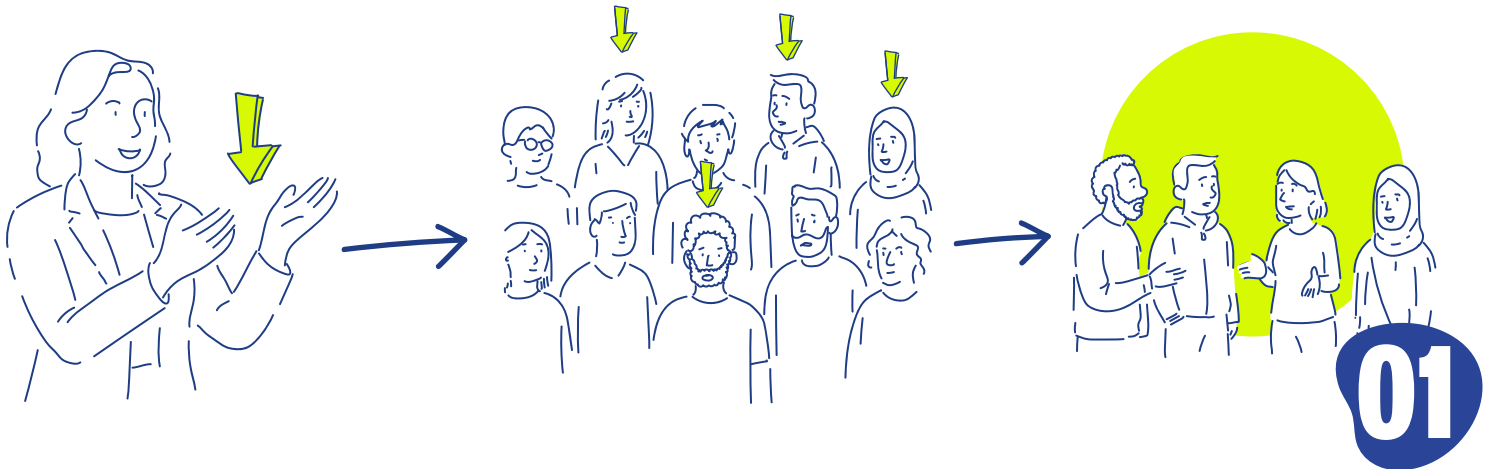


DEMOCRATIC INNOVATION



PROBLEM-BASED AD-HOC CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY

A temporary group of randomly selected citizens brought together by a government to deliberate about a **specific challenge**

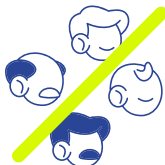


A STRENGTH:



Can be relatively rapidly convened to dive deep into issues and **produce practical recommendations**

A RISK:



1. **Disbands after delivering recommendations**, so people or organizations may not have a long-term memory of the assembly



2. Can sometimes be used symbolically, **without any commitment to follow through on outcomes**

Sources

Example efforts include a 2004 Canadian British Columbia Citizens' Assembly on electoral reform; the French Citizens' Convention on Climate; the French Citizens' Assembly on the End of Life.

DEMOCRATIC INNOVATION GRASSROOTS CITIZENS ASSEMBLIES



A temporary or long-standing
group of concerned citizens
self-organize to deliberate
about societal issues



A STRENGTH:



Citizens can set their **own agenda**
and run the process outside of
governmental institutions

A RISK:



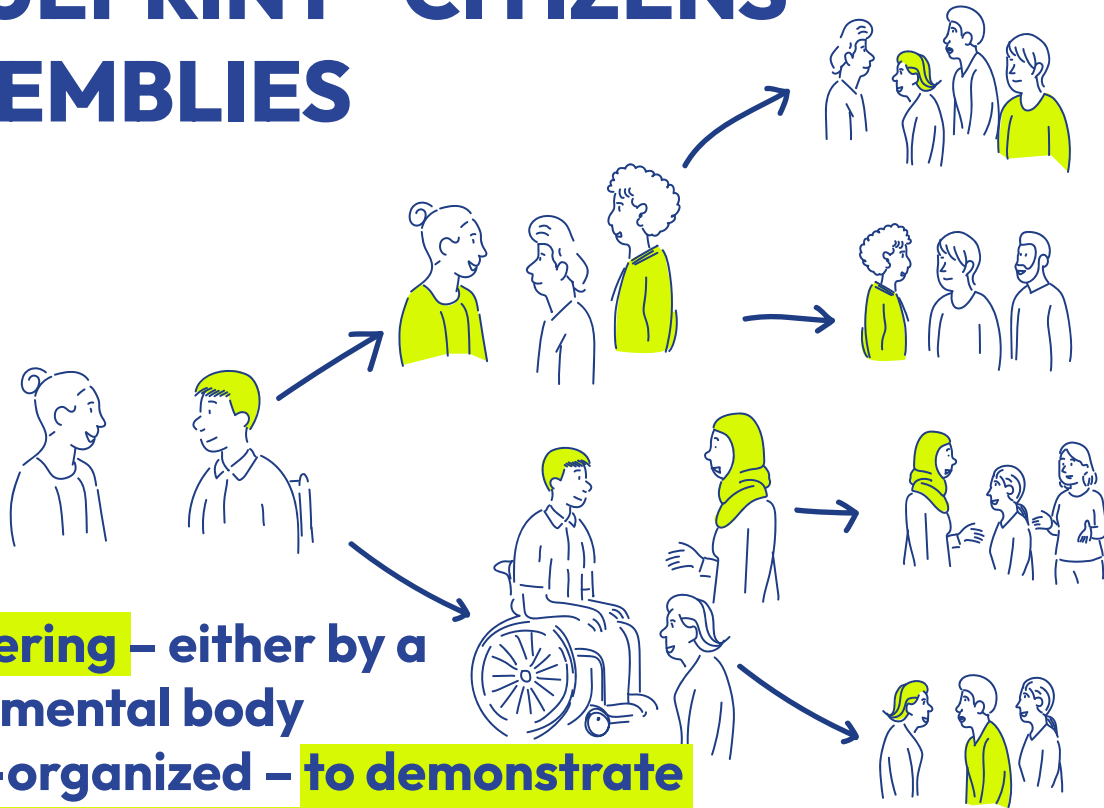
Can be challenging to fund and organize,
and may not **connect to policy or politics**

