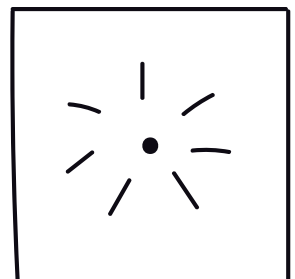


Negotiating Democracy Master Thesis Sietske Van Bakel

Exploring future relationships between
young people and democracy through
the evolving role of identity
and belonging



Master thesis // Design for Interaction
Negotiating Democracy
August 2026

Author

Sietske van Bakel
Faculty of Industrial Design Engineering
Delft University of Technology

Graduation Committee

Dr. Matthijs van Dijk // chair
Department of Human Centered Design
Faculty of Industrial Design Engineering
Delft University of Technology

Dr. Sine Celik // mentor
Department of Design, Organisation and Strategy
Faculty of Industrial Design Engineering
Delft University of Technology

In collaboration with

ProDemos // client
Anita Rademakers
Education expert for ProDemos

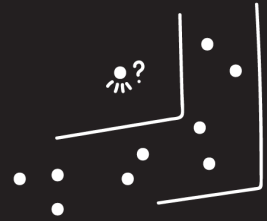
Right: the nine democratic
capacities developed in this project



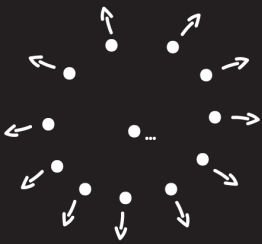
choose consciously
within guided
systems



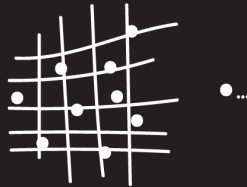
Dare to take a
position within a
group



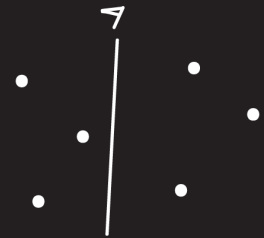
Contribute to the
system you depend
on



Pause before react



Act without
knowing all possible
consequences



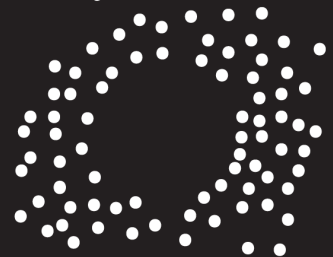
Understand that
fairness feels
different for
everyone



Build shared
orientation within
uncertainty



Connect across
differences



Feel part of
something larger
than yourself

Preface

This is a personal project. From a young age, I have been fascinated by groups and the constant negotiation between adapting to a collective and developing an identity of my own. That fascination feels increasingly relevant at a time when conversations about democracy are dominated by polarisation, distrust and democratic decline. Much is said about what is falling apart, but far less about what we want as a society, and how to act upon that. Especially among young people, democracy exists beyond political institutions. It is present in classrooms, groups of friends and the everyday situations in which identities are formed.

During this project, I started to understand democracy more and more as a way of living together. Once I began looking at it that way, I started recognising it everywhere around me. It changed how I understand the society I am part of and strengthened my desire to care for it.

Working at ProDemos also changed how I understand my role as a designer. I was surrounded by people who knew much about politics, education and democracy, and I realised that I could contribute in a different way. Design gave me a way to work with a subject that initially felt almost too large to grasp. I found that I really enjoyed being in that position.

It also made me more aware of my own position within this project. As a young person and a designer, I am part of the world I am studying. Acknowledging that position became an important condition for working on a subject that I care deeply about.

-

Thank you to Anita, for giving me so much trust, time and space to try things out, say whatever came into my head, and always meet it with enthusiasm and a critical eye. To Matthijs, for the lectures and reflective conversations from which I never left without a new idea or something else to think about. To Sine, for your fresh perspective, your honesty, and all the good conversations along the way.

And thank you to my brother Boet, for gathering wise young people around me and for inspiring this project in many ways.

Finally, to my fellow students at IDE, for the conversations, enthusiasm, feedback and thinking along the way. Finishing this project also means finishing my time as a student at IDE. I am sad to leave a faculty where I felt so at home, and with people who made me feel that way.

Sietske van Bakel



A picture made at Uit De Kunst in Delft, from an artwork of Donald Trump.
Artwork made by Tijn Noordenbos.

Summa

Aim and relevance

This graduation project explores how young people may relate to democracy in 2035 and how design can support them in recognising, practising and contributing to democratic life. The project starts from growing concern about democratic decline. International research describes continuing autocratisation and pressure on democratic rights, representation and participation (Nord et al., 2025; International IDEA, 2025). In the Netherlands, democracy remains relatively strong, while trust in politicians and the House of Representatives has declined substantially (CBS, 2026). Rather than approaching democracy only as a political system, this project understands it as a way of living together. Young people encounter democracy not only through elections and institutions, but also by following rules, having disagreement, when belonging to a group, when feeling influence of your context and being responsible for the things happening in your life. This perspective is especially relevant during adolescence, when democratic attitudes develop alongside identity, autonomy and relationships with peers (Van der Meer et al., 2024; Meeus, 2011). ProDemos, a Dutch organisation that provides education about democracy and the rule of law, forms the design context for exploring what this could mean for democratic education.

Method

The project follows the Vision in Product Design approach (Hekkert & Van Dijk, 2011), using design to first understand and reframe the context before developing interventions. The existing ProDemos instrumentarium was studied through programme materials, observations and interviews with guides and programme makers. This was followed by future-oriented research towards 2035. Interviews, conversations with young people and professionals, input sessions, observations, lectures, performances and desk research were translated into 159 context factors and clustered into 14 clusters.

These clusters were used to construct a framework of plausible future relationships between young people and democracy. The framework and later design directions were further developed through conversations with researchers, education experts, political and institutional experts, as well as design sessions and tests with young people and ProDemos education experts.

ry

Results

Two dimensions became central in understanding the possible future relationships. The first describes how graspable the world around a young person feels, ranging from clear and structured to contested or difficult to grasp. The second describes how a young person relates to a group: moving along with it, taking an own position, or withdrawing from it. Together, these dimensions create nine possible behavioural positions. These positions are not mutually exclusive: a young person may move between them or encounter several of them across different situations.

The nine behavioural positions informed the development of nine democratic capacities. These describe what young people may need to practise when navigating democratic situations: choosing consciously within guided systems, daring to take a position within a group, contributing to the system they depend on, pausing before reacting, acting without knowing all possible consequences, understanding that fairness feels different for everyone, building shared orientation within uncertainty, connecting across differences, and feeling part of something larger than themselves. The capacities are intended to develop through repeated practice and across different situations in young people's lives.

This led to a reframing of the design challenge. Instead of focusing on separate democratic experiences, the project proposes recurring democratic practice across situations young people already encounter: 'experiencing'. A school rule, a decision at a sports club, becoming eighteen or a disagreement about a shared place can become an opportunity to practise a democratic capacity.

Conclusion

The resulting concept, Lieve Toekomst, is a programme for a recurring practice. It supports educators and other makers in recognising everyday situations, selecting a democratic capacity and turning that combination into a concrete educational intervention. A practical booklet and first collection of examples make the programme usable today. The shared identity, feedback loop and roadmap describe how separate practice moments could become connected across places where young people already are.

The project therefore proposes a broader role for ProDemos. Knowledge about institutions, rights and procedures remains important, but young people also need opportunities to practise how they position themselves, relate to others and act within uncertain situations. Lieve Toekomst provides an instrumentarium for creating these opportunities while leaving the content of the democratic future open. Young people are prepared for that future by practising democracy in the situations they already share with others today.

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toekomst

Glossary

Democracy

Democracy is in this project understood as a way of living together, making decisions, sharing responsibility and negotiating differences.

Democratic decline

The weakening of democratic institutions, values, trust, participation or shared norms. This concern forms the starting point of the project.

Young people

The main group this project focuses on. Because I am doing human research, the focus is on young people between 16 and 18 years old (within the period of becoming democratically aware following the ADKS research)

ProDemos

The client organisation in this project. ProDemos explains democracy and the rule of law and develops educational programmes that help people understand and engage with democracy.

Democratic capacities

Nine capacities that describe what young people may need in order to recognise, practise and contribute to democratic life. They are used as both design lenses and reflection lenses.

Democratic education

Educational practice that helps people understand democracy and develop the ability to take part in democratic life.

Democratic practice moment

A concrete moment in which young people can practise a democratic capacity. These moments can happen in schools, libraries, municipalities, sports clubs, public spaces or other everyday contexts.

Guides

ProDemos facilitators who guide educational programmes. In Lieve Toekomst, their role expands beyond facilitation towards observing and listening to what young people experience and giving that information back to ProDemos.

