



EXPLORING WORLDWIDE DEMOCRATIC INNOVATIONS OUTSIDE THE WEST: LESSONS FROM ASIA

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Introduction

Despite the region's comparatively short history of democracy, several Asian countries have achieved notable democratic milestones. Three Asian countries (South Korea, Japan, and India) have become part of the D-10 (Democracy 10), which consists of 10 leading democracies of the world.

This is significant as the D-10, comprising the G7 nations along with Australia, South Korea, and India, plays a pivotal role in establishing and upholding a rules-based democratic framework.¹ In the 2022 Democracy Index, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan were classified as full democracies, while nine other Asian countries were deemed to be flawed democracies,² meaning they practise democratic elements but face significant shortcomings. In addition, the latest polling conducted by the Pew Research Center in six Asia-Pacific democracies (Australia, India, Indonesia, Japan, the Philippines, and South Korea) reveals strong support for democracy and satisfaction with the functioning of democracy in these countries amongst citizens.³ This data indicates that Asian countries have made considerable advancements with a number of democratic nations from the region gaining global recognition. This is reflected in South Korea's upcoming leadership of the Summit for Democracy, exemplifying their global recognition as a frontrunner in advancing democracy. The Summit for Democracy represents the most extensive consortium of nations encompassing the majority of electoral and liberal democracies.⁴ As the most extensive entity, its primary goals are to strengthen democracy, defend against authoritarianism, combat corruption, and promote human rights worldwide.⁵

The region has witnessed various democratic innovations that have aimed to enhance democratic processes, increase citizen participation, and address challenges, such as governance transparency, social

or citizen inclusion, and corruption. Some of the democratic innovations that can be found in Asia include deliberative polling, participatory budgeting, E-governance, citizen juries, and different strategies to channel youth empowerment.

It is crucial to highlight that Asian democracy differs from its Western counterpart due to differences in political structures, cultural norms, historical circumstances, and the interpretation and implementation of democratic principles. For instance, in the context of Asia, society places a greater emphasis on the family unit rather than individualism, with a prioritisation of social and economic rights over individual political rights.⁶ Therefore, it is essential to acknowledge cultural differences when examining various instances of democratic innovation across different regions. This highlights the importance of exploring specific cases of democratic innovation within the context of Asia.

This regional case study explores how two specific types of democratic innovations have been implemented and practised across Asia. These two types are digital democracy, also known as e-democracy, and participatory decision-making. Both innovation types enable citizens to engage more actively in democratic governance by articulating their policy ideas and participating directly in decision-making processes. This often involves interaction with other stakeholders, including government officials, field experts, and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs).

1 Heather Evennett. "Democracy under Threat: A Case for Co-Ordinated Action?" UK Parliament, January 27, 2022. <https://lordslibrary.parliament.uk/democracy-under-threat-a-case-for-co-ordinated-action/>.

2 "Democracy Index 2022." Economist Intelligence Unit, February 1, 2023. https://www.eiu.com/n/campaigns/democracy-index-2022/?utm_source=google&utm_medium=paid-search&utm_campaign=democracy-index-2022&utm_glclid=CjwKCAjwge2iBhBBEiwAfXDBRxn9DGYPYAXVEhDd-KUBZi7sZ3MII8ag3TuVEmMVGoePKQJAr8VoghoCQmYQAvD_BwE.

3 Richard Wike, and Shannon Schumacher. "3. Satisfaction with Democracy." Pew Research Center's Global Attitudes Project, February 27, 2020. <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2020/02/27/satisfaction-with-democracy/>.

4 Sook Jong Lee. "Global Perspectives on the Second Summit for Democracy." Council on Foreign Relations, April 5, 2023. <https://www.cfr.org/councilofcouncils/global-memos/global-perspectives-second-summit-democracy>.

5 "Frequently Asked Questions: The Summit for Democracy." U.S. Department of State. Accessed October 1, 2023. <https://www.state.gov/further-information-the-summit-for-democracy/>.

6 Chan Yau Hoon. "Revisiting the Asian Values Argument Used by Asian Leaders and Its Validity." Indonesian Quarterly 32, no. 2 (January 2004):155

This case study will first broadly discuss digital democracy in Asia, outlining how digital democracy has been implemented and practised in different countries including South Korea, Mongolia, and Indonesia, with different levels of digital advancement. Second, it will elucidate how Asian countries innovate in the realm of democratic participation in decision-making processes, by tailoring approaches that align with their unique cultural contexts and values. For example, practices observed in Japan and Mongolia are deeply rooted in and influenced by their specific cultural milieu. These innovations are each accompanied by three short country case studies that describe how they have been implemented and practised. The last part of this study will conclude with lessons to be learnt from these cases of democratic innovation in Asia and their impacts.