Sources

Belgian “We Need to talk” citizens’ assembly (2023).

DEMOCRATIC INNOVATION

“BLUEPRINT” CITIZENS ASSEMBLIES



A gathering – either by a governmental body or self-organized – **to demonstrate the value of the citizen assembly**

A STRENGTH:



1. Shows the public how **deliberative democracy can work in concrete and practical ways**



2. Can **support experimentation with methods and processes for future assemblies**

A RISK:



May not **connect to concrete or relevant policy areas**

Sources

Example efforts: The G1000 initiative in Belgium (2011), which entered public memory as a breakthrough in participatory democracy; the Democratic Odyssey seeking to do the same at a European scale for transnational issues.

DEMOCRATIC INNOVATION

INSTITUTIONAL CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY



**A long-standing group of randomly selected
citizens brought together by a government to
sustain ongoing citizen consultation**

A STRENGTH:



With a legal mandate and longer time-horizon, these groups **increase the likelihood citizen recommendations are considered and implemented**

A RISK:



Can be **challenging to sustain citizen recruitment** over time and permanently staff and fund support for such a body

Sources

Example efforts: The Ostbelgien Citizens' Council in Germany; the Climate Assembly in Brussels; the permanent citizens' assembly in Paris.

DEMOCRATIC INNOVATION

MIXED CITIZENS' ASSEMBLIES



A temporary or long-standing group of citizens and elected representatives are brought together to deliberate side-by-side



A STRENGTH:



Creates greater understanding between citizen and elected officials and increases likelihood that recommendations are considered

A RISK:



Requires highly skilled moderation, and politicians may use the process to score political points rather than to genuinely engage

Sources

Example efforts: the Irish Constitutional Convention of 66 citizens and 33 parliamentarians; the permanent Brussels deliberative committees (since 2021) of 45 randomly selected citizens and 15 members of Parliament.

DEMOCRATIC INNOVATION

PARTICIPATORY

BUDGETING



Citizens directly propose ideas, discuss, and shape public spending in facilitated discussion – may also occur with the assistance of digital technologies.



A STRENGTH:



May improve citizen engagement with and **trust in government** and **better reflect the community's needs and priorities.**

A RISK:



May **focus only on immediate short-term problems.**

Sources

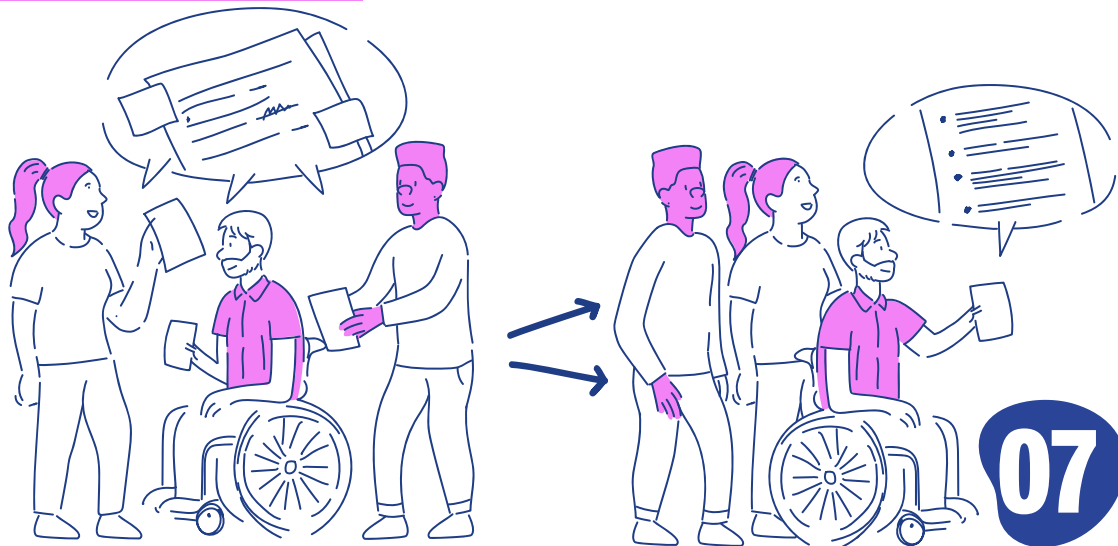
Experimented in Porto Alegre (Brazil) in the 1990s. According to the Participatory Budgeting World Atlas thousands of public authorities, particularly in cities, have developed participatory budgeting processes.