Education experts

Employees of ProDemos with expertise in learning, facilitation and democratic education. In this project, they helped assess whether ideas were educationally relevant, feasible and meaningful.

Instrumentarium

The set of tools, formats, roles, moments, questions and structures through which democratic education is made possible.

Interaction layers

Three design layers that describe what an intervention should make possible: seeing conditions, practising relations and creating directions.

Lieve Toekomst

The final concept of this project. Lieve Toekomst is a programme and platform that helps ProDemos and partners create recurring democratic practice moments with young people.



Negotiating

The ongoing process of positioning oneself in relation to others, rules, values and systems. Negotiating does not necessarily mean reaching agreement.

Programme

The organised structure behind Lieve Toekomst. It connects tools, partners, moments, feedback and learning over time.

Toolbox

The collection of practical materials that helps partners create democratic practice moments.

Concept cards

Example cards that show how one capacity, one moment and one context can become a practical intervention. Over time, these cards can be expanded with real examples from practice.

Partners

Organisations that can carry Lieve Toekomst into everyday places where young people already are, such as schools, libraries, municipalities, youth organisations and sports clubs.

Field listener

An additional role for ProDemos guides. Field listeners observe, collect and interpret what young people experience in relation to democracy across different practice moments and give this input back to ProDemos.

Field signals

The questions, tensions, stories, needs and patterns collected from young people and partners during democratic practice moments.

Feedback loop

The learning structure through which field signals are brought back to ProDemos, partners and institutions. This allows the programme to develop over time and gives young people's experiences a route back into democratic reflection.

Institutional partners

Institutions that can respond to recurring field signals, such as ministries, research institutes or political institutions. Their role is not to control the programme, but to listen, learn and respond.

New democratic story

The broader evolving story about what democracy should mean and become in the future. This project does not define that story, but creates an instrumentarium through which young people can contribute to it.

1 //

Framing; from a concern about democracy to a design question

In this chapter, I introduce the starting point of my graduation project: a growing concern about the future of democracy and the role (young) people may play within it.

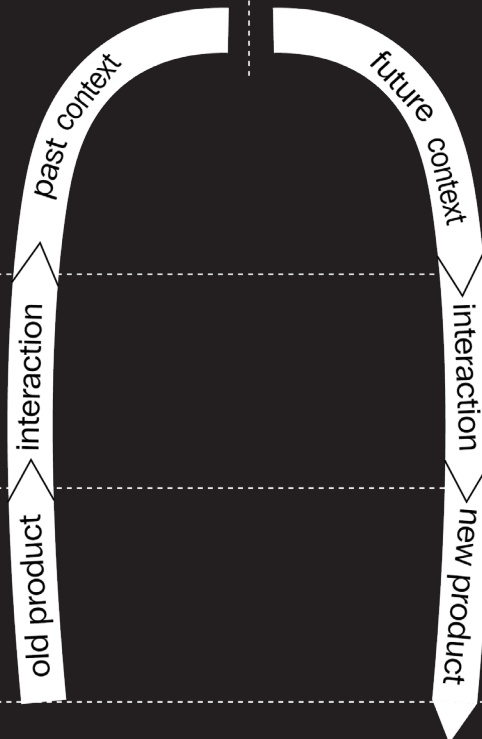
I understand democracy as something that is lived and experienced in everyday life. This shifts my focus from formal politics to the social environments in which young people form opinions, relate to others, and learn what it means to participate in a democratic society.

From this perspective, I position ProDemos as the concrete design context for this project. I introduce the organisation, explain the research questions, and describe how I use the Vision in Product Design method to structure the design process.

Figure 1: The Vision in Product Design process used in this project (Hekkert & Van Dijk, 2011)

deconstruction
preparation

designing



- ① domain/time
- ② context factors
- ③ context structure
- ④ statement
- ⑤ human-product interaction
- ⑥ product qualities
- ⑦ ideas and concepts
- ⑧ detailing

1.1 A personal and societal concern

This project starts from a growing personal concern about democratic decline and what this means for society. By attending several lectures, performances and public programmes, this personal concern was reinforced: Sander Heijne's lecture *Democratie onder druk* (see figure 2), the performance *Alkibiades* with Ilja Leonard Pfeijffer, Marcia Luyten and Sofie Decler, and lectures by Eva Rovers and David van Reybrouck. Rather than offering reassurance, these events strengthen my sense of urgency. The people speaking about democracy know much, yet their analyses do not point towards a way to solve it. Why is it so difficult to see and think about what comes next? This concern forms the starting point for exploring which relationships with democracy may be needed for the future.

This sense of urgency is reflected in international research about democracy. Across different reports, democracy is described as being under pressure worldwide. V-Dem describes a continuing wave of autocratization (Nord et al., 2025). Freedom House reports the nineteenth consecutive year of decline in global freedom (Gorokhovskaia & Grothe, 2025). International IDEA points to pressure on representation, rights, the rule of law and participation (International IDEA, 2025). As such, democratic decline is not only a personal concern or a theme within public debate. It is part of a broader international development. This situation is serious.

In the Netherlands, the situation is different but not unrelated. Compared to many other countries, Dutch democracy remains relatively strong. Freedom House still classifies the Netherlands as a free country with a strong record of safeguarding political rights and civil liberties (Freedom House, 2025).

However, CBS reported that trust in politicians and the Dutch House of Representatives reached its lowest level since the start of the survey in 2012 (CBS, 2026). Democratic pressure in the Netherlands seems to appear more as a gradual weakening of trust, representation and social cohesion.

1.2 Democracy as a lived relationship

This project approaches democracy not as a construct, but as a relationship between people, institutions and society as a whole. Democracy is shaped through formal structures such as elections, rights and law, but (young) people encounter it through rules, groups, disagreement, belonging, influence and responsibility.

This understanding resonates with Honingh (2026), who describes democracy as a way of living together that extends beyond formal institutions. In this project, this idea is taken further as a design perspective: to explore how young people may experience and practise democracy, and how the conditions for this relationship may change towards 2035.

In this project, 'negotiating democracy' refers to how people position themselves in relation to others and to the world around them. It is not about formal negotiation, but about how people find their place within democratic life.

1.3 Why young people?

Young people are central to this project because their relationship with democracy is developing during adolescence. The ADKS research shows that democratic attitudes and values can already be studied from the beginning of secondary education, and continue to develop throughout the school years (Huijsmans et al., 2024).

During this period, young people are strongly developing their own identity. Learning who you want to be, how to relate to groups, and what position you will take in the world around you. Identity formation during adolescence is closely connected to social relationships, peer groups and the search for autonomy (Meeus, 2011).

1.4 ProDemos as a design context

This project is conducted together with ProDemos. The organisation operates at the intersection of education, democracy and society. ProDemos creates programmes through which young people encounter democratic institutions and learn about democratic values to make and be a meaningful contribution to democracy.

ProDemos is therefore used as the concrete design context of the project. ProDemos is an entry point to explore how young people may relate to democracy in the future, and how design can create conditions for these relationships to develop.

Moreover, this context brings an important tension into the project. ProDemos works within a politically sensitive domain and tries to position itself carefully in relation to neutrality, influence and democratic values, as mentioned in their strategic vision (ProDemos, 2021). Designing within this context requires sensitivity.



Figure 2: Sander Heijne speaking about democratic decline at Nieuwspoor



Figure 3: A picture made at The Debat Simulatie at ProDemos

1.5 Research questions

This project is guided by two interconnected research questions. The first research question addresses the future relationship between young people and democracy. The second addresses the responsibility of designing within a politically and socially sensitive domain. The second question will be answered through the resilience principles and reflections explained in paragraph 1.7 and will be used as a reflective layer on this research.

Research question 1

How might young people relate to democracy in 2035, and how can design create conditions for them to recognise, practise and contribute to democratic futures?

Sub-questions:

- Which societal, cultural, technological, psychological and political factors influence the future relationship between young people and democracy towards 2035?
- How might these developments interact and unfold into plausible future relationships between young people and democratic society?
- Which preferable future relationships can be envisioned, and which values, mechanisms and interaction qualities define them?
- How can these qualities be translated into meaningful design directions and interventions?

Research question 2

How can a designer responsibly design for democratic development while navigating the tension between influence and neutrality?

Sub-questions:

- To what extent is neutrality possible and preferable within democratic education and design practice?
- How do framing, interaction and design choices influence how young people relate to democracy?
- What responsibilities and ethical tensions emerge when designing within politically and socially sensitive contexts?