1) Digital Democracy (E-governance)

Asia is fertile ground for advancements in digital democracy due to the accessibility of technology and widespread internet access. Many Asian countries have highly advanced digital technologies. Asia boasts leading smartphone brands such as Samsung, LG, Xiaomi, and Sony, which accounted for 69% of global sales in 2014, along with a third of the world's app developers.⁷ Furthermore, it is noteworthy that the average percentage of internet access has consistently increased, rising from 21.5% in 2010 to 67.4% in 2022.⁸ Additionally, governments across Asia are actively promoting and advancing digitalisation efforts.⁹ This effort and associated developments are reshaping governance across the region. In the past few decades, Asian democracies have seen a significant rise in digital participation that primarily focuses on either the public sphere and public opinion, or involves traditional political forces like pressure groups and social movement organisations.¹⁰ At a local level, citizens have engaged in politics and policy-making via digital platforms, while on a broader scale, digital means have also been utilised as a platform for conveying citizens' opinions to the central government. The utilisation of digital platforms in democratic governance has significantly increased citizen participation and their interest in governance.

One of the examples showcasing the strong development of digital democracy in Asia is the case of Taiwan. Taiwan's robust capabilities in digital democracy have been fully demonstrated by previous studies **on Taiwan** conducted by the European Partnership for Democracy in the framework of the European Democracy Hub.¹¹ In addition to Taiwan's case, the following section will present three concrete examples of digital democracy observed in Asian nations spanning the period from 1990 to the present, thereby affording insights into its practical manifestations within distinct national contexts. The case of South Korea effectively demonstrates democratic innovation in a mature democracy utilising digital technologies that have not been attempted globally, such as blockchain-based systems. On the other hand, democracy in Mongolia is relatively new and cannot be considered as developed as South Korea, Taiwan and other developed democratic countries. However, there are lessons to be learnt from the attempts made through the E-Mongolia platform and its rapid growth over the past three years. Lastly, recognised as the world's third-largest democracy, Indonesia, despite currently experiencing democratic backsliding, has also made advancements in e-democracy. With the support of international partners, Indonesia has implemented a one-stop online complaint-handling platform called "SP4N-LAPOR! (Sistem Pengelolaan Pengaduan Pelayanan Publik Nasional-Layanan Aspirasi dan Pengaduan Online Rakyat)." This platform was acknowledged as a pioneering model at the 2019 ASEAN-ROK Ministerial Roundtable and has likewise garnered favourable assessments from the Indonesian general public. SP4N-LAPOR! being recognised as an innovative exemplar during the Ministerial Roundtable held considerable significance, as this forum convened prominent ministers from the ten ASEAN countries as well as the South Korean minister, providing a unique opportunity for the exchange of successful practices and deliberation on policy enhancement strategies.

7 Thomas Jakob. "Asia Leads the World in Digital Transformation." Bosch Digital Blog, May 4, 2017. <https://blog.bosch-digital.com/asia-leads-the-world-in-digital-transformation/>.

8 Kameke, Leander von. "Internet Penetration Rate in Asia Compared to the Global Penetration Rate from 2010 to 2022." Statista, January 3, 2023. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/265156/internet-penetration-rate-in-asia/>.

9 "Digital Transformation in Asia-Pacific." European and International Cooperation. Accessed August 3, 2023. <https://www.kas.de/en/web/europaeische-und-internationale-zusammenarbeit/digital-transformation-in-asia-pacific>.

10 Naoyuki Mikami. "Trends in Democratic Innovation in Asia." in Handbook of Democratic Innovation and Governance, ed. Elstub Elstub and Stephen, Oliver Escobar (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2019), 427. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781786433862.00040>.

11 Ming-sho Ho. "Exploring Worldwide Democratic Innovations - A Case Study of Taiwan." Brussels: The European Democracy Hub, 2022. <https://epd.eu/content/uploads/2023/07/Case-Study-Taiwan.pdf>

Case studies

South Korea

South Korea is one of the top-ranking countries in digital democracy. South Korea ranked 3rd out of 193 countries in the E-Government Development Index and 9th out of 193 in the E-Participation Index.¹² An example representing South Korea's strong digital democracy is the "Ddabok Community Support Project" which took place in the South Korean province of Gyeonggi-do in March 2017. The project's objective was to enable local residents to suggest ideas for financial assistance, following which the provincial government may choose to allocate budgets to support these projects.¹³ As part of this project, the province of Gyeonggi-do effectively utilised a blockchain-based voting system to collect votes from its residents.

