DEMOCRACY FUTURES



INFLUENCING FACTORS

CARD DECK

ABOUT THE CARD DECK

INFLUENCING FACTORS CARD DECK

A version of this card deck was used by the YouthDecide 2040 research consortium to support the setup and facilitation of workshops on the future of democracy in Europe for the year 2040. It is part of the **DEMOCRACY FUTURES KIT.**

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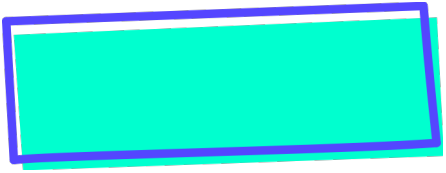
DEMOCRACY FUTURES

INFLUENCING FACTORS



INFLUENCING FACTORS



INFLUENCING FACTORS



DIFFERENCE AND DEMOCRACY



DEMOCRACY FUTURES

INFLUENCING FACTORS

IS DEMOCRACY OK WHEN IT INCLUDES INEQUALITIES AND DISCRIMINATION?

- Although politicians promise to represent certain gender identities and gender-related issues, many groups remain underrepresented.
- The feminist movement or the LGBTQ movement have shown how to fight for political rights.
- Gender affects who has power, who makes choices, and who faces risks.
- Racism undermines democracy by excluding people from equal participation and representation.

#social

INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONS AND AGING EUROPE



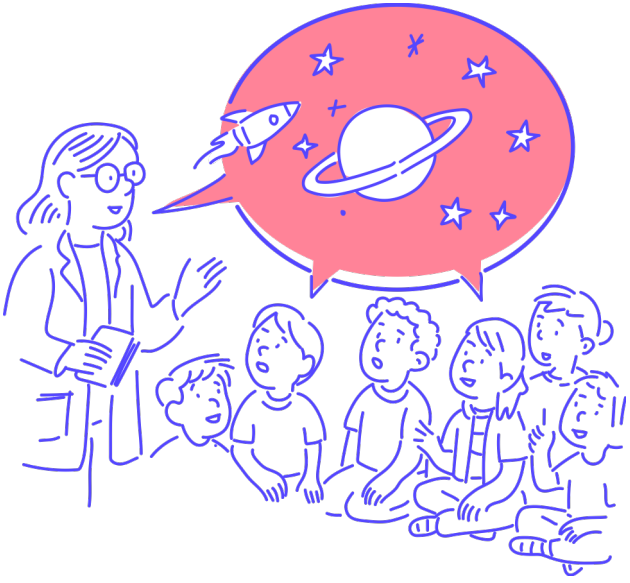
DEMOCRACY FUTURES

IS THERE A GENERATIONAL GAP IN OUR DEMOCRACY?

- Young people often face barriers, feel left out of politics and have different ideas about how democracy should work.
- Old systems may not meet what young people need, so new democratic tools are appearing.
- Fewer babies are being born and people live longer. Population is aging, so needs for pension and care are increasing.

#social

SCIENCE AND EDUCATION



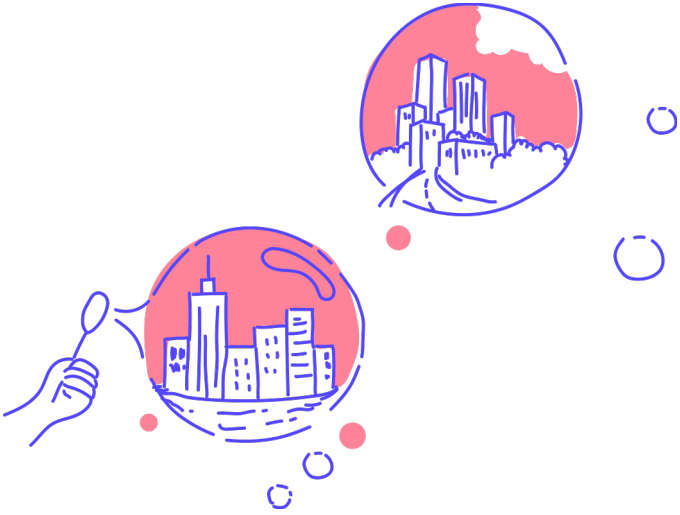
DEMOCRACY FUTURES

HOW CAN SCIENCE AND EDUCATION SUPPORT DEMOCRACY?

