

# A Typology of Democratic Innovations

Stephen Elstub, (Newcastle University, [stephen.elstub@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:stephen.elstub@ncl.ac.uk)) & Oliver Escobar, (University of Edinburgh [Oliver.Escobar@ed.ac.uk](mailto:Oliver.Escobar@ed.ac.uk))

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## **Abstract**

*A variety of institutions and processes, collectively termed 'democratic innovations' are increasingly being utilised around the world in order to increase, diversify, and deepen opportunities for citizen participation in governance, policy, and public administration processes and are attracting substantial academic interest as a result. Despite this there is little agreement in the academy about which governance processes should be classified as 'democratic innovations' and a lack of clarity and precision in the use of the term. Indeed, democracy itself is widely regarded as an 'essentially contested concept' and 'innovation' is interpreted in a number of different ways across different countries and policy areas. This article seeks to survey the history of the term's use and critically review the different and dominant definitions currently employed, in order to produce an analytical typology that can provide greater clarity and coherence. Drawing on Freedman's morphological analysis of political concepts a set of ineliminable, quasi-contingent, and contextual features of democratic innovations are offered to enable a degree of consistency to be achieved in the understanding of 'democratic innovations' independent of specific contexts. Following this it is argued that democratic innovations can be seen as Wittgensteinian 'families' of conceptual clusters that include spaces and processes that have certain resemblance but, also differences determined by context. They are similar because they all reimagine the role of citizens in governance processes, and thus renegotiate the relationship between government and civil society.*

## Introduction

The field of democratic innovation has taken shape since the turn of the century, bringing together diverse streams of democratic thought and action. This new field stems from the confluence of a range of practical and theoretical projects advancing the critique and development of democracy throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. However, the label ‘democratic innovation’ has only recently started to galvanise a burgeoning academic field built on notable publications (Smith, 2009; Hendriks, 2011; Geißel & Newton, 2012; Geißel & Joas, 2013; Grönlund et al., 2014; Lee, 2015; Font et al., 2014; Elstub & McLaverty, 2014; Sintomer et al., 2016; Baiocchi & Ganuza, 2017) and the development of new international research networks<sup>1</sup>.

There is limited agreement in academic work about which governance processes should be classified as ‘democratic innovations’ and a lack of clarity and precision in the use of the term. Indeed, democracy itself is widely regarded as an ‘essentially contested concept’ (Gallie, 1955-6) and ‘innovation’ is interpreted in a number of different ways across different countries and policy areas (cf. Sørensen, 2017). This article seeks to survey the history of the term’s use and critically review the different and dominant definitions currently employed, in order to produce an analytical framework that can provide greater clarity and coherence. It is argued that democratic innovations can be seen as a Wittgensteinian ‘family’ of conceptual clusters that include spaces and processes that have certain resemblance but, also differences that are determined by context. They are similar because they all reimagine the role of citizens in governance processes, and thus renegotiate the relationship between government and civil society. Drawing on Freedén’s (1994) morphological analysis of political concepts a set of ineliminable, quasi-contingent, and contextual features of democratic innovations are offered to enable a degree of consistency to be achieved in the understanding of ‘democratic innovations’ independent of specific contexts.

The analysis here is based upon a scoping review of the literature, the results of which are presented in section one to establish the lack of clarity and consistency in the use of the term. In section two we explain the difficulties in developing a definition and analytical typology. In the remaining sections we develop the definitions and typology, drawing on the existing literature identified in the review.

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<sup>1</sup> See for example the Standing Group on Democratic Innovations at the European Consortium of Political Research (<http://standinggroups.ecpr.eu/democraticinnovations>), or the databases developed by Participedia (<http://participedia.net>) and the LATINNO project (<http://www.latinno.net/en>).

## A Scoping Review of Democratic Innovations

We conducted a scoping review<sup>2</sup> of the academic literature and found that the concept of democratic innovations had limited usage prior to the early 2000s and 75% of the relevant entries were from the year 2010 onwards. At that point, the concept was gaining scholarly currency with milestone publications shaping the field (e.g. Smith, 2005, 2009). It has been also increasingly used in key initiatives by governments and NGOs such as the Open Government Partnership, which declared at its 2016 Paris summit: ‘The Partnership gathers today 70 member countries and hundreds of civil society organizations that promote transparency, citizen participation and democratic innovation.’<sup>3</sup> The OGP connects key actors currently confronting the challenges of democracy across the globe, from the Americas to Australasia and through Africa and Europe. The initiative illustrates how democratic innovations have concurrently become matters of governmental concern as well as new sites for civil society mobilisation.

Part of the concept’s appeal is that it carves up space to overcome a series of dualisms inherited from various fields of inquiry and practice:

- Between participatory and deliberative democracy. The field of democratic innovation accommodates both participatory and deliberative traditions, thus bridging key groundwork carried out over the last 50 years.
- Between representation and other democratic practices. The field tries to test and demonstrate the compatibility of representative, participatory, and deliberative logics in configuring new practices of democratic governance.

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<sup>2</sup> We would like to thank Derry Keohane for his research contribution to the review. The review was conducted between May and July 2016 and the methodological choices are outlined in detail in a forthcoming paper. Given that this is an emerging field we decided that a scoping review would be the most effective way of surveying the field. Scoping studies ‘differ from systematic reviews because authors do not typically assess the quality of included studies’ (Levac et al., 2010, p. 1). And they also differ from narrative or literature reviews ‘in that the scoping process requires analytical reinterpretation of the literature’ (Ibid.). We conducted a scoping review of peer-reviewed journal articles as well as book chapters, based on systematic searches of two databases (Web of Science and DiscoverEd) and pre-specified inclusion criteria (i.e. key search terms: variations of democ\* innovat\*; no date limit; range of search filters: title, abstract, topic). The largest search yielded 860 results, which were checked for relevance in stages by reading titles, abstracts and conducting in-text keyword searches. The final shortlist of publications that met the criteria was 48 and each paper was coded to locate both definitions and typologies of democratic innovations.

<sup>3</sup> The Open Government Partnership summit involved: ‘3000 representatives from 70 countries: Heads of State and governments, ministers, public servants, members of parliament, local authorities, civil society representatives, start-ups and digital innovators, civic techs, developers, researchers, journalists will gather in Paris to share their experiences and push forward the open government agenda in light of the global challenges.’ (<https://en.ogpsummit.org/osem/conference/ogp-summit>)

- Between politics and policy. The field seeks to transcend artificial separations of the worlds of policy and politics by reintroducing normative judgement (by citizens) to disrupt the technocratic impulses of the New Public Management era (Baiocchi & Ganuza, 2017; Fischer, 2009). Democratic innovations are political sites for collective action bounded by the realpolitik of policy crucibles in the new public governance.
- Between state and civil society. The field opens space to rethink the oppositional framing of the relationship between state and civil society, by building new processes and arenas for citizen participation that try to constitute an interface, or liminal space, between both that is distinct from each (Escobar, 2014).
- Between normative and empirical concerns. The field has developed as a meeting point for those wrestling with the perennial issue of the practice of the normative. As such, it has contributed to cut across silos to accommodate scholars and practitioners from a range of disciplines and fields –from politics to urban studies, public administration, environment, education, health and constitutional reform, to name but a few.

Despite the increasing popularity of democratic innovations, our scoping review found very few efforts to provide a consistent definition of the concept or to develop a coherent typology. In this section we highlight the review findings in relation to both definition and typology, in turn.

