exist in society and traditional institutions are reproduced within the mechanisms themselves. This includes instances of paternalistic behavior and racism. Clearly, the quality of deliberation and inclusiveness are closely interrelated; the cases that are deemed to be less deliberative also fare poorly with respect to inclusiveness.

Comparing the cases also suggests some possible paths for improvement, however. Some of the solutions discussed under deliberation would also help to address some of these problems: an equitable system of information dissemination, clear and well-enforced procedures for ensuring that all members are treated equally, and training and mechanisms that individuals can call on when their peers do not play by the rules.

Studying inclusiveness also revealed additional concerns not directly related to power relations. These include an apparent lack of interest among certain segments of society
(particularly youth) and barriers based on lack of time and distance from meeting venues. While it would be impossible to entirely resolve such problems, states that are genuinely committed to ensuring inclusiveness can consider various measures. Guidelines can ensure that meeting times and locations rotate to accommodate different work schedules and geographic proximity. Labour legislation can support citizens who wish to exercise their right to participate just as employers are required to offer staff time off for activities such as voting and jury duty. At the time of this research, the Venezuelan government was considering reform that would reduce the work week for those actively engaged in participatory mechanisms.³⁶⁹ Opportunities for involvement in the various functions and activities of the participatory mechanisms can be expanded through information and communications technologies. Providing online fora for participatory engagement may also help to attract younger citizens, who demonstrate low rates of participation across the three countries. This would, of course, necessitate state participation agencies offering appropriate training and access to technology to citizens who require such support, particularly in poor and indigenous communities. Such training would benefit the recipients beyond participatory mechanisms, and states should see this as contributing to the social development of marginalized communities.

Achieving and sustaining high levels of participation is another important factor. Lack of participation may sometimes be related to the issues discussed in the preceding section (lack of time, geographic distance from meeting places, etc.). For these citizens, the solutions discussed above may help to address the barriers they face. Of course, other explanations for low levels of participation are beyond the control of those who design participatory mechanisms. Many citizens will remain apathetic and uninterested in public participation regardless of accessibility.

of opportunities for engagement. The “free rider” problem is well known in the collective action literature and extends to citizen participation. These individuals may calculate that they are able to receive a benefit or public good even if they do not participate in their local communal council or citizens’ assembly. Still, the evidence presented in Chapter 6 demonstrates that levels of participation fluctuate even in those cases where it is generally low. Experts charged with promoting participatory initiatives must closely study what incites people to engage. We have seen, for example, that neighbours are more likely to participate when they perceive that something significant is being discussed and when they believe that significant results will be achieved. This suggests a need for better communication between participatory mechanisms and residents who do not participate regularly. Leaders must ensure that they solicit feedback from the entire community and not only from regular participants. This can help to ensure that non-participants’ needs are taken into account and that they see their wishes reflected in what is being discussed. State agencies can assist council and assembly leaders to coordinate this communication and disseminate information. The latter activity must also focus on making residents aware of the achievements of their participatory mechanism.

With respect to ensuring efficient and productive working relationships between citizen participants and local authorities, a key problem observed in this study is related to the alignment between expectations and reality. It is important that citizens, government agencies, central state and local politicians, and civil servants be on the same page. State discourse should not promise a level of democracy that institutions cannot or will not provide in practice. Lack of alignment on this factor produces tensions that make progress difficult. Design of participatory systems must also avoid overlapping powers or ambiguous divisions of power between citizens and officials. Formal devolution of decision-making and implementation powers can empower citizens, but the
most important consideration is that citizens can engage in these processes in meaningful ways. If formal powers are not fully devolved, there must be organs in place to ensure that relationships can be effective, non-conflictual and (ideally) institutionalized. The mid-tier cases that produced positive outcomes despite a lack of formal decision-making and implementation powers were all able to engage with local or state officials through some kind of municipal or regional-level mechanism. In most cases, authorities played a dominant role within these organs but there is no reason why they cannot be redesigned to provide a more equal balance of power. Central state agencies committed to citizen participation can design and enforce the development of regional participatory organs that are more institutionalized than the current iterations. They should have clear procedures that allow for respectful interaction between citizen representatives and authorities. Such bodies would also allow various local councils and assemblies in a defined territory to connect with each other.