- Science and education help people make informed choices and think critically.
- Access to knowledge helps people participate in decision-making in public and political life.
- Independent science and education foster critical thinking and protect people from manipulation, disinformation, and corruption.

#social

EMMIGRATION, MIGRATION & ASYLUM



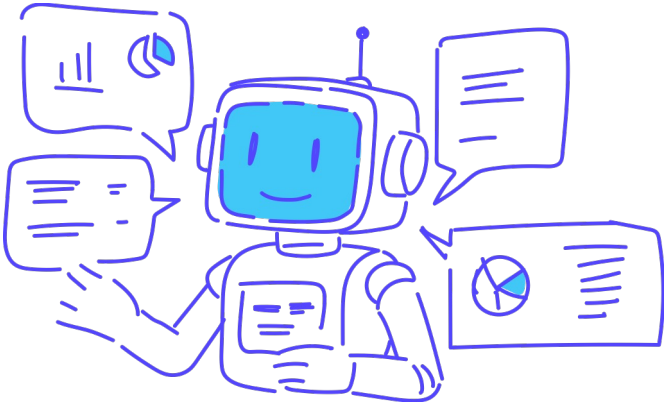
DEMOCRACY FUTURES

HOW DO REACTIONS TO MIGRANTS, REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS CHANGE DEMOCRATIC SOCIETIES?

- Populist politics and national fears frame migration as a crime, often targeting racialised and non-European migrants, which shows ongoing racial inequality.
- Technologies can be used to undermine human rights (e.g. digital surveillance, geolocation, generative AI).
- How can Europe's cultural practices, governance instruments, and social welfare systems be made more resilient?

#social

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE SYSTEMS



HOW MIGHT AI CHANGE DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION?

- Personal AI helpers could spread widely and help translate policy complexities into understandable issues.
- AI may carry bias and cause harm if not monitored democratically.
- It is hard to set fair, democratic rules for fast-moving AI privately own tech companies.

#technological

NEW COMMUNICATIONS MEDIA AND MANIPULATION



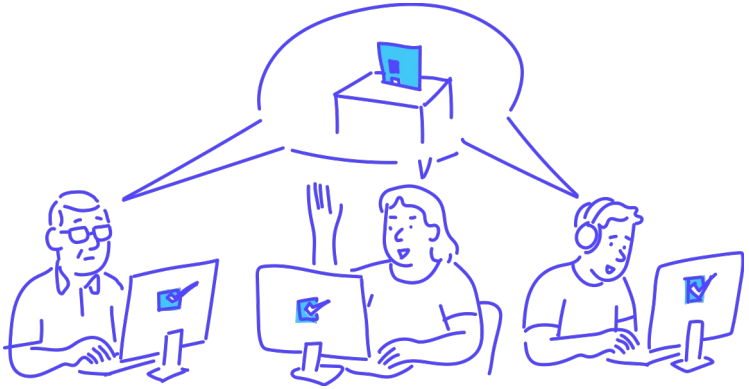
DEMOCRACY FUTURES

HOW DO PEOPLE COMMUNICATE, RELATE TO AND TRUST INFORMATION?

- False information and AI-manipulated content may reduce trust.
- Algorithms can trap people in information bubbles and echo chambers and give extreme voices more resonance.
- Fake news and false data weaken public debate and increase polarization.

