

Presentation

Pablo Rodríguez Bilella | Esteban Tapella

Citation

Rodríguez Bilella, P. & Tapella, E. (2026). Presentation. In P. Rodríguez Bilella & E. Tapella (Eds.) *Evaluation, democracy and transformation: Experiences of participatory evaluation in Latin America*. Vientosur.

EvalParticipativa is the Community of Practice and Learning in Participatory Evaluation for Latin America and the Caribbean, born out of interest in evaluation and its growth in the regional and global context. It is a joint initiative between the *Social and Environmental Labour Studies Programme (PETAS)* at the National University of San Juan (Argentina) and the Focelac+ project for the promotion of a culture of evaluation and learning in Latin America with global reach, run by the German Institute for Evaluation in Development Cooperation (DEval).

The last few decades have seen an increase in theoretical and methodological production, as well as the emergence of national evaluation policies in countries on all continents, a growing institutionalisation of evaluation, and a process of consolidation of various initiatives aimed at professionalising this practice. In addition, the *Sustainable Development Goals* reflect a new agenda of priorities for evaluation at the global level, which includes the leading role of civil society in these efforts and highlights the participatory dimension as a central aspect of evaluation practice. Thus, concepts such as *participation*, *accompaniment*, *stakeholder perspective* and others have become recurrent in the current work of the evaluation field.

The emergence of EvalParticipativa involved the creation of a novel space in the region (and one of the few globally) aimed at reflecting on the practice

of participatory evaluation, linking the cognitive component with the practical dimension, aimed at generating knowledge, learning and concrete proposals in this field of evaluation. EvalParticipativa seeks to promote the inclusive involvement of civil society in evaluation processes based on three main strategic objectives:

- to strengthen and consolidate a community of practice and learning around participatory evaluation in Latin America and the Caribbean;
- to facilitate the multiplication and institutionalisation of this evaluation approach through the development of written and audiovisual materials on experiences and lessons learned from practice in the region;
- to promote training processes on participatory evaluation through seminars, courses for facilitators, and in-person and virtual forums with representatives from civil society organisations, the public and private sectors, and academia, as well as the creation of academic certification programmes for training in participatory evaluation.

This book is the natural continuation of *Sowing and Harvesting – Participatory Evaluation Handbook* (Tapella *et al.*, 2022), developed within the framework of the First Gathering on Participatory Evaluation Experiences, held in Quito (Ecuador) at the end of 2019, and built on the knowledge and learning of around twenty colleagues involved in such processes in different Latin American countries. *Sowing and Harvesting* presents conceptual and methodological considerations regarding participatory evaluation,

emphasising how to develop these processes and the role of facilitation, as well as the selection and use of appropriate tools for this approach. In other words, its focus was on providing ideas, guidelines and recommendations on how to carry out a high-quality participatory evaluation in concrete terms.

Since its publication and within the framework of EvalParticipativa's activities, this handbook has represented a unique conceptual and methodological construct, emerging from and for Latin America. In a short time, it became a key resource, a reference bibliography in training contexts, and an instrumental guide for facilitators of social participation evaluation processes. A diverse range of actors, practitioners, and academics interested in the subject thus gained access to a manual that addresses the most relevant issues surrounding the what, why, and how of participatory evaluation.

Following the widespread dissemination and use of this handbook, also published in English, there was growing demand to learn about how various participatory evaluation experiences had been effectively and concretely implemented in the region. New questions arose, such as: with which actors, under what conditions, with what results, and what lessons were learned from these processes? Thus, in order to answer these questions, a study was undertaken to report on experiences with varying degrees of development of social participation evaluation in different contexts in Latin America. This book is the result of a rich collective and international research process.

Its creation involved identifying and convening individuals who have taken part in participatory evaluation experiences in order to present these cases alongside reflections on the factors that facilitate and hinder this type of evaluation. The book's various chapters present lessons learned, as well as recommendations and suggestions that can inform the global debate on the inclusion and involvement of stakeholders in evaluation processes.

Chapter 1, developed by the coordinators of this book, discusses the importance and growth that the field of evaluation in general has experienced globally, as well as the importance that evaluative approaches involving greater participation by civil society in particular have acquired. Participatory evaluation and its principles in the Latin American context are briefly presented, and the key aspects that characterise it are introduced. The chapters of this book are based on this analysis, addressing both some criticisms and weaknesses of the approach and the responses that arise as a corollary of the experiences analysed, emphasising the potential of evaluation with social participation to strengthen democratic processes.