Blockchain technology, typically applied to Bitcoin, is a promising technology for the Fourth Industrial Revolution due to its high security and transparency.¹⁴ Originally, this technology was used as a shared and collective ledger that manages the process of recording transactions and tracking assets in a business network, enabling the tracking and trading of valuable items, thereby reducing risk and lowering costs.¹⁵ Adapting blockchain technology in governance can ensure high security and transparency such as in the area of elections or voting. The South Korean blockchain platform for voting was developed by a Korean financial technology startup called "Blocko." This voting platform was used in the selection of community aid projects, and the process concluded successfully with a total of 9,000 residents who participated by casting their votes through both online and offline methods.¹⁶ Following the voting process, the outcomes and related data were recorded within a blockchain system.¹⁷ In order to protect the confidentiality of votes, the calculations involved in the voting process were subjected to encryption.¹⁸ To secure the voting process, all voting rights assigned to registered citizens were tokenised using Public Key Infrastructure (PKI). These tokens were then electronically signed to maintain an accurate

and protected record.¹⁹ Reflecting on the project, Nam Kyung-pil, the governor of Gyeonggi-do, suggested that we can overcome representative democracy's constraints by incorporating blockchain technology, a defining feature of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, into traditional democratic processes. Incorporating the blockchain system into voting or elections ensures transparency and ballot secrecy and could also potentially increase voter participation.

Mongolia

Mongolia, situated between two global powers – Russia and China – emerged as a democratic country after the end of Communism in 1990. In 2020, Mongolia introduced the E-Mongolia service, which was the first e-government service in the country. E-Mongolia aimed to empower citizens to interact with the government with greater ease, efficiency and in a more transparent manner, thereby enhancing communication and fostering a participatory and inclusive democracy by strengthening the relationship between citizens and the government. By March 2022, E-Mongolia had digitalised around 630 public services, attracted 2 million users, and effectively provided over 8.5 million services.²⁰

E-Mongolia allows citizens to submit requests and petitions to government agencies online and facilitates the tracking of different application processes without geographical or time limitations.²¹ The platform not only allows easy access to government services and data but also led to a 20 to 30 percent reduction in the number of complaints related to corruption and bribery, according to a report from the Anti-Corruption Agency.²² One notable aspect is that this platform has made significant progress in increasing citizen participation in a recently democratised Mongolia, a country characterised by a distinctly nomadic lifestyle and diverse living conditions. This nomadic lifestyle initially presented obstacles to effective democratic engagement, as citizens do not live in a settled region but continuously move from one area to another. The introduction of E-Mongolia in this context is particularly noteworthy due to the elevated levels of citizen participation it has fostered, a development that was previously challenging within a community characterised by nomadic traditions.

12 "Republic of Korea." UN E-Government Knowledgebase. Accessed September 3, 2023. <https://publicadministration.un.org/egovkb/en-us/Data/Country-Information/id/138-Republic-of-Korea>.

13 Garrett Keirns. "Local Government in South Korea Taps Blockchain for Community Vote." BLOCKO, March 7, 2017. <https://en.blocko.io/media/local-government-in-south-korea-taps-blockchain-for-community-vote/>.

14 "[공개SW 활용 성공사례 232] 경기도 - '따복공동체' 사업에 블록체인 도입으로 직접 민주주의 실현." 공개SW 포털, June 7, 2017. https://www.oss.kr/oss_case/show/id24adb6-b9db-46e7-9e23-fe9655bade47.

15 "What Is Blockchain Technology?" IBM. Accessed September 28, 2023. <https://www.ibm.com/topics/blockchain>.

16 Samburaj Das. "A South Korean Province Used Blockchain Tech for Resident Voting." CCN.com, March 4, 2021. <https://www.ccn.com/south-korean-province-used-blockchain-tech-resident-voting/>.

17 Nir Kshetri, and Jeffrey Voas. "Blockchain-Enabled e-Voting." IEEE Software 35, no. 4 (July 2018): 96. <https://doi.org/10.1109/ms.2018.2801546>.

18 Yuhao Bai, Qin Hu, Seung-Hyun Seo, Kyubyung Kang, and John J. Lee. "Public Participation Consortium Blockchain for Smart City Governance." IEEE Internet of Things Journal 9, no. 3 (June 22, 2021): 2096. <https://doi.org/10.1109/jiot.2021.3091151>.

19 "[공개SW 활용 성공사례 232]" 공개SW 포털.

20 Bolor Lkhaajav. "Can Digital Governance Strengthen Mongolia's Democratic Institutions?" The Diplomat, May 20, 2022. <https://thediplomat.com/2022/05/can-digital-governance-strengthen-mongolias-democratic-institutions/>.

21 Baljmaa.T. "'E-Mongolia' Electronic Platform Launched to Provide 181 Government Services." MONTSAME News Agency, October 2, 2020. <https://montsame.mn/en/read/238364>.

22 Bolor-Erdene Battengel. "How to Do Digital Government: Experiences from E-Mongolia." Urbanet, February 8, 2022. <https://www.urbanet.info/digital-governance-mongolia/>.