#technological

DIGITALISING GOVERNMENT PROCESSES



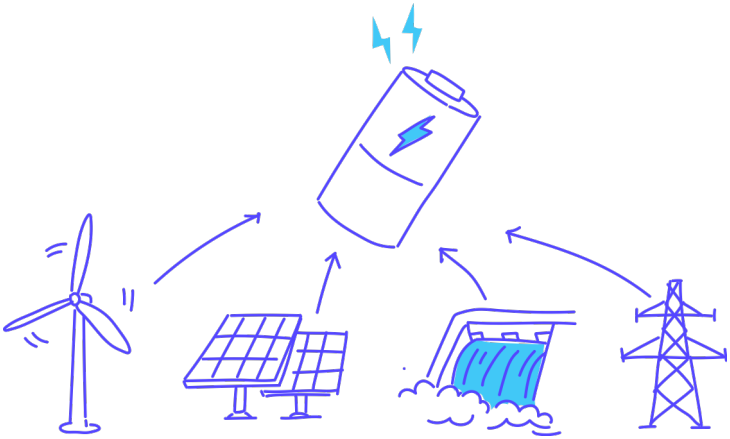
DEMOCRACY FUTURES

HOW CAN THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS BE SUPPORTED THROUGH TECHNOLOGY?

- New technological tools can make voting and counting faster, safer and more accurate.
- New technologies may also bring new security risks.
- Digitalisation creates new barriers for people who are less familiar with these technologies.
- Good record-keeping, public checks, and independent observers help people trust their elections.

#technological

DECENTRALISED ENERGY SYSTEMS



DEMOCRACY FUTURES

INFLUENCING FACTORS

DOES ENERGY INDEPENDENCE AND DECENTRALIZATION STRENGTHEN DEMOCRATIC RESILIENCE?

- Producing energy locally helps countries rely less on others and stay secure.
- Sharing energy between communities and countries makes power more affordable and accessible.
- Energy communities enable collective and citizen-driven actions to support a more sustainable energy system.

#technological

PUBLIC & PRIVATE INFRASTRUCTURES



DEMOCRACY FUTURES

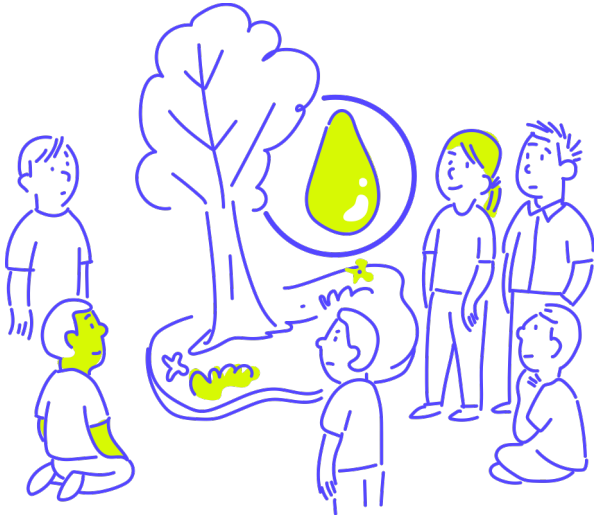
INFLUENCING FACTORS

DOES UNEQUAL ACCESS TO INFRASTRUCTURE UNDERMINE DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION?

- Strong infrastructure (hospitals, schools, transport, etc.) supports democracy by helping people to address their daily needs.
- People are more likely to trust political groups when they have access to fair and reliable infrastructure and services.
- People without good internet access are more likely to be cut off from public conversation.

#environmental

LAND AND WATER GOVERNANCE



DEMOCRACY FUTURES

INFLUENCING FACTORS

DO LAND AND WATER CONFLICTS REVEAL LIMITS TO INCLUSIVE DECISION-MAKING?

- Decisions about land and water use are sensitive issues as they may affect people's homes, work or health.
- Polarized interest groups with conflicting agendas make a democratic process more difficult.
- Letting more people join decision-making can increase legitimacy but also increase lobbying or external influence.

#environmental

NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS



DEMOCRACY FUTURES

INFLUENCING FACTORS

CAN ENVIRONMENTAL DATA AND RIGHTS FOR NATURE EXPAND DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION?

