

Civic participation and interactions with different levels of Government: National and international

Participación cívica e interacciones con los diferentes niveles de gobierno: Nacional e internacional

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Abstract

States have promoted many instruments of citizen participation at different levels of government. In most cases, local spheres were granted as a privilege to involve citizens in public decision-making. Simultaneously, we can see how citizens organize themselves in civil society, associations and NGOs, through which they aspire to collaborate and find support for their actions at the international level and thus influence decisions made within States. This paper is situated in the context of Latin American democracies and aims to analyze citizen participation from two perspectives: the institutional (States) and the international or non-institutional.

Keywords: Citizens, government, rulers, institutions and democracy.

Resumen

Los Estados han promovido muchos instrumentos de participación ciudadana en diferentes niveles de gobierno. En la mayoría de los casos, las esferas locales se otorgaron como un privilegio para involucrar a los ciudadanos en la toma de decisiones públicas.

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Simultáneamente, podemos ver cómo los ciudadanos se organizan en la sociedad civil, asociaciones y ONG, a través de las cuales aspiran a colaborar y encontrar apoyo para sus acciones a escala internacional y por tanto incidir en las decisiones que se toman al interior de los Estados. Este documento se sitúa en el contexto de las democracias latinoamericanas y tiene como objetivo analizar la participación ciudadana desde dos perspectivas: la institucional (Estados) y la internacional o no institucional.

Palabras clave: Ciudadanos, gobierno, gobernantes, instituciones y democracia

Introduction

Citizen participation arises towards the government in the inverted movement that interacts in many cases with international organizations. For the purposes of this document, I will analyze the actions taken at the international level. The use of both perspectives is directed at a common component: Actively participating citizens supposedly strengthen democracy within their states, and examining the forms of social organization that are conducive to rebuilding the links between citizens and government, in order to reap the benefits that democracy has.

One of the foundations of democracy is participation, traditionally enshrined by the voting and party system. Certainly, voting as part of the democratic system is fundamental and essentially positive, the criticism revolves around what are the scope and conditions under which you are voting (Aguilar, 2014) in terms of the ability to guarantee that States issue on equal terms and respect for human rights.

From this perspective, I consider it necessary to distinguish between procedural democracy and substantive democracy. The procedural aspect of democracy is established in the rule of law, that is, the institutional arrangement to arrive at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide through a competitive struggle for the will of the people. The procedural vision of democracy focuses solely on how the government is chosen, that is, the election and political participation (Revelez, 2017). This concept ignores the basic conditions to guarantee that all rights are guaranteed.

Unlike substantive democracy is understood as a series of human rights and social goods reinforced not only through the process of choosing their leaders but through a series of guaranteed social goods.

Materials y method

The present investigation uses the analytical method, which implies a comprehensive understanding, an extensive description of the situation through a joint analysis and within its context. This methodology, widely used in the social sciences, is appropriate in cases where you want to know how or why something happens, previewing advantages and disadvantages: on the one hand, the analysis of a specific aspect of reality that allows you to delve into the knowledge; however, concentrating the analysis on a single determined factor makes it difficult to extrapolate the results.

Results

The substantive point of view is best exemplified in the 1999 OHCHR resolution "Promotion of the right to democracy". UNHCR (1999) described the right of democratic governance as:

- The rights to freedom of opinion and expression, of thought, conscience and religion, and of association and peaceful assembly;
- The right to freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any means;
- The rule of law, including the legal protection of the rights, interests and personal security of citizens, and equity in the administration of justice and the independence of the judiciary;
- The right to universal and equal suffrage, as well as free voting procedures and periodic and free elections;
- The right to political participation, including equal opportunities for all citizens to become candidates;
- transparent and accountable government institutions;
- The right of citizens to choose their governmental system through constitutional or other democratic means;
- The right to equal access to public service in the country itself.

Since the latter definition states that substantive conceptions of democracy are multifaceted, they cannot be easily described as a particular political goal, such as maximizing popular participation in politics. Instead, substantive democracy is said to incorporate all the benefits of a tolerant, pluralistic, and participatory society.

Therefore, international agencies adopt this vision of democracy. Democracy is described by the United Nations as "consisting of nine distinctive but fully interrelated components", including human rights, constitutional design, parliamentary processes, the rule of law and accountability and transparency. Therefore, the strengthening of democracy must be considered based on strengthening as a whole (OHCHR, 1993).

If we look now, the fact that elections are held only from a procedural point of view (in fact, all citizens have the right to participate in the election), this right is guaranteed and protected by the rule of law. If we analyze it in a substantial way, it is likely that, although everyone has the same right to participate, not everyone is in the same conditions to do so, that is, the rational decision-making process at the time of voting may be affected by such factors. such as educational, economic, peer pressure, and clientelist practices of the media among others.