DEMOCRATIC INNOVATION

CITIZEN GUIDANCE PANELS



A group of randomly selected citizens deliberates in depth on a question and drafts an accessible, balanced statement summarizing key arguments that then get put to voters.



A STRENGTH:



Provides voters with **clear, citizen-drafted summaries** tempering emotional and partisan campaigns.

A RISK:



There is no guarantee voters will read the information or necessarily trust the advisory work.

Sources

Oregon, Washington Citizens' Initiative Review (since 2010); Sion, Switzerland (2022).

DEMOCRATIC INNOVATION

CHILDREN AND YOUTH

ASSEMBLIES



Alongside any temporary, permanent, or topic-based adult assembly, children and youth come together to discuss the same topics.

The results are shared into the adult assembly process.



A STRENGTH:



Youth bring fresh and bold ideas; **early engagement fosters democratic skills, political literacy, and long-term participation.**

A RISK:



Without follow-up, **youth input could be set aside** later in a process and their participation minimized, eroding trust.

Sources

Scotland and Ireland (2021–2023), youth climate assemblies operated alongside adult versions. Additionally, permanent children and youth assemblies exist in many countries at city level.

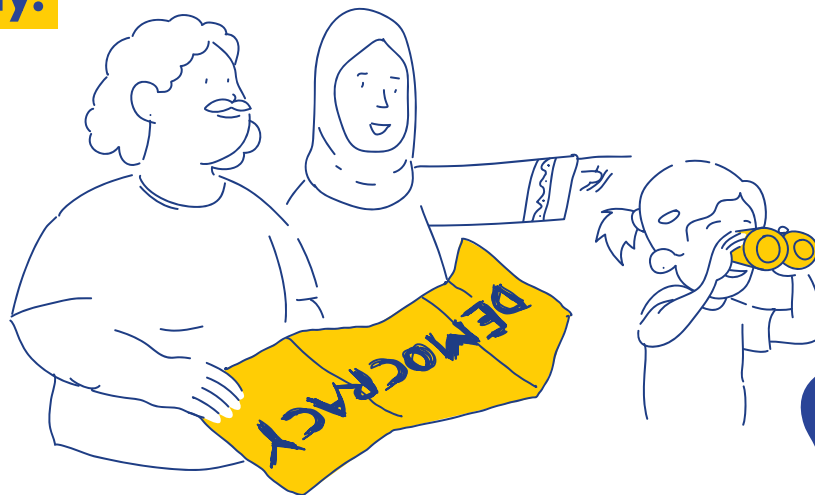
DEMOCRATIC INNOVATION

ANTICIPATORY

GOVERNANCE



Collecting information and holding participatory discussions to better understand how policies might play out or how future challenges might look to help make better decisions today.



A STRENGTH:



My better **equip policymakers to consider multiple possible futures** and create policies that can better handle changing situations.

A RISK:



Usually, **these processes are very expert driven**, so they may dilute democratic influence if not complemented with participatory public conversations

Sources

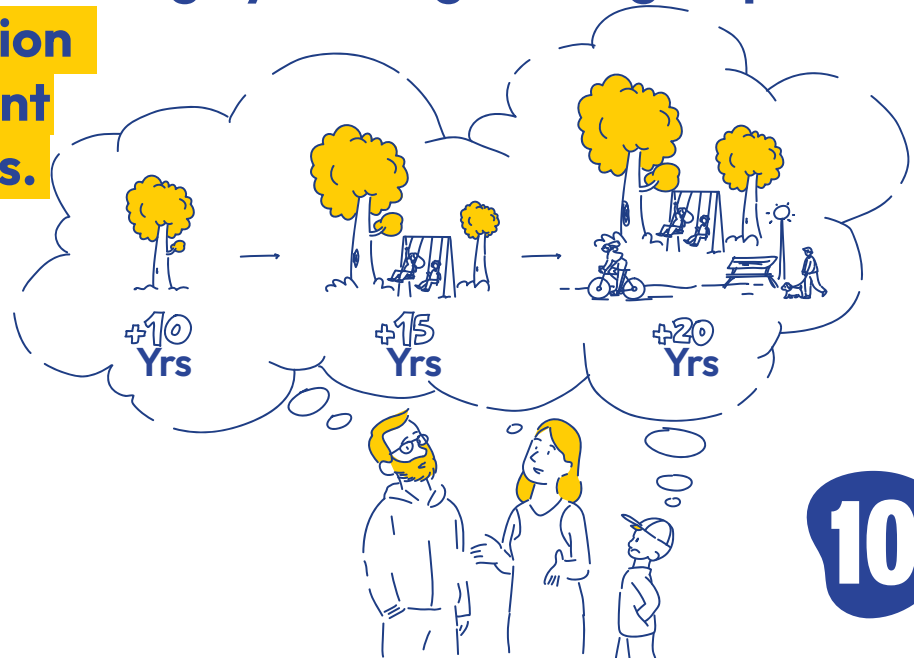
The EU uses anticipatory governance approaches in its Better Regulation framework, and many national governments have permanent strategic foresight groups.

