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Public Deliberation or Popular Votes? Measuring the Performance of Different Types of Participatory Democracy

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ABSTRACT

There is a growing body of empirical research on democracies with strong or weak deliberative and/or direct democratic features. But how do these features affect the performance of a country? How do participatory types of democracies differ considering system performance, democratic performance, and social performance? Which type is more successful? Although these questions are most crucial and pressing in democracy research, they remain mostly unexplored. Our explorative study is a start to fill this gap. It analyzes which participatory types of democracies perform better: countries with less or more deliberation, countries with less or more direct democratic elements, countries that score high or low on both features. Based on several datasets and applying different statistical tools, we show that the associations between these types of democracy and performance are multifaceted. The most important finding, however, is clear-cut. Democracies with strong deliberative as well as strong direct democratic features perform better than other democracies. Combining deliberation with direct democracy seems to be the optimal formula to guarantee high social, system, and democratic performance. However, many questions remain open and we discuss the need for future research.


KEYWORDS

Deliberative democracy;
direct democracy;
representative democracy;
system performance;
democratic performance;
social performance

Introduction

Since the 1990s, a common trend towards increasing citizen involvement can be observed. The introduction of democratic innovations that expand and deepen citizen participation in political will-formation and decision making is now a common policy of democratic governments (Elstub & Escobar, 2019; Geissel & Newton, 2012; Michels, 2011; Roberts, 2004; Smith, 2009). But participatory developments vary considerably. Some countries prefer direct democratic features, such as referendums or initiatives, others opt for fostering public deliberation (Geissel & Michels, 2017).

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Up to now, studies examine either democracies with different levels of deliberation or direct democracy. Comparative studies on countries combining deliberative and direct democratic features are missing altogether. And what is even more important, the question of *how these features affect performance has remained unexplored*. Although this question is vitally important for academia as well as for the real world of politics, research is missing. We do not know which democracies work better: those that have implemented more direct democratic features, those that have fostered public deliberation or those which score high on both or non-participatory ones. This paper starts to fill this gap. It answers the following questions: *Does it matter whether a country has strong direct democratic features, whether it provides extensive public deliberation, whether it combines both strong direct democracy and strong public deliberation or whether it offers almost none? Do these different participatory types of democracy differ considering their system, their social and their democratic performance?*

The scholarly interest in how different types of democracy perform is not new. Lijphart's (1999, 2012) research on the relation between different kinds of representative democracy and performance of the political system showed that patterns matter: consensus democracies do better than majoritarian ones in terms of social and democratic performance (Lijphart, 2012). In this paper, we shift our focus to participatory types of democracy, i.e., the levels and combinations of direct and deliberative features.

This article is of explorative nature. It is a first step and an invitation to continue the road of research we are suggesting. It entails several limitations, partly due to data restriction, partly due to the need to simplify complexity which leads to necessary restrictions considering both the dependent and the independent variables. For example, and as will be explained below in more detail, comparative, cross-national data sets on levels of deliberation are still scarce and the existing ones reflect the challenges of grasping deliberativeness. Also, performance is a complex construct that had to be rendered applicable. In spite of all limitations, this explorative study provides the first attempt to measure the performance of different participatory types of democracy – with the hope that many more studies will follow.

The article is structured as follows. The first section introduces the conceptual background. It explicates what we understand as direct democratic or deliberative features of democracy, explains the typology as well as our understanding of performance and then develops hypotheses on the relation between participatory types of democracy and performance based on theoretical expectations and empirical findings. The second section describes the research design including data, operationalisation, and methods. It presents and interprets the analyses. The conclusion summarises the findings.¹

Types of Participatory Democracy and Their Performance

In the last years, direct democratic and deliberative features have experienced significant growth (Geissel & Michels, 2018; Scarrow, 2001). Pateman (2012) referred in her APSA Presidential Address to several developments within democracies towards more participation, with for example participatory budgeting, mini-publics and referenda. Several authors have examined the evolvement of different practices of citizens' participation and the integration of these practices in political systems. The main participatory features

discussed in most of these studies refer to the two strands of *deliberation* and *direct democracy* (Carson & Elstub, 2019; Elstub & Escobar, 2019; Fung & Wright, 2001; Geissel & Newton, 2012; OECD, 2020b).

To begin with, many democracies have increasingly applied broad *public deliberation* over the past decades (OECD, 2020a). They support discussions among citizens on political topics for different reasons, e.g., to improve policies or to enhance civic competencies, and with different means, for example by passing respective laws or by organising dialogue-oriented procedures and committees (OECD, 2020a).²

This development is accompanied by a debate about the functioning and the tasks of (citizen) deliberation not only among scholars of deliberation. The *systemic turn* in deliberative theory goes beyond the until then predominant focus on scrutinising specific deliberative institutional devices or practices (mini publics, citizens assemblies etc.) (Smith, 2009) and emphasises the embeddedness of citizens deliberation within democratic systems (Parkinson & Mansbridge, 2012). Today, studies increasingly apply a more systematic approach and examine the impacts of deliberation on democratic systems in general. As one of the most prominent scholars in the field, John Dryzek (2010, p. 14), has underscored, we must examine deliberation ‘in its entirety, rather than assess component parts in isolation’. Accordingly, in this paper we use the broader concept of public deliberation which refers to the level of overall public deliberativeness in a country, i.e., the extent of which ordinary people and non-elite groups can discuss major policies in private contacts and in public.

Simultaneously, *direct democratic features* have proliferated since the 1990s (e.g., Scarrow, 2001). Many governments implemented more and more *direct democratic options* in the political processes of their countries giving citizens the option to vote directly on issues. These features, embracing initiatives, referendums and plebiscites, can either be advisory or binding, i.e., citizens can either decide via majority on the issues at stake with a popular vote or inform the authorities about their opinion. The level of direct democracy differs significantly with some countries providing many direct democratic features, while some offer a few and others allow none (e.g., Altman, 2010). In this paper, we examine to what extent direct democratic features are utilised at the national level.

Recent studies showed that democracies have taken very different participatory developments (Ansell & Gingrich, 2003; Bernauer et al., 2014; Geissel & Michels, 2018; Hendriks & Michels, 2011; Qvortrup, 2013; Sintomer et al., 2016). Some democracies have established either strong deliberative or direct democratic features, some enhanced

Table 1. Typology of democratic systems according to their participatory features.

