Methodological Proposal for Follow-up Workshops

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Presentation

From May 5th to 9th, 2025, the continental meeting "Democracies Under Attack: From Crisis to Strategy" was held in Panajachel, Guatemala. This event provided a space for discussion on the regional political context and the courses of action that can be promoted to strengthen democracies and counter the rise of authoritarianism.

Thanks to this shared moment of exchange and reflection, we realized that there is a need to create spaces for collective analysis. As activists, we often tend to be reactive, responding to political and social crises. We don't have enough time to think what's happening to us and how to address it more strategically.

For this reason, as part of the follow-up efforts to the meeting, we propose this methodological model based on collective deliberation. It is offered so that organizations and social movements, if they wish, can carry out these moments of reflection within their collectives.

Three workshops are proposed, each with exercises that will allow for a dialogue on the challenges facing democracy, as well as the role that social movements and organizations are playing in the face of the rise of authoritarianism. Flexible methodologies are proposed to be adapted to the needs of those facilitating these deliberative exercises within the organizations. The proposed methodologies are adapted from various facilitation and popular education manuals. The systematization of the Democracies Under Attack meeting can also be used as a supporting document for the workshops.

We propose that these follow-up workshops be held in preparation for a possible virtual reunion following the event held in Panajachel, Guatemala. At this reunion, we hope that organizations, regardless of how they organized their follow-up workshops, can share their collective reflections on the following three questions:

- **What challenges to democracy are emerging or re-emerging in my country?**
- **What strategies can be proposed to counter the challenges facing the hemisphere's democracies?**
- **What factors could facilitate or hinder the implementation of these strategies?**

If you have any questions or would like to comment on this document or other topics, please contact us at focoguatemala@gmail.com.

Workshop 1: Democracy in context

Duration: 4.5 hours

Main objective: Analyze the challenges facing democracies in the hemisphere in the face of surging authoritarianism.

Secondary objectives: 1) Identify the challenges facing democracies in our countries; 2) Map the political and social actors with authoritarian attitudes and describe the relationships between them.

*** To provide context for the discussion, we recommend sharing the links to the panels that took place at the event with the group participating in the workshops. Ideally, each participant should be able to listen to them before the workshop.*

- CONVERSATION 1 - Current political context: https://focoguatemala.org/conversatorio-1/
- CONVERSATION 2 - Practices that undermine democracy: https://focoguatemala.org/conversatorio-2/

Activities:

1. **Start of the day**

GOAL	Outline the activities for the day.
TIME	10 minutes
DESCRIPTION	The participants are welcomed; the day's activities and methodological approach are explained.

2. **Presentation of guidelines for a pleasant coexistence**

GOAL	Ensure a space for respectful dialogue.
TIME	10 minutes
MATERIALS	Rules of coexistence
DESCRIPTION	The rules of coexistence previously agreed upon by the facilitation team are presented. They are validated with the participants, and any others that are proposed are added. It is recommended to keep them posted somewhere visible throughout the day.

3. Analysis groups - Challenges to the democracies that are (re)emerging in my country

GOAL	Discuss in groups to reach a consensus on the challenges that democracies are facing.
TIME	1 hour and 10 minutes
MATERIALS	Sheets, markers, flipcharts
DESCRIPTION	**Formation of analysis groups** The goal is to create a snowball effect. The discussion begins with individual analysis, then moves on to small groups and then larger groups. At each point, the agreed-upon ideas should be written down on flipcharts. The question to guide the discussions is: **What challenges to democracies are emerging or re-emerging in my country?** The groups join together and exchange ideas according to the following logic (the example below is for a workshop of 40 people, but it can be adapted to the number of participants in each organization): ● Presentation of instructions (10 minutes) ● Time to reflect and write responses <u>individually</u> (5 minutes) ● 1st moment (10 minutes): 20 groups of 2 people ● 2nd moment (15 minutes): 10 groups of 4 people ● 3rd moment (30 minutes): 5 groups of 8 people It is important for facilitators to visit all groups throughout the exercise to ensure that discussions stay on topic. Each group creates an agreed-upon list of identified challenges, and ideas are combined as the groups become larger, taking into account consensus and disagreements. The point is not just to add elements, but to also analyze and prioritize. In the third phase, each group should write down the agreed-upon challenges to democracies on a flipchart paper and prioritize two, which will be used for the next exercise.

4. Group photography

GOAL	To bodily and collectively express the results of the discussion on challenges to democracies.