DEMOCRATIC INNOVATION



FUTURE DESIGN FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

A method that helps people think about themselves and the future in decision making by inviting a sub-group of people in a deliberation to adopt the viewpoint of future generations.



10

A STRENGTH:



Participants are pushed to think beyond immediate needs and **consider the legacy of today's decisions fostering empathy and moral responsibility.**

A RISK:



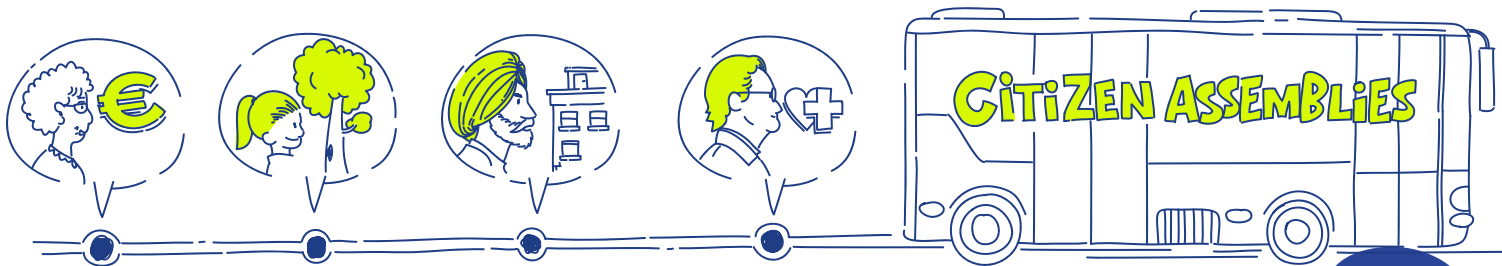
There's a risk that focusing too much on the **future diverts attention away from current marginalized voices and communities.**

Sources

Japan's Future Design movement, developed by Tatsuyoshi Saijo, combats political short-termism by having citizens plan for their communities' futures. Norway has launched a future assembly to explore long-term democratic governance.

DEMOCRATIC WORKPLACE - SOCIOCRACY

An assembly that moves from neighborhood to neighborhood, changing places and randomly selecting people but keeping the same topical focus as it travels.



A STRENGTH:



When citizens see that every part of the city or territory is being listened to, the final recommendations of the assembly are more likely to be **viewed as balanced and representative**.

A RISK:



A moving assembly **can suffer from a lack of shared momentum** or consistent group learning if not carefully designed.

Sources

The Bogota itinerant citizens assembly initiated in 2020 is the model for this innovation.

DEMOCRATIC INNOVATION

DEMOCRACY IN

THE WORKPLACE



An effort to expand people's everyday experience with democracy by reducing top-down hierarchies at work and increasing organized, bottom-up experiences with discussing and resolving differences, decision making, and getting things done.



12

A STRENGTH:



Increases creative problem solving, and job satisfaction, promoting a **positive environment where employees feel valued and heard**, resulting in higher productivity and a better company reputation.

A RISK:



Decision-making processes can become time-consuming, as involving many stakeholders to reach consensus or gather input can take longer

Sources

Sociocracy 3.0 (S3) Common Sense Framework is one practical guide to help organizations evolve more democratic practices.

“MORE-THAN-HUMAN” REPRESENTATION

Specially appointed people or “guardians” are invited to speak to speak on behalf of nature, in deliberations.

Art or other symbols and items may be used to bring the essence of natural systems into the room.

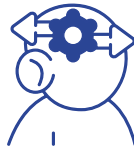


A STRENGTH:



Acknowledges our dependence on the natural world and invites thinking about **environmental needs** and **long-term human futures**.

A RISK:



Including nature in deliberations requires a cultural shift, and social inequalities and barriers to resources must not be overlooked.

Sources

Constitutional recognitions bring nature into democracies in Ecuador (2008) and Bolivia (2010), with additional examples in the Boardman River Dams Project (US, 2017) and KNOCA's workshop on unheard voices in Climate Assemblies.

DEMOCRATIC INNOVATION

LIQUID DEMOCRACY



A system letting individuals **decide whether to vote directly on a public issue, or give their vote to a trusted third party to vote on their behalf.** Instead of one representative for all issues, presents the possibility for people to select different representatives to vote on different issues, depending on who they trust for different issues.



A STRENGTH:



Allows for stronger monitoring of delegates and for clearer voter accountability

A RISK:



As an experimental concept, it is not yet clear whether it helps prevent the concentration of power in a small group. In addition, the process of delegation is highly sensitive and may be difficult to trace at scale.

Sources

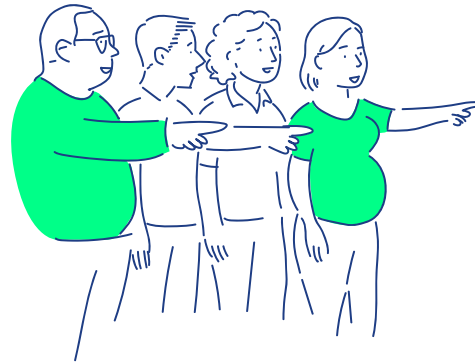
An experimental form of liquid democracy called Civocracy was tested at the Vienna University of Technology in 2012. Various digital platforms have been developed to enable Liquid Democracy or similar delegate voting systems.