The two research questions structure the report in two layers: a future-oriented layer about young people's possible relationships with democracy in 2035, and a reflective layer about the responsibility of designing within a politically and socially sensitive context.

1.6 Methodological approach: Vision in Product Design

Designing is used as a way to understand what the problem actually is. A design process is used to question how the problem is framed, what assumptions shape that framing, and what future consequences may follow from it.

This relates to the third stage in the co-evolution of problem and solution, described by Kees Dorst (2015) as a deliberate and proactive process (figure 3). At this level, designing means finding deeper structures behind a problem. Rather than moving directly towards a solution, you first explore the underlying causes and the conditions that can make change possible. The purpose of this approach is to investigate how a solution contributes to broader societal change.

The Vision in Product Design method is used as the approach for this project, as it fits this open-ended and future-oriented nature Dorst describes. Instead of starting from a predefined problem, the process begins with understanding the context in which future interventions may exist (Hekkert & Van Dijk, 2011).

The relationship between young people and democracy cannot be defined as one fixed problem. It is shaped by sociological, psychological, philosophical, technological, cultural and political dynamics, in which identity, belonging, trust and (collective) responsibility are all part of a wider context.

At the same time, this graduation project also became an exploration of the ViP method itself. Prior to this project, I had not worked with ViP as a complete design methodology. Choosing such a broad and future-oriented method therefore meant deliberately stepping into uncertainty as a designer. The process required resisting the urge to move directly towards solutions, and spending a large part of the project constructing and understanding the complexity of the domain first. In that sense, the project not only investigates the future relationship between young people and democracy, but also critically reflects on whether ViP is an effective way to do so.

The design process moves from analysing the context, to imagining possible futures, and finally to defining a direction for intervention.

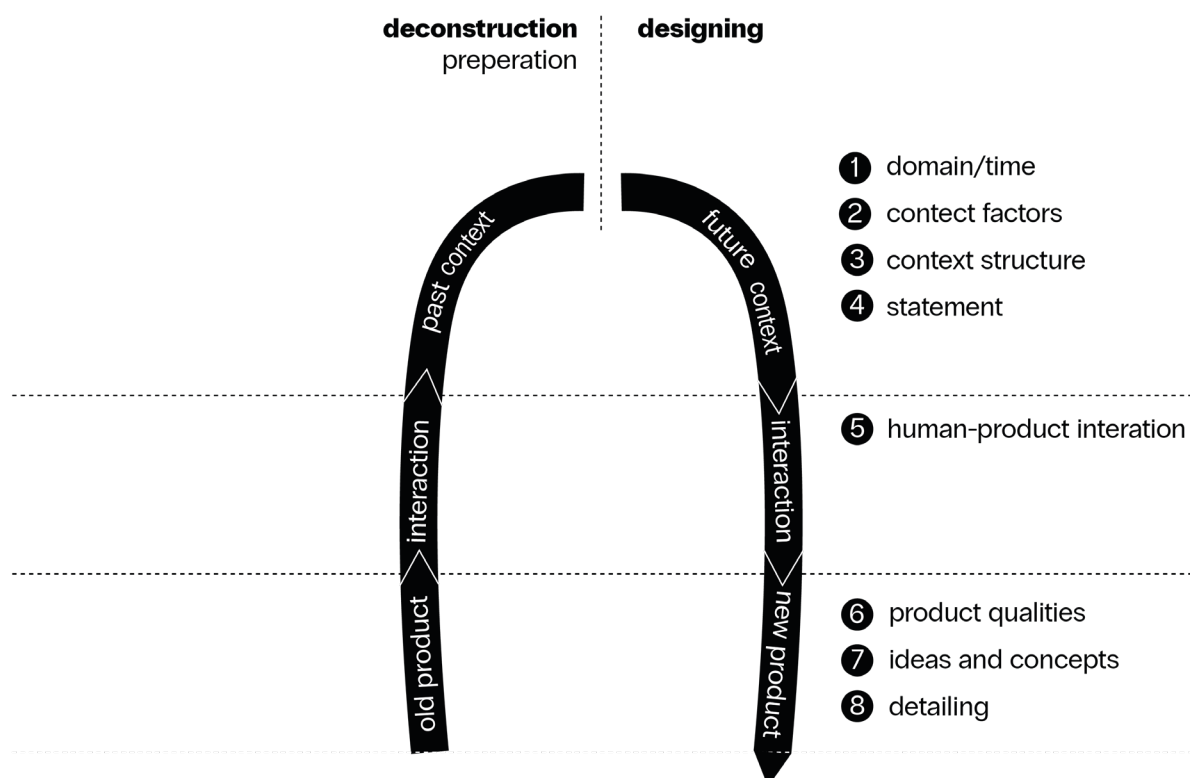


Figure 1: The Vision in Product Design process used in this project.

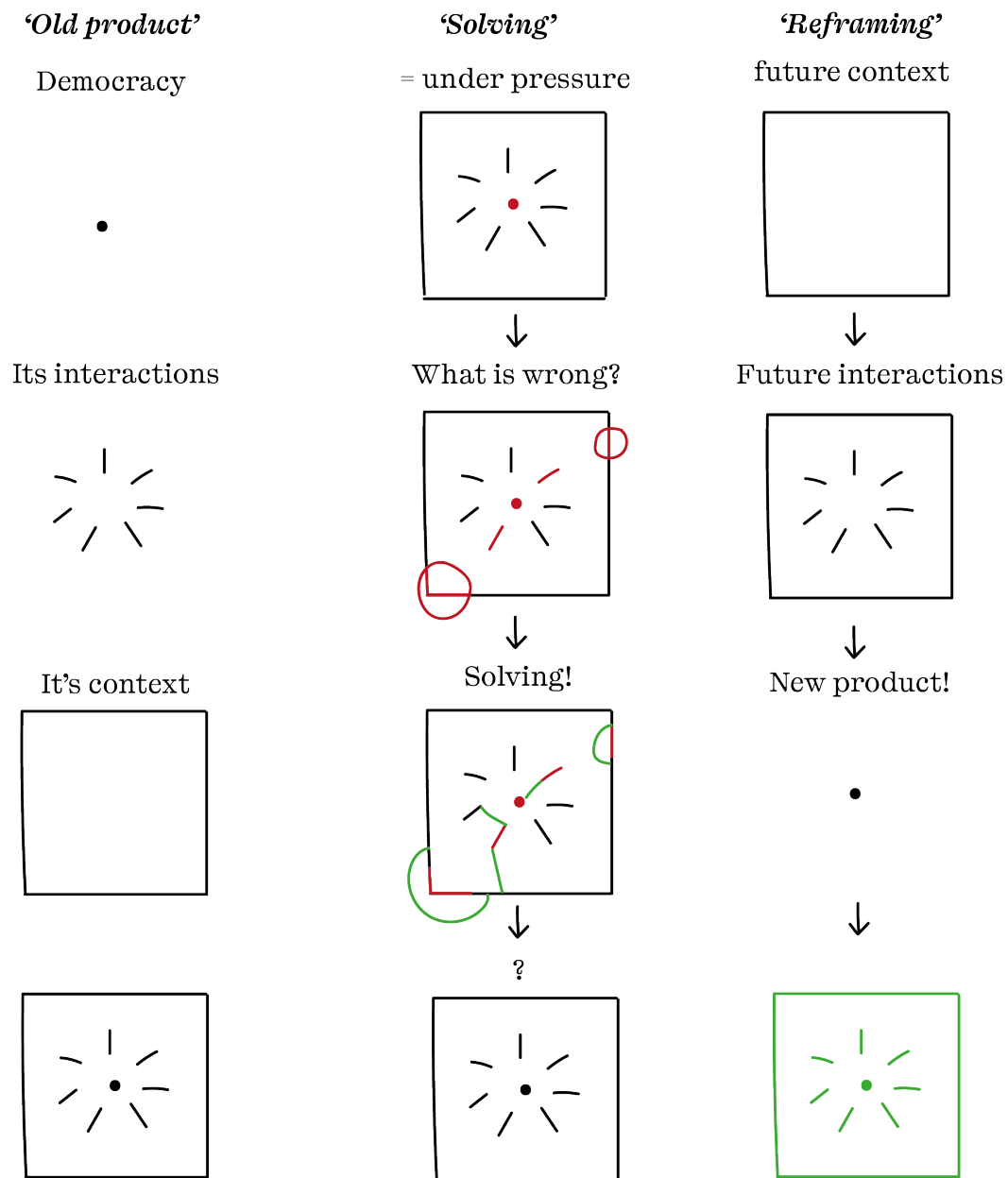


Figure 4: Reframing through the co-evolution of problem and solution

1.7 The role of the reflective designer

Because this project engages with democracy, neutrality and influence, reflecting on my own role as a designer became an essential part of the process. At the start of the project, I used principles from *The Resilient Designer's Handbook* by Mieke van der Bijl and Rebecca Price to structure my weekly reflections in a diary. Their work helped me reflect on complex situations, my ambition and engagement, and designing from within a context rather than from the position of an outsider (Price & Van der Bijl-Brouwer, 2023).