TIME	20 minutes
DESCRIPTION	This exercise is done with the same groups as the previous exercise. For each of the two main challenges prioritized by the group, create a group photo as a static scene. All members of the group participate, except for two who are designated by each group to explain the scenes later. *For example,* *if they determine that criminalization, and repression of activists are two of the challenges to be represented, the group members could simulate a rigged trial and an arrest during protest.*

5. Presentation of the collective photographs

GOAL	Synthesize a general list of challenges based on the lists created by each group
TIME	1 hour
DESCRIPTION	Each group takes the stage to present their collective photographs. In each scene, the two designated people explain the elements that make up the two challenges facing democracies. In addition to the two prioritized challenges, each group presents the other agreed-upon elements in their lists. Remember to document the process to systematize. Each group will have 10 minutes

6. Mapping of political and social actors with authoritarian attitudes

GOAL	Identify political and social actors with authoritarian attitudes and describe the relationships between them.
TIME	1 hour and 10 minutes
MATERIALS	Markers, flipcharts or the printed map, tape, post-its, pens
DESCRIPTION	The 5 groups of 8 people are formed again. Each group maps the political and social actors who exhibit authoritarian attitudes. They must choose a representative to present the mapping in the afterwards. The stages of the exercise are as follows: ● Presentation of instructions and drawing of the map diagram (10 minutes) ● Public Sector Analysis (15 minutes)

	● Civil society analysis (15 minutes) ● Private Sector Analysis (15 minutes) ● Analysis of international actors (15 minutes) The map diagram of actors is used (found in the appendix materials, or it can be drawn). The map is composed of three circles, each larger than the other. The closer the political actor is to the center, the greater their proximity and influence on our organization or movement. The circles are crossed by quadrants that divide the analysis by sector. As an additional exercise, relationships between political actors can be identified by using solid or green lines connecting actors who have a good relationship with each other, and dotted or red lines when the relationship between them is not good.

7. **Stakeholder mapping presentation**

GOAL	Discuss the mapping of actors that was developed by the different groups.
TIME	30 minutes
MATERIALS	Flipcharts with the mapping of actors.
DESCRIPTION	In plenary session, the stage is organized to carry out a conversation with one representative from each group, led by a facilitator. It begins with a volunteer group, which presents its mapping. The other representatives then comment on what commonalities and differences are in their own mappings, what actors are missing, or what other conclusions they have reached. It is recommended that this plenary session be recorded and the flipcharts collected for systematization.

Workshop 2: Exploring organizational experiences and possibilities

Duration: 3.5 hours

Main objective: Generate strategies to counter the challenges that democracies are facing.

Secondary objectives: 1) Collectively explore possible strategies in the face of the rise of authoritarianism; 2) Discuss the positions held by different actors in the face of surging authoritarianism.

*** To provide context for the discussion, we recommend sharing links to the panels that took place at the event with the group participating in the workshops. Ideally, each participant should be able to listen to them before each workshop.*

- CONVERSATION 3 - Experiences of democratic alternatives: https://focoguatemala.org/conversatorio-3/
- CONVERSATION 4 - Media: https://focoguatemala.org/conversatorio-4/

Activities:

1. **Start of the day**

GOAL	Outline the activities for the day.
TIME	15 minutes
MATERIALS	List of guidelines in a presentation or written on flipcharts.
DESCRIPTION	The participants are welcomed; the day's activities and methodological approach are explained. A reminder of the guidelines for a pleasant coexistence is given.

2. **Quadrants of democracy**

GOAL	Discuss the assessment of different actors in the face of the surging authoritarianism.
TIME	40 minutes
MATERIALS	Tape, Printouts of the words: "Very good, good, bad, very bad", cell phone for recording video, sheet to write down the results

DESCRIPTION	Form three groups, each appointing a facilitator. Using adhesive tape, draw a cross or Cartesian plane on the floor, creating four spaces or quadrants. Stick the following labels on each space: very good, good, bad, very bad (see example in appendix). The facilitator in each group asks a question. All participants position themselves in the quadrant they find most appropriate to answer the question. After this, participants discuss their answers in more detail. **The questions are:** ● Do you think the population is well informed about the risks of authoritarianism? ● How do you think the institutions charged with maintaining democratic balance are working to prevent the spread of authoritarianism? ● How has your organization reacted to the rise of authoritarianism? ● How do you assess the role of the media in strengthening democracy against authoritarianism? ● Do you think communities are well organized to resist authoritarian practices? The facilitator should record the number of participants in each quadrant on their sheet and encourage discussion with questions such as: Why did you choose that answer? What factors led us to this point? How can this situation be improved?