### ***Defining Democratic Innovations***

Most publications (85%) covered in our review used the term ‘democratic innovations’ without defining it. The scoping review included a final sample of 48 publications that met the inclusion criteria –e.g. featuring democ\* innov\* in title, abstract or topic. The sample included 3 articles from the 1990s, 10 from the 2000s, and 35 from 2010 onwards. The dramatic increase in usage of the term ‘democratic innovations’ coincides with Graham Smith’s eponymous book in 2009, which provided a definition that is now widely used: ‘institutions that have been specifically designed to increase and deepen citizen participation in the political decision-making process’ (Smith, 2009, p. 1). This definition foregoes attention to democratic *innovation* as a practice and focuses instead on democratic *innovations* as the processes that embody that practice. This makes the object of study less elusive and opens space for the investigation of a range of exemplars –which are the foundation of an applied discipline (Flyvbjerg, 2004, p. 432). It also galvanises a shared terminology which was more ambiguously used before. Indeed, before Smith, democratic innovation was generally used interchangeably with social innovation, institutional innovation or participatory innovation.

### ***Typologies of Democratic Innovations***

As part of our scoping review of the literature on democratic innovations, we explored existing typologies in order to map the range of relevant processes and institutions. Only 10% of the articles offered specific typologies. Of those that did, about half separated 'direct' (sometimes 'binding') and 'deliberative' innovations, reflecting the differentiation that appeared in some definitions. In most articles it was difficult to discern types and how they were determined. Michels (2011, p. 280), for example, explicitly argues that 'four types of democratic innovation can be distinguished: referendums, participatory policy making, deliberative surveys, and deliberative forums.' This typology suffers from omission and also lacks conceptual distinctiveness, for instance: citizen juries and deliberative polls might be categorised together as deliberative innovations, or separately as deliberative surveys and deliberative fora.

Smith (2009) offers the clearest typology, which includes popular assemblies, mini-publics, participatory budgeting, direct legislation (ie. binding referenda) and e-democracy. But there is little reference to this typology in the literature, and instead most papers tend to focus on a specific democratic innovation. The term 'mini-public' was fairly rare (mentioned in 19% of the publications), while 'deliberative arena', 'deliberative institutional innovation' or 'deliberative forums' often featured before a list of recurrent examples including citizens' juries (41%), planning cells (19%) and citizens' assemblies (17%). Participatory budgeting received the most mentions (60%), while referenda and citizen initiatives were name-checked fairly often (43%) although usually mentioned in passing rather than in-depth. The terms 'collaborative governance' or 'co-governance' were used rarely. They were, however, frequently described, usually in the form of a specific case. When 'digital participation' was mentioned, often it was either as 'e-democracy' or the application of existing forms of participation (innovative or otherwise) online.

All in all, there were few explicit typologies and there is not yet a widely used typology. There doesn't seem to be disagreement in terms of what should be considered a democratic innovation; the disagreement lies in how to conceptually divide them up. While there seems to be no widely accepted typology, there were significant repeats of certain democratic innovations, as noted above. This is to be expected in an emerging field that is driven by the study of exemplars that function as a point of encounter for democratic theory and applied social science. Therefore, it is typical to find lists of examples rather than typologies:

Democratic innovations covers a wide range of instruments: participatory budgets, citizen juries, deliberative surveys, referenda, town meetings, online citizen forums, e-democracy,

public conversations, study circles, collaborative policy making, alternative dispute resolutions, and so on. (Baiocchi & Ganuza, 2017, p. 39)

In contrast, Geißel's (2013) classification of new participatory practices has three broad categories: collaborative governance, deliberative procedures, and direct democracy. We are interested in finding a middle point between the two approaches above – a typology that is not just a long list of formats nor simply an abstract set of overlapping headings. On the one hand, Baiocchi and Ganuza offer a list that mixes formats and processes; for example, alternative dispute resolution approaches and study circle formats could be used within a citizens' jury process; by the same token, participatory budgeting can be a subset of collaborative policy making and vice versa. On the other hand, Geißel's categories somewhat overlook the hybridity of practices across DIs – thus collaborative governance processes (for instance the paradigmatic case of NHS Citizen<sup>4</sup>) can have deliberative components; likewise, direct legislation mechanisms can be used as part of a broader deliberative system (see the Oregon Citizens' Initiative Review<sup>5</sup>). Alternative democratic principles and practices can be combined purposefully to assemble a democratic innovation.

Therefore, we maintain that despite the increasing use of the term 'democratic innovations' further work on defining it and typologising the field are required. In the next section we explore the challenge of doing so.

## **The Challenge of Defining Democratic Innovations**

All attempts at defining the concept face a fundamental challenge: 'democratic innovations are very different from one another and elude general characterisation' (Fung & Warren, 2011, p. 347). However, Fung and Warren do not explore why this is the case, other than to indicate it is primarily due to the great variety of types that exist. This is certainly part of the problem. Indeed, some time ago Smith (2005) identified 57 types and the number has surely increased exponentially since, including the myriad hybrids that now populate databases like Participedia or Latinno<sup>6</sup>. In this section, we offer several explanations for this variety. Firstly, the increasing number of different contexts where democratic innovations take place. Secondly, the influence of different theories of democracy on the development of democratic innovations. Thirdly, the lack of clarity about the object of study. We now turn to elaborate on each of these factors drawing on material from the scoping review.

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<sup>4</sup> See <http://participedia.net/en/cases/nhs-citizen>

<sup>5</sup> See <http://participedia.net/cases/oregon-citizens-initiative-review-oregon-cir>

<sup>6</sup> See <http://participedia.net> and <http://www.latinno.net/en>.

## **Context**

A democratic innovation can only be considered 'innovative' in relation to its context. We see this firmly acknowledged in the definition of democratic innovations offered by Brigitte Geißel (2012, p. 164): 'as new practice consciously and purposefully introduced in order to improve the quality of democratic governance in any given state, irrespective of whether the innovation in question has already been tried out in another state.' The problem is that due to the enormity of the contexts we end up with a myriad of practices that could be defined as democratic innovations. For example, in authoritarian regimes democratic innovations are viewed differently than in established democracies:

The case of China provides a contrast to the literature on participatory innovations in democracies. While participatory innovations in democratic countries are seen as a way to deepen and improve democracy, in China these innovations are to some extent developed in order to provide an alternative to electoral democracy. (Almen, 2016, p. 478)<sup>7</sup>

The limitation of Geißel's definition is that 'context' is interpreted rather narrowly and limited to states i.e. if a practice has not been used in a specific state before, and meets certain democratic criteria, it constitutes innovation.<sup>8</sup> This might make characterisation and definitions of democratic innovations more achievable, but at the expense of some vital nuance. For example, it ignores the democratic innovations that are occurring in transnational and global governance (Rask & Worthington, 2015; Rask et al., 2012). Moreover, we believe that other contexts must be considered in this assessment such as policy area, level of governance, stage in the policy process, and function in the policy process (Elstubb, 2014). The premise being that if a practice is new to these contexts it could still be classed as a democratic innovation, even if it had been implemented elsewhere within the same state (Sørensen, 2017). If this is accepted then the variety of relevant contexts is multiplied and so too the number of processes to be classified as democratic innovations, in turn making general characterisation even more elusive.

## ***Theories of Democracy and Democratic Innovations***

The focus on democratic innovations has arisen in the context of perceived limitations and failings of representative democracy's dominant institutions such as elections and parties. Democratic innovations are thought necessary to help overcome these problems. The understanding of what type of democratic innovation is required to do this has been significantly informed by two democratic

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<sup>7</sup> This then raises the question of whether the introduction of free and fair elections could be considered a democratic innovation in states in transition to democracy.