DEMOCRATIC INNOVATION

PARTICIPATORY POLITICAL PARTIES



Political parties adopt deliberative processes for making decisions within the party. **More party constituents may be given a voice in shaping agendas, voting for party positions, and even co-drafting statutes.**



15

A STRENGTH:



More transparency, connection, and experience with a party and its representatives may build trust and improve the quality of decision making.

A RISK:



May do little to protect minority voices within parties, and may not address polarisation between parties.

Sources

Parties like Agora (Belgium), the Two-Tailed Dog Party (Hungary), and Podemos (Spain) have mobilised their constituencies through deliberative processes across the electoral cycle.

DEMOCRATIC INNOVATION

RE-THINKING

VOTING RIGHTS



Changes to who is given the right to vote in a democratic political system, for example, the historic extension of voting rights to women. Lowering the voting age?

Allowing non-citizen residents to vote?

Proposals such as giving nature a vote are also considered here.



A STRENGTH:



Youth, minorities and youth members of minorities may feel more welcome to **join political life earlier, impacting their interest and ability to do so long-term**

A RISK:



May **exacerbate existing inequalities** related to (for example) socioeconomic status, even if voting rights are extended in some way.

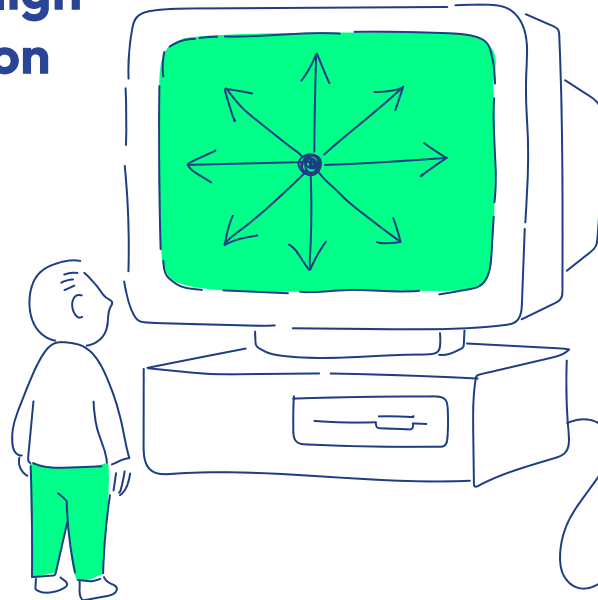
Sources

Women's suffrage movement. Lowering the voting age below 18, as seen in Germany and Austria

DEMOCRATIC INNOVATION VOTING ADVICE TOOLS



Interactive digital (online) surveys ask voters questions to better understand their values and priorities and, in turn, point them toward candidates or political parties that align with their political views on specific issues.



A STRENGTH:



Challenges propaganda by promoting a focus on policy preferences instead of identity-driven or protest voting.

A RISK:



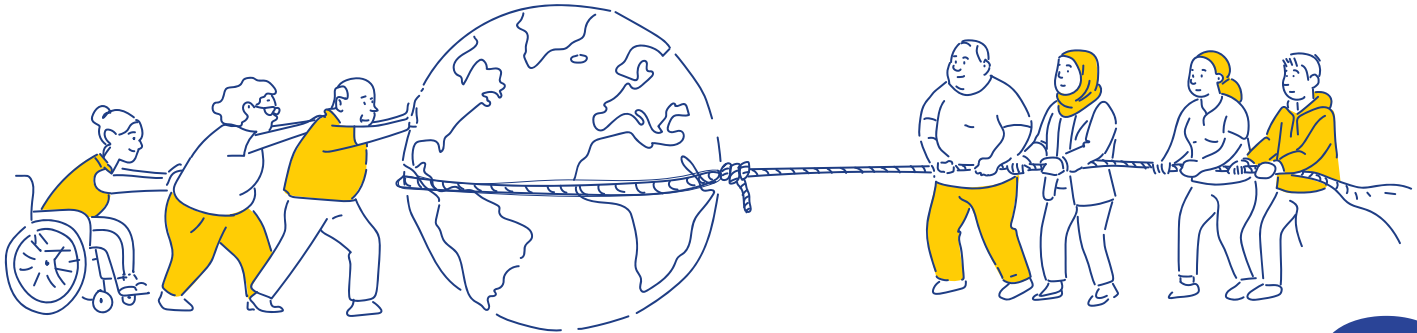
Not all people may have equal access to these digital resources, particularly those who may be most in need of benefiting from them.

Sources

Vokskabin (developed in Hungary) familiarizes users with current political issues straightforwardly and playfully. The Belgian Electoral Test of news media Le Soir - RTBF and the Université Libre de Brussels is helping voters to 'Find out which party or parties you're closest. For younger voters, a variant called PolitiqueSwipe is available, offering a more interactive experience tailored to their preferences.

