



PATHWAYS
MEANINGFULLY ENGAGING COMMUNITIES

**PEOPLE
POWERED**



**A messy participatory
process is indicative
of democracy at its
best.**

The journey from Kenya to Mexico was demanding both physically and mentally. 22 hours in transit takes mettle and gusto, but after days of travel, we, Njeri Muthaura, the Youth and women associate and Solomon Kibue, director-finance from Pathways Policy Institute, finally arrived at our destination on May 6th, 2023. Our core purpose in Mexico was to attend the People Powered convening on Participatory democracy.

As members of the global hub for participatory democracy called People Powered, we had the opportunity to join 80 other implementers and researchers from around the world to discuss practical action on participatory and deliberative democracy. The objective of the convening was to network with other organizations working on *participatory and deliberative democracy* and share positive practices from the implementation of participatory budgeting in municipalities while learning new mechanisms for citizen engagement and innovative tools.

At Pathways Policy Institute, we firmly believe that empowering people and giving them a voice in the decision-making processes is crucial for creating a fair and just society. Throughout the conference, we delved into the concept of participatory democracy and discovered various methods that promote citizen engagement and active participation. One highlight was participatory budgeting, which we

learned from the Institute of Public Finance Kenya (IPFK) - James Muraguri.

This innovative approach allowed community members to directly influence how public funds were allocated, ensuring their needs and priorities were taken into account.





We also studied participatory policy-making, drawing inspiration from a case study conducted in Senegal by Jon Steven. This approach involved involving citizens in the formulation of policies, enabling them to contribute their knowledge and experiences to shape the decisions that affected their lives. Another fascinating aspect we explored was participatory theatres, which originated in Brazil in 1992.

Kat Rubin shared the story of how community theatres were used to identify, develop, and enact new legislation. This creative approach brought people together to discuss important issues and propose solutions through artistic expression.

Throughout our journey, we encountered various examples of participatory democracy in action. We learned about citizen juries and assemblies from Caroline Vernailen, where participants were selected to deliberate on specific topics, present recommendations, and take collective action. The Climate Assembly in France was particularly inspiring, as recommendations were taken without filtering, ensuring that the voices of citizens were directly reflected in policy decisions. We were also awe-inspired by the power of constitutional referendums, as seen in Ireland, where the entire nation had the opportunity to vote on important constitutional matters.





Additionally, we saw the potential for our Learning Management System (LMS) to contribute to the creation of a digital participation platform, where people could come together virtually to discuss and collaborate on various social and political issues. This platform could help bridge geographical barriers and ensure that diverse voices were heard.

As we concluded our journey, all participants acknowledged the importance of regional hubs in different parts of the world, including Africa, to promote participatory democracy. We emphasized the need for adequate funding to cover administrative costs, as this would be essential for sustaining and expanding such initiatives. With newfound knowledge and inspiration, we returned from Mexico, eager to share our insights and drive meaningful change in our communities. The journey had been long, but the destination was well worth it. We are determined to advocate for participatory democracy and work towards a more inclusive and socially just society.

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