During the project, these reflections became more personal and specific to the situations I encountered. Therefore, I formulated resilient principles of my own, still inspired by the 'original' resilience principles. After each chapter, one or more of these principles are introduced together with a short explanation, how to put the principle into practice, and my 'remedy': an experience, conversation, text or observation that helped or inspired me to move through.

Reflection becomes part of the report structure. It shows why and how the design process is personal.

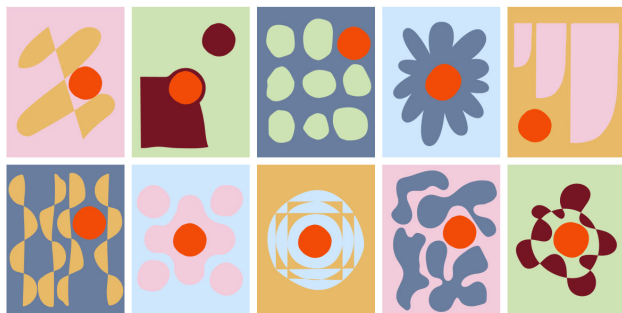


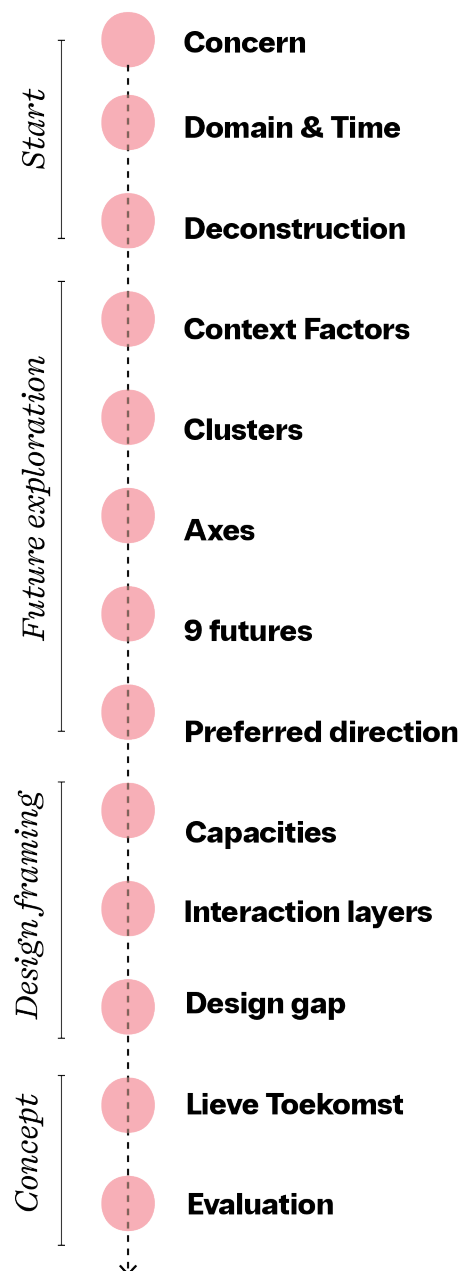
Figure 6: The visual representation of the resilience principles (Price, Van der Bijl-Brouwer, 2023)

1.8 Reading guide

Important information will be highlighted with orange.

After every chapter, the main or key takeaway will be presented in white letters with black shading.

The Resilience Principles will be presented at the end of the chapters, all in the same vibrant red colour to show their function as reflection layer.



1.9 Overview activities

Design activities

- DA01 Framework building session with fellow IDE students
- DA02 Framework building session with fellow IDE students, part 2
- DA03 Framework building session
- DA04 Framework building session
- DA05 Ideation session through Conditions, Relations and Directions with fellow students

Test / input activities

- TI01 Shadowing day: four programmes with guides 12/03/2026
- TI02 Observation day with guide, 19/03/2026
- TI03 Observation of Eindbazen with guide, 21/03/2026
- TI04 Listening afternoon in office café, 21/03/2026
- TI05 Collecting input with conversation starter of eight Civics teachers
- TI06 Testing plausible futures with three young people aged 18–20, 08/05/2026
- TI07 Midterm presentation input with ProDemos education experts
- TI08 Classroom test in a havo 4 class in The Hague using individual, duo and capacity cards
- TI09 Testing the first version of the Lieve Toekomst guide with fellow design students
- TI10 Review of the second version of the Lieve Toekomst booklet with Anita Rademakers, education expert at ProDemos
- TI11 Testing the final version of the Lieve Toekomst booklet with four ProDemos education experts

Interviews

- IN01 Interview with Cees van den Bos, Professor of Organizational Development and Leadership for Societal Transitions at Utrecht University, 24/11/2025
- IN02 Interview with young people, 03/03/2026
- IN03 Interview with Frank Wanders, researcher at ProDemos, 18/03/2026
- IN04 Interview with Abel van Beest, intern at D66, 20/03/2026
- IN05 Interview with Jan Durk Tuinier, Stichting Vredeseducatie, 23/03/2026

- IN06 Interview with Renate van der Kuijl, educational expert at ProDemos, 30/03/2026
- IN07 Interview with Niels Bedijn, guide at ProDemos, 30/03/2026
- IN08 Interview with Cynthia van Putten, guide at ProDemos, 31/03/2026
- IN09 Interview with Ivar van den Brink, guide at ProDemos, 01/04/2026
- IN10 Interview with Tommy Blomvliet, guide at ProDemos, 13/04/2026
- IN11 Conversation with Matthijs van Tuijl, programme manager at ProDemos
- IN12 First conversation with Tom van der Meer, Professor of Political Science at the University of Amsterdam
- IN13 Second conversation with Tom van der Meer about the programmatic approach
- IN14 Reflection with Laurens Dassen
- IN15 Conversation with Eric Stokkink, director of ProDemos
- IN16 Conversation with Hella van der Velde, Head of the Department Influence and Participation at the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations
- IN17 Conversation with Matthijs Rooduijn, Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Amsterdam
- IN18 Interview with two ProDemos guides as evaluation of Lieve Toekomst
- IN19 Interview with two young people as final reflecting conversation

Attended activities

- AA01 Attending Sander Heijne's lecture Democratie onder druk at Nieuwspoort in The Hague, 16/02/2026
- AA02 Attending Eva Rovers' lecture at the Docentenavond Maatschappijleer in The Hague, 26/03/2026
- AA03 Attending David van Reybrouck's lecture at the Docentendag Maatschappijleer in The Hague, 27/03/2026
- AA04 Attending the performance Alkibiades with Ilja Leonard Pfeijffer, Marcia Luyten and Sofie Decleir at De Balie in Amsterdam, 02/04/2026
- AA05 Attending the performance night Europanacht by De Kiesmannen at Paradiso in Amsterdam, 09/05/2026

The project does not treat democracy as a fixed system to be explained, but as a changing relationship to be designed for. The next step is to understand how ProDemos currently creates this relationship through its existing programmes.

1



Remedy: Sef performing Voor Alles Altijd Bang at Best Kept Secret, and everyone singing along made me reconnect with my urgency to do this project

Declare your position

During the first weeks, I started building a collection that would eventually consist of 159 context factors. Every new factor made the domain feel more substantial. At the same time, every addition made me more aware that I was personally constructing the domain I was studying.

I selected the lectures, performances, podcasts and articles that interested me. Some had been recommended to me; others had been selected by an algorithm while I was browsing online. From everything I encountered, I kept what I considered important. I noticed that I wanted to hold certain factors close, almost as if they already belonged to me. Other observations slowly disappeared because they did not immediately resonate with my understanding of the subject.

This made me uncomfortable. I was working with ProDemos, an organisation for which political neutrality is important. I wondered whether my own involvement made the research less legitimate. I doubted whether professionalism meant keeping emotional distance: the less visible I was, the more trustworthy the work would become.

I no longer believe that. Removing my voice from the project would not remove my influence. It would only make that influence harder to examine. This realisation led to my positionality statement and to the second research question about neutrality and democratic influence. I chose to acknowledge that the project needed to be personal, while remaining critical of the way my position shaped the research.

My choices are never neutral. Knowing and naming what draws me towards them makes my position visible.

2

Resilience principles



Remedy: Observing the atmosphere around the elections time.