DIRECT VOTING ON TOPICS

Voters are given the opportunity to cast a vote directly in decisions being taken. Called “referenda,” direct voting initiatives may be proposed by a government or initiated by citizens; results may be binding or advisory; the timing may be before or after a government decision.



A STRENGTH:



Greatly increase democratic legitimacy in decision-making when such votes are transparently and effectively managed.

A RISK:



May be **expensive to initiate and sufficiently inform the voting public on issues**; may be vulnerable to majority capture without sufficient consideration of more diverse, minority interests.

Sources

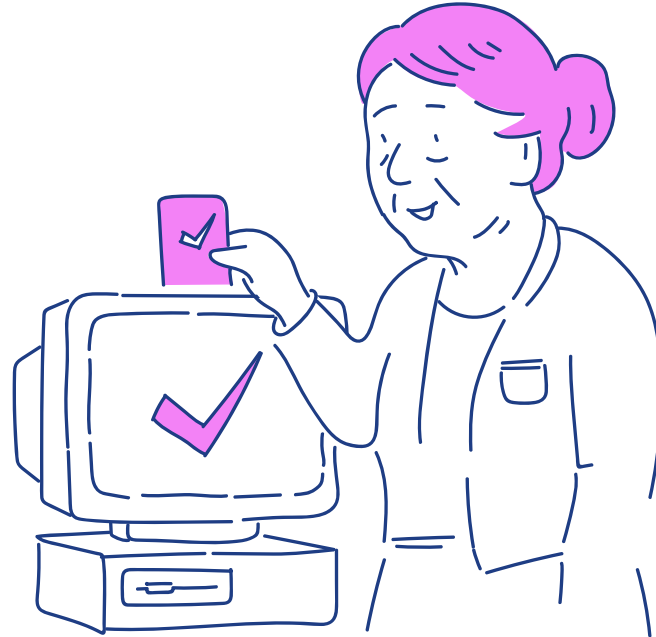
The European Citizens' Initiative. Switzerland has a robust referenda program, with 6.42 popular votes conducted each year, between 1984 and 2009. The Chilean Constitutional Assembly proposed a deliberative, elected body to initiate the drafting of a new constitution, to be voted on through a mandatory referendum.

DEMOCRATIC INNOVATION

ELECTRONIC VOTING



Citizens use secure online portals and digital devices to cast their vote.



A STRENGTH:



A lower cost, easier to access method for people to vote.
May potentially harmonize European-wide voting system.

A RISK:



Concerns about **security and universal access to digital systems**. Further, it is unclear if electronic voting increases participation by everyone or only those who already vote anyway.

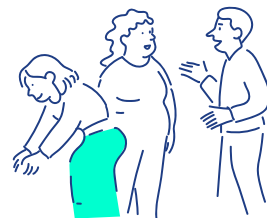
Sources

Canada, Switzerland, and Estonia—the first country to use online voting in national parliamentary elections, in 2007—led the way in adopting electronic voting

DEMOCRATIC INNOVATION

CAMPAIGNING FOR MORE INCLUSIVE CULTURES IN DEMOCRACIES

Active training and education about and campaigning for increased tolerance of people and groups actively being discriminated against, for example, people in the LGBTQIA+ community.



A STRENGTH:



Raises social awareness, counters misinformation and propaganda, and promotes tolerance and inclusion.

A RISK:



May face political resistance and if campaigns are not connected to voting, may have limited broader political impact.

Sources

In collaboration with other local NGOs, Amnesty International Hungary gives e-learning materials for students and employees and organizes educational sessions and workshops for stakeholders.

DEMOCRATIC INNOVATION

CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE



Engaging in nonviolent protest and direct actions to demonstrate the urgency and importance of a topic – for example peace, labour rights, environmental rights, freedom of the press, etc.



A STRENGTH:



May draw significant attention to threats to human rights, sparking public debate and delay or block unjust policies or decisions.

A RISK:



Solidarity for mass action is difficult to achieve.
Smaller actions may be unfairly portrayed by dominant interests in power to minimize their impact.

Sources

Time-tested tactic of the civil rights, indigenous rights, and women's rights movements. The intergenerational movement "I would teach" in Hungary organized road blockades and school strikes to protest the unjust firing of teachers speaking out against the repression of educators' rights and free speech.

DEMOCRATIC INNOVATION

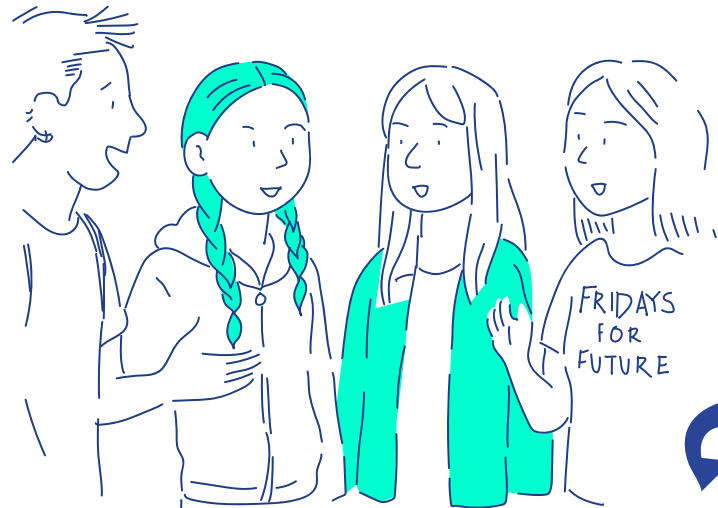
FRIDAY FOR FUTURE

MOVEMENT



A global youth movement, organized through local chapters, seeking to accelerate action on issues of environmental and climate collapse.