Indonesia

Indonesia, having successfully transitioned from dictatorship to democracy over two decades ago, is leveraging technology to reinforce its democratic political culture and institutions.²³ Despite its successful transition, Indonesia has been recently grappling with democratic backsliding. In particular, the polarisation witnessed in electoral conflicts in 2014, 2017, and 2019 played a role in causing a noticeable deterioration in the quality of democracy in the country.²⁴ Due to the electoral conflict in the aforementioned three elections, society has become more divided than ever before and this has threatened the country's democratic practices. In the case of Indonesia, where democracy has regressed, efforts have still been made to support democracy. One of these efforts is the way digital platforms have been employed to collect complaints and recommendations from citizens, as a means of citizen engagement. This platform is referred to as "SP4N-LAPOR!", providing Indonesian citizens with the convenience of using their mobile phones to directly submit feedback regarding the quality of public services and suggest possible improvements.²⁵

Unlike the previous examples, where the innovations were carried out independently by state institutions and local stakeholders, SP4N-LAPOR! has been implemented and supported through a partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), and the Ministry of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform (KemenPANRB). With the utilisation of this nationwide complaint-handling system, the Indonesian Government can now directly engage with citizens and request their input, thus enhancing transparency and accountability. This, in turn, helps guarantee the citizens' rights to effective and efficient public services throughout the nation.²⁶ Currently, SP4N-LAPOR! is linked with 34 ministries, 96 institutions, and 493 local governments in Indonesia.²⁷ SP4N-LAPOR! was also recognised as an innovative model during the 2019 ASEAN-ROK (Association of Southeast Asian Nations - Republic of Korea) Ministerial Roundtable and has also earned commendable evaluations from citizens. According to a survey released on March 14, 2023, by UNDP, the proportion of respondents expressing their intention to

continue using SP4N-LAPOR! to submit complaints was 84 percent in 2022, a rise from the 80.9 percent noted in 2021. Similarly, the percentage of respondents willing to recommend SP4N-LAPOR! to others also registered a slight increase, rising from 80.9 percent in 2021 to 82.9 percent in 2022.²⁸

The future for digital democracy (E-governance)

The achievements made possible through digital democracy are pivotal for advancing democratic systems worldwide. The notion that digital democracy is irreplaceable for the future of democracy persists unchanged. Despite its many advantages, it is imperative to actively seek methods to mitigate potential challenges, including those democratic predicaments stemming from technical errors or cyber-attacks, as we advance the cause of digital democracy. Furthermore, it is important to note that digitalisation also revolutionised various aspects of governance, from the electoral process to law enforcement and social services—resulting in consequential effects on citizens' capacity to hold public officials responsible.²⁹ To further elaborate, the transparency and equity facilitated by digitalisation empower citizens to actively observe the actions and policies of government or public officials in real time, granting them the opportunity to express their opinions. As a result, citizens have the ability to rectify government policies that have gone astray through digital platforms. In addition, government budgets and other data are available online, which help prevent the irresponsible actions of public officials, such as corruption. This, in turn, encourages public officials to formulate and execute government policies with an increased sense of accountability and responsibility.

23 Craig Willy. "Digital Democracy in Indonesia: An Asian Giant in Constant Transformation." Fair Observer, December 15, 2022. <https://www.fairobserver.com/politics/digital-democracy-in-indonesia-an-asian-giant-in-constant-transformation/>

24 Eve Warburton. "Deepening Polarization and Democratic Decline in Indonesia." Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, August 18, 2020. <https://carnegieendowment.org/2020/08/18/deepening-polarization-and-democratic-decline-in-indonesia-pub-82435>

25 Tomi Soetjipto, and Ranjit Jose, eds. "E-Citizen Platform Helps Indonesian Citizens' Response to the COVID-19 Crisis: United Nations Development Programme." UNDP, March 24, 2020. <https://www.undp.org/indonesia/news/e-citizen-platform-helps-indonesian-citizens%E2%80%99-response-covid-19-crisis>

26 "SP4N-LAPOR! Indonesia's National Complaint Handling Management System." Observatory of Public Sector Innovation, March 18, 2021. <https://oecd-opsi.org/innovations/sp4n-lapor-indonesias-national-complaint-handling-management-system/>

27 Fitri Gupitasari, and Muhammad Khoiril Anwar. "The Effectiveness of SP4N-LAPOR-Based Complaints! At the Department of Communication and Information Technology of Tasikmalaya City." Publica: Jurnal Pemikiran Administrasi Negara 14, no. 1 (June 2022): 2. <https://doi.org/10.15575/jpan.v14i1.17164>

28 "Survey Reveals 8 out of 10 Indonesians Recommend Using SP4N-LAPOR! System to Report Public Service Complaints: United Nations Development Programme." UNDP, March 14, 2023. <https://www.undp.org/indonesia/news/survey-reveals-8-out-10-indonesians-recommend-using-sp4n-lapor-system-report-public-service-complaints>