2

Resilience principles

Return to interaction

During the municipal election period, I became very aware of the amount of democratic interaction happening around me. Political parties were handing out flyers near the office. On my phone, campaign posts and superficial opinions appeared next to each other.

This made democracy feel less like an abstract system and more like something people practise. It happens in conversations, classrooms, workshops, public spaces and online environments. It also happens in small moments: when people decide whether to listen, speak, withdraw, respond or connect.

This helped me understand my own expertise more clearly. I am an interaction designer. More precisely, I am a designer who designs for interaction. I design conditions in which people can meet a subject, each other and themselves differently.

That became important for my position in the project. I was not only researching democratic education as content. I was researching how democracy is practised through interaction. The project became less about explaining democracy to young people, and more about designing situations in which democracy could be experienced, questioned and practised.

When I feel lost in the size of a topic, I will return back to interaction, to the people. That is something that lies deeply in me and fascinates me the most, so that is always a thing I can come back to.

2 //

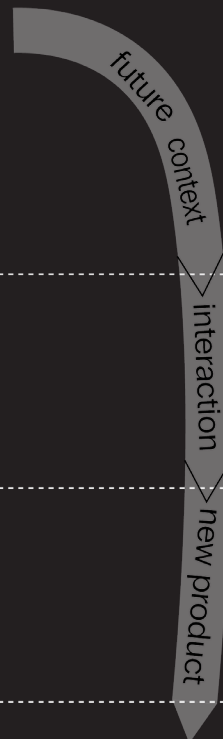
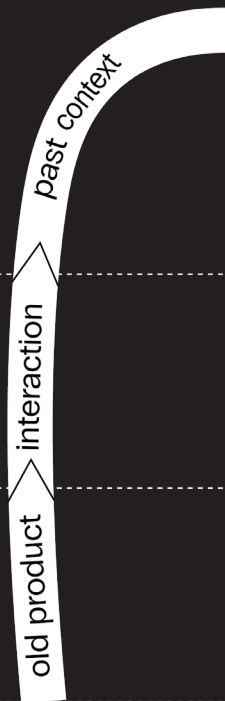
Current practice; ProDemos' existing instrumentarium

Before developing a new direction, it is important to understand how young people currently encounter democracy within the existing ProDemos programmes. ProDemos already offers a broad instrumentarium through which democratic themes are translated into educational experiences. These experiences transfer knowledge, but also values and ideas about how young people should relate to democracy, to each other and to society.

For that reason, this chapter focuses on two programme components: DemocratieLAB and Eindbazen. Together, they show two different sides of ProDemos' current instrumentarium. DemocratieLAB mainly creates space for individual reflection, where Eindbazen uses collective simulation to let participants experience democratic decision-making in practice.

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- ⑧ detailing

2.1 Approach and programme selection

Following the ViP approach, the existing programmes are deconstructed through product, interaction and context. This structure helps examine how the relationship between human, product and context is shaped within the existing design (Hekkert & Van Dijk, 2011).

The purpose of this deconstruction is to understand how ProDemos currently creates democratic experiences for young people. More specifically, it looks at what these experiences make possible, the assumptions they carry, and what kind of relationship between young people and democracy they create and intend to create.

Two programme components are selected for this analysis: DemocratieLAB and Eindbazen. DemocratieLAB is selected because it is a relatively new programme and shows how ProDemos currently works with modular, individual and reflective formats. Eindbazen is selected because it is a collective programme that ProDemos has already identified as being in need of renewal.

The analysis is based on programme materials, multiple observation days at ProDemos (see Appendix A), and interviews with guides and the designer of the programme component (see Appendix B). The educational vision of ProDemos is used as an additional reference to compare the intended programme with what happens in practice. It focuses on informing, activating and encouraging participation, and on learning through experience and active involvement.

The full product-interaction-context deconstruction can be found in Appendix C. In this chapter, only the insights most relevant to the design direction are discussed.

2.2 Deconstruction overview

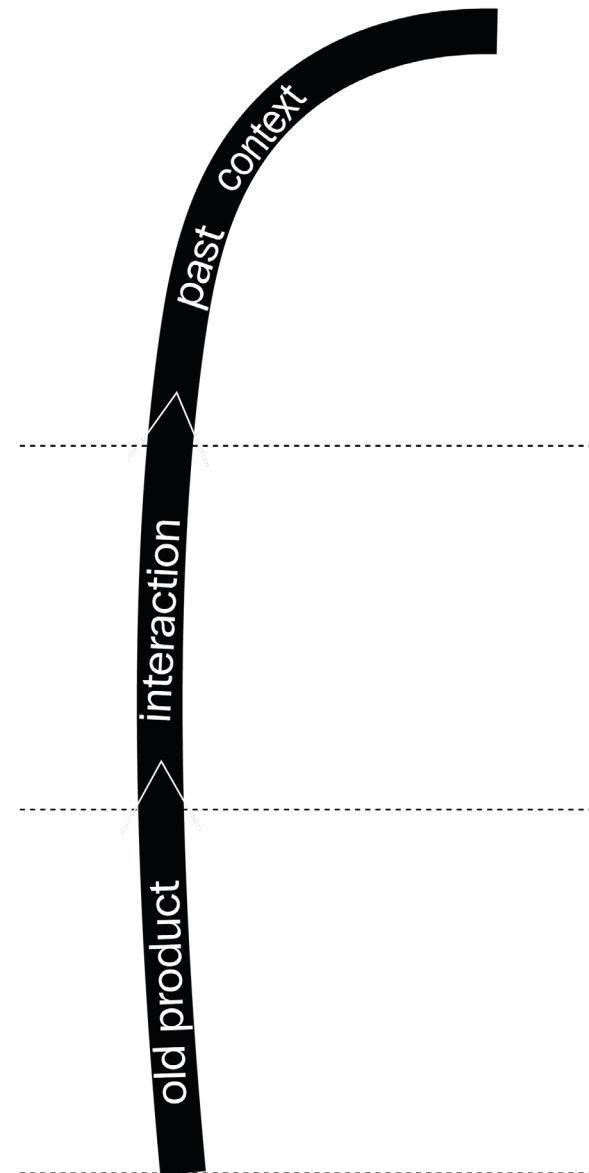


Figure 7: Deconstruction steps following ViP

DemocratieLAB

DemocratieLAB is a modular installation in an exhibition space. It is sequential, question-driven, individual, time-bound, lightweight, and structured. Students use a phone as a digital guide. The phone gives instructions, guides the route, collects answers, and generates a final report. The product mainly works as a scaffold for personal reflection, and to a lesser extent as a direct knowledge transmitter.

Participants move through the lab with a phone and answer short dilemmas and prompts. The intended interaction is autonomous reflection, but in practice students often collaborate, copy each other, and focus on finishing quickly. This makes the interaction more about participation and task completion than deeper reflection.

DemocratieLAB fits a context of preparatory citizenship education. Young people are encouraged to understand and reflect on democracy in a controlled educational setting. Their role is mostly oriented toward their role in the future, instead of giving them an active role within democracy in the present.

DemocratieLAB creates accessible personal reflection, while its structured and timebound character can turn reflection into task completion.

Eindbazen

Eindbazen is a game-based installation with a central projection of a map of the Netherlands, individual phones, and a facilitator with a tablet. It is collective, fast, visual, simulation-based, game-based, and decision-driven. Students build a country by choosing values, allocating budgets, responding to dilemmas, and reflecting on the result. The product is a simplified and accelerated model of governance.

Participants make collective decisions through voting, discussion, and immediate visual feedback. They are quickly engaged, especially when choices connect to their own values. However, reflection often remains superficial. Students need to make choices, but do not always explain their reasoning. Deeper discussion depends strongly on the facilitator.

Eindbazen fits the context of engagement-driven citizenship education. It aims to make (democratic) decision-making accessible and relevant for students. Depth and critical reflection depend on facilitation that connects the choices made in the simulation to broader democratic principles and consequences.

Eindbazen creates strong participation and energy, while reflection and democratic depth depend on how the facilitator slows down the game and opens up the choices.

2.3 Comparing the current instrumentarium

The deconstruction shows that DemocratieLAB and Eindbazen share a similar intention within ProDemos' current instrumentarium. Both programmes translate democracy into an active experience and invite young people to engage with democratic values, choices and decision-making. In this way, they move away from a traditional knowledge-transfer-setting and make democracy more tangible.

However, they do this both in different ways. DemocratieLAB focuses on individual routes, personal questions and guided reflection. However, the 'lab' metaphor creates a tension. It suggests experimentation and measurable outcomes, while DemocratieLAB aims to be subjective and personal. Eindbazen focuses on collective decision-making, voting and simulation. DemocratieLAB therefore positions democracy mainly as something students personally reflect on, while Eindbazen presents democracy as something students temporarily practise together.

