

# Lessons From Abroad: What US Policymakers Can Learn from International Examples of Democratic Governance

The passage of unprecedented legislation over the last two years, such as the Inflation Reduction Act and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, presents a chance to fundamentally transform our economy while combating the grave threat of climate change. But with authoritarianism on the rise at home and abroad, it’s more important than ever that large-scale attempts to build critical infrastructure, make important investments, and regulate key players along the way are carried out democratically.

This is no small undertaking. But real-world experiments with democratic governance show us that it’s possible to meaningfully include public input across governance structures, and that doing so can actually strengthen the effectiveness and efficiency of important projects. A recent Roosevelt Institute issue brief explores six international examples of democratic governance and the lessons they provide for US policymakers interested in crafting robust mechanisms for public participation throughout the policymaking process.

## Democratic Mechanisms in Action

	Description	Democratic Mechanisms
<b>Ireland’s Citizens’ Assembly</b>	In 2016, the Irish parliament created a permanent Citizens’ Assembly—a deliberative convening of randomly selected citizens—to consider key political issues and draft recommendations for lawmakers. Since then, the Citizens’ Assembly has weighed in on a range of issues, from recommending that abortion be legalized, to proposing mitigation measures that would combat the climate crisis.	Citizens’ assembly, also known as “deliberative mini-publics,” whereby a body of citizens comes together to deliberate certain issues

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<b>Taiwan's vTaiwan</b>	In 2014, Taiwan citizens created vTaiwan, a crowdsourced, open-source online platform designed for citizen deliberation, consensus-building, and voting on various policy issues. Consisting of four stages—proposal, opinion, reflection, and legislation—the vTaiwan platform has helped resolve important regulatory issues, like how to bring rideshare services like Uber in line with the existing taxi industry.	Online polling and crowdsourcing platform
<b>Paris's Water Remunicipalization and Water Observatory</b>	Eau de Paris is the city's public water utility. It came back under public control in 2010. Along with remunicipalization, Eau de Paris also reorganized the water utility's governance structure by establishing a multi-stakeholder board of directors and the Paris Water Observatory, an autonomous institution that serves as a platform for oversight, transparent data sharing, and community debate.	Public ownership Multi-stakeholder board of directors Autonomous citizen oversight board
<b>Spain's Mondragón Corporation</b>	The Mondragón Corporation is a voluntary association of 95 independent, worker cooperatives. Employing more than 80,000 people in Spain, Mondragón's cooperatives exist across a range of sectors, though worker-owned industrial enterprises are particularly relevant. With no outside shareholders, each member-owner is part of the corporation's general assembly and enjoys equal decision-making power.	Member ownership Worker-composed general assembly with all workers holding equal decision-making power Member-elected governing council

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<b>Germany's KfW Bank</b>	Germany's Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW) is a government-owned public development bank that functions as a key player in the country's industrial planning efforts. In contrast to private banks, KfW's main goal is to offer low-interest loans and grants for activities that advance public interests. The bank has been especially critical for the country's renewable energy revolution, with more than half of its promotional business focused on climate action and environmental protection.	Public ownership Multi-stakeholder board of directors
<b>Costa Rica's Banco Popular</b>	Costa Rica's Banco Popular y de Desarrollo Comunal is a hybrid, public-cooperative national bank that invests in micro-, small-, and medium-sized enterprises. About 20 percent of all Costa Ricans hold shares in the bank. Moreover, the bank has a Worker's Assembly—a 290-member body of democratically elected worker-owners—and endorses a “triple bottom line” model, which goes beyond the profit-maximization paradigm by also emphasizing environmental and social well-being.	Public ownership Worker ownership Board of democratically elected worker-owners



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