

Evolving Practices of Citizenship amid Institutional Reform

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The *Debates* section in this issue explores the ways in which political institutional reform has altered the manner in which citizenship is expressed and practiced.

The third wave of democratization in Latin America has been accompanied by reforms in representative as well as participatory institutions. Countries have followed diverse paths. In some cases, pacts among the elites materialized during processes of transition. In other cases, bottom-up processes of social mobilization allowed for radical transformations of the political systems—usually through the approval of new constitutions. In some cases, sequential modest reforms have allowed political actors to adapt institutions to changing environments.

In all these processes, three main issues are at stake. First, reformers have scrutinized representative institutions, such as electoral systems, and the effectiveness with which they channel and aggregate citizen interests. Second, political and social actors have addressed the question of empowering citizens within the decision-making process. Debates on the promotion of direct mechanisms of citizen participation are central at local and national levels and reflect bottom-up approaches toward democratic politics. Finally, in several countries organized indigenous groups have advanced a political agenda concerning self-determination and cultural and political recognition and autonomy. Thus, institutional shifts are reflecting new democratic challenges in a highly dynamic political landscape. ■