Local chapters run open assemblies and operate by consensus, seeking to change the culture of political debate, as well.



A STRENGTH:



Activates and engages youth in direct action campaigns while also strengthening a culture of democratic politics

A RISK:



Young participants may be emotionally or physically overwhelmed by political opposition or online bullying, or by balancing advocacy at the same time as everything else in their lives.

Sources

The Fridays for Future movement has to date pushed 25 cities, the European Commission, and the German Constitutional Court to change policies and rulings and introduce more ambitious climate actions.

DEMOCRATIC INNOVATION

CLIMATE

CONSTITUTIONALISM



Through online outreach, **people initiate and collect signatures to demonstrate political opinions or will about specific topics or issues.**



A STRENGTH:



Low barrier to civic participation, providing fast opportunities to collect large amounts of feedback.

A RISK:



Can create an **illusion of impact** if signatures don't translate to votes. Does not involve dialogue.

Sources

Paper petitions are an old democratic tool -- online petitions have gained rapid growth thanks to platforms like change.org. The EU Parliament but also the French National Assembly, the UK Parliament, and other bodies have set up their own online petition platforms.

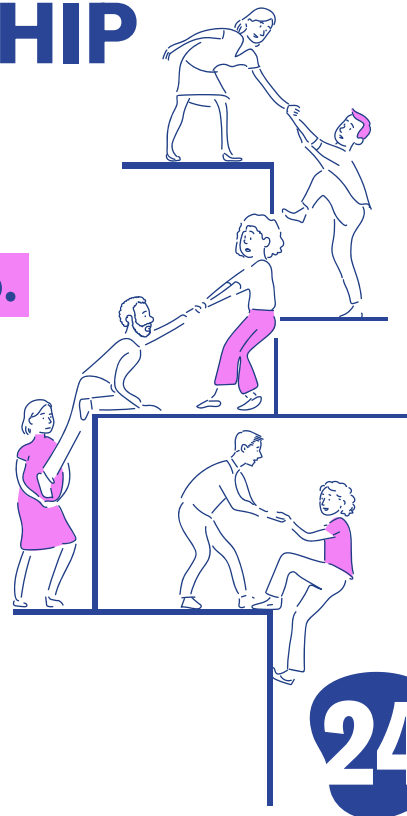
DEMOCRATIC INNOVATION



GENDER QUOTAS IN POLITICS AND LEADERSHIP

A range of possible requirements
for increasing the presence women or
other minorities in politics and leadership.

May involve quotas for political parties;
representation in legislative bodies;
in public administration and public
committees; on corporate boards.



A STRENGTH:



May ensure a minimum number of **women in leadership and politics**, often through reserved seats.

A RISK:



Adoption may not be sustained; seats may be captured by entrenched political positions, reducing diversity of voices.

Sources

Adopted by over 130 countries globally, catalyzed by the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995.

DEMOCRATIC INNOVATION

COMPULSORY VOTING



A system where **citizens are legally required to vote in elections, and face fines or other measures if they do not vote.**



A STRENGTH:



Significantly increases voter participation in countries where this is adopted; sends a strong message about civic responsibility.

A RISK:



For some, **conflicts with ideas of freedom in democracies**; it may also be difficult to enforce.

Sources

Belgium, Argentina, and Australia were among the earliest nations to implement mandatory voting laws, doing so in 1892, 1914, and 1924 respectively. Additionally, countries like Venezuela and the Netherlands once had compulsory voting systems but have discontinued them.

DEMOCRATIC INNOVATION

ONLINE CITIZEN CONSULTATIONS



Processes carried out online designed to get public input on topics of debate.

These online methods allow governments, municipalities, or organizations to hear from a wider range of people beyond traditional in-person meetings.



A STRENGTH:



Allows many more people to share their views anytime, anywhere, and uses digital tools to handle large amounts of information.

A RISK:



May exclude individuals without internet access or digital literacy and may be difficult to ensure respectful, detailed, and constructive discussion online.