3. Presentation of the quadrants

GOAL	Discuss the assessment of actors that was developed by each group.
TIME	30 minutes
MATERIALS	Flipcharts with the assessments of actors.
DESCRIPTION	In plenary session, the stage is set up for a discussion with one representative from each group, led by a facilitator. It begins with a volunteer group presenting their assessments. The other representatives then comment on what commonalities and differences are in their own assessments, what actors are missing, or what other conclusions they have reached. It is recommended that this plenary session be recorded and the flipcharts collected for systematization.

4. Group discussion with rotations - Strategies to counter the challenges facing democracies

GOAL	Deliberate in groups and generate strategies to counter the challenges facing democracies.
TIME	1 hour and 10 minutes
MATERIALS	Printed sheet with the challenges to democracy identified in the first workshop. Preferably, each group is given different challenges.
DESCRIPTION	**Pollination** It is recommended to recreate the same groups as the previous workshop, although it is also possible to form new ones. Each group should appoint a facilitator and a note-taker. These two people will be responsible for "cross-pollinating" the ideas (i.e., taking the ideas to other groups). Each group receives a sheet with some of the challenges to democracy identified in the first workshop. The goal is to come up with possible strategies to address these challenges and write them down on a flipchart. At the end of the first discussion, the two chosen participants move to another group. There, they present the results of the first discussion. The members of this new group enrich the analysis with new ideas. At the end of the second discussion, a third rotation takes place, where the ideas from the other two discussions are shared, and a final group deliberation begins. The main question for guiding the discussions is: ● **What strategies can be proposed to counter the challenges facing the hemisphere's democracies?** Time distribution: ● Presentation of instructions and distribution of challenges (10 minutes) ● Initial discussion (25 minutes) ● 1st rotation and second discussion (20 minutes) ● 2nd rotation and third discussion (15 minutes)

5. Presentation of discussion results

GOAL	Share the strategies enriched in the pollination exercise.

TIME	50 minutes
DESCRIPTION	The two selected individuals for each group present in a plenary session the strategies identified by their group plus the comments or additions made by the other groups during the pollination exercise. It is recommended that these presentations be recorded and the flipcharts collected for systematization.

Workshop 3: Prioritization and evaluation of actions to follow

Duration: 2.5 hours

Main objective: Evaluate and refine potential courses of action for organizations to pursue in response to the challenges posed by the crisis of democracies in our countries.

Secondary objectives: 1) Prioritize the strategies to be pursued; 2) Analyze the feasibility of the prioritized strategies.

** To provide context for the discussion, we recommend sharing the link to the panel that took place at the event with the group participating in the workshops. Ideally, each participant should be able to listen to it before each workshop.

- CONVERSATION 5 - Future Perspectives and Reflections: https://focoguatemala.org/conversatorio-5/

Activities:

1. **Start of the day**

GOAL	Outline the activities for the day.
TIME	15 minutes
MATERIALS	List of guidelines in a presentation or written on flipcharts.
DESCRIPTION	The participants are welcomed; the day's activities and methodological approach are explained. A reminder of the guidelines for a pleasant coexistence is given.

2. **Prioritization by "point-ocracy"**

GOAL	Prioritize strategies to be developed.
TIME	30 minutes
MATERIALS	Flipcharts, stickers or post-its
DESCRIPTION	This exercise is done in plenary session. The list of strategies that came out of the previous workshop is presented. These strategies should be written on flipcharts with space to vote on each one. Stickers or markers are also distributed for voting. The

	total number of points (stickers) for each person will be half plus one of the listed strategies (if there are 10 strategies, there will be 6 points for each person). After distributing the stickers, participants must vote simultaneously. Each participant can decide whether to use all their points on a single option or divide them into different options. The strategies with the most points at the end will be the prioritized ones.

