

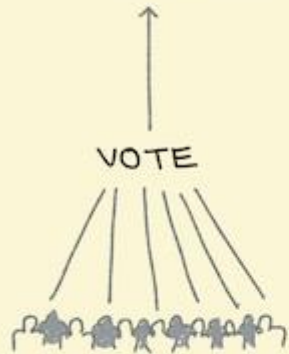
Online Platforms for public participation

A success or a delusional democratisation?

DIRECT

DEMOCRACY

LAWS, RULES...

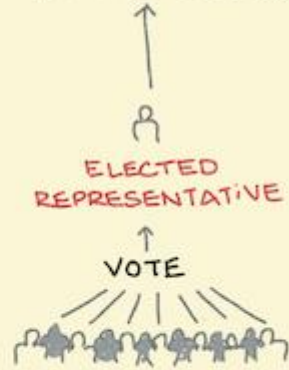


THE PEOPLE

REPRESENTATIVE

DEMOCRACY

LAWS, RULES...



THE PEOPLE



Representative democracy – an outdated model?

- A gap has developed between the activities of citizens and the way in which politics and democracy are carried out contributing to:
 - **A decline in trust and confidence in democratic institutions**
 - **A lack of innovative approaches to solving the complex and dynamic issues faced by contemporary cities today.**

Towards a direct democracy?

- “...the democratic ideal is not the election of representatives but the greatest *participation* of the people in public life” (Levy, 1997)
- Enable “everyone to help develop and refine shared problems on a continuous basis, introduce new questions, construct new arguments and formulate independent positions on a wide range of topics” (Levy, 1997)

Future of Cities: The Science of Cities and Future Research Priorities

A report by the project's Lead Expert Group



The Future of UK Cities

- “...within the same national system widely different levels of political participation might happen at the local level, and different national systems appear to give rise to different levels of participation.”
- “...how to optimise the participation of citizens in city decision-making?”

(Government Office for Science, 2016)

Current Projects

The screenshot shows the homepage of the Better Reykjavik website. At the top, there is a header with the city's coat of arms and a sun icon, followed by the title "Betri Reykjavik" and a brief description in Icelandic. Below this, there are three main project cards: "Hverfið mitt 2018" (My neighborhood 2018), "Háskólinn okkar" (Our university), and "Gufunesbær" (Gufunesbær). Each card includes a title, a short description, and a "Join" button with a count of participants. The bottom of the page features a grid of smaller images related to the projects.

Better Reykjavik

Online consultation forum

The screenshot shows the homepage of the "All consultations" website. The header includes the title "All consultations" and a search bar. Below the header, there are several project cards with titles in French: "Les temps additionnels", "Conseils de Quartiers", "Améliorer les nefs parisiennes", "Saint Vincent de Paul Lariboisière", and "La Maison des Citoyens". Each card provides a brief description of the project, the number of participants, and a "Join" button with a count of participants. The bottom of the page features a grid of smaller images related to the projects.

Madame Mayor I have an idea

€500 million to projects proposed

The screenshot shows the homepage of the Decide Madrid website. The header includes the title "Decide Madrid" and a search bar. Below the header, there are several project cards with titles in Spanish: "Remodeling Jardín del Parroco Sanchez Camara (Round Park C / Laurel)" and "No public remuneration to political positions in the municipal boards". Each card provides a brief description of the project, the number of participants, and a "Support" button with a count of supporters. The bottom of the page features a grid of smaller images related to the projects.

Decide Madrid

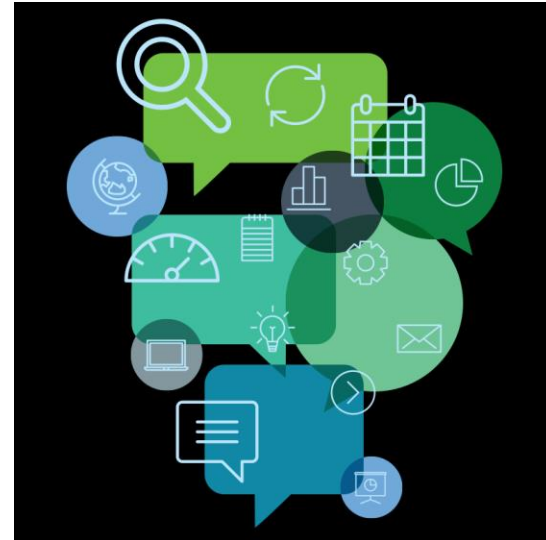
Requires support from 1% of the census population

Issue 1 - Resources

- Ideas generated must still be processed by civil servants
- In 2016 €200,000 of public money was used to promote the Decide Madrid process which, despite leading to a spike in activity, was short-term

Issue 2 - Visibility of proposals

- Still receive a large number of proposals leading to duplication
- How to identify proposals of interest?
 - Machine learning and Natural Language Processing to cluster similar posts?



Issue 3 - Addressing more complex problems



- Cycle lanes or the greening of the city over initiatives to tackle pressing socio-economic problems
- A fear the budget is too small to create any meaningful change?

Issue 4 - Participation

- Awareness? Lack of time, interest, online access?
 - **Decide Madrid:** less than 10% of the city's population is registered on the online platform. Only 2 out of over 13,000 proposals have ever made it through
- Diversity? A small and unrepresentative number of citizens?
 - **Better Reykjavik:** participation is more biased towards those that are University educated, those who have higher salaries and people aged between 36 and 55



A delusional democratisation of predefined participation?

- May involve externally-defined programmes of participation
- Carry out pre-defined or fixed practices, extended only to certain groups
- Instrumentality (citizens as data providers) rather than empowerment (citizens opening up information spaces) giving a ‘delusion of democratisation’ (de Albuquerque and de Almeida, 2019)?



A deliberative democracy?

- Require a *continuous* process of knowledge co-production
- “...an open-ended and continuous learning process in which the roles of the ‘teacher’ and ‘curriculum’ are raised and the matter of what is to be learnt is settled in the process of learning itself” (Held, 1998)

What is citizen participation?

- A collective feedback loop or a form of dialogical communication.
- Online platforms should utilise the 'collective intelligence' of the community allowing for a form of co-production.
- How to promote a continuous feedback loop? How to measure this collective intelligence?