Sources

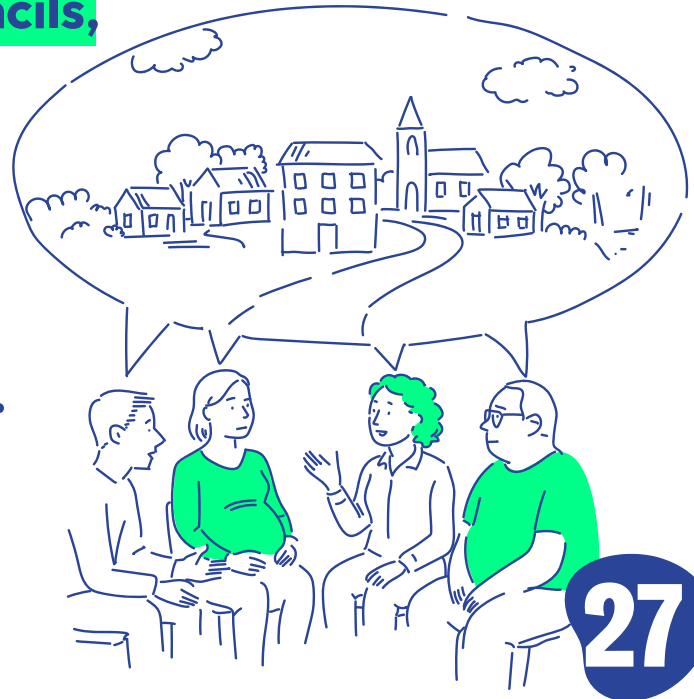
Online citizens consultations gained traction in the 1990s and early 2000s. Platforms include Decidim which offers tools for proposals and discussions; government websites with feedback forms or forums on specific topics; and innovative platforms like Polis, which uses computational methods to identify areas of consensus and disagreement within large-scale public input, providing a structured overview of collective sentiment on an issue.

DEMOCRATIC INNOVATION

NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCILS



Also known as **community councils**, **district councils**, or **parish councils** these are local-level spaces for people to gather and deliberate on issues related to local affairs – often at the scale of a neighborhood.



A STRENGTH:



Builds local connections and civic capacity, improves response to community issues.

A RISK:



May lack diverse representation or lead to “not-in-my-back-yard” attitudes, particularly in larger cities with many interacting and connected neighborhoods

Sources

Parish/Town Councils in UK, Conseils de quartier in France, Ortsbeiräte in Germany, Lokalsråd in Denmark, and more. Neighborhood or district level citizen committees are serving as a guarantee of a local representation of citizens

DEMOCRATIC INNOVATION

MAJORITY JUDGEMENT VOTING



Citizens vote on the quality of all candidates in a race, for example “excellent, very good, good, acceptable, poor or unacceptable,” to provide a more comprehensive understanding of voter preference.

A STRENGTH:



All candidates have a chance; providing more informative results on all candidates.

A RISK:



Makes voting more time-consuming and complicated.

Sources

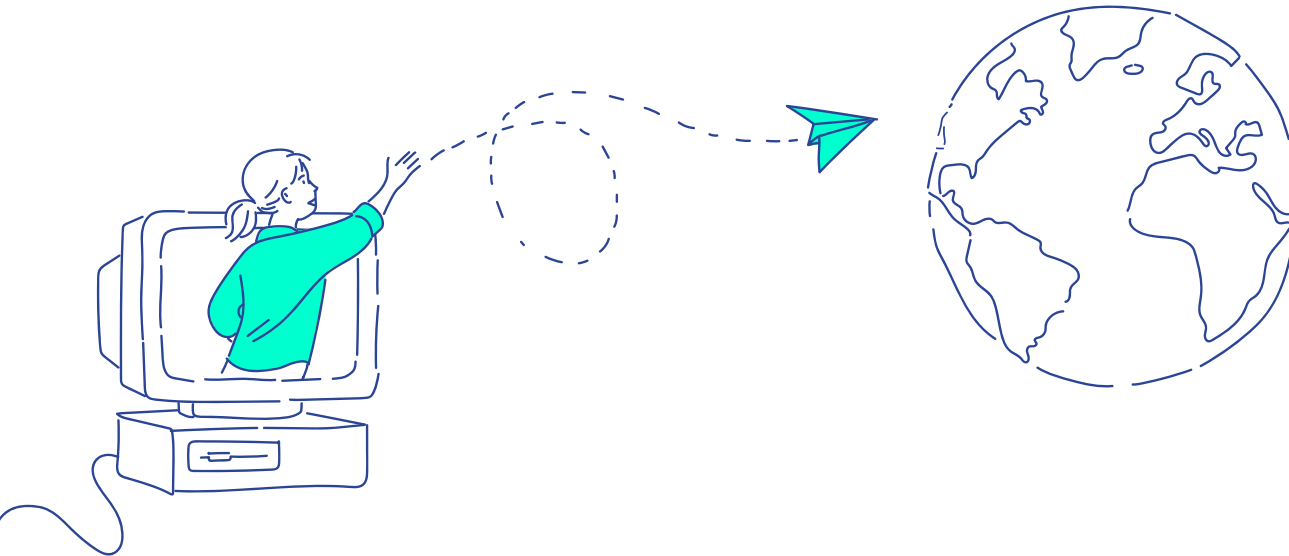
Developed in 2007 in France by CNRS researchers, Michel Balinski and Rida Laraki, the majority judgment voting method has been experimented in different non-governmental elections in several countries, but not yet in major elections.

DEMOCRATIC INNOVATION

ONLINE PETITIONS



Through online outreach, **people initiate and collect signatures to demonstrate political opinions or will about specific topics or issues.**



A STRENGTH:



Low barrier to civic participation, providing fast opportunities to collect large amounts of feedback.

A RISK:



Can create an **illusion of impact** if signatures don't translate to votes. Does not involve dialogue.

Sources

Paper petitions are an old democratic tool -- online petitions have gained rapid growth thanks to platforms like change.org. The EU Parliament but also the French National Assembly, the UK Parliament, and other bodies have set up their own online petition platforms.