		Direct democracy	
		Weak	Strong
Deliberative democracy	Strong	Type II Strong deliberative democracy and weak direct democracy	Type IV Strong deliberative democracy and strong direct democracy
	Weak	Type I Weak deliberative democracy and weak direct democracy	Type III Strong direct democracy and weak deliberative democracy

both significantly and others introduced hardly any changes. Whereas for example Latvia enhanced its direct democratic options at the national level since 1990 considerably, Germany did not make any changes at this level. Similarly, Slovakia increased its level of deliberativeness significantly, while deliberativeness in Turkey deteriorated (based on data provided by V-Dem, see below). Also, comparative public opinion studies confirm the different participatory trajectories democracies took in the last years leading to different participatory preferences (Fernández-Martínez & Fábregas, 2018; Ferrín & Kriesi, 2016). For example, British citizens show distinct and different patterns considering preferences for direct or deliberative features (Gherghina & Geissel, 2020), while Spanish citizens seem to support both models in similar ways (Font et al., 2015). We might conclude that a variety of studies prove with different methods and data that the participatory developments of contemporary democracies show rather different trajectories towards deliberation and/or direct democracy. These different trajectories cannot simply be linked to the institutional settings identified by Lijphart (1999), Geissel and Michels (2018). Other factors such as national traditions and supra-national involvements also play a role. Examples for the impacts of national traditions are the long tradition of direct democracy in Switzerland or a historically strong elite culture as in the Netherlands. Also, developments in the context of EU-convergence (Vatter et al., 2014) may have an impact on participatory developments, as well as (political) tipping points or critical junctures (Mahoney & Thelen, 2010). However, conclusive explanations are still missing.

Combining these two participatory features, we distinguish four participatory types of democracy (see Table 1). Countries with weak direct democratic and weak deliberative features, e.g., Mexico (Type I), countries with strong deliberative and weak direct democratic features, e.g., Norway (Type II), countries with strong direct democratic and weak deliberative features, e.g., Lithuania (Type III), and countries with strong direct democratic as well as strong deliberative features as for example Switzerland (Type IV).

We developed this typology instead of simply relating deliberative versus direct democracy on the one hand and performance on the other hand, because we assume that looking just at relations between one feature and performance would not suffice. Three reasons guide our considerations. First, countries can score high on one or both dimensions. For example, Switzerland, a country scoring high on deliberative and direct democratic features, most likely performs differently compared not only to countries scoring low on both features as e.g., Mexico, but also compared to countries scoring high on one feature but low on the other as Lithuania or Slovakia. Second, a country's performance might not only depend on its level of deliberation or direct democracy, but we have to test whether and how both features 'work together'. Several authors have pointed out that deliberative and direct democratic features are no dichotomies but are entangled. Countries with certain direct democratic practices often provide a high level of deliberativeness but there is no automatism (El-Wakil, 2017, 2020; Landemore, 2018; Leduc, 2002). Third, the suggested typology can also reveal whether both features have similar effects. For example, a country with a high level of deliberativeness (and low direct democracy) might perform similar than a country with strong direct democracy (and low deliberativeness).

Accordingly, our typology looks as depicted in Table 1.

Based on these reflections and findings we test the performance of different types of democratic systems according to their participatory features. We hypothesise that countries scoring low on both features versus countries scoring high on one or on both differ.

Performance

The discussion about the performance of democracies has attracted some scientific attention in the last years (e.g., Gerring et al., 2022; Roller, 2005; Rothstein, 2018). But the literature is far from unanimous on the question, what exactly can or should count as performance. For example, Lijphart (1999, 2012) makes a distinction between performance in terms of effective government (system performance) as well as performance in terms of democratic quality and social dimensions. Rothstein (2018) is mainly concerned about the lives of ‘ordinary people’ measured by the United Nations Development Program Index of Human Wellbeing.³ Roller (2005) looked at system and social performance in major policy fields, i.e., social and economic policies (Gerring & Tracker, 2008).

Based on these considerations, in this paper, we make a distinction between three dimensions of performance (see also Gerring et al., 2022). We examine system performance (Lijphart, 2012; Roller, 2005), democratic performance (Lijphart, 2012), and social performance (Lijphart, 2012; Roller, 2005; Rothstein, 2018). We conceptualise these dimensions in line with this literature in the following way:

System performance is not a clearly defined term and means different things to different scholars. However, most scholars agree that system performance refers to economic prosperity as well as to integrity. Accordingly, in our study system performance refers to non-corruption as well as to its economic performance (Anderson & Tverdova, 2003; Wang, 2016; Warren, 2004).

Democratic performance has been defined in different ways as well. It should not be confused with (measurements of) democratic quality. Democratic performance in a strict sense refers to the functioning of a system considering democratic values. Among the most crucial democratic achievements provided by a political system are without doubt accountability as well as support by its citizens. Most studies refer to these two indicators. Accordingly, we refer in our study to the functioning of the system in terms of democratic accountability and support by its citizens (e.g., debates by Olsen, 2013; Wegscheider & Stark, 2020).

Also *social performance* is not a clearly defined term but used in different ways. The literature knows several approaches for measuring social performance; yet equality is crucial in all works (e.g., Gilens, 2012; Rueschemeyer, 2011). In our study we conceptualise equality as the level of equality or equal opportunities provided in a democracy.

We introduce the indicators which we use for measuring the three dimensions of performance after the following discussions on the expected relations between participatory types of democracy and our three dimensions of performance.

