



Democratic Infrastructure

Turning one-off deliberations
into resilient democracies

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democratic
society



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We have been working across Europe to support democracy since 2010. In that time we have undertaken numerous projects and worked with thousands of participants. We create opportunities for people to take part in democracy.

Open Question

Think of a process that you have been part of
and what was left behind that could enable
better democratic practices.

Our answer
to move beyond one off events
is **Democratic Infrastructure**



Why the Concept of Democratic Infrastructure

1. One off interventions cannot sustain resilient democracies
2. Our Theory of Change: Strengthen and Reimagine Democracy
3. How we can intentionally design for democratic infrastructure.

We want to prepare
good food



We focus on building the kitchen

- After the project is finished, the kitchen will still be there
- The kitchen creates the possibilities to make all kinds of food
- The kitchen isn't flexible in itself but can be used in flexible ways (to prepare all kinds of food)

The kitchen is democratic infrastructure

In the same way the kitchen enables the preparation of food, democratic infrastructure enables more and better democracy over the long term





Essential Characteristics of Democratic Infrastructure

1. **Flexibility**
2. **Longer-Term Consideration**
3. **Capacity to Enable Democratic Self-Improvement**

1. Vision(s) for Democracy

2. Capabilities

- a. Learning How to Learn
- b. Using/Fighting Power
- c. Democratic Design

3. Networks

**4. Governance
Systems**

**Elements of
Democratic Infrastructure**

“Democratic Infrastructure” : Persistent, generally available sets of elements that enable the continuous development, reinforcement and reimagination of democracy in a defined context.”

Definition of Democratic Infrastructure



Questions?



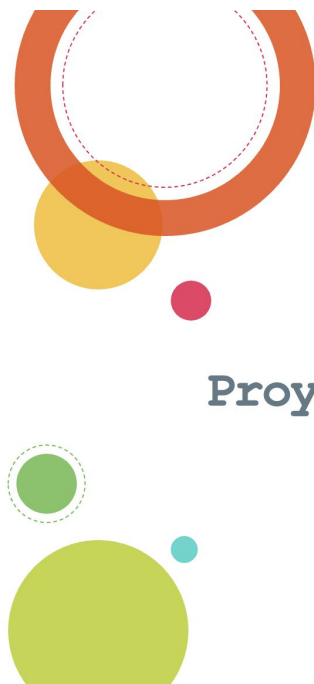
Examples

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**Example: LIFE/PACT (Leuven,
Madrid, Krakow)**

Building Networks

- Creation of participation hub
- Goals: trigger action and experiments, share learning and resources, building relationships
- Core team and looser involvement of unexpected allies: activists, artists, grassroots groups
- Creation of networks beyond the initial project



Proyecto Educativo y Social
LIFE – PACT project



basurama



Example: Climate PB Vienna

Governance innovation and building capability of Democratic Design and

- Different departments involved in intensive co-design to build design capabilities
- One project as enabler for long-term democratic innovation and just climate action
- First project to implement government innovation



Example: Vooruit project

Vision for Democracy

- Internal democratisation within political party
- Initial question: participation for the election programme
- Rethinking this initial question in co-design sessions
- Outcome: structures that can be used to include the voice of citizens for the long term



Example: NetZeroCities

**Capabilities Building (Learning
how to Learn) + Governance
Systems + Networks**

- Systems and services to institutionalise learning how to learn (reflexive, action learning approaches).