Final Reflections

Despite the limitations and the very different citizenship models promoted in Venezuela, Ecuador and Chile, all three countries have promoted a more active and inclusive citizenship than in the past. There is now a segment of the historically marginalized sectors of the population that has experienced some form of inclusion in decision-making and perceives this as a fundamental right, particularly in Venezuela. Even in Ecuador, where instrumental outcomes are less significant and participants are not satisfied with the actual participatory processes, people value the “on paper” right to participate as a good in itself. These effects may very well outlast the political movements that initiated the participatory discourse. It is also clear from interviews with politicians and civil servants in these three countries that despite cynical musings about the
true intentions of these initiatives, many of these individuals are genuinely committed to enhancing the quality of democracy in their country. The research presented in this thesis should therefore contribute to informing those charged with expanding participation when it comes to building more effective participatory institutions.

Both the radical and pragmatic models demonstrate strengths and limitations. Ideally, future participatory innovations could draw on elements of both to produce stronger participatory mechanisms and limit the weaknesses of each model. This would involve providing citizens with a real role in decision-making while maintaining the checks and balances of representative institutions in order to avoid the pitfalls of controlled inclusion. Future research could consider what such a model would look like.

Ultimately, however, efforts should focus on the factors that produce positive outcomes, as these are more important in determining the mechanisms’ success. Thus far, the focus of participatory initiatives in Venezuela, Ecuador and Chile has revolved around the model of what citizen participation should look like. States have engaged in a battle of ideas over the nature of democracy, the role of citizen participation and the ideal balance between citizens and authorities in the process. The importance of the factors discussed in this thesis suggests that they should be focusing on more practical areas of institutional design by institutionalizing deliberation, inclusiveness, productive citizen-government relationships and promoting high levels of participation. Ensuring that the design of participatory mechanisms incorporates these characteristics to the extent possible should be given precedence over developing models based on elusive concepts and ideologically charged discourse surrounding the nature of democracy.
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## Appendix 1: Comparison of Participatory Mechanisms in Venezuela, Ecuador and Chile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Venezuela</th>
<th>Ecuador</th>
<th>Chile</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Name</strong></td>
<td>Consejos comunales (communal councils)</td>
<td>Asambleas locales (local assemblies)</td>
<td>Juntas de vecinos (neighbourhood councils)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Oversight</strong></td>
<td>Ministerio del Poder Popular para las Comunas y Protección Social, MPComunas (central government department)</td>
<td>Secretaría Nacional de Gestión de la Política (central government department); Consejo de Participación Ciudadana y Control Social, CPCCS (national council of elected citizen representatives)</td>
<td>División de Organizaciones Sociales, Ministerio Secretaría General de Gobierno (central government department); Relevant municipal departments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Creation of institutions</strong></td>
<td>At initiative of local citizens in rural area or urban neighbourhood</td>
<td>At initiative of local citizens in rural area or urban neighbourhood</td>
<td>At initiative of local citizens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Funding</strong></td>
<td>From central government agencies or local governments; CCs can manage allotted funds themselves and create their own bank; CCs are also encouraged to fundraise for their own sources of revenue</td>
<td>Funds to be allotted from different levels of government (central, provincial, local) and by CPCCS</td>
<td>Funds raised by juntas themselves or transferred from municipalities or government agencies, money may be allotted from the newly established central government Fund set up to finance projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Powers and Autonomy</strong></td>
<td>Autonomous from other levels of government in policy areas designated by law; oversight over implementation and evaluation</td>
<td>Autonomous in policy areas designated by law; must work with other institutions of participatory democracy (provincial and municipal, etc); oversight over implementation and evaluation</td>
<td>Deliberation and decision-making process autonomous within the institutions themselves, but citizens must work with officials (municipal) to have their projects implemented; input into implementation and evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy Areas</td>
<td>Local economic development and social development, environment, housing, infrastructure (water, electricity, roads/street paving, parks, etc), public services (garbage collection, etc), sport, education, promoting participation</td>
<td>Local policy initiatives, local economic and social development, housing, infrastructure and services, promoting participation</td>
<td>Local economic development and social development, housing, infrastructure (water, electricity, roads/street paving, parks, etc), public services (garbage collection, etc), sport, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutions linking them together and/or to higher levels</td>
<td>Regional citizen assemblies, National Citizen Assembly</td>
<td>Provincial and regional assemblies, National Planning Council, sectoral councils</td>
<td>Unions of neighbourhood councils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>Directive made up of elected spokespeople; working groups (social, economic, education, utilities, etc.); Citizen’s Assembly made up of all residents of represented territory ultimate decision-making body</td>
<td>Directive made up of elected president, vice-president, treasurer, secretary; citizens’ assembly made up of all residents of represented territory</td>
<td>Directive made up of elected president, vice-president, treasurer, secretary; Assembly made up of all residents of represented territory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedural mechanisms</td>
<td>Regular meetings (frequency and length varies) of the Assembly. Meetings are focused on deliberation, all residents may present proposals to be discussed. Working groups and directive may further develop proposals, which then come back to the Assembly for more deliberation and decisions. Consensus through deliberation is preferred, majority vote as a last resort.</td>
<td>Directive members generally discuss and develop proposals which are presented to the all-citizens council for deliberation. Meetings vary in frequency and length. Consensus through deliberation is preferred, majority vote as a last resort.</td>
<td>Citizens’ assembly meets sporadically to vote on proposals put forward by directive. Meetings vary in frequency and length. Meetings are focused on deliberation followed by a vote.</td>
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Appendix 2: Interviews

