



What is it?

Demo.Reset is a community of practice for deliberative democracy. It was created in 2022 by the Colombian organization Instituto de Política Abierta, with funding from the National Endowment for Democracy (NED).

Who is it by and for?

The network connects political innovation initiatives from 5 Global South regions: Latin America, Africa, Eastern Europe, Southeast Asia, and India. Participants are representatives of civil society organizations that work to transform democracy via citizen movements, feminist and environmentalist initiatives, and general political advocacy exercises.

The program is structured around four phases. The first focused on exchange among practitioners from the Global South. Among the activities in this phase were focus group sessions that allowed participants to identify and understand deeply and carefully the interests and barriers of practitioners in the field of deliberative democracy in the Global South. The barriers collectively identified were clustered in categories such as cultural and organizational barriers, as well as barriers to participation mechanisms and decision-making.

The second phase aimed at identifying the main obstacles, challenges, and methodological and technical issues affecting deliberative democracy in the Global South, and subsequently developing answers and prototype solutions to them. Thirty professionals were then invited to participate in the co-creation laboratory “Demo.Reset/Lab” to work collectively on solving their problems together with other participants. For 15 days, participants met in person and were divided into six teams to collectively work on a prototype solution for one previously identified barrier to deliberative democracy per team.

In the third phase, the prototypes were tested for re-applicability, adaptability, and effectiveness. The implementation followed an expert mobility residency model, in which people with specific expertise accompanied all actions. The prototypes were tested in different locations, with the support of host organizations.

The fourth and final phase, still underway, consists of launching a match-making platform between practitioners of deliberative democracy, in which professionals in the field will connect their needs with the support of other professionals or organizations working on deliberative democracy processes in the Global South. As a second component, the Demo.Reset team will offer recommendations to improve the effectiveness of the deliberation processes collected throughout the project.



Implications for mutual learning

Demo.Reset's approach is interesting as a mutual learning case study in a couple of ways. It enables Global South deliberative democracy practitioners to exchange experiences and produce collective knowledge about the needs in the field, effectively creating a cross-continental community of practice. Communities of practice are distinctively promising for mutual learning, for they create horizontal spaces in which different perspectives can be presented and exchanged, and the understanding of new information can arise from this exchange.

In its second phase, the initiative breaks the theoretical barrier and jumps into action by fostering the design of prototypes for actual challenges identified by deliberative democracy practitioners. The diversity of the groups, often trans-continental, adds to the richness of the solutions presented. These prototypes can be adopted by various stakeholders. There are few instances in today's siloed work environments in which professionals from different countries, organizations, and backgrounds can put in time to put their minds together to come up with tangible solutions for our pressing issues. Demo.Reset's lab follows deliberative democracy's premises by creating the environment for this kind of collaboration.