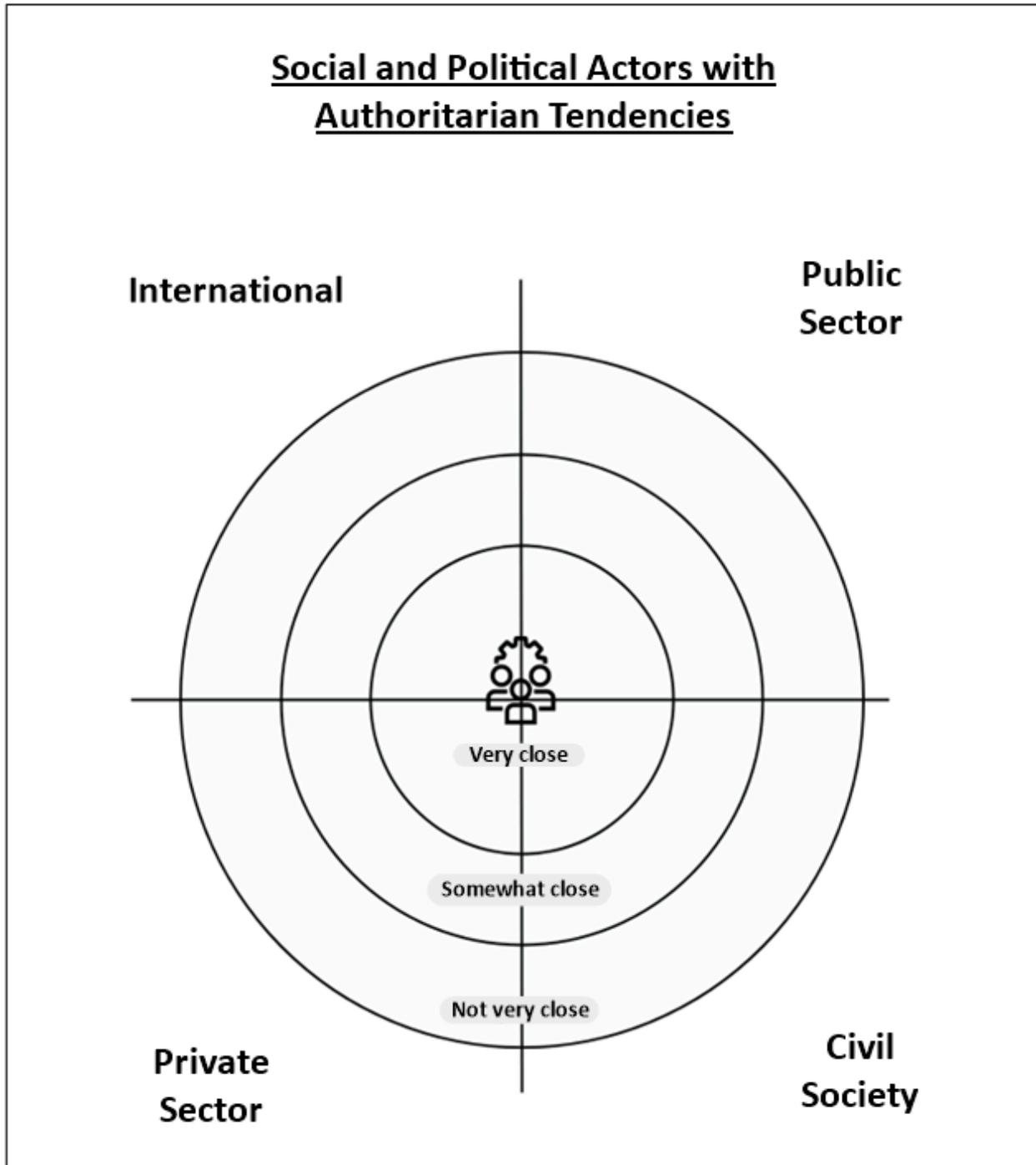### 3. Group discussions - 4 hats to deepen the strategies of social movements and organizations

GOAL	Delve deeper into the prioritized strategies and analyze their viability.
TIME	45 minutes
DESCRIPTION	Three to five strategies with the highest scores in the previous exercise are selected, and each group is assigned one strategy. They analyze their assigned strategy from different perspectives, or "hats," which can be distributed among the members. The method for analyzing each hat is as follows: ● **White Hat:** Identifies good practices its own or of other organizations that are worth taking into account, continuing or reinforcing to implement the strategy. ● **Green Hat:** Proposes new or innovative practices that must be adopted in order to implement the strategy. ● **Red Hat:** Reflects on internal risks of the organization or bad practices that could hinder the strategy. ● **Orange Hat:** Analyzes external risks to the organization or the context that may reduce the effectiveness of the strategy.

4. Presentation of discussion results

GOAL	Share the strategies enriched by the hats exercise.
TIME	60 minutes
DESCRIPTION	People chosen from each group present their hat analysis to the plenary session. It is recommended that these presentations be recorded and the flipcharts collected for systematization.

Annex: Supporting material

Social and Political Actors with Authoritarian Tendencies

International

Public Sector

Very close

Somewhat close

Not very close

Private Sector

Civil Society

Workshop 2, Activity 2: Quadrants of democracy

Quadrants of Democracy

Very
good

Good

Bad

Very
bad