<sup>8</sup> There is also the issue of the criteria for what constitutes 'new.' For example, how many times might a process have to be used in a state for it to cease to be new and consequently no longer innovative.

theories that have emerged in the last 50 years as critiques of representative democracy, namely participatory democracy and deliberative democracy (Davidson & Elstub, 2014; Kössler, 2015), which propose differing, but related solutions to this democratic malaise and corresponding legitimacy deficit (Elstub, forthcoming 2017). Both theories aim to reform, rather than replace, representative democracy, and democratic innovations are therefore also seen in this light (Fung, 2006). However, there are important differences between these two theories which has consequently led to a variety of designs of democratic innovations to promote the various norms of each, which again makes defining democratic innovations challenging. Florida (2014, p. 305) sums up the differences between these two theories of democracy: 'participatory democracy is founded on the direct action of citizens who exercise some power and decide issues affecting their lives, while deliberative democracy is founded on argumentative exchanges, reciprocal reason giving, and on public debates which precede decisions.'

Robin Leidner (1991) was the first scholar to use of the term 'democratic innovation' with respect to democratic governance in the National Women's Studies Association (NSWA), where she argues that one-person-one-vote majority electoral processes contradict core feminist principles of giving voice to minority groups. In this first use we see key themes identified that would prove central to subsequent discussions of democratic innovations. Most notably a critique of representative democracy, but also links to deliberative democracy as Leidner (1991) suggests that in the NSWA all arguments should have equal weight regardless of numbers of supporters. However, no definition of 'democratic innovation' is offered by Leidner. A few years later John Stewart (1996, p. 32) defines 'innovations in democratic practice' as processes 'designed to bring the informed views of ordinary citizens into the processes of local government.' The debates on democratic innovations have since moved well beyond local government to include national and even transnational governance too, however, again we see a nod to deliberative democracy in this definition with the requirement of 'informed views.'

In addition to the continued theme of democratic innovations offering something new in comparison to the orthodoxy of representative democracy, we see an explicit link to participatory democracy emerging a few years later in a definition of democratic innovation offered by Michael Saward (2000, p. 4): 'The phrase "democratic innovation" expresses a critical commitment to democratic values of popular participation and political equality, allied to an urgent imperative for theorists to articulate and analyse new solutions to the problems of democracy.' Graham Smith's (2009, p. 1) more recent definition moves the focus from 'democratic innovation' to 'democratic innovations', while cementing the influence of participatory democracy: 'Institutions that have been specifically designed to increase and deepen citizen participation in the political decision-making process.' There is still a potential



influence here from deliberative democracy too if 'deepen' is interpreted as making participation more meaningful and improving citizens' opinions either prudentially or epistemically, which it can be given 'considered judgement' is one of the evaluative criteria Smith proposes to assess democratic innovations. As we saw above Geißel (2012, p. 164) suggests that the aim of democratic innovations is to 'improve the quality of democratic governance.' This improvement could be informed by participatory and/ or deliberative democracy, or indeed any other democratic theory. However, in specifying that democratic innovations 'involve citizens in the decision-making process' (Geißel, 2012, p. 163), we see the influence of participatory democracy, while elsewhere it is made clear that deliberative democracy also underpins a strand of democratic innovations (Geißel, 2012, p. 166).

While the theories of participatory democracy and deliberative democracy are clearly related, and often entangled in the complexity of practice, they are not the same, and aspire to promote related, but ultimately different values (Elstub, forthcoming 2017) and this distinction has led to different types of democratic innovations, aiming at the enactment of different and potentially conflicting democratic goods as James Fishkin (2012, p. 71) notes: 'Democratic Innovations have tended to move in two conflicting directions. Some aspire to increase inclusion and some to increase thoughtfulness.' Cohen (2009, p. 257) suggests 'social complexity and scale limit the extent to which modern polities can be both deliberative and participatory' and consequently if we expand participation, deliberative quality will be reduced (see also Thompson, 2008, p. 513). The point is that different types of democratic innovations are likely to be required to promote participatory democracy to a deliberative version, and vice versa. We can see this clearly demonstrated in Fung's (2007, p. 445) pragmatic equilibrium, which is achieved when 'the consequences of the institutions that' a particular democratic theory 'prescribes realize its values well and better than any other feasible institutional arrangements over a wide range of problems and contexts'. The equilibrium point will vary though according to the approach to democracy, as the 'consequences acceptable to one, will be rejected by the other' as they have varying norms (Fung, 2007, p. 444). The influence of these two different democratic theories on democratic innovations therefore results in making characterisation more elusive.

However, it is also conceptually coherent to consider a conception of 'participatory deliberative democracy' (della Porta, 2013) where citizens deliberate to make collective decisions. Moreover, it has been argued that 'advancing both is coherent, attractive, and worth our attention' (Cohen, 2009, p. 248); would 'provide a richer alternative for the improvement of democracy in search for political legitimacy' (Vitale, 2006, p. 753) and may well be our best hope to save democracy (della Porta, 2013). Indeed, Elstub (forthcoming 2017) argues that participatory democracy can enhance and facilitate the inclusion of all relevant reasons and assent from all affected, that is required in a deliberative interpretation of legitimacy, while 'deliberative' participation makes participatory democracy less

vague, enhances the educative effects that political participation is considered to cultivate in citizens, and enables inequalities to be addressed through public reasoning. Participatory and deliberative democracy thus can and do overlap in practice, despite theoretical differences and tensions between them. Consequently, they can potentially be reconciled in practice through appropriately configured processes that blend participatory and deliberative principles following, for instance, the pragmatist approach of democratic innovators such as John Dewey (1927; Escobar, forthcoming). Many democratic innovations thus emerge from experimental blending, which contributes to their diversity and intensifies the challenge of deriving a suitable definition and typology.

### ***Object of Study***

There seems to be little agreement on what type of object democratic innovations are. This ontological debate is at the heart of the conceptual challenge. Saward (2000, p. 4) mentions ‘solutions’ which is rather vague and for Geißel (2012) democratic innovations are ‘practices’ which is less vague, as it indicates that ‘implementation’ is required (Newton, 2012, p. 4) but still remains very encompassing and ontological debates about the nature of ‘practice’ further complicates the concept (Schatzki et al., 2000; Schatzki, 2002). Baiocchi and Ganuza (2017, p. 39) make it more specific by mentioning ‘instruments’ but perhaps muddle important distinctions between formats, techniques and approaches that may be combined as part of a democratic innovation process. In turn, Smith (2009, p. 1) has provided a more specific and concrete institutional focus which has now seemingly become the dominant definition in the field (e.g. Bua, 2012; Mattijssen et al., 2014; Trettel, 2015). The institutional focus certainly reduces the variety of things considered as democratic innovations and therefore renders finding a suitable encompassing definition less challenging. However, we consider it to be too restrictive as institutions have some level of stability and continuity over time (Warren, forthcoming 2017) that many democratic innovations still lack in most contexts. Moreover, it excludes innovative processes within established mainstream institutions that can be an important aspect of democratic innovation (Hendriks & Dzur, forthcoming). Consequently, we suggest that democratic innovations may be institutions *or processes*.

### **A Definition of Democratic Innovations**

Having outlined the challenges of defining democratic innovations we now move to develop our own based upon recurrent themes from existing definitions.

Although most sources do not define democratic innovations, in those that provided a definition, four themes were recurrent. Firstly, the articles placed a strong emphasis on increasing direct participation, signifying that an innovation is democratic insofar it increases opportunities for citizen engagement and influence –as argued by Smith (2009, p. 2-3).

