

TH1.30.18 Formal –vs- informal participatory mechanisms, which way to go?

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When the 1998 Mexico City Citizen Participation Law was approved, an ample variety of participatory mechanisms were provided to the inhabitants of one of the largest metropolitan areas worldwide. For example, the legislation introduced such direct forms of democracy as the referendum or the plebiscite. Furthermore, since 2010, one of the largest participatory budgets implemented at the global scale takes place in Mexico City, with over 50 million dollars and nearly 9 million residents with the possibility to participate. Notwithstanding these apparent democratic advances, there are some doubts about the way each participatory mechanism has impacted the process of citizen empowerment at the local scale. The aim of this paper is to analyse the effects of some of the participatory mechanisms carried out in the Mexico City context, questioning whether it is better to use formal or informal participatory channels. We believe it is relevant to develop such analysis, due to the fact that in some cases detected, informal participatory activities (i.e. blocking a road, taking by force government offices) have proven more empowering, when compared to those schemes offered by the citizen participation legislation. The article concludes that the Mexico City participatory legislation requires reforms to make its proceedings more proficient, giving a greater true empowerment possibility to the citizenry taking part in each of them.

TH1.30.18 How to Study Learning in Democratic Activity Across Time and Space by Analyzing Discourse

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How does talk of Latino participation relate to actual Latino participation in a participatory process? The paper uses discourse analysis to examine how the topic of Latino participation was discussed in Chicago's 49th Ward Participatory Budgeting process (PB49). PB49 enactments here are positioned as learning environments of democratic activity. Thus, how this topic was discussed over a three-year time frame provides insights into the types of learning about Latino participation that took place. Findings for this paper relate to a longitudinal ethnographic case study focusing specifically on the Latino immigrant community's participation in the PB49 process. While discourse analysis is not new to the study of democratic activity, longitudinal systemic application seems to be missing. Briggs (1998) insightfully demonstrated what a socio-linguistic analysis of a participatory planning enactment could provide. This kind of discourse analysis offers insights into the power dynamics at play in participants' social interactions. However, very few, if any, planning, community development, or other forms of democratic activity take place in one enactment. Moving the discourse analysis from an individualized speech act in one public meeting to its trajectory over time and space provides more nuanced tools to decipher how power and learning are at play (Wortham, 2015) in complex evolving democratic activity systems. This paper focuses on how learning occurs in practice across time from participants' own words and actions. Practice-based research and analysis on learning in participatory processes is needed to move beyond summative evaluations that ask participants to self-report what they have learned, which might miss nuanced manifestations of power structures at play in democratic activity. The distinction here is made

explicit, since how we talk about Latino participation informs how we envision Latino participation, i.e., the civic engagement valued in the design of the participatory process.