29 Lily Sabol. "The Digitalization of Democracy: How Technology Is Changing Government Accountability." National Endowment for Democracy, March 27, 2023. <https://www.ned.org/digitalization-democracy-technology-changing-government-accountability/>

2) Participation in Decision-making

Participatory democracy refers to the involvement of individuals, non-governmental organisations, and the broader civil society in the management of public affairs at the local, regional, and national levels.³⁰ While some people have found participatory decision-making to be meaningful and exciting, emphasising the solidarity and trust it fosters, others have regarded consensus-based decision-making as unbearably slow.³¹ As the number of voices increases and the people influencing decisions grows in number, it is natural for the decision-making process to slow down. Hence, participatory decision-making is often implemented and practised through local authorities or non-governmental organisations, as opposed to central governmental bodies.

Participatory democracy includes various levels of practice such as information, consultation, dialogue, and partnership, employing diverse models for organising participation, such as user-friendly interactive municipal websites, consultation platforms, participatory budgeting initiatives, or citizens assemblies, all with the overarching goal of actively involving citizens or civil society in local, regional, or national decision-making processes concerning matters that impact their everyday lives.³² In Asia, various forms of participatory democracy are being practised, displaying unique features that reflect the regional characteristics.

The next section will examine three specific cases of participation in decision-making processes in different Asian regions. This analysis will provide a practical understanding of how citizen participation in decision-making processes has been put into practice within varying national contexts. The section below will look at examples from the Philippines, Japan, and Taiwan.

Similar to the “Gram Sabha” in India, which has been briefly covered in a previous case study,³³ the Philippines has its own small administrative units called “Barangay.” Both Gram Sabha and Barangay operate as parliamentary systems essentially at village level. These units allow citizens to participate in the decision-making process, comprising various aspects, including budgetary matters and more.

In Japan, on the other hand, there is a special way of engaging citizens in the decision-making process called “The 1% Support Scheme,” which utilises non-profit organisations (NPOs). Japan has a significant number of NPOs. These organisations were intentionally established as a political initiative to foster openness in the public sphere and encourage greater civic participation in political affairs.³⁴

Meanwhile, Taiwan has used various forms of citizen participation in regard to the Orchid Island nuclear waste repository site, such as a consensus conference, the anti-nuclear waste movement, and the citizen forum. Despite the fact that the issue’s inception was based on citizen resistance stemming from unilateral government initiatives, it is noteworthy to observe the diversified forms of citizen engagement within the realm of science and technology—a domain traditionally reserved for experts and government officials.

30 “Civil Participation in Decision-Making.” Council of Europe. Accessed July 23, 2023. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/good-governance/civil-participation-in-decision-making-processes>.

31 Polletta, Francesca. “Participatory Democracy’s Moment.” *Journal of International Affairs* 68, no. 1 (2014): 86. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24461707>.

32 “About Participatory Democracy.” Council of Europe. Accessed August 2, 2023. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/participatory-democracy/about-participatory-democracy>.

33 Niranjan Sahoo. “A Case Study of India.” *Exploring Worldwide Democratic Innovations*, 2022. <https://epd.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/case-study-india.pdf>.

34 Akihiro Ogawa. “Civil Society in Japan.” in *The Oxford Handbook of Japanese Politics*, ed. Robert J. Pekkanen and Saadia M Pekkanen. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 300. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190050993.013.17>.

Case studies

Philippines

During the democratisation wave that swept across the 1980s-1990s in Asia, the Philippines played a crucial role as the first country in the region to successfully overthrow an authoritarian regime, directly removing Ferdinand Marcos' twenty-year-long dictatorship in 1986 through citizen action.³⁵ However, the recent presidential administration of Rodrigo Duterte unquestionably raised concerns with its record on human rights and democracy, as it showed a disregard for human rights, political rivals, and the country's democratic institutions.³⁶ Understandably, people have expressed concerns about a decline in democracy in recent years. Furthermore, Ferdinand Marcos Jr., the son of the former dictator of the Philippines, Ferdinand Marcos, was elected as the next president in the 2022 presidential election. Amidst these patterns of democratic regression, there are democratic innovations that can still be discerned. One of the democratic innovations worth examining is Barangay assemblies, which take place at the smallest administrative unit, known as "barangay".