It is clear that the fact that elections are held and that citizens participate in them is a democratic advance, but in terms of strengthening we should question citizenship and under what conditions they vote, which means that elections should be guaranteed in a context of respect for human rights and democratic values.

Consider now the political parties, one of the main criticisms is that today they have become organizations designed with the purpose of obtaining power, and to fulfill that purpose, they are willing to sacrifice the ideals of democratic participation (Subirats, 2011).

In the face of current criticism of voting and the party system, the electoral offer is suspect from the first time, that is, the candidates come from a questionable or damaged internal electoral process chosen by the closed party centers since the beginning of the contest, turning the elections into a scarce offer of credibility and, therefore, not very attractive to the public.

The need to broaden participation in the Latin American case, where attempts have been made to counteract the democratic vacuum, the question is whether, in the context of institutional deterioration and

low credibility, governments have the capacity and the interest to grant real power to citizens and generate consensus to guarantee real spaces.

By this I mean that if you create truly pluralistic and participatory spaces, the exercise of citizenship would be strengthened, which would result in more democracy and greater demands on the government.

Therefore, participation promoted by institutions will be conditioned by the capacity and degree of credibility towards government institutions. Since they are not developed as a public initiative, talking about strengthening democracy through expanding participation or establishing practices to encourage it requires a higher level of complexity. According to citizen surveys carried out in 2008 to interesting data in two dimensions.

On the one hand, when citizens were asked about the democratic preference indicators from 0 to 100%, all the percentages are above 85%. While this percentage in relation to the percentages expressed on the degree of trust in the institutions are notable differences, since the degree of trust ranges between 10 and 40%, excluding Mexico, Colombia and Chile that have reached higher values. to the average. The prospect of acceptance of democracy and a significant delegitimization of political institutions is the paradox of democracy and indicates the pressing need to create new spaces to respond to the empty and unfulfilled expectations of citizens. The challenge is to strengthen the citizen-state link. While the social fabric of Latin American democracies has traditionally been organized from top to bottom, that is, from institutions to individuals around an institutional axis or policy. If it is weak, the participation scenarios proposed are not very encouraging. If democracy does not have the capacity to create a strong enough social fabric, it cannot generate a citizenship that is a true counterweight to the state

In his work "Democracy in the United States", Tocqueville questions the relationship between a community and its political ties in a democratic society, that is, how to build and keep alive a relationship between the citizen and the government, which can be legitimately translated democracy and response to its citizens.

From the origin of Latin American countries, the characterization of the social fabric makes it difficult to create pressure groups that counter the government, making it difficult for people to get involved in social justice issues.

From this argument derives the need to redefine the State-Society relationship, considering the role of citizenship in a modern democratic society.

One of the main factors that point to the need to reconfigure the concept of citizenship is globalization and the weakening of states. From this point of view, citizenship seen as a tool of the State, is exercised through institutions. To analyze this concept more deeply, a historical background is needed.

Beginning with the French Revolution, two different types of rights could be distinguished, human rights and citizens' rights. The former do not depend on any power of the State, they are before the authorization of the State.

The latter are signed by the State and can be modified according to the needs of the State. The redefinition of citizenship outside the traditional sphere of the State, seeking to claim the rights within the States through non-state actors, opens doors to advance in the deepening of democratic legitimacy. Citizens are strengthened and a social fabric is created that can generate a state response capacity.

According to the Kymlicka classification, the importance of citizens in matters of social justice and the establishment of the relationship between civil society and government can be divided into (Chambers, 2002):

- The representative democracy system, including the electoral system, the legislative process and political parties;
- State administration, including court schools, welfare agencies, the army and the police, and the like.
 - Associative life that can be divided into
 - Public interest groups engaged in democratic debates and public speeches, including NGOs and social movements in which citizens try to address each other on issues of public concert and change public opinion.
 - Private association (art groups, recreational groups, many religious groups) in which people associate with others with a similar mindset to pursue a particular conception of the good.
- The economy.
- The family.

After this classification, civil groups can participate and act in two areas, the first relates to institutional participation and the second refers to the association of groups with public interest. The latter may or may not be institutional, as in NGO groups. This type of group has demonstrated its importance in international fields, achieving significant participation in International Summits and claiming rights within States.

In this scenario, it is necessary for a new definition to emerge for citizens and civil society, where they play as actors to help rebuild the "polis" and strengthen democracy.

While citizens currently play an important role in international politics, new concepts such as citizen diplomacy are emerging to explain this new role and its new ability to carry out public authorization and influence on governments.