Secondly, innovation is usually expressly set in contrast to representative democracy: ‘Democratic innovations refer to different arrangements of procedures, through which citizens are involved in public decisional mechanisms and differ from the traditional representation models’ (Trettel, 2015, p. 88). Questioning associative forms of participation, this conceptual work tends to emphasise that democratic innovations ‘directly engage citizens’ rather than only ‘individuals who represent organised groups’ (Smith 2009, p. 2). In this sense, ‘democratic innovations change the political subject and widen the political boundaries to include lay citizens’ (Baiocchi and Ganuza 2017, p. 45). In contrast to consumerist models of citizenship advanced in the New Public Management era, or traditional associational models based on collective representation, democratic innovations open space for the reconstruction and influence of the deliberative citizen in the context of the ‘New Public Governance’ (Osborne, 2010). This challenges minimalist versions of democracy for citizen-consumers, as well as traditional associations’ claims to being representative while struggling to be inclusive. In effect, democratic innovations do not suppress the influence of organised interests, advocacy groups and associational life, but they place alongside it a ‘universal subject of participation’ that enacts politics by prioritising deliberation over protest or representation (Baiocchi and Ganuza 2017, p. 95). This notion of the deliberative citizen is therefore mobilised to provide a political subject that can legitimately engage in the myriad theatres of the New Public Governance (Newman & Clarke, 2009; Mahony et al., 2010; Hajer & Wagenaar, 2003).

The third recurring theme in the literature was about legitimacy and how democratic innovations do not merely happen to increase legitimacy, but are designed specifically to do so. Frequently, there is a conceptual differentiation between innovations in direct democracy and deliberative democracy, but often transcended by focussing on the ‘democratic goods’ to be realised by new combinations of participatory and deliberative practices (Smith 2009, p. 12).

The fourth and final theme highlighted by the review is that democratic innovations are, above all, contextual. As Crouzel (2014, p. 1) puts it: ‘Democratic innovation flows from the synergies generated between different types of actor (public institutions, civil society organizations, private sector, citizens, the media).’ As noted earlier, Geißel (2012, p. 164) has argued that context determines the extent to which something may be considered a democratic innovation in a given state. However, we argued that this consideration must be more fine-grained and take into account the multitude of policy

contexts and levels of governance at play. Democratic innovations are innovative insofar they haven't been previously used in a given governance context. This recognises that, as Astrom et al. (2013, p. 27), 'democratic innovations, just as any innovation, are more than ideas and designs; they are ideas in action'. Context provides the cornerstone of democratic innovations and, for instance, makes referenda or mini-publics novel in some places today, while having been used elsewhere for decades. Critical observers of the field have noted that democratic innovations often reflect a compromise between emancipatory and governmental logics, an interface that generates new forms of citizen participation but also accommodates the imperatives of the state and other powerful stakeholders (Cooke & Kothari, 2001; Gaventa, 2006; Cornwall & Coelho, 2007; Lee et al., 2015). This has given place to a critique of the limits of democratic innovations that offer participation but not empowerment (Böker & Elstub, 2015; Lee, 2015). Baiocchi and Ganuza (2017, p. 50) question 'empowerment processes that take place within the limits set by administrators'; they argue that the 'contradiction of democratic innovations is that they invite participation to debate the common good but do not endow ordinary citizens with the power to determine outcomes. This is empowerment, but within limits'. Democratic innovations represent a compromise between the aspirations of participatory democracy from the 1960s (Pateman, 1970; Barber, 2003) and a revived pragmatism regarding current challenges in public governance and the need for new modes of collective action (Fung, 2012; Dewey, 1927). This has generated a spectrum of processes and institutions with a range of objectives:

Some democratic innovations aim simply to engage individuals in civic and political life. Others are more ambitious; they aim to enhance equality or inclusion in political processes. Many aim principally to solve some public problem—education, safety, environmental protection, the quality of local amenities, and other public services—where conventional alternatives fail. (Fung & Warren, 2011, p. 348)

As we have seen, there has been limited conceptual work on democratic innovations, with the exception of the influential definition provided by Smith (2009): 'institutions that have been specifically designed to increase and deepen citizen participation in the political decision-making process.' This paper is built on the foundations provided by Smith, but also incorporating four variations elicited by the scoping review. Firstly, we add 'processes' because, as argued earlier, 'institutions' have a permanency that may not apply to some democratic innovations. Secondly, we want to heed the empirical basis that is reshaping the field and broaden the scope from 'political decision-making' to 'governance' processes, as democratic innovations tend to stem from

‘governance-driven democratisation,’ and to a great extent it has been policymaking, rather than politics, that has ignited this field of practice and inquiry (Warren, 2009).

Thirdly, democratic innovations not only ‘deepen the role of citizens’, but also reimagine it. It is about more than deepening their current role as voters or activists, it entails alternative imaginaries of citizens as co-producers and problem-solvers. The ‘reimagine’ bit is important because it brings in contextual elements and establishes that a democratic innovation gives citizens roles that are new in that given policy context, and in doing so, it deepens citizenship by recasting the parameters of participation and influence. In this sense, democratic innovations seek to enhance democracy first and foremost by reimagining the role that citizens can play in governance processes.

Finally, the definition must accommodate the empirical reality that the field of democratic innovations is one of hybrid processes that in practice combine otherwise discreet logics. In particular, we want to signal the importance of blending participatory and deliberative democracy. Democratic innovations, through the prism of the deliberative systems approach (Parkinson & Mansbridge, 2012), can combine participatory and deliberative logics by sequencing them as part of an overarching process that realises crosscutting democratic goods such as inclusion, deliberative quality, popular control and so on. In this light, exemplars such as the pioneering British Columbian Citizens’ Assembly illustrated how mini-publics, public forums and referenda can be combined to realise both participatory and deliberative ideals as part of a hybrid democratic innovation (Warren & Pearse, 2008). Although not all democratic innovations are hybrids, the number of hybrid processes developing around the world is staggering<sup>9</sup>.

Cases like the Icelandic constitution-making process combined digital participation, mini-publics and referenda in an arrangement that blended logics such as sortition, election, crowd-sourcing and deliberation (Gylfason, 2013; Kroll & Swann, 2015). Another example is the global spread of participatory budgeting and its often uneasy fit with local innovations in collaborative governance including established associations (Sintomer et al. 2016; Ganuza et al. 2013; Baiocchi and Ganuza 2017). There are recent influential cases, such as the Melbourne Citizens’ Panel or the Irish Constitutional Convention, which demonstrated the elasticity and porosity of mini-publics, overcoming limits of scale or compatibility with representative democracy (Suteu, 2015; Kroll & Swann, 2015). Hybridity and experimentation are the hallmarks of an applied theoretical discipline, and deliberative qualities have come to be expected as one of the systemic properties of most democratic innovations –even in those, like referenda or citizens’ initiatives, firmly anchored on

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<sup>9</sup> See for example the the databases developed by Participedia (<http://participedia.net>) and the LATINNO project (<http://www.latinno.net/en>).

aggregative logics. Consequently, we place deliberation, alongside participation and influence, as a key crosscutting dimension present to some degree in all democratic innovations.

To conclude, we posit a two-step definition that takes the above four changes into consideration and also differentiates between democratic innovation –the practice– and democratic innovations –the processes that embody the practice. Therefore, when we talk about democratic innovation, we refer to the field of practice where researchers and practitioners work to advance democratic governance according to participatory and deliberative ideals embodied in a range of democratic innovations. People may engage in the practice of democratic innovation through a variety of roles, as activists, designers, sponsors, monitors, entrepreneurs, supporters, researchers, gate-keepers or facilitators. Accordingly, for the purposes of this article, democratic innovations are defined as processes or institutions developed to reimagine and deepen the role of citizens in governance processes by increasing opportunities for participation, deliberation and influence. From this definition we now move to expand our focus towards a typology of democratic innovations.

## **A Typology of Democratic Innovations**

In his seminal discussion of political concepts and ideologies Freedon (1994, p. 146) claims that political concepts ‘consist of both ineliminable features and quasi-contingent ones.’ In this section we make the case that the concept of ‘democratic innovations’ contains both these features too and we set out which elements fall into which category in order to develop a typology.