At the same time, both programmes reveal the same central tension: the balance between engagement and reflection. Their fast-paced and accessible formats help to maintain attention and stimulate participation, but observations show that this can also make it difficult for students to slow down, explain their reasoning or consider broader consequences.

In both cases, students are active, but the democratic depth of the experience is not automatically created by the format itself.

This makes facilitation a crucial part of the instrumentarium. Time, group dynamics, social influence and the way reflection is organised strongly shape what young people take from the experience. Facilitators help students connect their choices to democratic principles, articulate different perspectives and reflect on consequences. The current instrumentarium consists of the interaction between product, participant, facilitator and educational context.



Figure 8: Picture made during observation of DemocratieLAB



Figure 9: Picture made during observation of DemocratieLAB



Figure 10: Picture made during observation of Eindbazen



Figure 11: Picture made during observation of Eindbazen

2.4 The current instrumentarium

To understand the current instrumentarium beyond individual programmes, its main elements and relationships were mapped in a simplified figure using ProDemos' strategic and educational vision and insights from conversations within the organisation.

The map shows how ProDemos' vision is translated by education experts into programme tools that structure educational moments. Guides facilitate these moments and interact with young people, who participate in the programme. Together, these elements form a democratic experience.

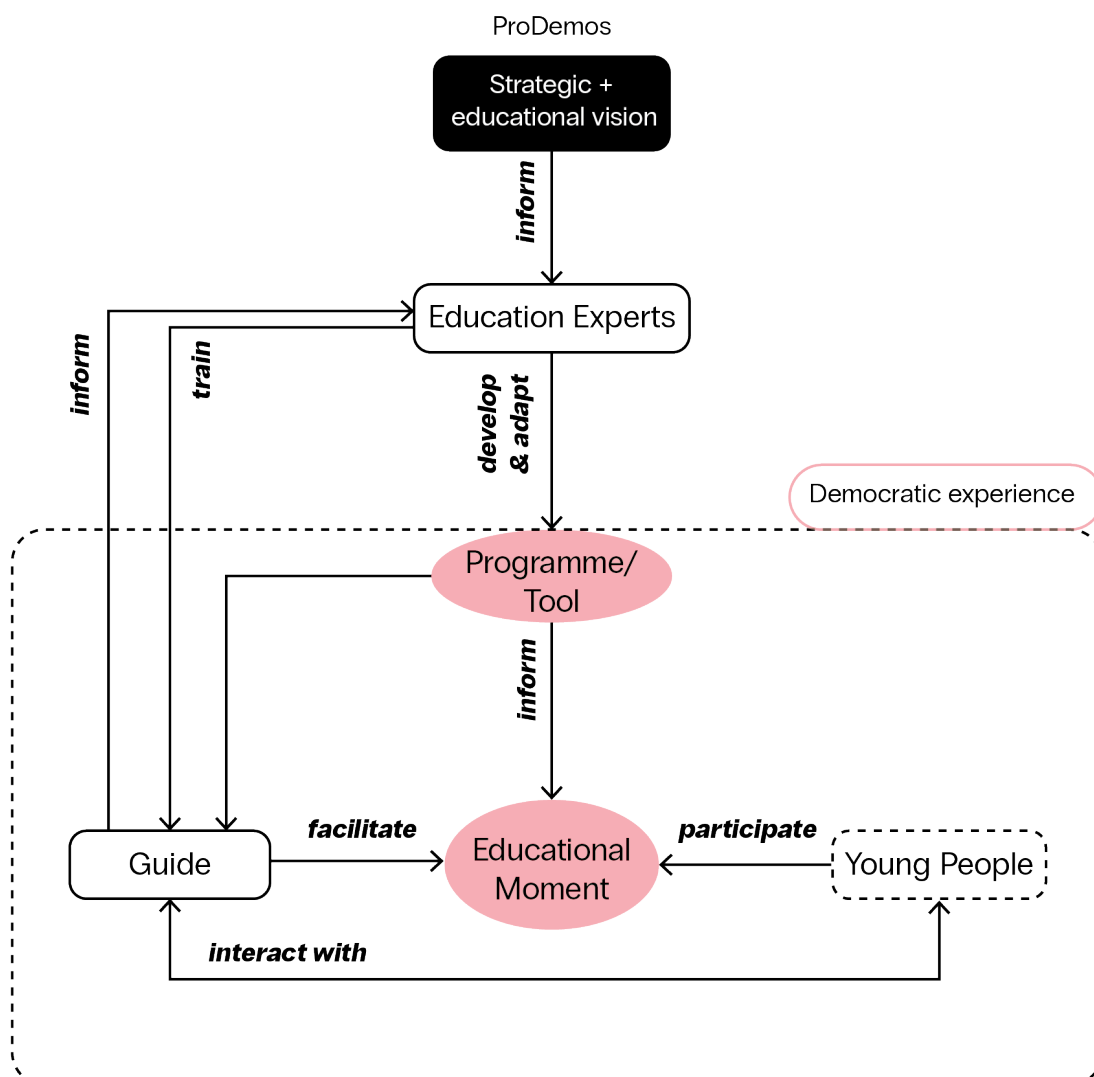


Figure 12: Simplified current ProDemos instrumentarium and the relationships between its main elements

ProDemos currently creates democratic experiences through structured programme moments. DemocratieLAB mainly supports individual reflection and Eindbazen focuses on collective decision-making. In both, the depth of the experience depends on the programme, facilitation, time and group dynamics. Together, these elements form ProDemos' current instrumentarium.

3

Resilience principles



Remedy: Visiting the exhibition of Matisse at the Grand Palais really moved me. It reminds me that colour can hold feeling in a direct and generous way. I used the same vivid red for my resilience principles pages, to express that reflections are strong and personal.

3

Resilience principles

Listen where it is lived

I expected the interviews with ProDemos facilitators to give me the most valuable insights. They knew the programmes, understood the organisation and could explain the intentions behind design decisions.

But the conversations with teachers affected me more strongly. They gave me energy. They felt direct, specific and close to daily practice. The teachers are trying to reach young people every day, while dealing with limited time and a classroom full of social dynamics and different interest levels.

I recognised a struggle in their stories. They were not necessarily people with “a heart for politics”. They were people who wanted to help students understand the world around them. That shifted something for me. It helped me see that democratic education does not only belong to people who already feel politically engaged. It also belongs to those who work with young people in ordinary, difficult and repetitive situations.

Observing existing programmes created a similar shift. Some activities were intended to create reflection, but students often treated them as tasks to complete. They participated, but participation did not automatically mean reflection, listening or reconsidering a position. This was frustrating, because I knew the intentions behind the programmes were thoughtful.

I will talk to people who experience the situation differently, especially when their reality challenges my assumptions.

3 //

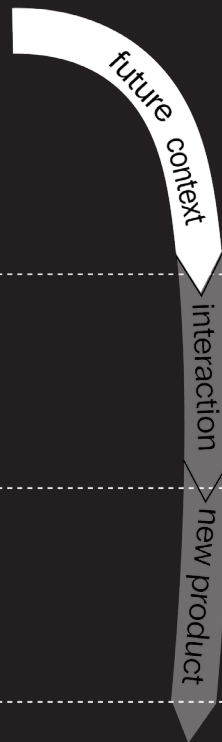
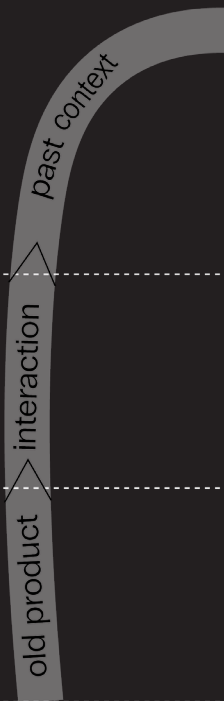
Future context; the democratic environment of 2035

After analysing how ProDemos currently creates democratic experiences, attention shifts to the future context in which young people may relate to democracy in 2035.

In line with the Vision in Product Design approach, contextual factors are explored before a design direction is defined. This supports an understanding of the broader societal conditions in which future relationships may emerge.

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- ⑧ detailing

3.1 Why 2035?

2035 is used as a design horizon. The relationship between young people and democracy is already changing, and the consequences of these changes will become more visible over time. Working with a future horizon creates enough distance from current educational formats and existing assumptions, yet remains close enough to relate to the lives of young people growing up today. This horizon is also relevant for ProDemos. The organisation plans to renovate its physical environment in 2031, the coming years create an opportunity to rethink how democratic experiences are designed and facilitated.