Research on the Performance of Different Participatory Types of Democracy

How might different participatory types of democracy perform? What can we expect based on existing literature? Not much research has been done to compare participatory

types of democracy. Research on this question is scarce and contradictory. Considering the performance of democracies using direct democratic features, some authors expect negative impacts on one or all three dimensions of performance. A few scholars assume direct democratic features to lower system performance, because these features would lead to higher debts (e.g., Blume et al., 2009; Bowler & Donovan, 2004; Feld & Matsusaka, 2003). Some scientists argue that direct democratic features would imply negative impacts on social performance, because resourceful groups would instrumentalise popular votes to the detriment of the weaker groups (Merkel, 2011). Due to unequal participation, also democratic performance could suffer. Other authors see more positive effects. Popular votes would constrain government expenditures and lead to balanced state budgets with less debt. They would thwart corruption, lead to more social equality, and increase political satisfaction as well as perceived legitimacy thus improving democratic performance (e.g., Berry, 2009; Geissel et al., 2019; Matsusaka, 2004; Moser & Obinger, 2007).⁴

Empirical studies show mixed results. Freitag and Vatter (2004) scrutinised whether the provision and use of direct democratic features correlate with the wealth of Swiss cantons. Their pooled cross-sectional time-series analyses show that strong direct democracy goes hand in hand with the system dimension of performance (Vatter & Rüefli, 2003). Most states with strong direct democratic features also have more restrictive fiscal policies and spend less on welfare (Berry, 2009; Feld et al., 2010; Matsusaka, 2004; Merkel, 2011; Merkel & Ritzi, 2017). These findings enforce the expectations that direct democratic countries perform higher on system performance than countries with less direct democratic features (Rothstein, 2018). Considering social performance, current empirical research reveals that direct democratic decisions more often increase than decrease equality (Geißel et al., 2019; Geissel et al., 2019; Krämling et al., 2022). However, the context seems to be more crucial than the feature ‘direct democracy’ and therefore we expect no effect on social performance. Considering effects on democratic performance, the picture seems to be clearer. We know that in Switzerland, a country with strong direct democratic features, citizens are more satisfied with their democracy than citizens in most other democracies (Frey & Stutzer, 2000).

Considering *deliberative democracies*, some authors argue that citizens are more often confronted with diverse opinions and perspectives than in less deliberative countries. As a result, they expect a better understanding for divergent interests and needs. Accordingly, social and democratic issues might have higher priorities than in democracies without deliberation. This is in line with what Lijphart found for consensus democracies. In his book ‘Patterns of Democracy’ (1999), Lijphart tested the impact of the majoritarian model and the consensus model of democracy on performance. He showed that consensus democracies score higher than majoritarian ones considering democratic performance and social performance. Since, deliberative democracies show similarities with consensus democracies – negotiation, conversation and argument are both the crucial principles of consensus democracies as well as of deliberative democracies (Hendriks & Michels, 2011; Steiner et al., 2004) –, we might assume that strong deliberative democracies perform higher on both social and democratic performance. There is no empirical research on the effects of deliberation on respective policies, but empirical results on deliberative experiments back up these assumptions (e.g., Andersen & Hansen, 2007).

Based on these insights, we can argue that the deliberative type of democracy fosters democratic and social performance. The effects on system performance are unknown.

Considering Type IV (see [Table 1](#)), neither theoretical considerations nor any empirical studies have been available until recently. But scholars discuss increasingly, how direct democratic and deliberative features could and should be connected (e.g., El-Wakil, 2020; Gastil & Richards, 2013). They assume that such connections would enhance the performance of democracy at large. But they seldom detail exactly the performance they expect to be enhanced nor do they provide empirical evidence. As we expect positive effects of direct democracy on democratic and system performance and positive effects of deliberation on democratic and social performance, we expect Type IV to have positive effects on all dimensions.

Hypotheses

Based on the above, we can now formulate the following expectations:

H1a: Strong deliberative democracies (Types II and IV) score higher on democratic performance than weak deliberative democracies. (Types I and III)

H1b: Strong deliberative democracies (Types II and IV) score higher on social performance than weak deliberative democracies. (Types I and III)

H1c: Strong deliberative democracies (Types II and IV) and weak deliberative democracies (Types I and III) score similar on system performance.

H2a: Strong direct democracies (Types III and IV) score higher on democratic performance than weak direct democracies. (Types I and II)

H2b: Strong direct democracies (Types III and IV) score similar on social performance than weak direct democracies. (Types I and II)

H2c: Strong direct democracies (Types III and IV) score higher on system performance than weak direct democracies. (Types I and II)

H3: Comparing strong deliberative democracies with strong direct democracies the former score similar on democratic performance (**H3a**), higher on social performance (**H3b**), and lower on system performance (**H3c**).

H4: Systems that combine strong deliberative and direct democratic features (Type IV) score higher on democratic (**H4a**), social (**H4b**) and system (**H4c**) performances than democracies with weak deliberative as well as with weak direct democratic features. (Type I)

The following [Table 2](#) summarises the expected effects.

Table 2. Summary of expected effects/hypotheses.

Participatory features and types→Performance↓	Direct		Type I	Type II	Type III	Type IV
	Deliberative	democratic				
Democratic	+	+	-	+	+	+
Social	+	0	-	+	0	+
System	0	+	-	0	+	+

+ = positive effect, - = negative effect, 0 = no effect.

Operationalisation and Data

In this paper we focus on the OECD countries, with the exception of its latest members, Colombia and Costa Rica.⁵ We restrict the study to the OECD countries due to data availability and reliability. Thus, we have a total of 36 countries. Many studies justify this choice of their rather similar economic and democratic situation of OECD countries, but countries like Germany or Austria differ of course considerably from Turkey or Mexico. However, due to shortage of space, more detailed analyses must be postponed to future research.

We choose to analyse the time period from 1995 to 2019, mainly due to the fact that most deliberative as well as direct democratic features developed within this period. Also, data availability for both dependent and independent variables is provided within this timeframe. We measure the countries at three points in time (1995, 2003, 2019), which allows for a more comprehensive picture than a study only at one point in time. In this period, the level of deliberative and direct democratic features remained relatively stable in some countries (Italy, Mexico), other countries experienced considerable changes (Hungary, Ireland), which do not always move in the same direction. Due to the limited space of this article, it would be impossible to pursue, calculate and explain all developments. This explorative study takes each point in time as the object of analysis and leaves more detailed analysis to further research.

In this section we first describe the operationalisation and the employed sources of data to measure direct and deliberative features. Then we proceed to the operationalisation of the performance dimensions.

