The Two Faces of Institutional Innovation
Promises and Limits of Democratic Participation in Latin America
Advances in Critical Policy Studies series
Leonardo Avritzer, Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG), Brazil

This book evaluates democratic innovations to allow a full analysis of the different practices that have emerged recently in Latin America. These innovations, often viewed in a positive light by a large section of democratic theorists, engendered the idea that all innovations are democratic and all democratic innovations are able to foster citizenship – a view challenged by this work. The book also evaluates the expansion of innovation to the field of judicial institutions. It will benefit democratic theorists by presenting a realistic analysis of the positive and negative aspects of democratic innovation.

‘It is a truism to say that to understand democracy one must go beyond elections and the activities of the political class, and delve into the entrails of the bureaucracy and the judiciary. The execution is complicated, because it requires navigating a forest of rules and regulations and dissecting numerous small-scale decisions, but this book offers excellent examples of how to go about this task.’

‘Avritzer’s groundbreaking book demonstrates how different trajectories of innovations affect both democratic politics and the rule of law. The book highlights how democratic innovations expand citizens’ voice and broaden the public sphere. In contrast, innovations initiated with the judicial branch not only limit democratic practices, but also make it more difficult to craft a functioning rule of law because there are few accountability checks over judicial actions. Avritzer’s book makes an excellent contribution to debates on democratic politics and the rule of law in new democracies.’
– Brian Wampler, Boise State University, US

‘Most students of democratization since 1974 (myself included) were wrong and Leonardo Avritzer has proven us so. We assumed (and complained) that in these seventy or so cases, almost all of the effort in regime change was devoted to simply imitating preceding “real-existing democracies.” His book documents and analyzes an extraordinary variety of efforts at institutional innovation in these neo-democracies, mostly in Latin America (and especially in his native Brazil). It is enlightening reading for anyone studying democratization and obligatory reading for anyone interested in improving the quality of “real and recent existing” democracy.’
– Philippe C. Schmitter, European University Institute, Italy

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