This makes it possible to explore how current developments may develop over time, and what this could mean for the way young people relate to democracy in the future. In line with the Vision in Product Design approach, defining a future context is a way to define a new relationship between people, context and the design.

The domain is defined as:

How young people relate to democracy in 2035.

3.2 Collecting context factors

The process begins with the collection of context factors. Within ViP context factors are observations, developments, principles, beliefs, or societal dynamics that describe the world in which a future design may exist. They help to understand the complexity of the domain.

Context factors are collected to explore the conditions that may shape the future relationship between young people and democracy.

Together, these factors form a broad basis for clustering and creating plausible futures.

3.3 Principles and states, trends and developments

Following the ViP approach, the collected context factors are divided into four types: principles, states, trends and developments.

Principles describe underlying mechanisms. These can be psychological, sociological, philosophical or systemic. Principles help explain why certain behaviours or relationships may appear across different situations.

States describe relatively stable conditions or situations. These are factors that are present in the current context and may continue to influence the future.

Trends describe broader directional shifts. They indicate movement over time, such as changes in social behaviour, technology, culture or political expectations.

Developments describe ongoing changes that may still unfold in different directions. They are more specific than trends and often show how a particular issue is evolving.

Using these four types made it possible to avoid treating all factors in the same way. Some factors describe change, while others describe more stable mechanisms.

3.4 Sources

The context factor collection combines interviews, observations, conversations with youth, input sessions, lectures, performances, and desk research. See Appendix A for an overview of this data.

The different sources were often used in combination. Insights from talks, interviews and conversations were followed up through desk research, for example to find supporting theory, check whether a pattern appeared elsewhere, or connect an observation to a broader societal development. In this way, desk research was used to deepen and substantiate themes that first emerged through the fieldwork.



Figure 13: David van Reybrouck speaking at the Docentendag Maatschappijleer



Figure 14: Picture made during one of the observation days at ProDemos with guides

3.5 Teacher 'street' interviews

As part of the research process, several civics teachers (n=8) were interviewed during the civic teachers day in an informal 'street interview' like format about what they experience and observe in classrooms today. A conversation starter was used to engage them with the topic.



Figure 15: Conversation starter used during the teacher street interviews:



Figure 16: Completed conversation starter from the teacher street interviews. Larger picture in appendix A.

The conversations started by asking which factors they believe currently strengthen or undermine democracy among young people. Afterwards, teachers reflected on which of these factors they feel able to influence through education, and which seem to lie outside their reach. These conversations provided grounded insights into everyday democratic behaviour in schools and formed the basis for several context factors used throughout the project.

3.6 Overview of the factor landscape

The context factor collection resulted in 159 factors. These were divided across different fields, including biological, cultural, demographic, ecological, economic, philosophical, political, psychological, social and technological factors.

Most factors in the collection came from the social, psychological and political fields. This distribution reflects the focus of the research and the material that was collected, rather than the relative importance of these fields. These factors particularly address social belonging, identity, trust, group behaviour, institutional relations and political culture.

Appendix C shows all collected context factors.

	Biological	Cultural	Demographic	Ecological	Economical	Philosophical	Political	Psychological	Social	Technological	
Principle	4	5		2	3	9	5	18	8		54
State	1	6		3	1		6	7	14	3	41
Trend	1	2	4		3	1	3	1	11	3	29
Development		2	4	4	9		7	1	5	3	35
Total	6	15	8	9	16	10	21	27	38	9	159

Figure 17: Distribution of the 159 context factors across fields and factor types



Figure 18: Examples from the context factor collection

The complete set of factors is organized into clusters based on their contextual relationships. Factors that correlated were grouped either by shared characteristics, forming common-quality clusters, or by the new meanings that emerged through their combination, forming emergent-quality clusters.

Each cluster is then described in narrative form to capture its complexity and internal dynamics. Finally, I added artworks to the clusters to convey their emotional and experiential qualities, complementing the analytical descriptions with a more intuitive layer of interpretation.

3.8 Cluster overview

An overview of the collected clusters is presented on the next 2 pages.

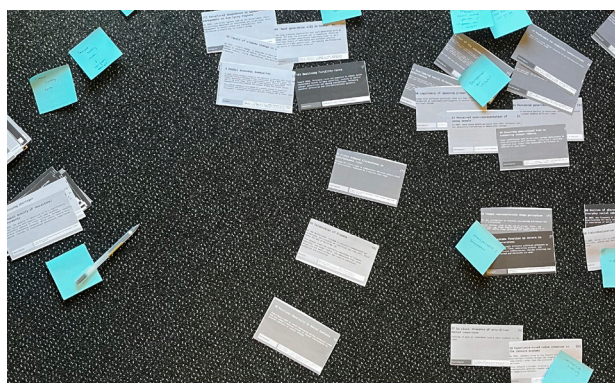


Figure 19: Clustering the context factors at ProDemos

The context factors show that the future relationship between young people and democracy will be shaped by identity, belonging, trust, influence and uncertainty. This means the project must look beyond democratic knowledge and explore how young people may position themselves within future democratic environments.

Figure 20-26: Artworks connected to clusters, references can be found at the end of the report's references. (Klimt, 1908–1909; Hockney, 1970; Dalí, 1931; Basquiat, c. 1980s; Hopper, 1927; Richter, 1995; Friedrich, c. 1817; Escher, 1953; Bourgeois, 1999; Fleming, 1939; Kusama, 2016; Haring, 1989; Hockney, 1972; Eliasson, 2010)



1 Expectation of systemic care

By 2035, the expectation that systems will take care of citizens remains strong, but increasingly abstract. Welfare structures still exist, yet their capacity to respond is inconsistent and unevenly experienced.

Young people grow up expecting support as a default, while learning through experience that systems cannot consistently deliver on that promise.

74 | 37 | 149 | 63 | 47 | 146 | 20 | 33 | 111

2 The withdrawing State

By 2035, public facilities become less visible and less present in everyday life. Furthermore, public services such as access to healthcare, housing, and local governance vary strongly by region and socio-economic position.

Daily interactions with the state become more distant, shaping a perception of systems that fail to materialize in practice.

96 | 16 | 69 | 7 | 92 | 112 | 151 | 150 | 13

3 Reality as quantified construction

By 2035, reality is increasingly mediated through data, metrics, and algorithmic representations. What is considered true is shaped by measurable indicators, rankings, and system outputs rather than shared interpretation.

Public understanding of society becomes dependent on how information is selected, structured, visualized, and distributed, shaping not only how reality is seen, but what is seen at all.

70 | 139 | 104 | 140 | 108 | 157 | 21 | 41 | 2

4 Amplified relational realities

By 2035, adolescence remains a phase marked by heightened emotional intensity, sensitivity to social feedback, and more extreme forms of expression. At the same time, the world young people grow up in becomes more volatile and extreme, shaped by climate change, crises, and increasing instability.

Through digital media, these developments are not only experienced directly, but also continuously amplified and accelerated. External events and internal responses reinforce each other, creating a dynamic in which extremes converge rather than balance out.

5 Contested togetherness

By 2035, collective structures have dissolved into overlapping small communities. Shared rituals, spaces, and narratives are no longer widely synchronized across society. Belonging is organized in smaller, fluid groups, reducing the experience of a unified public sphere ('we').

Rather than a single public sphere, multiple smaller collectives coexist, each with their own norms, references, and rhythms.

64 | 30 | 51 | 36 | 131 | 153 | 57 | 60 | 58

6 Unequal decline

By 2035, societal decline is not experienced equally. Access to stability, opportunities and collective support increasingly depends on socio-economic position and the resources available in someone's immediate environment.

As shared systems offer different levels of security, young people become more dependent on personal resources and close networks. This makes collective problems increasingly experienced as individual challenges.

7 The Elusive sense of certainty

By 2035, the transition into adulthood is increasingly prolonged, with young people reaching independence later in life. Stable housing, financial security, and long-term prospects remain uncertain, creating a sense of instability during a phase that was once associated with growing autonomy.

At the same time, youth continues to be framed as a protected and relatively carefree period, in which responsibilities are delayed rather than assumed. As a result, many young people remain dependent on their parents or immediate environment for longer, relying on them for housing, financial support, and stability.

This creates a condition in which certainty is not internally established, but externally sought. The need for stability increases, while the ability to independently secure it remains limited.