To classify the level of direct and deliberative democracy in each country we use data from Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) which provide us with information about the level of direct and deliberative democracy for our 36 countries at three points in time (see Appendix 12, 13). The data of V-Dem is based on expert interviews provided by more than 3000 country experts around the world and is compiled by around 20 researchers at 13 universities in the US, Europe, and Latin America. However, the methodological approach is not without critique (Coppedge et al., 2017; Fleuß & Helbig, 2021). Some scholars criticise that experts would not be able to assess societies and reject this approach all together due to cognitive biases. However, currently, V-Dem represents the only dataset that provides comprehensive data on such a large scale (both in regard to the selection of countries as well as the time frame). V-Dem has been used widely in comparative research, especially in comparative research on democracies. Many scholars and organisations make use of V-Dem data in their measurements and indices, for example the Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI) or the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), hundreds of articles have been published using the V-Dem data (see also Appendix 12 for more information on V-Dem). Despite all its limitations, V-Dem is still considered a better option compared with previous data collection projects on democracy (Boswell & Corbett, 2021).

V-Dem's Direct Popular Vote Index (DPV) shows to what extent *direct democratic features* are utilised at the national level. The DPV applies a scale from 0 to 1, meaning from low to high. Other direct democracy measurements are available as well, e.g., the Democracy Barometer. However, most of these indices reveal very similar assignments. We apply data by V-Dem in order to provide consistency with the measurement of deliberativeness (Geissel & Michels, 2018).

The *level of deliberativeness* is measured by the indicator ‘Engaged Society’ (ES), which measures ‘how wide and how independent’ public deliberation is on a scale from 0-5. With 0 indicating ‘public deliberation is never, or almost never allowed’ and 5 ‘large numbers of non-elite groups as well as ordinary people tend to discuss major policies among themselves, in the media, in associations or neighbourhoods, or in the streets. Grass-roots deliberation is common and unconstrained’ (Coppedge et al., 2020a). The measurement of the level of deliberativeness of a country is controversial (Fleuß & Helbig, 2021). But this critique can be countered by triangulation with other data. For example, previous research has shown high correlations between V-dem indices and e.g., Freedom House indices (Teorell et al., 2016 Thomas & Statsch, 2021).

Although the expert questions considering direct and deliberative democracy differ slightly – the first referring to the existence and the use of direct democratic instruments, the second referring to perceived deliberativeness within society – both inform about the level of the respective participatory dimension as confirmed by other measurements and indices (for more information about V-Dem, see Appendix 12, 13; see for correlations between direct and deliberative democracy Appendix 11).

Performance: Operationalisation and Applied Datasets

The operationalisation of performance is a demanding endeavour (e.g., Gerring & Tracker, 2008). It requires theoretical justification as well as data availability for all countries under research at the three points in time. In the end, we decided to measure each of our performance dimensions by combining two indexes. In total we use six indexes for gauging the three dimensions of performance (see for sources of indicators Appendix 14; see for correlations between indicators as well as dimensions of performance Appendix 10).

As explained above, *system performance* refers to the integrity of a system as well as to its economic prosperity (Anderson & Tverdova, 2003). We measure integrity employing the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) developed by Transparency International. The CPI ranks countries according to their ‘perceived levels of public sector corruption’ on a scale from 0 to 100, with ‘0’ indicating the highest level of corruption and ‘100’ the lowest level of corruption (Transparency International, 2020). In order to assess prosperity, we apply the debt-to-GDP ratio provided by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for two reasons. First, it allows for comparisons of countries regardless of different sizes or economic backgrounds; and second it gives rather nuanced information about the fiscal health of a system. The IMF defines gross debt as ‘all liabilities that require payment or payments of interest and/or principal by the debtor to the creditor at a date or dates in the future’.⁶ For the analysis, the variable gross debt is reverse coded which enables us to interpret the performance scores across dimensions consistently: the higher the score, the better the performance. Summing up, we measure system performance by combining data from the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) with data concerning general government gross debt-to-GDP ratio. A composite variable system performance is created as a sum of debt and CPI, which gives as a rather clear picture of the system performance of all country under research at the chosen points in time.⁷

Democratic performance is conceptualised in our study as accountability and support by its citizens. Accordingly, to measure democratic performance, we combine data from

V-Dem's Accountability Index with data on satisfaction with democracy. V-Dem's Accountability Index assesses to what extent the accountability of a government is achieved. It consists of three subcomponents, i.e., vertical, horizontal and diagonal accountability.⁸ Thus, this Accountability Index summarises a variety of different indicators, which makes it suitable for assessing democratic performance. It has a scale from 0-1 (low to high), the original scale is multiplied with 100 and recoded to 0-100. Our data on satisfaction with democracy are mostly gathered from the HUMAN⁹ surveys project which uses a scale from 0 to 100, with '0' being the lowest score possible and '100' the highest (Klassen, 2018). However, the HUMAN surveys project has respective data only until 2016, therefore data from 2017 to 2019 is compiled from additional sources: the European Social Survey Round 9, European Values study, World Values survey and with data from Pew Research Centre. All these sources are well-known and frequently used in research (Foa et al., 2020). All data sources for satisfaction with democracy are recoded accordingly to the scale used by the HUMAN surveys project.¹⁰

In order to measure *social performance* defined as the level of equality or equal opportunities provided in a democracy, we look at the distribution of resources and social mobility. These indicators are appropriate for assessing social performance. We combine data from the Equal Distribution of Resources Index developed by V-Dem with data from the World Economic Forum's Global Social Mobility Index. V-Dem's Equal Distribution of Resources Index measures on a scale from 0 to 1, (low to high) 'the extent to which resources – both tangible and intangible – are distributed in society' (Coppedge et al., 2020a).¹¹ The Global Social Mobility Index ranks countries according to their relative social mobility, which is grounded on 10 pillars (education access, fair wages, social protection etc.) by using a scale from 0-100, with '100' being the highest score possible (World Economic Forum, 2020). Unfortunately, the data does not provide data for all years of interest. But taking into consideration the very slow change of social mobility within the countries or research (if nearly any), we argue that it is acceptable to use the limited data (see Appendix 8).¹²

Most indicators applied in this study refer to objective data; only one indicator we apply for measuring democratic performance includes citizens perspectives (see for the differentiation Gerring et al., 2022). Since democratic performance is necessarily related to the perception of citizens, it makes sense to apply survey data for measuring this dimension. In contrast, systemic and social performance might require more objective data. For example, citizens might have difficulties to compare the systemic performance of their country with other democracies just because they have little information allowing for comparison. However, we strongly encourage future research to take objective as well as subjective indicators into account when measuring performance (see Gerring et al., 2022).