Venezuela

Citizen Participants

Sucre (Caracas)

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<td>Vocera</td>
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<td>Marta R.</td>
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<td>Jan. 16, 2013</td>
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<td>Laura</td>
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Guacara

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**Mérida**

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<td>Chela</td>
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**Other**

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<tr>
<td>José Luis</td>
<td>President, CC in Puerto Cabello</td>
<td>Dec. 5, 2012</td>
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<tr>
<td>Martín U.</td>
<td>CC in 23 de Enero (Caracas)</td>
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<td>Marta</td>
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**State and Opposition Representatives**

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<td>Diputado, AD</td>
<td>Nov. 18, 2012</td>
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<tr>
<td>Francois Albarrán</td>
<td>Coordinator of “Taquilla Unica”,</td>
<td>Nov. 11, 2012</td>
<td>Fundacumunal, Mérida</td>
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<td>Jan. 6, 2013</td>
<td>Sabana Grande, Caracas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Luisa Carreño</td>
<td>Planning Agent, Instituto Municipal de</td>
<td>Dec. 8, 2012</td>
<td>Municipio Socialista de Guacara</td>
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<td>Dec. 8, 2012</td>
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<td>Jan. 23, 2013</td>
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<td>Jan. 25, 2013</td>
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<td>Nelly Gutiérrez</td>
<td>Director of Communal Development, Consejo federal de gobierno</td>
<td>Nov. 15, 2012</td>
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<td>Sectional Executive Committee, Acción Democrática (AD)</td>
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<td>Carlos León Mora</td>
<td>Director of Public Services, Government of the State of Mérida</td>
<td>Nov. 9, 2012</td>
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<td>Herick Rangel</td>
<td>Director, Juventud PSUV (PSUV youth wing)</td>
<td>Jan. 5, 2013</td>
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<td>Francisco Rivero</td>
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<td>Director, Public Works Division, Municipio Bolivariano Libertador</td>
<td>Jan. 26, 2013</td>
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<td>Geora Valero</td>
<td>Project Support Agent, CORPOANDES</td>
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<td>Erik Uzcategui</td>
<td>Leader of Movimiento 13 de Marzo</td>
<td>Nov. 8, 2012</td>
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## Ecuador

### Citizen Participants

**Tarqui**

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<thead>
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<th>Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>José B.</td>
<td>President</td>
<td>Feb. 4, 2013</td>
<td>Manta, Manabí</td>
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<tr>
<td>Victor L.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Franklin P.</td>
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<td>Betty C.</td>
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<td>Washington A.</td>
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### Montúfar