According to some, an increasingly important component of citizen diplomacy is lobbying efforts with foreign governments, multilateral relations, the construction of government networks, ideas and proposals for research projects, and the dissemination of information in world forums or summits from the ONU (Avendaño, et. al, 2000). This new concept covers activities in Foreign Policy, and we could consider the emergence of a new citizenship through different forms of action to satisfy new social needs. This new citizenship arises with a different civil behavior, which implies a non-traditional participation in the Nations.

Another aspect to take into account is the way in which this public participation created and organized by citizens can impact the democratic strength of States through the citizen-government relationship, working from non-governmental bodies and supported by international groups. In addition to NGOs, there are more organizations dedicated to claiming rights and affecting the political life of nations. In this paper, I will analyze this participation specifically through non-governmental organizations.

NGOs emerge as a social reaction when the state neglects social development assistance activities. Then, NGOs emerge as an important aid and, in some cases, as a main actor in the assistance tasks that must be carried out by the official authorities. There are few examples of the contributions of NGOs in the life of a nation Natsios (1995).

NGOs have developed on three levels:

- Social and political changes, specifically in the democratization of public life.
- Human rights.
- Conflict planning process.

Under these premises, NGOs have established their own space on the international and national scene. At the international level, NGOs have made important contributions, take, for example, Amnesty International's action that led the UN to first adopt a resolution against torture, followed by the Convention against Torture.

NGOs have also enjoyed development within the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

In 1945, NGOs were recognized with a special consultative status in article 71 of the Charter of the United Nations. There are currently approximately 1,500 registered NGOs in the United Nations system with observer status, and only 400 are registered with US AID. USA A necessary process for them to receive grants from the US government (Natasios, 1995).

NGOs are perhaps the most complex and diverse of these three stakeholder groups, particularly those involved in complex humanitarian emergencies.

The participation of NGOs and international agencies specifically in sessions within the United Nations makes these organizations negotiators at different levels of government, both international and national. From this arises the first of three arguments, which would be the importance of these actors in the contributions of global governance, secondly, the management of these actors in terms of strengthening multilateralism and, finally, the deepening of democratic legitimacy.

These arguments may have a point regarding citizen participation and contributions to the Global Scene and to the State, creating new ties and new actions and, finally, how they are contributing or affecting the States, for this specific case in strengthening democracy.

I mentioned the rise of citizen organizations (NGOs) working with international agencies (UN) in tasks known as complex emergencies, humanitarian tasks ranging from the deterioration or complete collapse of central government authority; ethnic or religious conflicts and widespread human rights abuses; episodic food insecurity frequently deteriorates into mass starvation; Macroeconomic collapse involving hyperinflation, mass

unemployment and net declines in GNP, and massive population movements of displaced people and refugees escaping the conflict or looking for food.

Discussion

In these conflict situations, citizens have taken steps to become a link in the chain of management of state and international activities in favor of the States of Stability and the Protection of Human Rights; once these rights are guaranteed, it will contribute to democratic legitimacy.

In this regard, the United Nations has also participated as observers in the establishment of young democracies with the intention of developing and guaranteeing respect for human rights.

In these efforts, we can find a set of democratic values that can be related to citizens of different states, these values are reflected in collaborative efforts or in the interest of participating in international organizations to contribute to the solution of certain disputes.

If we analyze the idea of the interaction between citizen and international organizations, on the one hand we see a contribution of citizens from all over the world who participate in global governance (Karns and Mingst, 2004), and on the other hand, we have organized citizen groups that claim that international organizations support their claims or instruments that make them mediators or counterweights, and allow them to impact the interior of the States. Therefore, international public interaction can be collaborative or guardianship, seeking the inclusion of a mention or taking into account certain demands of citizens.

If we take this argument to Latin American societies, institutional participation has not been predominantly looking back or supporting, as in the case of the search for recognition of indigenous communities in Latin America, who wanted to be recognized as subjects of international law under the term of people who invoke UN resolutions that evoke the term people since 1948, then ILO Convention 169 recognizes the term people and the right to self-determination. Another case: the 1997 declaration of the Organization of American States (OAS) on indigenous peoples proclaims peoples under international law (Villoro, 2005). This fight for the recognition of indigenous communities in Latin America is a sample of the relationship between citizens and international and

state organizations, and has finally undertaken reforms in most Latin American governments to grant constitutional rights to difference and diversity. cultural. This fight was won from the international to the national level in the sense of a collaborative citizenship that trusts and depends on international organizations that exert a positive influence within the states. In this case, the result affects the institutions and grants legitimacy; Government institutions are also under pressure to respond to the necessary counterbalance in traditionally non-participatory societies or in those that do not have citizen mobility and stronger networks.

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