Table 3. Comparison of performances in relation to deliberative and direct democratic features.

	System performance (SD)	Democratic performance (SD)	Social performance (SD)
Direct democracy	69.6 (16.4)	71.7 (7.8)	81.0 (8.4)
Deliberative democracy	73.5 (14.6)	76.3 (5.3)	83.9 (7.6)
N	105	99	108

Table 4. Results of ordinary least squares (OLS) regression.

	System performance B (SE)	Democratic performance Performance, B (SE)	Social performance B (SE)
Direct democracy	12.30 (8.87)	-1.87 (3.27)	9.17 (5.09)
Deliberative democracy	8.69*** (2.24)	6.96*** (0.8)	8.66*** (1.32)
N	105	99	108
R2	0.143	0.445	0.305

Note: B = unstandardised regression coefficient; SE = standard error of the coefficient; *** $p < 0.001$.

Methods, Analyses, and Results

Our study contains three continuous dependent variables – democratic, social and system performance – which are analysed separately. Our independent variables are twofold. First, we examine the level of deliberative and direct democratic features, which is continuous data. Second, we test the effects of participatory types of democracy and these types are categorical.¹³ In order to assess which types of societies perform better, we focus, as mentioned, on three points in time: 1995, 2003 and 2019.

We start with two preliminary assessments: Two calculations give a first overview of the relations between the levels of direct and deliberative features on the one hand and the three dimensions of performance on the other hand. Then, we calculate and present the four types of democracy. The most important part of the analyses, however, focusses on the *correlations and associations between the participatory types of democracy and performance*. The main method that we use for the analysis is one-way ANOVA (Contrasts) performed with SPSS program. We guide you through ANOVA analysis¹⁴ and explain the findings. In the Appendix you also find illustrations via boxplots (Appendix 1).¹⁵

Analyses and Discussion

In order to get a first impression, Table 3 compares how countries with different levels of direct democratic and deliberative features perform. The 36 countries at the three points in time are used as single units for analysis (see also Appendix 7, 9). There is no evidence of multicollinearity, as assessed by tolerance values greater than 0.1. Due to some missing values for particular years and/or countries, the number of cases for each performance type differs slightly.

The following Table 4, representing the results of an ordinary least square regression (OLS), enables us to answer the first three hypotheses (H1-H3). The regression analysis shows an effect of deliberation on all dimensions of performances. One point increase in deliberation results in 8.7 point increase in system performance, 7 point increase in democratic performance, and 8.7 point increase in social performance. Also considering direct democracy positive relations with the dimensions of performance are considerable; there is a tendency to a positive association with system performance (12.3) and social performance (9.2). However, the standard errors are high, indicating large variances between countries. The R square of the model varies, explaining 14% of the variability in system performance, 45% in democratic and 31% in social performances – and thus indicating that participatory features are related to performance.

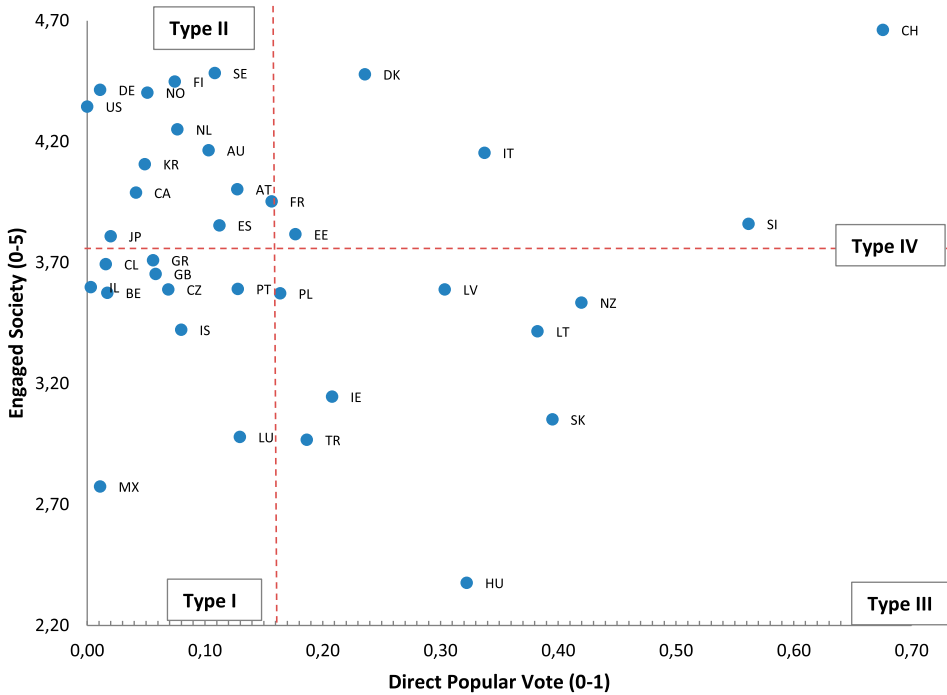


Figure 1. Deliberative (ES) and direct (DPV) democracy, average score (OECD-countries; 1995–2019).

Summing up, our H1 and H2 can be confirmed partly. Stronger direct democratic as well as deliberative feature show positive effects on all performance dimensions with the exception of the democratic performance of direct democracy. Considering H3, democracies with strong deliberative features score higher on all three dimensions of performance than direct democratic countries. However, when we do not adhere to statistical significance, direct democratic countries score higher on system as well as on social performance.

Identifying Participatory Types

We are not only interested in the correlations and associations between performance on the one hand and direct or deliberative democracy on the other hand. We also want to know how deliberation and direct democracy ‘work together’ in relation to performance. In the theoretical section, we introduced a typology with four types of participatory democracy: weak deliberative and direct democracy (Type I), strong deliberative and weak direct democracy (Type II), strong direct and weak deliberative democracy

Table 5. Overall distribution of cases among types of democracy.