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<td>Luis</td>
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<td>Patty</td>
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## State and opposition representatives

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<td>Feb. 22,2013</td>
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<td>Deputy Minister, SENPLADES</td>
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<td>Lawyer, Subsecretaria de Derechos Humanos y Cultos, Ministerio de Justicia</td>
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<td>Isabel Terán</td>
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<td>Pamela Troya</td>
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<td>Technical Agent, Department of Public Works, Municipio de Manta</td>
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Chile

Citizen Participants

La Pintana

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>Gloria R.</td>
<td>President</td>
<td>March 22, 2013</td>
<td>La Pintana (Santiago)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luis A.</td>
<td>Vice President</td>
<td>March 23, 2013</td>
<td>La Pintana (Santiago)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alicia C.</td>
<td>Financial</td>
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<td>Elsa A.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mercedes A.</td>
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<td>Romelia R.</td>
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<td>Carlos M.</td>
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<td>April 3, 2013</td>
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<tr>
<td>Christian C.</td>
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<td>Fabiola S.</td>
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<td>Carla V.</td>
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<td>Rodrigo G.</td>
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Maipú

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<td>Sandra B.</td>
<td>President</td>
<td>March 14, 2013</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maria Teresa A.</td>
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<td>Nicolás N.</td>
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**Cayumapú**

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<td>Pablo G.</td>
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<td>April 20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Renan G.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ivan M.</td>
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<td>Jesús Andrés G.</td>
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<td>Octavio O.</td>
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**State and Opposition Representatives**

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<tr>
<td>Municipal Councillor, Municipalidad de La Pintana</td>
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<td>April 15, 2013</td>
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<tr>
<td>Support Agent, Public Works, Municipalidad de Valdivia</td>
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<td>April 26, 2013</td>
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<tr>
<td>Javier Alarcón</td>
<td>Lawyer Responsible for the application of the Citizen Participation Law in municipalities, Ministry of Justice</td>
<td>March 22, 2013</td>
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<td>Head of Community Organizations Division, Municipalidad de Valdivia</td>
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<td>Former Director of the Social Organizations Division, Ministerio Secretaría General de Gobierno</td>
<td>March 18, 2013</td>
<td>Santiago</td>
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<td>Official, Office of the Mayor of Valdivia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monica Jarra</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Thomás Marín</td>
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<tr>
<td>Carla Parraguez</td>
<td>Citizen Participation Advisor, Ministerio Secretaría General de Gobierno</td>
<td>March 19, 2013</td>
<td>La Moneda, Santiago</td>
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<tr>
<td>Juan Salinas</td>
<td>Coordinator, Association of Chilean Municipalities</td>
<td>March 18, 2013</td>
<td>Maipú (Santiago)</td>
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</table>
Appendix 3: Documents Analyzed

Venezuela (27 texts)

Legislation

Ley Orgánica del poder popular (2010)
Proyecto de Ley de Reforma de la Ley de los Consejos Comunales (2009)
Ley de los Consejos Comunales (2006)
Constitución Bolivariana de la República de Venezuela (1999)

Websites

Consejo federal de gobierno
https://www.cfg.gob.ve/web_cfg/

Fundacomunal
http://www.fundacomunal.gob.ve/

Ministerio del Poder Popular para las Comunas y Protección Social
http://www.mpcomunas.gob.ve/

Servicio Autónomo Fondo Nacional de los Consejos Comunales (SAFONACC
http://www.safonacc.gob.ve

Documents

Banco Central de Venezuela (BCV)

Fortaleciendo la Nueva Cultura Participativa y el Emprendedurismo Social

Consejo nacional de gobierno

Baremo
Control y seguimiento
Como hacer un proyecto
Ejecución de Proyectos

Escuela Fortalecimiento del Poder Popular

Manual de participación ciudadana y gestión comunitaria
**Fondo Intergubernamental para la Descentralización (FIDES)**

Instructivo del formulario “relación de proyectos de inversión financiados con recursos FIDES”

