

WHAT IS PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY?



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Participatory democracy is what happens when we can all participate in policy-making, budgeting, and other decisions that impact our lives. Community-led decision-making = participatory democracy practices that share decision-making power.

WHO DECIDES? WHO BENEFITS?

We can create democratic practices that are more inclusive than traditional elections. They can include young people, people who have been or are incarcerated, and people of all immigration statuses.

HOW DO WE MAKE SURE THAT WE HAVE A POSITIVE IMPACT?

Participatory democracy practices are only as **equitable, accessible, and significant** as we design them to be.



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Participatory democracy must be:

Equitable: centers community members who are marginalized or excluded from decision-making.

Accessible: removes physical, language, economic, and other barriers to participation.

Significant: focuses on processes with power over meaningful budgets and policies.

EXAMPLES OF COMMUNITY-LED DECISION-MAKING PRACTICES

Participatory budgeting - community members come together to decide how to spend public money.

Participatory policy-making - community members come together to design and decide on policies.

Policy juries - a representative group of people convene to produce a decision or statement on a policy.

Ballot initiatives - voters directly create, amend, and appeal laws by first gathering signatures from a minimum number of supporters.

***THIS IS A GLOBAL MOVEMENT!
COMMUNITY-LED DECISION-MAKING HAS
DEEP ROOTS IN OUR BLACK AND AFRICAN
AMERICAN, INDIGENOUS, AND IMMIGRANT
CULTURAL TRADITIONS.***



- The **Iroquois Confederacy**, founded in 1142, is the oldest **participatory democracy** on earth.
- Black people escaped enslavement and established **maroon communities** to create space for self-determination and community care.
- People across the globe have used **participatory budgeting**—which started in Brazil—to decide over 7,000 public budgets.
- State organizers are using ballot initiatives to do things like **expand access to Medicaid** and **downgrade criminal drug charges**.

- **Organizers in Jackson, Mississippi** are creating a network of community-owned and controlled businesses and institutions.
- A local leader in Chicago is giving community members decision-making power over **zoning decisions**.
- Irish citizens built public consensus through national **Citizens' Assemblies** on abortion and climate change.
- Puerto Ricans used **people's assemblies** in 2019 to challenge corruption and crushing, extortionate debt, and envision a path forward.
- The Indigenous **landback movement** is reclaiming political and economic sovereignty through the return of stolen land to native peoples.

DEMOCRACY
BEYOND
ELECTIONS



*JOIN OUR CAMPAIGN
FOR COMMUNITY-LED
DECISION-MAKING THAT IS
EQUITABLE, ACCESSIBLE,
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