

Report



- Date and time: 7 December 2020, 16:00 - 17:30
- Title of the session: **Is the future of participatory democracy digital?**
- Format: Ideas Lab
- Facilitators: **Lorenzo Marsili** (co-founder, European Alternatives), **Ljiljana Simic** (trainer, anthropologist and action researcher)

Main topics discussed

The difficult times we are currently living in can be seen as a threat to our fragile democracy. The US elections, as well as events in Hungary, Poland and China, show the fragility and the state of our democracies. We need a deeper system upgrade of our democracies, and the digital revolution can play a crucial role in the process of change.

Participatory democracy, without listening to and translating people's needs and demands into action, is a form of democracy that far from being improved, is now discredited and encountering resistance.

Three aspects of digital democracy: Impact, proximity and trust

The thing that is positive about participative democracy at the local scale is the immediate impact people can have: they can see the changes that their participation creates.

Democracy creates proximity, the sense of knowing who is doing the implementing and to whom we should address our concerns if demands and promises are not met.

Personal impact creates trust in the system, in democracy.

Key messages from each speaker

We need more research to see how physical and online dimensions could affect democracy and help ideas travel.

Digital tools can be a vehicle for hate speech politics (e.g. the 5 Star Movement in Italy).

There are risks in converting digital democracy into transnational democracy: language translations, including AI translations, can create barriers to digital exchanges as well as mistrust in the EU institutions (credibility, self-interestself-orientation). Bureaucracy and the cumbersome decision-making process can kill democracy.

Solutions proposed

The EU is proof that languages and bandwidth are not obstacles to communicating and growing political ideas.

The role and rapidity of the EU in responding to the current situation can bring about a paradigm shift in democracy.