Barangay assemblies serve as community forums that enable citizens to directly impact local governance, effectively acting as the barangay's parliament.³⁷ The role of the assembly includes discussing community matters, expressing concerns, suggesting initiatives, and actively allowing citizens to participate in the decision-making processes that impact their local area. The barangay assemblies serve as a direct avenue for people at grassroots level to enact legislation on local issues, making it the closest mechanism to direct democracy in the Philippines.³⁸

One of the examples that showcases the role of Barangay assemblies is the Kapit-Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan-Comprehensive and Integrated Delivery of Social Services-National Community-Driven Development (KALAHI-CIDSS-NCDD) Program, a national programme implemented by the Department of Social Welfare and Development. This programme

empowers marginalised communities to engage with barangay officials, identify needs, and access resources from government agencies, fostering participation in decision-making, accountability, and preventing fund misallocation.³⁹ This project transformed the Barangay assemblies into a multifunctional forum. Not only do they serve a reporting function but also one for ensuring responsibility, endorsing various elements of selected subprojects, and providing directives for updates on implementation progress.⁴⁰

Japan

Japan has a long history of democratic governance and has been recognised as a successful democratic state with well-established institutions, recurring elections, and a flourishing free press.⁴¹ In this context, it has experimented with various types of democratic innovations. Amongst these, is a participatory budgeting scheme in Ichikawa City, called "The 1% Support Scheme". This is a notable innovative case that differs from those in other countries. This scheme is a unique participatory budgeting system, allocating 1% of residential tax revenues to NPOs. The success of the scheme in Ichikawa has inspired other cities in Japan, and consequently the term "participatory budgeting" is becoming widely used within Japan.⁴² Furthermore, the innovative aspect of the 1% Support Scheme lies in its utilisation of NPOs to address the needs of citizens.⁴³ In other words, citizens guide the distribution of funds by casting votes for non-profit organisations, which in turn carry out projects that align with the citizens' preferences and interests.

NPOs interested in participating in this scheme need to submit an application to qualify for funding, which is then evaluated by an assessment committee comprised of four academic experts and three citizens chosen by local officials based on their volunteering and non-profit experience. Eligible organisations must meet specific criteria, including having had an active presence in Ichikawa city for more than a year, maintaining a legal and ethical standing, and refraining from political or religious involvement.⁴⁴ Following the evaluation, a list of eligible organisations is compiled and made public

35 Michael Henry Yusingco. "Barangay Assembly: A Citizen-Led Reinvention of Political Discourse and Civic Engagement in the Philippines." *Constitutional Studies* 8, no.1 (December 12, 2022):178. <https://constitutionalstudies.wisc.edu/index.php/cs/article/view/95>.

36 David G. Timberman. "Philippine Politics Under Duterte: A Midterm Assessment." *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, January 10, 2019. <https://carnegieendowment.org/2019/01/10/philippine-politics-under-duterte-midterm-assessment-pub-78091>.

37 Michael Henry Yusingco. "Barangay Assembly" 187-189.

38 Sheena L. Boysillo. "Governance of the Barangay Chairpersons in the Municipality of Ubay Bohol." *International Journal of Business and Management Studies* 9, no. 1 (February 1, 2017): 52. <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/pub/ijbms/issue/36086/405193>.

39 Francisco A. Magno. "Direct Democracy in the Philippines." *East Asia Institute*, July 4, 2022. https://www.eai.or.kr/new/en/pub/view.asp?intSeq=21335&board=eng_workingpaper.

40 Francisco A. Magno. "Direct Democracy"

41 John Nilsson-Wright, and Jon Wallace. "Democracy in Japan." *Chatham House*, September 8, 2022. <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2022/09/democracy-japan>.

42 Yves Sintomer, Carsten Herzberg, Anja Röcke, and Giovanni Allegretti. "Transnational Models of Citizen Participation: The Case of Participatory Budgeting." *Journal of Public Deliberation* 8, no. 2, article 9 (December 30, 2012): 15. <https://doi.org/10.16997/jdd.141>.

43 "The 1% Support Scheme: Participatory Budgeting in Ichikawa City (Japan)." *Participedia*. Accessed August 29, 2023. <https://participedia.net/case/4783>.

44 Rosario Laratta. "The 1% Support Scheme in Ichikawa City." *Governance International*, August 2014. <https://www.govint.org/good-practice/case-studies/the-1-support-scheme-in-ichikawa-city/change-management/>.

to citizens, after which all taxpayers participate in the voting process; subsequently, once voting is concluded, the supported organisations are announced. These organisations then engage in exchanges to inform local residents of their proposed activities.⁴⁵

NPOs in Japan obtained legal status through the passage of the NPO Act/Law in 1998, transforming them from voluntary organisations into ones with legally protected characteristics, which facilitate their receiving of a publicly awarded pool of funds. These funds are collected through the 1% Support Scheme, which reserves 1% of budgetary funds to support their activities. This development has considerably improved conditions for citizen participation and fostered grassroots activities in diverse fields, such as environmental issues, education, and poverty.⁴⁶ NPOs have served as a means for bolstering citizen participation in Japan, and their use in Japanese participatory budgeting can be considered a unique form of participatory democracy, since in Japan they are heavily utilised in the participatory budgeting process, whereas usually, participatory budgeting processes rely on individual citizens directly involving themselves by raising their voices in national and regional political activities. The 1% Support Scheme can be regarded as an initiative through which both citizen's democratic participation and the sense of responsibility and public interest within NPOs have been concurrently addressed, effectively achieving dual objectives.