- Collecting and accessing data about water or air-quality or biodiversity counts, may increase citizens' willingness to collect and analyse information for other policy areas.
- Giving legal rights to nature (a lake, a river, a forest...) extends democratic participation to new political subjects.
- Green projects like tree planting and wetland restoration are good opportunities to engage citizens in policymaking.

#environmental

EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE



DEMOCRACY FUTURES

INFLUENCING FACTORS

HOW CAN DEMOCRACY EFFECTIVELY GOVERN CLIMATE CHANGE ACROSS BORDERS AND SOCIAL DIVIDES?

- Climate change makes the gaps between regions and incomes larger.
- Democratic legitimacy falls when people in hard-hit places feel forgotten.
- Managing rivers, streams or green corridors, requires multilevel or cross-border cooperation as they concern many parties.
- Climate policy over energy, migration, and farming may spark conflicts and fights but also new democratic methods like citizens' assemblies or green-budgeting votes.

#environmental

WORK CONDITIONS AND LABOUR



DEMOCRACY FUTURES

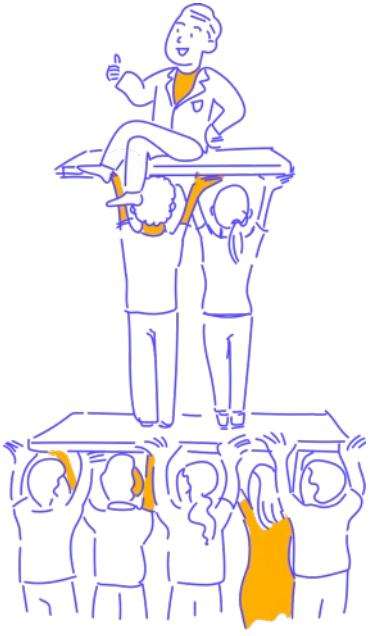
INFLUENCING FACTORS

DOES THE FREELANCE AND ON-DEMAND ECONOMY WEAKEN DEMOCRATIC WORKER REPRESENTATION?

- Digital monitoring and automation deeply change the relationship between workers and employers and their respective economic and political interests.
- Work done through apps, digital checks but also remote work may challenge workers' power and privacy.
- As more people become freelancers or work multiple part-time jobs, unions may lose power and their ability to protect workers.

#economic

ECONOMIC INEQUALITIES



DEMOCRACY FUTURES

HOW DO INCREASING WEALTH INEQUALITIES CHANGE DEMOCRATIC PRACTICES?

- Wealthy people and influential groups can shape public priorities and policies more than others.
- Strong lobbies can shape democratic debates and decision making.
- Governments ruled by private interests make inequalities worse.

#economic

SHIFTING GLOBAL POWERS



DEMOCRACY FUTURES

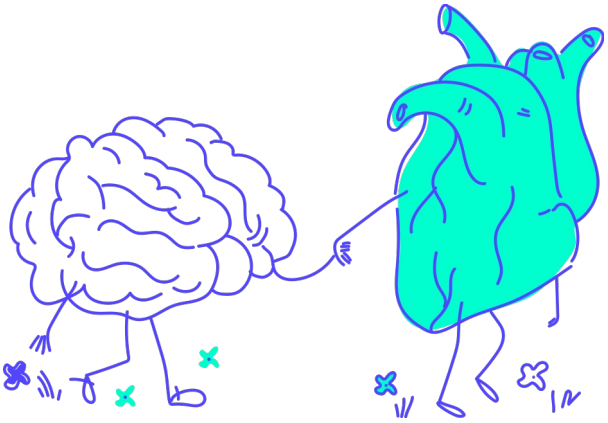
INFLUENCING FACTORS

DOES ECONOMIC INTERDEPENDENCE AND FOREIGN INVESTMENT UNDERMINE DEMOCRATIC SOVEREIGNTY?

- Global economic interdependence and foreign investment can pressure decision making.
- Like many others, Europe depends heavily on world trade to get raw materials and manufactured products.
- Dependence on international trade raises democratic questions and debates about sovereignty, wealth distribution, power inequalities.