Democracy types	Frequency	Percent
Type I	29	26.9
Type II	37	34.3
Type III	25	23.1
Type IV	17	15.7
Total	108	100.0

Table 6. Democratic performance, mean values (std. deviation).

		Direct democracy	
		Weak	Strong
Deliberative democracy	Strong	Type II	Type IV
		1995: 79.6 (3.2) 2003: 75.2 (5.4) 2019: 77.0 (3.7) Overall: 76.9 (4.5) N: 36	1995: 72.8 (8.3) 2003: 76.9 (7.0) 2019: 76.8 (6.6) Overall: 75.8 (6.9) N: 16
	Weak	Type I	Type III
		1995: 68.1 (7.8) 2003: 72.1 (5.6) 2019: 70.5 (3.8) Overall: 70.0 (6.4) N: 26	1995: 68.6 (8.9) 2003: 68.9 (5.4) 2019: 66.4 (7.5) Overall: 67.9 (6.8) N: 21

(Type III), strong deliberative and direct democracy (Type IV). The following figure gives a first impression of the distribution of the selected OECD-countries¹⁶ (Figure 1). In order to keep the figure concise and easy to understand, in Figure 1 we only refer to the average scores of each country for deliberative and direct democratic features (1995–2019).

Looking at this figure, it becomes immediately clear that many countries score relatively high on public deliberation and relatively low on direct democracy. In order to test our expectations, we use *relative* measures of direct and deliberative democracy. This means that we compare democracies that are *relatively* strong versus relatively weak on direct and/or deliberative democracy. Accordingly, the thresholds for assignment are set around the mean of the data, which is 3.73 for deliberative democracy (Engaged Society, ES) and 0.16 for Direct Democracy (DPV).

The average scores applied in this figure only give a preliminary impression. Many countries changed their level of direct and deliberative features over time. Thus, they could be type I in 1995, but switch to type II in 2003 and finally to type III in 2019 or the other way round. For example, Slovenia, or Turkey has experienced several changes. In order to cover the whole range, we work in our empirical analyses with the selected OECD countries at the mentioned three points in time. The following table shows the overall distribution of cases across the types (Table 5).

Table 7. Social performance, mean values (std. deviation).

		Direct democracy	
		Weak	Strong
Deliberative democracy	Strong	Type II	Type IV
		1995: 85.3 (5.7) 2003: 81.2 (11.9) 2019: 83.5 (7.6) Overall: 83.2 (8.9) N: 37	1995: 87.1 (4.5) 2003: 86.2 (3.7) 2019: 82.3 (6.0) Overall: 85.1 (5.0) N: 17
	Weak	Type I	Type III
		1995: 77.4 (13.6) 2003: 79.0 (14.5) 2019: 72.4 (16.7) Overall: 76.9 (14.2) N: 29	1995: 78.5 (9.2) 2003: 80.5 (4.2) 2019: 74.8 (12.0) Overall: 77.8 (9.1) N: 25

Table 8. System performance, mean values (std. deviation).

		Direct democracy	
		Weak	Strong
Deliberative democracy	Strong	Type II	Type IV
		1995: 74.3 (15.4) 2003: 76.9 (12.7) 2019: 75.3 (9.3) Overall: 75.7 (11.9) N: 37	1995: 72.4 (18.0) 2003: 77.7 (13.5) 2019: 69.2 (21.5) Overall: 73.1 (17.2) N: 17
	Weak	Type I	Type III
		1995: 55.8 (20.1) 2003: 71.1 (13.7) 2019: 60.9 (13.6) Overall: 62.0 (17.6) N: 27	1995: 55.0 (22.5) 2003: 71.6 (11.8) 2019: 71.7 (9.9) Overall: 66.8 (16.4) N: 24

How are the performance dimensions distributed across all types of democracies? The following tables display the results considering democratic performance, social performance and system performance, and (Tables 6–8).¹⁷ We start with the measurement of democratic performance.

Regarding democratic performance, similar trend remains – we observe that differences are most prominent between strong and weak deliberative countries (see Table 6). Accordingly, strong deliberative democracies (Types II and IV) score considerably higher than weak deliberative democracies (Types I and III; statistically significant, see Appendix 4). The ANOVA Contrasts confirms this finding (mean difference of 7.4 statistically significant, $p = .000$; Appendix 6). In the light of these observations, we deduce that H1a is confirmed. Contrary to our expectations (H2a), countries with strong direct democratic features (Type III & IV) score slightly worse on democratic performance (statistically insignificant, see Appendix 6). Direct democracy performs much better when it is combined with deliberative features. In accordance with our Hypothesis 3b, the analysis confirms that countries that combine both strong deliberative and strong direct democratic elements (Type IV) score higher on democratic performance compared to countries with weak participatory elements (Type I) (statistically significant, see Appendix 6).

The one-way ANOVA analysis show statistically significant differences in *social* performance between the four types of countries (Appendix 5).¹⁸ As presented in Table 7, similar patterns emerge – Type II and Type IV perform considerably better than Type I and Type III countries. There is a statistically significant mean difference between strong and weak deliberative democracies (see also Appendix 6). Hence, we deduce that H1b is confirmed. Furthermore, Type IV countries score significantly higher on

Table 9. Comparison of performances across types.

	System performance (SD)	Democratic performance (SD)	Social performance (SD)
Type I	62.0 (17.6)	70.0 (6.4)	76.9 (14.2)
Type II	75.7 (11.9)	76.9 (4.5)	83.2 (8.9)
Type III	66.8 (16.4)	67.9 (6.8)	77.8 (9.1)
Type IV	73.1 (17.2)	75.8 (6.9)	85.1 (5.0)
N	105	99	108

social performance than Type I countries (mean difference of 8.2, adjusted $p = .007$). Our hypothesis H4b is confirmed. Contrary to our expectations, *social performance is also slightly higher among strong direct democracies* (mean difference of 1.4 statistically insignificant, adjusted $p = .449$). Accordingly, H2b is rejected.