Taiwan

Traditionally, the specialised field of science and technology has relied heavily on expert and governmental input, resulting in limited citizen involvement.⁴⁷ In order to facilitate citizen engagement in this realm, imparting essential professional knowledge to individual citizens through a comprehensive, time-intensive process is essential. This constraint is one of the contributing factors to the scarcity of citizen participatory cases in the field of science compared to other areas. However, there have been attempts to involve citizens in the field of science in a number of countries, such as the example of Taiwan's Orchid Island nuclear waste repository explored here.

On Orchid Island, also known as Lanyu, a nuclear waste repository site was constructed on the southern side without prior notification or agreement from the Tao Tribes, the island's indigenous residents. Upon learning

of this repository, the Tao Tribes initiated a series of demonstrations against this decision. Despite their efforts, the government has been slow to address the issue of nuclear waste.⁴⁸ The Government's passive attitude spurred the inception of various deliberative systems including the consensus conference, the anti-nuclear waste movement, the citizen forum, the AEC's (Atomic Energy Council) citizen participation platform, and the Orchid Island Committee on Nuclear Waste Removal.⁴⁹

While the precise objectives of each event or form may vary, the common purpose underlying these deliberative systems is to establish a platform for citizens to engage in reasoned dialogues concerning nuclear waste disposal matters. They aim to articulate diverse concerns and perspectives, thereby offering valuable insights for future site-selection procedures. Additionally, these mechanisms facilitate citizens in constructively expressing their viewpoints on public policies and engaging in rational communication with one another, ultimately striving to achieve consensus within the framework of deliberative democracy.⁵⁰ The Orchid Island case demonstrates various levels and modes of citizen involvement, serving as a valuable example that illustrates the potential range of citizen engagement types. Therefore, this case holds significance in the context of democratic innovation in Taiwan.

The varying levels of citizen involvement in the decision-making process ranged from the consensus conference, which empowered citizens to voice concerns and propose ideas, subsequently serving as a roadmap for future site-selection procedures, to the negotiation platform between the Orchid Island Repository Removal Promotion Committee and government and Taipower, a government-controlled institution supplying electric power to Taiwan. This committee consists of 26 members, including both Tao people from Orchid Island and experts and scholars, with one-third of its members being representatives of the Tao people.⁵¹ Throughout the process, citizens were educated on science and technology issues, enabling them to engage in discussions with experts and government officials and articulate their ideas more convincingly.

After a number of negotiations amongst stakeholders, in mid-August, President Tsai Ing-wen visited the island

45 Shinsook Ahn. "[기획연재] 내가 낸 주민세의 1% 시민단체에 기부해볼까?" The Hope Institute, August 25, 2015. <https://www.makehope.org/?p=26514>.

46 Carmen Schmidt. "The changing institutional framework for local democracy in Japan." 68, Proceedings of the 10th Meeting of the German-Japanese Society for Social Sciences, ed. Gyoergy Szell et al. (forthcoming). 2009. https://www.fsjapan.uni-osnabrueck.de/media/Schmidt/Schmidt_Local_Democracy.pdf

47 Jinkyung Baek. "A Case Study of South Korea." Exploring Worldwide Democratic Innovations, 2022. <https://epd.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/case-study-south-korea.pdf>

48 Amy Qin, and Amy Chang Chien. "The Nuclear Dump That Created a Generation of Indigenous Activists." The New York Times, January 5, 2023. <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/01/05/world/asia/lanyu-taiwan-nuclear-waste.html>.

49 Mei-Fang Fan. "The Democratisation of Science in Deliberative Systems: The Controversy over Nuclear Waste Repository Siting." in *Deliberative Democracy in Taiwan: A Deliberative Systems Perspective*, 93-121. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2022.

50 Mei-Fang Fan. Op. cit. "The Democratisation"

51 Ibid.

following her formal apology to the Indigenous people on August 1, 2016. During her visit, she convened a discussion forum with community leaders at the Orchid Island Township Office, with significant emphasis on the topic of nuclear waste storage; President Tsai promised to form a specialised team to investigate the decision-making process that led to the selection of Orchid Island as a nuclear storage facility, formulate a framework for providing financial compensation to the island's residents, and enhance the future governance of Taiwan's nuclear waste storage facilities.⁵² While the government's response was initially inadequate, it can be considered an important case due to the various forms of citizen participation that took place and the possibility of establishing an active citizen participation platform.

awareness, and nurturing a heightened perception of political effectiveness.⁵³ In essence, when examining the case of Taiwan, it becomes apparent that citizens underwent a sustained process of education regarding science and technology before taking proactive roles in various deliberative mechanisms. Likewise, the cases in Mongolia and Japan demonstrate that citizens developed heightened political awareness and initiated active participation. Therefore, it remains crucial to establish various forms of policy decision-making participation platforms, even if their effects are not immediately evident.