### ***Ineliminable Features of Democratic Innovations***

According to Freedon (1994, p. 146) ineliminable features ‘are not intrinsic or logically necessary to the meaning of the word to which they attach, but result from actual linguistic usage.’ The features are ineliminable because they are present in all usages of the word which would therefore be meaningless without this feature present. If concepts do not have ineliminable features then this would mean the word employed to represent the concept applies to more than one concept. As argued above, in the case of democratic innovations, we see the ineliminable feature as ‘reimagining and deepening the role of citizens in governance processes.’ However, this is not sufficient for a political concept as the concept itself is not reducible to the ineliminable feature. Rather ineliminable features are minimum components of political concepts, that need to be elaborated and given complexity by the presence of additional non-random, although contingently variable, components that are ‘locked in to that vacuous “de facto” core in a limited number of recognisable patterns’ (Freedon 1994, p. 149). The presence of these quasi-contingent components are required to give the

core substance by furnishing it with a specific range of categories. Here we are looking for options which come into play when we consider a concrete example of a democratic innovation where some aspect of each will be relevant. Quasi-contingent components are therefore logically adjacent to the ineliminable features.

### ***Quasi-Contingent Features of Democratic Innovations***

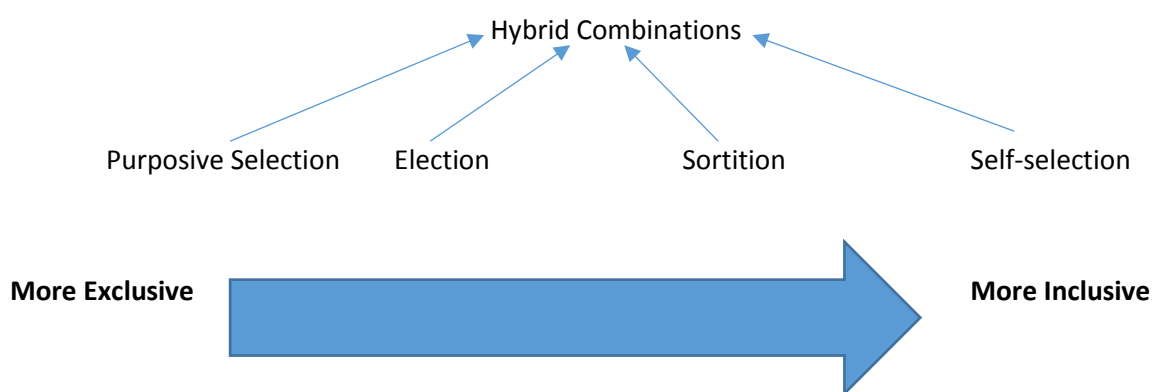
Our quasi-contingent features are largely derived from the three dimensions of Fung's (2006) framework for institutional possibilities for public participation, which include who participates (inclusion), how they participate (mode of participation), and the effect of the participation on policy (influence). However, Fung's scope is broader than ours in the sense that 'possibilities for public participation' overlap with, but are not necessarily the same as, democratic innovations. These possibilities might not be innovative or new at all. Therefore, our framework differs from Fung's in some important ways. With respect to who participates we use the same scale of inclusiveness, but narrow and reorder the elements included. On how citizens participate, Fung combines 'communication mode' with 'decision-making', but we consider these to be separate features. We retain Fung's scale of intensity for mode of participation, expanding it slightly to include observation. Decision-making is then dealt with separately and placed on Fung's (2006) scale of intensity (see Figure 3), while 'power and authority' for the effect on policy is adopted with minor variation (see Figure 4). Moreover, we agree with Fung (2006, p. 67) that analytical tools should spate empirical and normative criteria. The quasi-contingent features therefore present criteria through which to categorise and analyse different types of democratic innovations. Whether these combinations of features provided by a democratic innovation are normatively desirable will depend on the approach to democracy favoured, and the particular context the innovation occurs in.

The first quasi-contingent component relevant to democratic innovations is 'which citizens participate' and therefore the manner the participants are selected is relevant (Fung 2006). There are a number of options here including self-selection, sortition, purposive selection, election and hybrid combinations of some or all of these that can occur in any specific democratic innovation. Following Fung (2006) these can be placed on a scale of inclusiveness as demonstrated in Figure 1. Self-selection, which in principle means open participation, has the potential to be the most inclusive as there are no formal restrictions to participation. However, we know from studies on public participation that in reality this leads to skewed participation as social and economic cleavages affect equality of participation (Ryfe & Stalsburg, 2012; Verba et al., 1995). In sortition, only a limited number of citizens are permitted to participate, but as they are randomly selected, all citizens have an equal chance of

being selected (Carson & Martin, 1999). This method of selection can overcome the skewed nature of self-selection (Fishkin, 2009).

Participants can also be elected. For Fung (2006, p. 68) election is seen as selecting professional politicians as representatives, but this need not be the case. For example, in many participatory budgeting programmes, citizens elect lay citizens as budget delegates (e.g. Baiocchi, 2005). In elections participation is exclusive, but all get a say in who the participants will be. However, in addition to considering how citizens elect fellow participants within a democratic innovation, the election element does enable us to consider professional and elected politicians who may also participate in democratic innovations alongside lay citizens. Citizens can be purposively selected, i.e. selection by invite, in other ways too. For example, for their interest or knowledge in the topic, because of the impact the decision will have on them, because of their employment, or because they represent, or are representative of, a particular interest or identity group or community. This is less inclusive, in principle, as not all citizens have an equal chance to participate or to determine who the participants will be. The potential hybrid combinations of the elements are vast, and while they clearly effect inclusiveness of the democratic innovation, cannot be comfortably delineated to be placed on the scale.

**Figure 1. Participant Selection Methods**

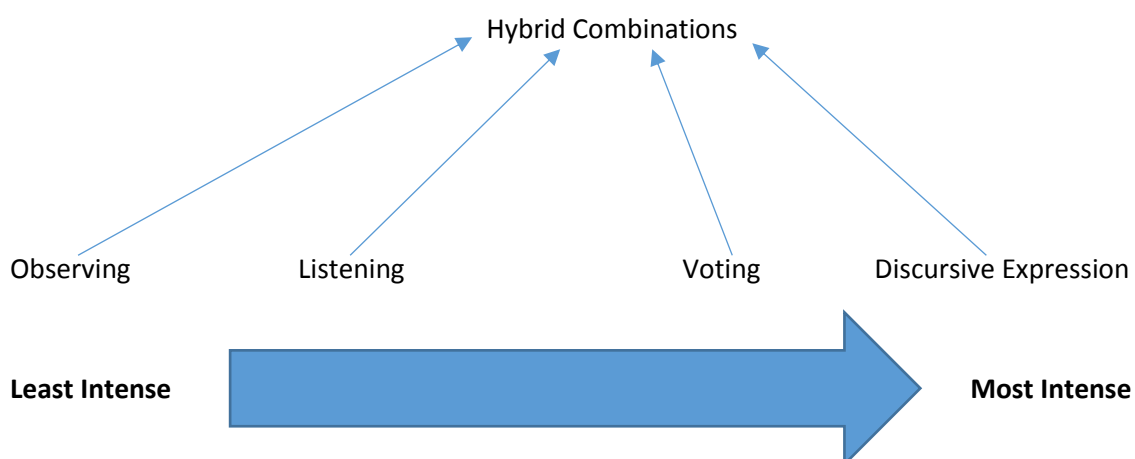


(Based on Fung 2006)



The second quasi-contingent component is the ‘mode of participation’, which relates to how the participants communicate with each other in the democratic innovation. There are a number of options here including observation, listening, and expression which can be placed on a scale of intensiveness of participation, as depicted in Figure 2.<sup>10</sup> Firstly, participants can just observe proceedings. For example, they may be restricted to watching other participants vote on an issue. This is the least intense as it requires some, but negligible engagement. Secondly, participants can be required to listen to other participants give speeches, negotiate or deliberate, which is potentially more active than observation. In addition, participants can be afforded the opportunity to express their views and opinions themselves through voting, or discursively through asking questions, making comments or engaging in deliberation. Discursively expressing a view is more demanding than registering a vote. Once again there are numerous hybrid combinations of these too.