#economic

MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS



DEMOCRACY FUTURES

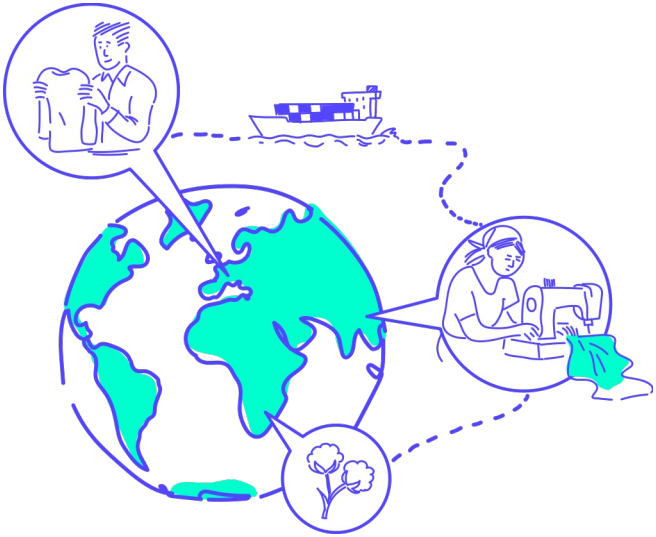
INFLUENCING FACTORS

HOW CAN MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES UNDERMINE EQUAL DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION?

- Mental health issues can range from financial worries and work-related stress to climate anxiety, war, pandemic and family problems.
- Being in good mental health is important for people to take part in public and political life.
- Access to mental health is often a privilege for those that can afford the cost and time.

#ethical

GLOBAL SUPPLY CHAINS



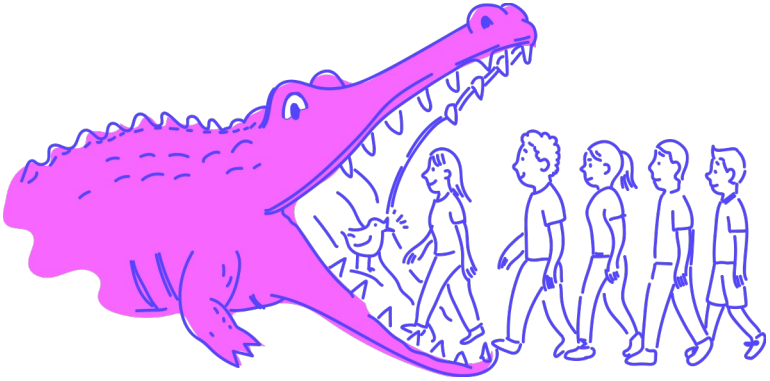
INFLUENCING FACTORS

CAN SOCIETY SUPPORT FAIR TRADE STANDARDS AND SAFE WORKING CONDITIONS WITHIN GLOBAL SUPPLY CHAINS?

- Protection of human rights is at risk nationally if governments allow the import of goods made with forced or child labour.
- Import-ban systems (like the EU's upcoming forced-labour rule) and thorough checks can help to change what is considered acceptable at international level.
- Europe can inspire other countries to improve their labour practices by enforcing high standards for working conditions.

#ethical

RISING POPULISM



DEMOCRACY FUTURES

HOW DOES POPULISM AFFECT DEMOCRATIC PRACTICE AND SOCIETIES?

- Populist leaders promise quick answers to problems (like job loss, wage gaps) and claim they speak for “the people” against “the elite.”
- Populist strategies often use digital media to spread political messages at very little cost.
- Social changes like immigration or shifting gender roles can create anxiety that may be used by populists.