Comparing participation in decision-making methods

The cases examined above reveal the diverse ways in which grassroots democracy is being practised across three different Asian countries, each adapting to regional characteristics. These regional characteristics encompass the various elements discussed in this paper: democratic innovation in Japan, which considers the social position of NPOs; the Mongolian innovation, which accounts for and reflects the Mongolian people's nomadic way of life; and the South Korean case, which showcases the nation's technological capabilities. While the forms and ways may vary, it is evident that many countries are adopting participatory democracy, thereby encouraging direct citizen engagement in decision-making processes. This increased civic participation serves as a foundational element for more pragmatic and practical policymaking, ultimately contributing to the democratic development of local communities and, by extension, the nation. Furthermore, active citizen participation in local governance plays a vital role in enhancing education by fostering skill development, increasing political

52 "President Tsai Visits Indigenous Tribe on Orchid Island." Taiwan Today, August 16, 2016. <https://taiwantoday.tw/news.php?unit=2&post=102354>.

53 Pascal Lupien. "Participatory Democracy, Democratic Education, and Women." *Journal of Latin American Studies* 54, no. 4: 617-45.

Conclusion

Citizen participation in democracy takes on diverse forms, exhibiting variations not only across larger regions such as Asia, Europe, and Africa but also inside a region, such as Asia. For instance, within the Asian context, noticeable disparities exist, as exemplified by the distinctions between South Korea and Mongolia explored within this article. South Korea, with its highly developed technological infrastructure, leverages digital tools in citizen participation in a markedly different manner than from Mongolia.

The country cases covered in this article provide three key lessons. Firstly, through digital adoption, we can foster citizen engagement in democratic contexts. Each country possesses varying levels of digital readiness, and the extent and methods of democratic utilisation also differ. In South Korea, a country with highly developed technological capabilities, Blockchain technology has been employed in the political arena. This allowed for a more secure and transparent form of citizen participation in governance. On the other hand, in Indonesia and Mongolia, digital technology is just being introduced and advanced to promote citizen participation and enhance transparency in decision-making on policy. Based on citizens' positive feedback, an increasing number of citizens are using online platforms in both countries. Additionally, similarities have been noted amongst the cases in South Korea, Mongolia, and Indonesia, with all showing increased citizen participation and satisfaction in democratic practices. This trend is likely to further amplify citizens' interest in politics and democracy.

A second lesson gleaned is that, while the engagement of citizens is pivotal, the government's receptiveness to their input is also significant. Looking at the case of nuclear waste disposal on Orchid Island in Taiwan, we can see attempts to create citizen participation at various levels. However, it is clear, the site was not properly handled and remained in the area due to the government's passive approach and lack of determination. It demonstrates that despite efforts in various forms to involve citizens in decision-making, limitations can arise when there is insufficient collaboration with the government. Nevertheless, the involvement of citizens at different stages can still be considered a successful innovation case.

The final lesson learnt is that small-scale policy decision-

making bodies play a vital role in democracy. Taking various forms, such as the Barangay assemblies in the Philippines and NPOs in Japan, these two cases offer pathways for citizens to become more actively involved in the policy decision-making process. This, in turn, enhances participatory decision-making by citizens. It underscores the idea that smaller or localised groups have the potential to accomplish goals that might be limited when relying solely on the central government.

The three lessons mentioned above illustrate the strengths and weaknesses of democracy in Asia. In short, a strength is the rapid evolution of citizen-centred democratic participation in line with technological advancements, which contributes to the positive development of democracy. A weakness lies in the diverse ways citizens participate in democracy, meaning their impact is often contingent on the role and decisions of the government. Hence, meaningful citizen participation is challenging without government involvement. Different types of democratic innovations are being implemented in Asian countries to tackle these weaknesses and constraints, and various endeavours are ongoing in an effort to revitalise democracy.

To conclude, the cases examined in this paper serve as examples of democratic innovations in Asia, showcasing a variety of citizen participation modalities. From a European perspective or a Western perspective, some of these cases may appear fresh and unfamiliar, while others may have parallels that already exist. Some cases may be deemed successful, while others may be perceived as failures. Nevertheless, we can extract valuable lessons from these country cases and aspire to introduce more effective and efficient democratic innovations in our democratic practices, guided by the knowledge acquired.

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About the project:

'Exploring Worldwide Democratic Innovations' is a research project supported by Robert Bosch Stiftung, which explores emerging innovations in democratic participation around the world and offering an overview of the lessons learned throughout the application of these innovations. The project highlights policy implications and gives a set of recommendations for European policymakers and practitioners working on the EU's internal democratic renewal. The project brings together researchers, practitioners and policymakers to exchange best practices in democratic political innovations.