The analysis puts in contrast real democracy in Ecuador against the lack of democratic ideal, and the predominant idealization of a democracy inspired from imported institutional models. The review of the minimal components of institutional and normative polyarchy allows to see that limitations and instability of governments and rules of the game have not necessarily hindered the legitimization of democratic procedures in Ecuador. The latter have support from various quarters of society, specially through elections and concordance with Ecuadorian political system’s features, like regional equilibriums. Processes incompatible with norms gather recognition but contradictorily can also contribute to consolidate other democratic processes. Evolving institutions follow the dynamics of these democratic processes: search for social equality and obstruction of the oligarchical tendency. Relations between social conditions and the kind of political system are advantageous to understanding the type of polyarchy.