**Figure 2. Mode of Participation**



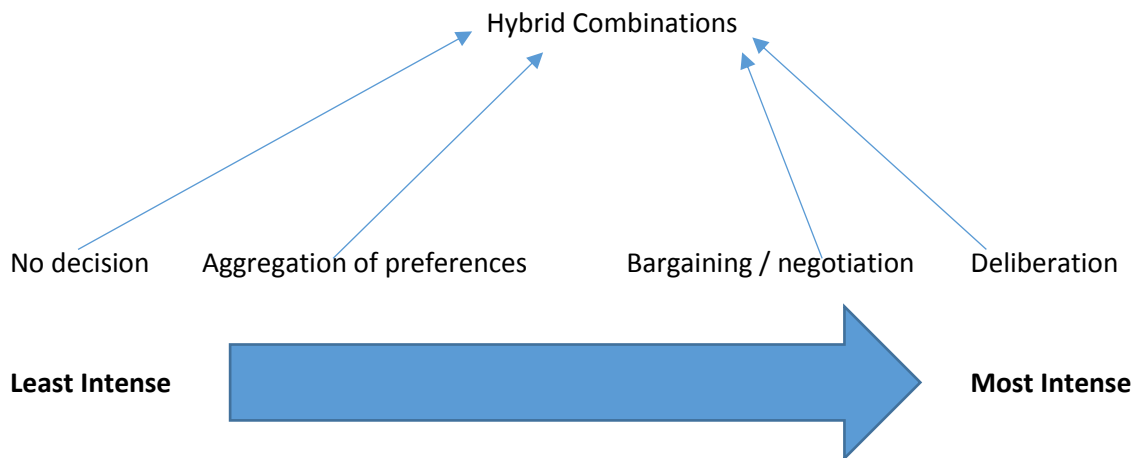
(Based on Fung 2006)

Our third quasi-contingent component is mode of decision-making in the democratic innovation, and the decision-making options can be assessed according to the intensity of work expected from participants. The options here include no decision required, decision made through aggregation of preferences, decision made through bargaining and negotiation, and decision made through

<sup>10</sup> Again our scale is inspired by Fung (2006), but we add some additional elements e.g. observation. Fung also combines communication mode with decision-making, but we consider these to be separate, although related, components. As Fung (2006, p. 68) himself acknowledges in many democratic innovations ‘there is no attempt to translate the views or preferences of participants into a collective view or decision.’ That translation is therefore for us a distinct element on which to categorise democratic innovations.

deliberation, with additional hybrid combinations of all of these as depicted in Figure 3. On the most intense side of the scale we find deliberation and bargaining/negotiation, which in practice may overlap and represent similarly intensive forms of interaction.

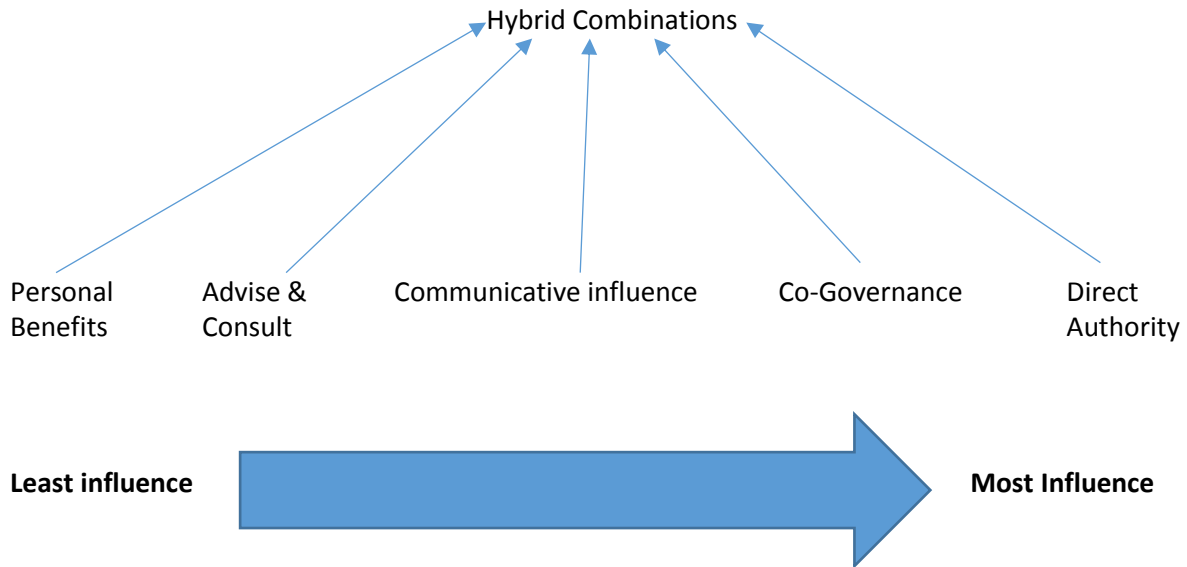
**Figure 3. Mode of Decision-Making**



(Adapting Fung 2006)

A further quasi-contingent component is 'authority and power'. This relates to the influence the participants in the democratic innovation have over what public authorities do. Here the options are personal benefits, communicative influence, advise and consult, co-governance and direct authority and can be placed on a scale of degree of influence as depicted in Figure 4. Firstly, even when there is no influence over formal decision-making processes citizens may gain personal benefits such as self-development or fulfilment from performing civic obligations. In this sense, there is some influence over the participants themselves, who constitute the demos which public authorities must reflect and serve. Secondly, the institution or process can be a mechanism to provide 'advice and consultation' for public authorities who retain decision-making power, but are open to citizen input via certain avenues. Thirdly, public opinion can be expressed or transformed through the participatory process, and even where no formal decision-making influence is exerted, there can be 'communicative influence on members of the public or officials who are moved by the testimony, reasons, conclusions, or by the probity of the process itself' (Fung 2006, p. 69). The level of impact of 'advise and consult' vs. 'communicative influence' is variable depending on context, so here we alter Fung's order. Fourthly, we have 'co-governance', where citizens join public officials to make decisions via a democratic innovation. Finally, we have democratic innovations that have direct authority to make a decision. Once again there can be hybrid combinations of these elements.