Proyecto Modelo, Sistema eléctrico ampliación de redes de baja tensión

**Fundacomunal**

Comuna: gobernar, construir, destruir

**Ministerio del Poder Popular para las Comunas y Protección Social**

Método de trabajo y organización popular
El Poder popular
Plan Político Estratégico Comuna o Nada
Guía de formulación de proyectos para las organizaciones de base del poder popular
Instructivo Plan de Desarrollo Integral Comunitario
Metodología revolucionaria para el trabajo y la organización comunal
Planilla de solicitud de registro del consejo comunal

**Fundación escuela de gerencia social, Ministerio de planificación y desarrollo, Escuela de gerencia publica**

Herramientas de participación ciudadana y controlaría social

**Municipio de Baruta**

Manual de Formación de los Consejos Comunales

**Universidad Bolivariana de Venezuela**

Formación consejos comunales (2007)
http://editorialubv.files.wordpress.com/2013/05/formacion-consejos-comunales.pdf
Ecuador (18 texts)

Legislation

Ley Orgánica de Participación Ciudadana (2010)
Nueva Constitución Política del Estado (2008)

Websites

Asamblea cantonal de Montúfar
http://www.asambleamontufar.org/

Consejo de participación ciudadana y control social (CPCCS)
http://www.participacionycontrolsocial.gov.ec/

Secretaría nacional de gestión de política
http://www.politica.gob.ec/

Corporación de Participación Ciudadana
http://www.participacionciudadana.org

Secretaría Nacional de Planificación y Desarrollo (SENPLADES)
http://www.planificacion.gob.ec/

Documents

Cantón Montúfar
Proyecto de ordenanza que regula el sistema de participación ciudadana del Cantón Montúfar

Consejo de participación ciudadana y control social (CPCCS)

Políticas de participación ciudadana, control social, rendición de cuentas, transparencia y lucha contra la corrupción
Curso de Participación Ciudadana, Control Social Y Rendición De Cuentas
Conceptos básicos de la participación
Las Asambleas Locales Ciudadanas y el Sistema de participación ciudadana en las localidades
Fondos concursables
Herramientas y mecanismos de participación ciudadana
Presupuestos participativos
Sistema de participación ciudadana
Secretaría Nacional de Planificación y Desarrollo (SENPLADES)

Guía de participación ciudadana en la planificación de los GADs
La participación ciudadana para la vida democrática
Legislation

Ley sobre asociaciones y participación ciudadana en la gestión pública (2011)
Ley sobre juntos de vecinos y demás organizaciones comunitarias (1997)

Websites

Gobierno de Chile, Participación Ciudadana
http://www.participacionciudadana.gob.cl/

Secretaría General de Gobierno, Participación Ciudadana
http://www.msgg.gob.cl/participacion-ciudadana/

Secretaría General de Gobierno, Fondos concursables

Municipalidad de La Pintana, Organizaciones comunitarias
http://ooccpintana.wordpress.com/

Municipalidad de Maipú
http://www.municipalidadmaipu.cl/participacion-ciudadana/

Municipalidad de Maipú, Participación Ciudadana

Documents

Asociación chilena de municipalidades
Nuevas Obligaciones de los Secretarios Municipales: Ley N° 20.500

Biblioteca del Congreso Nacional de Chile
Historia de la Ley N° 20.500 Sobre asociaciones y participación ciudadana en la gestión pública
Guía legal sobre juntas de vecinos

Ministerio de vivienda y urbanismo

Programa Recuperación de Barrios
Subsecretaría de desarrollo regional y administrativo

Consejos Comunales de Organizaciones de la Sociedad Civil
Reglamento tipo de los Consejo Comunales de Organizaciones de la Sociedad Civil

Ministerio de justicia

Principales inquietudes surgidas en el marco de la nueva Ley N° 20.500
Sobre asociaciones y participación ciudadana en la gestión pública

Ministerio Secretaría general de gobierno, División de Organizaciones Sociales

La Participación Ciudadana como Eje de Gestión del Gobierno
Política para la participación ciudadana en el marco de la corresponsibilidad
Ley N° 20.500 Sobre asociaciones y participación ciudadana en la gestión pública
Instructivo Presidencial sobre participación ciudadana
Normas de participación ciudadana del MSGG

Municipalidad de La Pintana

Ordenanza de Participación Ciudadana