



Exploring **Worldwide** Democratic Innovations

Innovations that draw on indigenous practices

Democratic innovations develop differently depending on a multitude of factors. Some of the innovations presented in the ‘Exploring Worldwide Democratic Innovations’ project are examples of how indigenous knowledge and practices of deliberation have been incorporated into democratic systems.

Such examples of democratic innovations can be found in the case study of Nigeria, India and in some of the innovations presented in our regional case study of Latin America.

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Nigeria: The Open Forum

The Open Forum or Apero is a democratic innovation in Nigeria that is rooted in the practices of the Yoruba People. The Open Forum draws inspiration from the Odan tree, used as a meeting place to discuss critical issues related to governance as well as pathways for addressing the socio-political issues arising in their communities. Similarly, this forum allows all citizens to contribute to issues of governance, irrespective of their socio-economic and political standing.



India: Gram Sabha

The Gram Sabha is an institution that governs villages according to the principles of direct democracy inspired by early rural community practices of self-governance, institutionalised in 1992 through the 73rd Amendment Act. The term sabha indicates a meeting in which different people and opinions come together. There are now more than 3.1 million elected representatives at the rural level, 1.3 million of whom are women.



Latin America: Community dialogues

Across Latin America, some democratic innovations, particularly those concerned with deliberation, are rooted in the traditions of indigenous peoples. In the Andean region, indigenous practices have long implied dialogue among community members and consensus building. Some of the examples of innovations discussed in the case study of Latin America reflect this tradition. Today many democratic innovations have been focused on involving the indigenous population in decision-making. Such a form of democratic innovation are National Dialogues which have been used in Latin America for over three decades.



About the project:

'Exploring Worldwide Democratic Innovations' is a research project that brings together researchers, practitioners and policymakers to exchange best practices in democratic innovations and explore how innovations developed and implemented outside the West can be applied to a European context. This project was supported by the **Robert Bosch Stiftung**.



Sources:

European Democracy Hub (2022). Exploring Worldwide Democratic Innovations - A Series of Case Studies.