Table 8 shows that for system performance, the difference between Type I and Type II democracies is most pronounced. Furthermore, we observe that strong deliberative democracies (Types II and IV) score higher on system performance than weak deliberative democracies (Types I and III) (H1c). The difference is statistically significant (see Appendix 4). Subsequently, we conducted ANOVA Contrasts¹⁹ with one-way procedure which allows us to determine whether there is a difference between a combination of more than two groups of an independent variable (this method works with both met and violated assumptions of homogeneity of variances). The findings confirm that *system performance is higher in strong deliberative democracies*, the mean difference of 10 is statistically significant, $p = .002$ ²⁰. System performance is also slightly higher in *strong direct democracies* (Types III and IV) compared to weak direct democracies (Types I and II) – with statistically insignificant mean difference of 1.1 ($p = .72$). Hence, we can confirm our Hypothesis 2c. The difference in system performance is most notable between Type IV and Type I countries – with statistically significant mean difference of 11.1 ($p = .02$) –, thus, confirming our Hypothesis 3c.

Summing up, our analyses reveal that *democracies combining strong deliberative as well as direct democratic features* (Type IV) *perform better on all three dimensions compared to weak participatory democracies*. Type IV democracies score considerably higher on democratic, social and system performance than weak deliberative and direct democracies (Type I). These findings confirm H4a, H4b and H4c. Similarly, our findings show that strong deliberative democracies (Type II and IV) have significantly higher performance scores across all three dimensions, compared to countries with weak deliberative features. The following Table 9 summarises the results.

Comparing Type I and Type IV societies, it is evident that countries that combine strong direct democratic and deliberative features outperform significantly those societies that exhibit weak direct democratic and deliberative features. However, the picture becomes more nuanced when we compare countries with strong (Type II) and weak (Type III) deliberativeness. Across all three performances, countries with high level of deliberation score higher than the ones with low deliberation. Interestingly, there are only little systematic differences between countries with low level of participatory democracy (Type I) and countries that are characterised by strong direct democracy but low deliberativeness (Type III).

Conclusion: Deliberation Plus Direct Democracy – The Optimal Formula For High Performance

In this paper we have explored relations between four different types of participatory democracy and three dimensions of performance, namely democratic, system and social performance. By combining deliberative democracy and direct democracy and by classifying political systems according to them, we identified four participatory types: weak direct and deliberative democracy (Type I), weak direct and strong deliberative democracy (Type II), strong direct and weak deliberative democracy (Type III), and

strong direct and deliberative democracy (Type IV). The typology was used to test whether countries with different participatory features perform better or worse, i.e., to examine the relations between these participatory types of democracy and performance. We applied a variety of indices and data sets for the empirical analysis. Our research was confronted with some challenges, e.g., data availability or skewed distribution of deliberative and direct democratic features.

How do countries with different levels of deliberative and direct democratic features perform? We answered this question by applying different statistical tools. Our main tool was an analysis with one-way ANOVA (Contrasts), which proved that the countries with strong direct and deliberative democracy (Type IV) show better performance on all three dimensions than weak direct and deliberative democracies (Type I). Looking at the specific features, our analysis revealed that the level of deliberation is positively associated with high system, democratic and social performance.

Considering popular voting, democracies with strong direct democratic features score higher on system as well as on social performance than weak direct democracies, but slightly worse on democratic performance. We are not completely sure about the meaning of these findings. The findings confirm some theoretical assumptions, but at this point we cannot explain the results considering democratic performance.

The clearest and most interesting results refer to our fourth hypothesis: Democracies scoring low on deliberative as well as on direct democratic features (Type 1) show the lowest levels in all performance dimensions. In contrast, democracies with high levels on both participatory features (Type IV) provide best system and social performance and very good democratic performance. All in all, *democracies providing high levels of deliberative and direct democratic features perform better than democracies providing none or just one of these features.*

Our research and our findings have significant impact for the study on democracy and democratic innovations as well as for the real world of politics. *Our findings empirically ground and substantiate current debates on connective systems*, which have started with Parkinson and Mansbridge's (2012) publication on the deliberative systems approach focusing on deliberative features. This approach was expanded recently to the concept of participatory systems combining deliberative and direct democratic features, which complement each other. The findings show the importance of combining a deliberative system, which emphasises inclusive and robust will-formation but remains vague on collective decision-making, with a direct democratic system, which emphasises decision-making via popular vote. Up to now, arguments for such a combinative participatory approach were mainly normative and theoretical. Our study shows that the assumptions are confirmed by empirical findings. Deliberative and direct democratic features each have benefits but also caveats. Together they form an efficient and productive whole.

Despite all the merits of this study, there are several inherent limitations. First, the V-Dem data we use is based on expert evaluations and subject to cognitive biases. Future research might be able to base its data on more objective data. Second, performances are assessed by mostly 'objective' indicators and citizens' perspectives are largely missing (e.g., perceptions about personal or country's economic situation). Third, the choice for OECD countries conceals that within this group of countries there are considerable differences in the economic and democratic situation. Future research could include more detailed analyses of subgroups. Lastly, the correlations we found might

not necessarily indicate a one-way effect but signify interaction. For example, the level of deliberation might influence the level of corruption, but it might just as well be the other way around. Finally, there is a possibility of reverse causality that our study design is not addressing. Future multi-level longitudinal analysis could shed light on context factors as well as on respective interactions and causalities.

Summing up and in short, this explorative study provides the first comparative, comprehensive analysis on the association between different types of participatory democracies and their system, democratic, and social performance. The main result is distinctive and instructive for the debates on democratic innovations and for the future of democracy: Social, system, and democratic performance is higher in strong deliberative democracies as well as in countries combining both strong deliberative and direct democratic elements. If we want democracies with strong social, system, and democratic performance, the optimal formula is strengthening both public deliberation and direct democracy.