#political

DEFENSE AND SECURITY



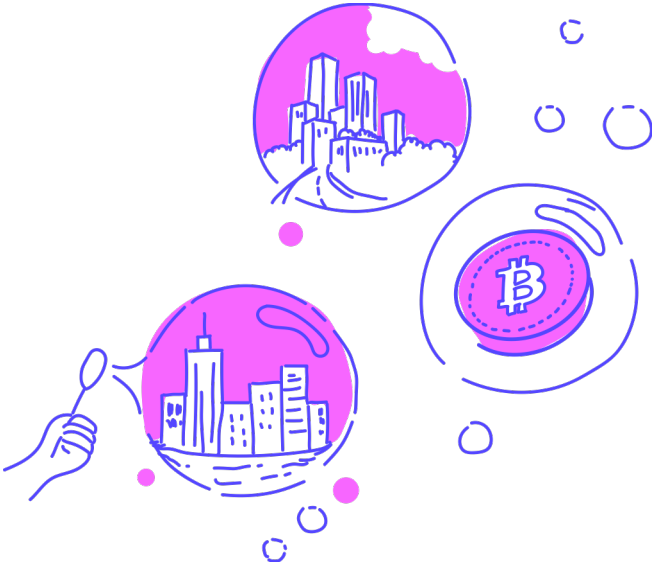
DEMOCRACY FUTURES

HOW DOES DEMOCRACY DEAL WITH CONFLICT?

- New surveillance tools may protect elections, public spaces or critical systems better, but may also harm privacy and freedom.
- War or national security matters are usually kept within a small circle of people to ensure efficiency, safety and security, but such an approach also raises democratic questions.
- Freedom-of-information rights and open-source algorithms lists and libraries may help people inspect and question security technology.

#political

CHALLENGING 'THE STATE'



DEMOCRACY FUTURES

INFLUENCING FACTORS

CAN RADICAL GOVERNANCE EXPERIMENTS CHALLENGE TRADITIONAL DEMOCRATIC NATION STATE?

- Radical governance experiments may undermine how nation states organise democracy
- Ideas such as "network states", "crypto nations" or "seasteading" reduce democracy to service provision and experiment with new forms of government, law, and society outside the control of existing nation states.

#political

INSTITUTIONAL TRUST & ACCOUNTABILITY



DEMOCRACY FUTURES

INFLUENCING FACTORS

DO PEOPLE TRUST THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS AND ITS INSTITUTIONS?

- Trust in effectiveness of public administration and government's accountability supports democracy.
- People are more willing to give leaders power when they see real results and trust that the law and rules are fair.
- Trust weakened in many countries, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic.

#political

WIDENING DEMOCRATIC REPRESENTATION



DEMOCRACY FUTURES

INFLUENCING FACTORS

WHO AND WHAT CAN BE POLITICALLY REPRESENTED AND PARTICIPATE IN THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS?

- Laws and rules decide who counts as a legitimate political actor.
- If rules widen or limit this, it changes whose voices are heard and whose needs are met.
- Which rules need to change to make more voices heard? Think marginalized groups, children, nature and future generations.

#legal

FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN RIGHTS



DEMOCRACY FUTURES

HOW CAN DEMOCRATIC SYSTEMS BETTER SUPPORT HUMAN RIGHTS AND WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS?

- All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.
- Free speech, voting rights, right to protest and equality before law limit power and support fairness.
- The "right to remedy" is a human rights principle that guarantees an individual's ability to seek justice and protect their rights. It must be accessible, binding and capable of preventing future violations.

#legal

JUSTICE AND THE RULE OF LAW



DEMOCRACY FUTURES

HOW CAN INDEPENDENT INSTITUTIONS AND THE RULE OF LAW EFFECTIVELY PREVENT ABUSES OF DEMOCRATIC POWER?

- Independent courts, free media and international oversight help keeping political leaders accountable.
- The rule of law means clear and fair rules that apply to all people equally, including those with power.
- Rights like fair trial and review make sure wrongdoing is punishable according to law.

#legal

TRADITIONAL GOVERNANCE SYSTEMS



DEMOCRACY FUTURES

HOW DO ESTABLISHED INSTITUTIONS AND GOVERNMENT PROCESSES USE THEIR POWER?

- Established institutions may slow down democratic innovations.
- Modernizing government systems can rebuild trust and support new democratic practices.

#legal

ANYTHING MISSING?

Make your own card.
Tell us what else is influencing the future of democracy and society.

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