



DESIGN AND DEMOCRACY

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A paradox: freedom of choice is both a perceived human right and an illusion of political authority. This is an issue of design. But, as has often been observed, “theories of design developed in the twentieth century have ignored these issues”.

...design profession expanded in line with the mass production of consumer goods. This abundance of stuff stimulated a culture of desire that served to distract people’s attention away from the human condition and the exercise of political will?

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How has the internet morphed from its democratic origin of "connecting everyone around the world" to an almost anarchic system dominated by powerful corporations where it seems that it's every man/woman for him/herself?

Design-and-democracy, 10:55 - 13:45, 27-29

WHY FOCUS ON DEMOCRACY?

V-Dem report 2023

1. Democracy in the World 2022

- Advances in global levels of democracy made over the last 35 years have been wiped out.
- 72% of the world's population – 5.7 billion people – live in autocracies by 2022.

Global Level is Back to 1986

- The level of democracy enjoyed by the average global citizen in 2022 is down to 1986 levels.
- The decline is most dramatic in the Asia-Pacific region, which is back to levels last recorded in 1978.
- Eastern Europe and Central Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean, are back to levels last seen around the end of the Cold War.

More Dictatorships than Liberal Democracies

- The world has more closed autocracies than liberal democracies – for the first time in more than two decades.
- 28% of the population – 2.2 billion people – live in closed autocracies.
- 13% of the population – 1 billion people – live in liberal democracies.

Drastic Changes in Last Ten Years

- Freedom of Expression is deteriorating in 35 countries in 2022 – ten years ago it was only 7.
- Government censorship of the media is worsening in 47 countries.
- Government repression of civil society organizations is worsening in 37 countries.
- Quality of elections is worsening in 30 countries.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION DETERIORATING



2. Democratizers and Autocratizers

- The number of democratizing countries is down to 14 with only 2% of the world's population. They have not been so few since 1973 – 50 years ago.
- All regions are affected – but Africa harbors the largest number of democratizing (N=5) as well as autocratizing (N=12) countries.

A New Record of 42 Countries Autocratizing

- A record 42 autocratizers with 43% of the world's population – up from 33 countries and 36% of the population last year.

3. The Major Autocratizers

- Democracy broke down in 7 out of the top 10 autocratizers in the last 10 years.
- Democracy also failed in 5 out of the top 10 autocratizers in the shorter 3-year perspective.
- In 2 democracies – Brazil and Poland – autocratization stalled before democracy broke down.
- Armenia, Greece, and Mauritius are democracies in steep decline.

What Autocrats Attack

- Censorship of the media and repression of CSOs increases and academic freedom declines in more than 25 of the autocratizing countries.
- Academic and cultural freedom, and freedom of discussion also rank among the top institutions attacked by autocratizing rulers.

Disinformation, Polarization, and Autocratization

- Disinformation, polarization, and autocratization reinforce each other.
- Top democratizers conversely reduce the spread of disinformation substantially, and to some extent also polarization.

WHAT ABOUT DESIGN AND DEMOCRACY

- Is democracy outdated, is it broken?
- Experting: They Know, We Know, and Together We Know Better, Later (a chapter in Design and Democracy)
- Design has power to influence - recognise that the wealth of excess accompanying freedom of choice is part of the human condition—but learn to manage it productively through design
- Could participatory and digital democracy help?

MITIGATING TRENDS

- DIFFICULT

The challenge of mitigating or reversing trends that democracies face are complex, multifaceted, dynamically changing, difficult to formulate and find solutions that work (i.e., are wicked).

Democracy scholars have considered different entry points that might be used in support of democracy, such as strengthening democratic institutions (Hendriks et al., 2020), highlighting the role of inequality (Ceka & Magalhaes, 2020), civic education (Westheimer, 2019), accountability (Laebens & Lührmann, 2021), or international support for democracy (Carothers, 2020).

THE CONCEPT OF PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY

Can consistent engagement save democracy?

- *Participatory democracy* is all about participation. Its goal is to ensure that all citizens, not just politicians, have a real say in the creation of the rules and programs that make up their government (or affects local community decisions).
- *Participatory* refers to something that involves active participation. *Democracy* is a form of government in which power is held by the people. If the people themselves vote directly on policies and laws, it is called a *direct democracy*. If they elect representatives to make laws and policies, it is called a *representative democracy*. The term *participatory democracy* is something somewhere in between: the people elect leaders but also play a role in forming policies.

THE CONCEPT OF DIGITAL DEMOCRACY

How can we upgrade democracy with digital means?

Such an upgrade would have to be built on

- (1) digitally unleashing creativity,
- (2) combinatorial innovation, and
- (3) better decision-making.

