

Press
release

Another *Democratic Future* is Possible:

For immediate
release

DemocracyNext

PARIS, 13 September 2022 — While we hear endlessly about the crisis of democracy, something remarkable and hopeful has been happening right under our noses: a new kind of democracy is taking root. A deliberative democracy with everyday citizens rising to the occasion to help one another and face global, national, and local challenges - from the climate emergency to constitutional amendments on abortion and same-sex marriage, long-term infrastructure investment decisions, and so much more.

DemocracyNext, a new non-profit, non-partisan research and action institute, which announces its foundation this International Democracy Day, 15 September 2022 – aims to actively help this new democratic paradigm take shape and take hold.

“We believe that another democratic future is possible. We want to design and build new institutions where citizens can hold real decision making power,” said Claudia Chwalisz, chief executive of DemocracyNext. “Our point of departure is that the current electoral system is broken beyond repair. An entirely new framework must be based on full participation, citizen representation by lot, and real deliberation.”

Anyone interested in learning about a new way countries could be run is welcome to join DemocracyNext’s virtual launch event here on 15 September from 17:00-18:30 CET (11am-12.30pm EST). At the event, Chwalisz will introduce the team, strategic advisors and members of the Advisory Board. She will also lay out some early plans: engagement with President Joe Biden’s Spring 2023 Summit for Democracy, projects to democratise the governance of economic institutions, university research collaborations, and the creation of a Citizen Confidence Index.

At the heart of DemocracyNext’s vision is modern inspiration from the ancient Athenian ideal of sortition: the random selection of equal citizens taking turns to legislate, judge, and act in the name of the community. As a research and action institute, it will aim to inform and empower the growing wave of global interest in such democracy by lot over the past decade, notably the flourishing of Citizens’ Assemblies, almost 600 examples of which have successfully tackled tough issues from Iceland to France, and from Ireland to the Philippines.

“We want to create a more just, joyful and collaborative future. Sortition does this by giving people agency, dignity, and equality, and by giving the community solutions based on collective wisdom and finding

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common ground,” said Dr. H el ene Landemore, a strategic adviser to DemocracyNext, professor of political science at Yale University and author of *Open Democracy: Reinventing Popular Rule for the Twenty-First Century*.

Also joining DemocracyNext’s strategic advisers are Jon Alexander, author of *Citizens* and Co-Founder of the New Citizenship Project and Mark Cridge, CEO of the National Parks City Foundation and former CEO of mySociety. DemocracyNext’s global board of advisers and democratic innovation pioneers includes Nicole Curato, Panthea Lee, Brenda Ogembo, Art O’Leary, Hugh Pope, Alice Rawsthorn, Felipe Rey, Robbie Stamp, Ol uf emi O. T aiw o, Ece Temelkuran and David Van Reybrouck.

“Democracy is at a crossroads: we might lose it, we might reinforce it. I feel honoured and privileged to join the ranks of those fighting for its next chapter,” said van Reybrouck, the pioneering author of *Against Elections* and founder of Belgium’s G1000 platform for democratic innovation. “DemNext is all about empowering everyday citizens: people have so much to say. Let us give them a meaningful role in shaping their communities.”

Popular demand for a democratic reboot is deep. A 2021 Pew Research Center report found “overwhelmingly popular” support for the creation of randomly selected citizens assemblies across several democratic countries. In the US, 79 per cent of citizens think that it is either very (43 per cent) or somewhat (36 per cent) important that the government create such assemblies. In France, after the end of the Convention for Climate, a poll measured that three out of five French people who knew about this citizens’ assembly – around 70 per cent of the French population by the end of the experiment – thought it had enough legitimacy to make proposals on behalf of the larger population.

“Right now, we live in what is at best a consumerised democracy, where politicians are forced to pretend they have all the answers, and a citizen’s only agency is an occasional opportunity to choose the best from what are all too often a bad set of options,” said Jon Alexander. “We all know we are living in deeply uncertain times, but no one can acknowledge it. We need a new democracy built around collective agency, and tapping into the ideas, energy and resources of everyone. Another democratic future is possible, and DemocracyNext is here to build it.”

With Ieva Cesnulaityte, now DemocracyNext’s Founding Head of Research & Learning, Chwalisz previously led the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development’s work on democratic innovation. They developed the OECD’s Good Practice Principles and Evaluation Guidelines for Deliberative Processes. Chwalisz also co-designed the permanent Paris Citizens’ Assembly and the world’s first permanent Citizens’ Council in Ostbelgien, Belgium, and she wrote the seminal OECD paper on institutionalising deliberative democracy.

To follow DemocracyNext’s future work and be notified of events where Claudia Chwalisz and other supporters will be speaking – including Chwalisz’s opening address to the New York Times Athens Democracy Forum on 28 September – sign up for the mailing list here, follow @Demnext_ on Twitter and on LinkedIn, and visit our growing website www.demnext.org.