The following chapters present different cases, with the first three corresponding to Chile. In **Chapter 2**, Rodrigo Quiroz Saavedra examines the evaluation of a programme aimed at promoting self-management among people with intellectual disabilities through the application of a measurement instrument composed of three dimensions of Participation: control over the evaluation process, diversity of

stakeholders, and extent of involvement. In **Chapter 3**, Fernanda Arriaza introduces the experience of the organisation Techo Internacional with a mechanism called *Mesas de Trabajo (Working Groups)*, which are formal and democratic meeting forums led by local leaders and young volunteers, and the participatory evaluation of one of these forums in a working-class neighbourhood in Santiago, Chile. In **Chapter 4**, Carmen Luz Sánchez, Catalina Valdés, and Camila Gallagher present the *ex-dure* or process evaluation of an inclusive social development experience of the Servicio País programme in a largely rural commune in the Valparaíso region.

In **Chapter 5**, Priscilla Bacalhau, Guilherme Bayma, Gabriela Lacerda and Nicole Mourad Pereira introduce the executive evaluation carried out by the Municipality of Recife (Brazil) with technical advice from *the Center for Learning on Evaluation and Results for Lusophone Africa and Brazil (CLEAR LAB)* of the Compaz Network (Community Centres for Peace), a programme aimed at tackling violence and promoting social inclusion through community centres. Also in the Brazilian context, Esmeralda Correa Macana and Rayssa Deps Bolelli present and discuss in **Chapter 6** the lessons learned in the construction of a Comprehensive Development Evaluation framework carried out with the active participation of community-based social organisations in different regions of the country.

Chapter 7, written by Mónica Ballezá, Suguey Sa-lazar, and Selene Michi from Evalúa Jalisco, in the Secretariat of Planning and Citizen Participation of the Estate of

Jalisco in Mexico, reports on one of the first participatory evaluations in the country, addressing the case of the Mi Pasaje Programme, which provides free tickets for public transport to older adults, students and people with disabilities. Also in Mexico, Janett Salvador discusses in Chapter 8 the disruptive commitment of the Zacatecas State Government to incorporate participatory evaluations of three public interventions in 2020: a strategy for gender equality, a project for the social prevention of violence, and another focused on the citizen participation component of a drinking water, drainage, and sanitation programme.

Chapter 9, written by Karol Cruz Ugalde, Eddy García Serrano, and Juan Murciano, presents an evaluation of the Programme for the Promotion of the Autonomy of Persons with Disabilities in Costa Rica. The first two authors are civil servants and the third is a consultant and academic, they have integrated their perspectives to review an evaluation process based on the *Participatory Evaluation Guide* published in 2019 by the Costa Rican Ministry of Planning (MIDEPLAN).

Chapter 10, by Carmen Lucía Jaramillo and Joselyn Corrales, is also a joint reflection between the facilitating evaluator and the civil servant requesting the evaluation, in this case focusing on the design of the participatory evaluation of a public service for the elderly in Ecuador.

Chapter 11, by Ángela Báez-Silva Arias, Helene Bradburn, Marina Apgar, Leslie Wingender Stephen Gray, Alejandra Solarte Cruz and Gloria Paulina Góngora Herrera present a participatory evaluation of a peacebuilding initiative in Colombia, comparing the implementation of a systemic action research project with a capacity-building process, highlighting the lessons learned in light of the use of the

inclusive rigour framework, which they present in the same chapter.

Chapter 12, by Esteban Tapella and Pablo Rodríguez Bilella, focuses on the capacity-building strategy in participatory evaluation that the EvalParticipativa initiative has generated in the region in its first six years of development, presenting the training modalities deployed, as well as the different instruments developed. Finally, in **Chapter 13**, Andrea Meneses reports on the key milestones, lessons learned and challenges that have arisen in this area during the 10 years of cooperation in the region between the German Institute for Development Evaluation (DEval) and the Ministry of National Planning and Economic Policy of Costa Rica (Mideplan) with the shared objective of strengthening evaluation capacities in Latin America and the Caribbean, with a clear emphasis on evaluation methodologies involving social participation.

As a whole, the book seeks to provide a critical, comprehensive and practical review of the application of participatory approaches to the evaluation of interventions implemented by both the public sector and NGOs and civil society

organisations in different countries in the region. Its authors, intellectuals and academics, public officials and programme and project managers, members of evaluation teams and independent consultants, have devoted their reflective talents to reviewing their practice and highlighting its most valuable aspects, offering recommendations to those who want to learn and improve their evaluation skills.

The authors of the different chapters of the book were free to choose the mode of expression they considered appropriate, choosing the language that would enable them to describe reality as it is, using the various resources available in the language so as not to discriminate against people, while prioritising clarity in communication. Thus, throughout the book, you will find that, when possible, gender-exclusive pronouns have been avoided and generic, collective or impersonal terms have been favoured.

Throughout this book links have been included to facilitate access to reference material available online. Please note that some content may be geographically blocked or unavailable in some regions, in such cases a VPN may be needed to access it.