Notes

1. In order to make the text more legible, we sometimes apply the terms ‘direct’ and ‘deliberative democracy’, meaning democracies with strong direct democratic or deliberative features. These democracies are still organized in a representative setting and are not purely ‘direct’ or ‘deliberative’.
2. Some examples illustrate this trend: Brazil’s National Public Policy Conferences, the French Citizen Assembly on Climate (*Convention Citoyenne pour le Climat*), the Bürgerrat Demokratie (Germany), the Canadian British Columbia Citizens’ Assembly on electoral reform, the deliberative forum organized in Belgium on the future of the state (G 1000), and the citizens’ assembly on abortion in Ireland. In addition to this, many small-scale deliberative assemblies took place at subnational levels, such as citizens’ assemblies, citizens’ juries, and consensus conferences (OECD, 2020a; Smith, 2009; Grönlund et al., 2014).
3. <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/human-development-index-hdi>. Accordingly, Rothstein (2018) includes thus a multitude of indicators such as for example poverty, child deprivation, high levels of economic inequality, illiteracy, being unhappy or not satisfied with one’s life, high infant mortality, short life-expectancy, high maternal mortality, lack of access to safe water or sanitation, low school attendance for girls, systemic corruption, low interpersonal trust, health care, universal education, sanitation, social insurances and physical infrastructure.
4. It is also contested whether direct democracy leads to minority-friendlier policies or not. Empirical findings present, again, a mixed picture (Matsusaka, 2004; Vatter & Danaci, 2010).
5. Colombia and Costa Rica were excluded because our research project and the data collection had started before both officially became OECD members (April 2020 respective May 2021). In addition, data on Columbia and Costa Rica are missing in most additional indices applied in this paper.
6. https://www.imf.org/external/datamapper/GGXWDG_NGDP@WEO/OEMDC/ADVEC/WEOWORLD
7. In order to have all the dependent variables on the same scale, the (reversed) debt variable – with values ranging from 1 to 233 – was normalized into the 100 point scale using the following formula (known as the min- max normalization method): $z_i = (x_i - \min(x)) / (\max(x) - \min(x)) * 100$. For instance, Austria in 1995 had a score of reversed debt equal to 171. Accordingly, the calculation is: $171-1 / 233-1*100 = 73$.
8. The Accountability Index measures how accountable governments are to its citizens, civil society, media and state institutions, the index measures the level of accountability as

- ‘constraints on the government’s use of political power through requirements for justification for its actions and potential sanctions’ (Coppedge et al., 2020a).
9. The HUMAN surveys project has combined several national public opinion surveys in its merged database, which contains data from 18 million people regarding their opinion on e.g. social trust and satisfaction with democracy (<https://humansurveys.org/>). The data is collected from the *The Quality of Government OECD dataset (version Jan19)*, which contains the HUMAN surveys data on satisfaction with democracy.
 10. The ESS round nine uses a scale from 0-10 when measuring ‘... on the whole, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in [country]?’ with 0 indicating ‘extremely dissatisfied’ and 10 ‘extremely satisfied’ (ESS, 2018). To make the ESS data comparable with the HUMAN surveys project data we recoded the scale to ‘0-100’. This was done by calculating a country’s aggregated mean per year and multiplying it with 10. The same principle was used for the recoding of the EVS/WVS data. The EVS/WVS joint dataset measures on a scale from 1-10 ‘how satisfied are you with how the political system is functioning in your country these days?’ With 1 indicating ‘not satisfied at all’ and 10 ‘completely satisfied’ (EVS/WVS, 2021). The formulation of the variable is not perfect for our study when it refers to the ‘political system’ instead of ‘democracy’. However, all the countries in our analysis are democracies so it is safe to assume respondents have had democracy in mind when answering the question. Pew Research Centre displays in percentage the number of respondents who are ‘satisfied’ or ‘not satisfied’ with democracy in their country in the report *Democratic Rights Popular Globally but Commitment to Them Not Always Strong* (Pew Research Centre, 2020a, 2020b).
 11. We multiplied the original scale with 100 and recoded it to 0-100.
 12. Problems due to limited data regarding social mobility has been noted in previous studies (Blanden & Machin, 2008; Blanden et al., 2005). However, previous research conducted in the beginning of the 21st century in e.g., the UK have observed that there has not been much change, if any, regarding the development of social mobility for recent cohorts (Blanden & Machin, 2008). A report published by the OECD in 2018, showed that it would take on average 4.5 generations for people ‘born in low-income families to approach the mean income in their society’, in France and Germany – six generations (OECD, 2018).
 13. Although, one might assume that Type IV society is ‘better’ than Type I, it is hard to say whether Type II or III have higher ranking. Hence, the independent variables are regarded as categorical and not as ordinal.
 14. Before conducting the one-way ANOVA, we determine if our data is normally distributed and test for homogeneity of variances. As assessed by Shapiro-Wilk test of normality, system performance is partially normally distributed (Type I and type III); democratic performance is normally distributed except for type I; and social performance is not normally distributed except for type IV (see Appendix 2). Despite this partial non-normality, we proceed with the one-way ANOVA since it is considered to be robust to non-normality (Delaney & Maxwell, 2004; Lix et al., 1996). Using Levene’s test for equality of variances, we observe that homogeneity of variances is met for system and democratic performance but violated for social performance (see appendix 3).
 15. One word about significance: Our data is not based on a random sample of countries but covers most OECD countries. It is accordingly rather comprehensive for consolidated democracies. Thus, the information on significance provided in our statistical analysis below has to be interpreted with caution.
 16. Australia (AU) Austria (AT) Belgium (BE) Canada (CA) Chile (CL) Czech Republic (CZ) Denmark (DK) Estonia (EE) Finland (FI) France (FR) Germany (DE) Greece (GR) Hungary (HU) Iceland (IS) Ireland (IE) Israel (IL) Italy (IT) Japan (JP) South Korea (KR) Latvia (LV) Lithuania (LT) Luxembourg (LU) Mexico (MX) Netherlands (NL) New Zealand (NZ) Norway (NO) Poland (PL) Portugal (PT) Slovakia (SK) Slovenia (SI) Spain (ES) Sweden (SE) Switzerland (CH) Turkey (TR) United Kingdom (GB) United States of America (US).

17. The overall mean distributions for system, democratic, and social performances are presented as boxplots in appendix 1. Least variation is present within the social performance, which also has the highest number of outliers. In contrast, there are only two outliers in the domain of democratic performance. Although, outliers are not ideal from a statistical perspective, we keep them in the analysis since there is no good reason to reject them.
18. Welch's $F(3, 54.74) = 5.16, p = .003$.
19. Since we have specific hypotheses about the differences between the groups of our independent variables, one-way ANOVA with custom contrasts is performed as opposed to post-hoc testing in the absence of pre-formulated hypotheses.
20. This and all the following p -values are adjusted p -values: original alpha level divided by the number of comparisons (2).

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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