

# Cambridge Elements

Elements in Politics and Society in Latin America

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## INNOVATING DEMOCRACY?

*The Means and Ends of Citizen  
Participation in Latin America*

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## Innovating Democracy?

### The Means and Ends of Citizen Participation in Latin America

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**Abstract:** Since democratization, Latin America has experienced a surge in new forms of citizen participation. Yet there is still little comparative knowledge on these so-called democratic innovations. This Element seeks to fill this gap. Drawing on a new dataset with 3,744 cases from 18 countries between 1990 and 2020, it presents the first large-N cross-country study of democratic innovations to date. It also introduces a typology of twenty kinds of democratic innovations, which are based on four means of participation, namely deliberation, citizen representation, digital engagement, and direct voting. Adopting a pragmatist, problem-driven approach, this Element claims that democratic innovations seek to enhance democracy by addressing public problems through combinations of these four means of participation in pursuit of one or more of five ends of innovations, namely accountability, responsiveness, rule of law, social equality, and political inclusion.

**Keywords:** citizen participation, Latin America, civil society, democracy, democratic innovations

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For Hannah,  
because women can be mothers and write books.

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