**Figure 4. Extent of Power and Influence**



(Based on Fung 2006)

### ***Contextual Features of Democratic Innovations***

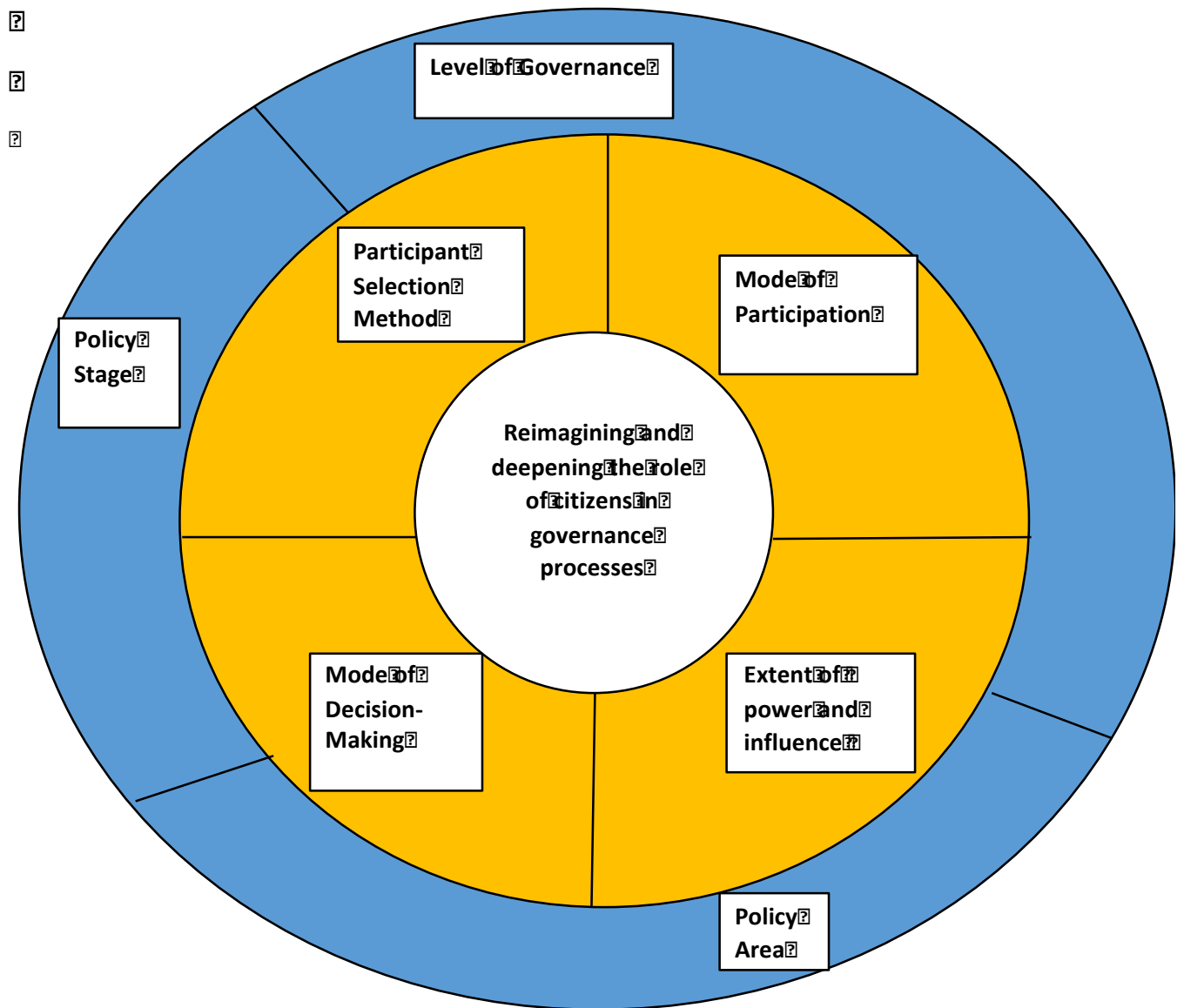
The options of the various patterns made available by the quasi-contingent components that will be present in any specific democratic innovation will be determined by the context the democratic innovation is imbedded in. As highlighted above this is crucial in determining whether an institution or process qualifies as a democratic innovation in the first place. These contextual features therefore relate to Freedman's notion of cultural adjacency, 'which imposes further constraints on the structure of political concepts' (Freedman 1994, p. 149). The cultural context thereby reduces the number of quasi-contingent components that are applicable in a given application of democratic innovations. Ultimately they help make democratic innovations relevant to the context in question and determine whether it is a democratic innovation.

The first key contextual element that can influence the relationship between the quasi-contingent and ineliminable features in democratic innovations is the type of policy area or issue that the particular case of the democratic innovation is addressing. This is still applicable even where the democratic innovation does not produce a decision, or has little or no power and authority in the policy process.

Indeed, the type of issue at hand can influence these factors. Some policy areas have been more open to democratic innovations than others (Fischer, 2009, 2003). Therefore, even if a democratic innovation has been used repeatedly in the particular political system it can be seen as an innovation if it is used in a policy area where it has not been used before. Secondly, the level of governance that the democratic innovation is embedded in will influence the choices made between the array of quasi-contingent features available, which in turn influences the nature of the ineliminable core (Elstub, 2014). These levels include local, regional/subnational, national, transnational, and global. Therefore, if a democratic innovation is not new to the political system it can still constitute innovation if it is used a level of governance within that system where it has not been used regularly. Democratic innovations can also be used at different stages of the policy making process which can also influence the choices in design options between the quasi-contingent features (Elstub 2014). These include agenda-setting, debate and discussion, the moment of decision-making, implementation and review. Once again if a democratic innovation is adopted at different stage of the policy process to how it is usually used in a political system it can still constitute innovation.

The ineliminable core, the quasi-contingent features and the contextual features can all be combined in a framework to assess and characterise any particular instance of a democratic innovation as illustrated in Figure 5. At the heart of a democratic innovation is the ineliminable feature shared by all, i.e. that they change the role of citizens in governance processes (see core white circle in Figure 5). How they do this is determined by the quasi-contingent features of how they select their participants, how the citizens participate, how decisions are reached, and the extent those decisions determine policy. Depicted here by the yellow circle. The context effects the relationship between the quasi-contingent features and the ineliminable core. These include the policy area, the level of governance and the stage in the policy process, as depicted by the blue circle. A holistic analysis of democratic innovations requires consideration of all of these features and the relationships between them. Only then can we understand the contribution a specific democratic innovation makes to the shared ineliminable core of reimagining the role of citizens.

Figure 5. Framework for Democratic Innovations



Freeden proceeds to apply this morphological analysis to ideologies to glean further understanding of their meaning. This is not relevant for our purposes as specific democratic innovations are attempts to enact varying combinations of the quasi-contingent components, in specific contexts, in order to reimagine the role of citizens in governance processes. In this respect, unlike ideologies, democratic innovations do not compete with each other, although they are evaluated differently. Despite these important differences, the contention here is that specific democratic innovations, as with political concepts and ideologies, have core, adjacent and peripheral components. It is these combinations that makes them an instance of a certain type of democratic innovation rather than another. The quasi-contingent components discussed above, remain the same, but as they get combined in discrete ways in specific democratic innovations they can morph due to the proximity of different components. Different democratic innovations can therefore be distinguished by how they combine these different

components, while no component is necessarily exclusive to anyone type of democratic innovation. There's also a degree of fluidity with types of democratic innovations, as for example there are numerous forms of mini-public (Elstub 2014), participatory budgeting (Sintomer et al., 2016) and referenda (Setälä & Schiller, 2012; Altman, 2011). Moreover, as noted earlier, there are hybrid types that combine salient features associated with different types of democratic innovation. If it is accepted that types of democratic innovation do have core, adjacent and peripheral components, then it is possible for them to be seen as Wittgenstenian families. We now move to develop this point before concluding the paper.

### **Five Families of Democratic Innovations**

As in any applied field, a typology must be guided by the core characteristics of a range of exemplars, while allowing clear distinctions. The core characteristics of democratic innovations stem from the ineliminable features of the concept, while the distinctions emerge from putting to use the analytical framework introduced earlier (contingent and contextual components). Using this strategy, the result reflects Smith's (2009) starting point, and generates a series of clusters of democratic innovations exemplified throughout the scoping review, namely: mini-publics, collaborative governance, participatory budgeting, referenda and citizens' initiatives, and digital participation. What makes all of these democratic innovations is their ineliminable core of being processes and institutions that seek to reimagine and deepen the role of citizens in governance processes. But the contingent (inclusion, participation, decision-making, influence) and contextual features (policy area, policy stage, governance level) provide myriad variations in design and implementation.

