

# INNOVATING REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY – THE IMPACT OF DELIBERATIVE INNOVATIONS

## Empirical Background

Classic political participation such as going to the polls has declined in representative democracies such as Japan. The dissatisfaction with the given democratic systems has been growing in consolidated democracies. To meet the malaise of democracies governments, especially at the local level, all over the world have implemented numerous new instruments of citizen participation since the 1990s.

## Current Research

The dissatisfaction has intensified discussions also in academia about how to design new instruments of participatory governance, namely democratic innovations. Democratic innovations are defined as new forms of citizen participation in the institutional policy-making process to improve the democratic control and legitimacy.

## Research Aim

By elaborating the intentions and impacts of implemented democratic innovations this study aims at supplementing the normative concepts of participatory democracy with a critical approach.

## Research Question

Are democratic innovations desirable and feasible in a representative democracy such as Japan to meet the democratic crisis?

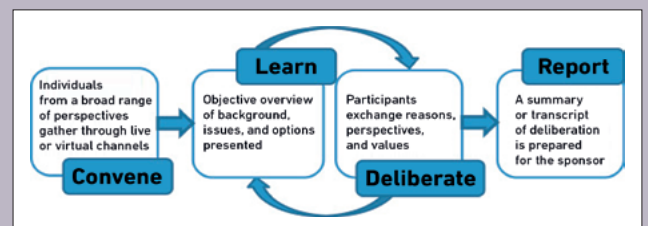
## Method

Theoretical discourses on democratic innovations and empirical studies on deliberation in Japan are examined. Deliberative innovations have attracted attention in governmental practice and several empirical and theoretical studies. This study focusses on two innovative deliberative methods in Japan, namely deliberative polls (討論型世論調査) and planning cells (計画細胞). To evaluate the impact of deliberative innovations on representative democracy the following criteria are applied: input-legitimacy, democratic process, effectiveness and civic education / democratic empowerment.

## Definition of Deliberation

Strict norms design the deliberative processes:

- Participants weigh sincerely the merits and disadvantages of a policy
- They are provided with balanced information in advance
- The rational, inclusive, public, free and equal deliberations pursue the common good
- The output of the deliberations is not legally binding



Source: Kristin L. Carman et. al (2015: 12)

## Preliminary Findings

Deliberative innovations

- improve the social/political inequality by the random selection (+ democratic input)
- increase the input legitimacy of political decisions (+ democratic input)
- lead to rational, informed public opinions and decisions (+ democratic process)
- encourage individual issue knowledge, civic skills and democratic virtues (+ civic education)
- are limited to topics without contention (- efficiency)
- are very time and cost-intensive (- efficiency)



Source: <http://www.city.kitakami.iwate.jp/docs/2017121100029/>

The impacts of deliberative innovations on effective problem solving, public opinion and policies are minor in comparison to direct democracy. However, deliberations improve the democratic throughput-legitimacy, civic virtues and democratic skills. Democratic innovations are therefore one additive device to improve the quality of representative democracy.