The first and second might be promoted by participatory approaches, such as Open Innovation, enabling people—as we will see—to do things by themselves that they could not do in the past. The second and third bring us to the subject of “collective intelligence”.

GLOBAL COLLECTIVE INTELLIGENCE

It is not about one fraction of people winning over another fraction of people. It is about learning to combine the best ideas of many minds with each other (synteses)

Could be supported by:

1. Exploration: Information search and search for solutions
2. Sharing: Information exchange to give the “big picture”
3. Integration: Development of integrated solution approaches through deliberation
4. Voting: Selection of the best integrated solution

GLOCALISATION

The proposed approach also pushes for a new paradigm of globalisation, which one may call “glocalisation”.

It would be based on

- thinking global,
- acting local (and diverse),
- experimentation,
- learning from each other, and
- helping each other.

PARTICIPATORY RESILIENCE

For a world in trouble - good to design for resilience:

Some principles of design for resilience:

1. redundancy,
2. decentralization and modular design,
3. local autonomy,
4. solidarity,
5. diversity and pluralism,
6. distributed control,
7. participatory approaches,
8. local digital assistance.

THE CO-PRINCIPLES

Success principles in the information age will be co-* principles such as:

- co-learning,
- co-creation,
- combinatorial innovation,
- co-ordination,
- co-operation,
- co-evolution, and
- collective intelligence.

PARTICIPATORY DESIGN AND DEMOCRACY

Citizens' interests and needs should be at the heart of any democracy.

Thus, first, grassroots participatory design processes enable citizens to take part in decision-making directly and deliver bottom-up changes (Hierlemann & Roch, 2020).

Second, the Nordic participatory design tradition (Bjerknes et al., 1987; Bødker et al., 2022) is a form of participatory democracy in design processes.

Therefore, exploring this intersection of local participation and the technology design that could support engagement, trust building, and good decision-making is relevant and has a more pronounced potential for a positive impact on participatory democracy.

PARTICIPATORY DESIGN FOR TRANSITIONS

The ‘Nordic model’ denotes some key characteristics of what Nordic countries have in common: a combination of capitalist economics, high taxation levels in exchange for universal welfare benefits, which has comprised a set of cultural practices, economic, and social policies that have collectively supported the model’s sustainment and transformation.

Technology design played a crucial role in these transformations and became more broadly known as participatory design (PD). PD promises a design of technology that strives for [democratization](#), [integration](#) and the [discussion of values](#) while perceiving conflict (frictions) as a possible resource and seeking the visions for alternative designs and futures that they might shape (Bjerknes et al., 1987; Björgvinsson et al., 2010; Bødker & Kyng, 2018; Bratteteig & Wagner, 2014; DiSalvo et al., 2008, 2014; Ehn, 2017)

EXAMPLES

Audrey Tang and Taiwan's digital democracy

Tang promotes transparency, collaboration, and civic engagement. One of her main initiatives is the *vTaiwan* platform, an online space for citizens to participate in policymaking and deliberations. The *vTaiwan* platform builds on participatory democracy: transparency and accountability (all discussions and decisions are open to the public), crowd-sourcing (citizens contribute their ideas and feedback on specific policy issues, and these contributions are used to inform government decision-making), moderating (ensures that discussions on the platform are respectful and constructive), decision-making by consensus (aiming to find common ground among stakeholders), and implementation (commitment to implement decisions made).

Decide Madrid

platform to encourage citizens' participation in city management supporting transparency, accountability, and collective decision-making through the following actions: debating (discussing concerns, views, and ideas), proposing (citizens can make various proposals of relevance to Madrid), polling (carried out when a proposal receives support from 1 per cent of residents, or when council wants citizens to decide on an issue), engaging in processes (the City Council obtains citizen input on a pre-defined topic using surveys, debates or requesting proposals on the topic), and engaging in participatory budgeting (citizens decide directly on the use of next year's budget for projects that can cover the whole city or specific districts)

AT UIO



UNIVERSITETET I OSLO



Call for applications for research groups

UiO:Democracy invites applications for interdisciplinary research groups. In this call, we announce grants of 2 to 6 million NOK for 3 to 5 research groups.

Application deadline: 15 September 2023.

[Read the full call](#)



Kick-off seminar for Science and Democracy (SciDem)

Welcome to the first seminar by the research group Science and Democracy. The full-day seminar will take place on the 23 May, with, among others, Finnur Dellsén, Maria Berg Reinertsen, Harald Eia, and Tore Rem.

[Read the full program](#)



5 million NOK to democracy in practice

UiO:Democracy has been granted 5,4 million NOK from Sparebankstiftelsen DNB, to increase knowledge about democracy among youth and young adults. (In Norwegian)

[Read more](#)

THAT SHOULD DO!
THANKS!