In turn, these clusters can be understood as united by characteristics that gives them a certain 'family resemblance' (Wittgenstein, 1953, p. 31). Family resemblances are those 'salient resemblances which are fairly common to, or distinctive of, the members of a kind, and which we often use to identify members of that kind' (Gert, 1995, p. 183). A Wittgenstenian understanding of concept formation allows for fuzziness without rejecting distinction. In this way, different processes may be related while remaining unique. For example, mini-publics can be very different (e.g. planning cells, consensus conferences, citizens' juries and assemblies, deliberative polls, etc) but there are some features that make them unmistakably part of the family of mini-publics (e.g. use of sortition; deliberative engagement).

We conclude this section by outlining our typology and highlighting key components in each family of democratic innovations. For each of them we consider the contingent and contextual features that vary between, and within, families of democratic innovations.

### ***Mini-publics***

These are forums of citizens, selected by sortition<sup>11</sup>, that undergo an intense deliberative process where participants engage in discursive expression. The mode of decision-making tends to be deliberation but it can combine with others in hybrids particularly including decision-making through aggregation of preferences. The level of power and influence is very variable, with cases across the scale in Figure 4. In terms of contextual features, mini-publics have been used in diverse policy areas (e.g. health, environment, social policy, constitutional reform), at various stages of the policy process (from policy formulation to scrutiny) and across local, regional, national and transnational levels of governance. Emblematic exemplars in this family of innovations (see Grönlund et al., 2014, p. for an overview) are citizens' assemblies (Warren & Pearse, 2008; Fournier et al., 2011; Farrell, 2014), citizens' juries (Coote & Lenaghan, 1997; Crosby, 1995), planning cells (Dienel, 1999; Dienel & Renn, 1995), consensus conferences (Hendriks, 2005; Joss & Durand, 1995), citizens' panels or councils (Chwalisz, 2017) and deliberative polls (Fishkin, 2009).

### ***Participatory budgeting***

This is a process where citizens can participate in deciding the allocation of public expenditure. The process tends to be open to anyone in the relevant constituency, and self-selection is often the main mode although election and purposive selection are also present in many cases. A common mode of participation is voting, and listening and discursive expression also play an important role, but ultimately it is by voting that decisions tend to be made. In terms of level of influence, participatory budgeting tends to place citizens as decision makers either with direct authority or in partnership as part of a co-governance arrangement. In terms of contextual features, participatory budgeting is typically at work at local level and attached to the formulation and decision making on urban policies and initiatives. Emblematic exemplars in this category (see Dias, 2014, p. for an overview) are the Porto Alegre model (Baicocchi, 2005) and its expansion across Brazil (Wampler, 2007) as well as global adaptations of the idea across Europe, Asia and more recently North America (Traub-Merz et al., 2013; Public Agenda, 2016a, 2016b).

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<sup>11</sup> The most common form of sortition used in mini-publics is quasi-random selection through stratified sampling, but there are notable exceptions (see Grönlund et al 2014).

### ***Referenda and citizen initiatives***

This third family of democratic innovations is characterised by its reliance on voting as the core mode of participation and decision-making. Open self-selection makes it a potentially highly inclusive process. The level of influence is variable but most oscillate between advisory and binding plebiscites. There is no theoretical limit in terms of the level of governance where it takes place, but it tends to be used as the final stage of policy-making and on issues of national import. This cluster of democratic innovations includes multiple cases of direct democracy worldwide (Altman, 2011) and reflects the more recent emphasis on new processes of direct legislation initiated by citizens i.e. citizen' initiatives (Setälä & Schiller, 2012).

### ***Collaborative governance***

This fourth family is perhaps one of the most internally diverse, including from public forums to collaborative partnerships and various participatory arrangements that seek to ensure cooperation and coproduction between citizens, public authorities and stakeholders. Collaborative governance innovations tend to entail self-selection and/or purposive selection of participants. The predominant modes of participation are listening and discursive expression, with decisions usually made, if required, through bargaining, negotiation or deliberation. The level of influence can vary greatly, covering the full spectrum in Figure 4. These new governance arrangements can be found across multiple policy areas and stages, as well as across local, regional, national and transnational levels. Emblematic exemplars have been explored around the world, from collaborative partnerships (Innes & Booher, 2010; Barnes et al., 2007) to a range of public and stakeholder forums and initiatives (De Souza Briggs, 2008; Leighninger, 2006; Barnes & Prior, 2009; Newman, 2005), in a range of governance contexts (Fung & Wright, 2003; Rask et al., 2012) and policy arenas (Newman & Clarke, 2009; Fischer & Gottweis, 2012; Fischer & Forester, 1993).

### ***Digital participation***

The fifth and final family of democratic innovations is that of digital participation processes. There are a wide range of communication channels and interactive platforms that are creating a new interface between government and civil society. The digital public sphere is rapidly expanding, and with it a number of digital innovations emerging to support or develop participatory and deliberative processes. Digital participation can encompass the full range of selection methods, modes of participation and decision-making, and levels of influence –although instances of direct authority are rare. It is equally malleable in terms of policy area and level of governance, and it can be designed to contribute during various policy stages, from crowdsourcing to prioritising and scrutinising.



Emblematic exemplars such as Open Ministry in Finland or the Icelandic crowdsourced constitution-making process can be found in online databases such as Participedia, which is itself a crowdsourced wiki to foster knowledge exchange on democratic innovations. However omnipresent today, the digital public sphere is a very recent phenomenon and there is some way to go to develop and test analytical frameworks to explore digital participation as a democratic innovation (but see Fung et al., 2013; Coleman & Shane, 2012; Howe, 2014).

As noted throughout the article, there are multiple examples of processes and institutions within each of these five conceptual families of democratic innovations. These five represent overarching clusters that allow us to establish meaningful distinctions and similarities, within and across democratic innovations. There are also a growing number of hybrid combinations of democratic innovations where process designers draw on complementary aspects between processes for the realisation of a broader set of democratic goods. For example, NHS Citizen<sup>12</sup> was an initiative in collaborative governance, including health authorities, citizens and stakeholders, and it featured an ambitious digital platform, a mini-public and large public and stakeholder forums, with each component contributing to different functions (e.g. crowd-sourcing, scrutiny, deliberation, aggregation). Hybrid democratic innovations are therefore purposeful assemblages of other democratic innovations.

## **Conclusion**

This paper has grappled with the challenge of defining democratic innovations by unpacking key conceptual components in order to offer a synthesis of existing definitions and typologies. It is unsurprising that conceptual and typological issues arise when a new field emerges. The field of democratic innovation will remain one of exemplars and hybrids. But it is because of the unique interfaces they generate –between participatory and deliberative democracy, between civil society and the state, between policy and politics– that democratic innovations have become rich sites for the exploration of contemporary governance and citizenship.

Building on the development of the field so far, we have settled on defining democratic innovations as processes or institutions developed to reimagine and deepen the role of citizens in governance processes by increasing opportunities for participation, deliberation and influence. Having surveyed the literature, we have concluded that there are at least five emblematic conceptual families of democratic innovations –namely, mini-publics, participatory budgeting, collaborative governance, referenda and initiatives, and digital participation. We have noted that while the concept of

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<sup>12</sup> See <http://participedia.net/en/cases/nhs-citizen>

democratic innovations has ineliminable features, these processes can take very different forms by virtue of variations in contingent (inclusion, participation, decision-making, influence) and contextual (policy area and stage, governance level) features. We have also made a broader distinction, between democratic innovation, understood as the myriad practices that shape the field, from democratic innovations, understood as the processes and institutions that anchor the field.

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