8 Power without grip

By 2035, decision-making power is spread across institutions, technologies and different levels of government. This makes it harder to see where decisions are made and who can actually influence them. Political, economic and digital systems overlap, so the effect of individual actions is often unclear. This can create a distance between taking part and seeing an outcome. You can participate without knowing what it changes. This raises questions about who is responsible, who can act and where influence is still possible.
144 | 103 | 117 | 145 | 83 | 155 | 15 | 137 | 143 | 98 | 1 | 44 | 66 | 5

9 Structures of dependencies

By 2035, societies operate within tightly interconnected systems of economic, technological, and geopolitical dependency. Energy supply, digital infrastructures, and regulatory frameworks are shaped across national and supranational levels, reducing the autonomy of individual actors. Decisions made within one system increasingly depend on developments in others, as global supply chains, platform infrastructures, and political alliances become deeply entangled. These dependencies form complex networks in which changes in one part of the system ripple through others, shaping what is possible, controllable, and negotiable.
101 | 54 | 89 | 100 | 56 | 4

10 Behaviour before reflection

By 2035, behaviour is increasingly shaped by immediate feedback loops from digital environments and social groups. Decisions are made in response to visibility, rewards, and group alignment rather than deliberate reflection. This creates patterns of action that feel intuitive and fast, strongly guided by external stimuli.
42 | 147 | 28 | 120 | 132 | 148 | 77 | 50 | 12 | 141 | 59 | 86

11 Identity through difference: if others are, I am not

By 2035, identity is increasingly shaped through difference and opposition. Social and political positions are defined not only by what individuals stand for, but by what they stand against. During adolescence, this dynamic becomes more pronounced, as young people actively position themselves in contrast to others in order to form a sense of self. This process of distancing and opposition plays a central role in how identities develop and are expressed.

At the same time, social environments are structured around visible divisions, stereotypes, and group distinctions. These boundaries shape how individuals interpret others and define their own place in society, often reinforcing polarization and limiting the recognition of opposing perspectives.
14 | 118 | 11 | 10 | 27 | 26 | 18 | 65 | 34 | 97 | 80 | 106

12 Ungraspable future

By 2035, the future is experienced as open but unclear, shaped by overlapping crises, slow transitions, and unpredictable developments. Beginnings and endings of societal shifts are not easily recognized, as change unfolds gradually and without clear markers.
88 | 109 | 25 | 87 | 102 | 113 | 158 | 99 | 62

Rather than a clear direction, there is a persistent sense of ambiguity about what lies ahead and how systems may evolve.

13 Self vs collective

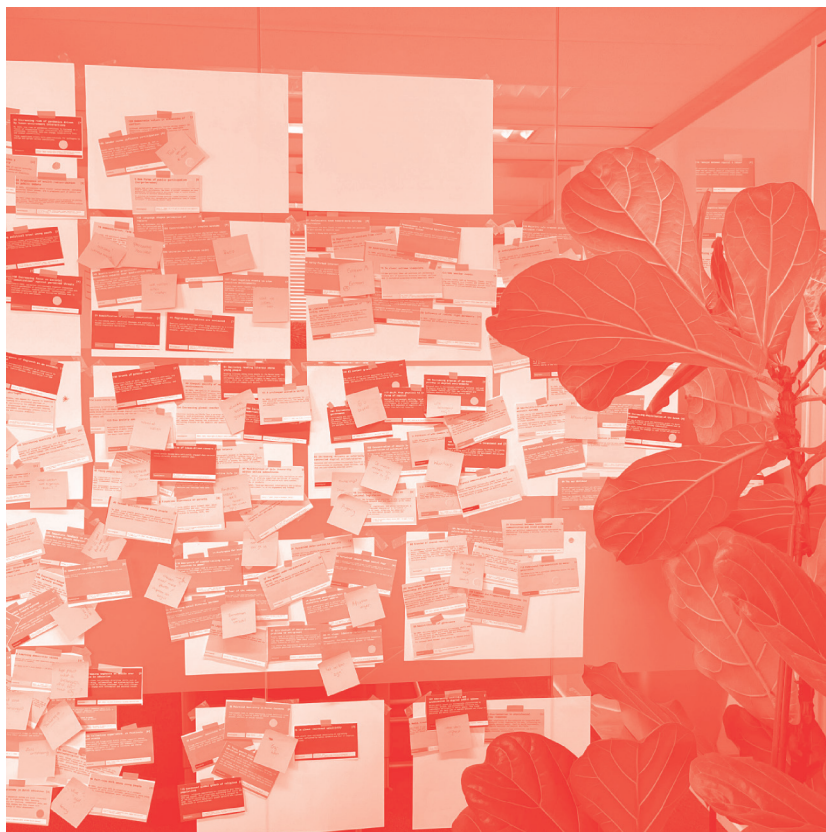
By 2035, individuals continuously navigate the relationship between personal autonomy and collective structures. Identity, values, and decisions are shaped through social interaction, education, and shared experiences, while also being driven by personal interests, emotions, and ambitions. Although collective contexts such as friendships, social environments, and shared events remain important, the balance increasingly shifts toward the individual.

This creates an ongoing negotiation, in which individuals are both shaped by and distanced from the collective, balancing personal goals with social expectations, norms, and structures that continue to influence what is possible and accepted.
105 | 29 | 8 | 9 | 19 | 82 | 39 | 31 | 135 | 142 | 90 | 136 | 46 | 94 | 17 | 93 | 110 | 38

14 The need to belong

By 2035, the need to belong remains a strong driver of social behaviour, but becomes increasingly shaped by highly visible and continuously connected social environments. Individuals seek connection, acceptance, and recognition within groups that provide a sense of identity and stability.

This need more strongly influences how people express themselves. Behaviour, opinions, and communication are increasingly adjusted to align with perceived group norms, as individuals seek approval and avoid social exclusion in environments where feedback is immediate and persistent.
35 | 43 | 84 | 115 | 75



Remedy: The wall at ProDemos, covered with my clusters and context factors, hanging there throughout the project. People kept stopping to look at it and ask what I was working on.

Respect complexity

During a conversation with Matthijs, he asked whether I had included a certain context factor. I realised that I no longer knew. I had collected so many factors that I could not remember exactly what was already there.

At first, that felt embarrassing. I thought I should be in control of the material I had created. But Matthijs suggested that this could also mean that I was beginning to embrace the complexity of the domain.

I liked that thought, although 'embracing complexity' sounds more comfortable than it felt. Complexity asked a lot from me. It asked me to read carefully and accept that every writing every 'short' factor reduced a much larger reality. It asked me to organise the material while knowing that I could have organised it differently.

This changed how I understood the framework. Making the framework is a way to hold the mess for long enough to see the patterns. When I started to use the framework, I saw that interpretations are a great starting point for creating interventions.

When I create a framework or overview, I will also ask what it helps me see and what disappears through simplifying.

5

Resilience principles



Remedy: Having people around!

Collect rich, not much

By week 5, I felt like a machine.

The process of collecting context factors had given me structure. I could read, select, formulate and add another number to the collection. When other parts of the project felt vague, this routine gave me a concrete sense of progress.

But after a while, I felt less joy working in this way. I was still producing factors, but I became less able to judge the quality of them. ViP did not give me a fixed point at which the collection was complete; selecting what was relevant to the domain remained my responsibility. The work became vague precisely because I had been looking at it for long enough. There was always another perspective I could include, another source I could read, another connection I could make.

Around the same time, I felt the loneliness of doing this project by myself. I was absorbing many other people's ideas, but I did not always have enough space to understand what they were doing to me.

Stopping the collection phase therefore became both a methodological and a personal decision. I was not complete. But continuing would not necessarily make the work better.

I will stop collecting when new material no longer changes, sharpens or challenges my understanding.



Remedy: Artworks and writings that touch on democracy remind me that this project is part of a much larger conversation, and that I can contribute to it too. Artwork by Tijn Noordenbos.

Use tools, but keep responsibility

During the clustering process, I wondered whether I should let AI or code help me. Maybe a computational analysis would reveal patterns I had missed. More honestly, I also hoped it would confirm that the patterns I saw were good enough.

The wish for a tool was partly a wish for certainty. If a system produced the clusters, I would no longer be the only one responsible for deciding which relationships mattered.

I later realised that this would not make the clustering less interpretive. Someone else looking at the same factors would also notice, prioritise and connect things differently. A tool could help me see relationships I had missed, but it could not remove interpretation from the process. What mattered was that I understood the choices behind the structure and could take responsibility for how I used it.

At the same time, words alone began to feel insufficient. The cluster descriptions could explain developments, but they did not communicate how a future might feel. That is why I added artworks. Words helped me deal with complexity. Images helped me stay connected to feeling and give the clustering process emotional weight.

I will use tools to support my judgement. A tool can help me see more (like ViP as a method helped me with structure), but it can also become a way to avoid responsibility for making decisions.

4 //

Future relationships; capacities for (democratic) life

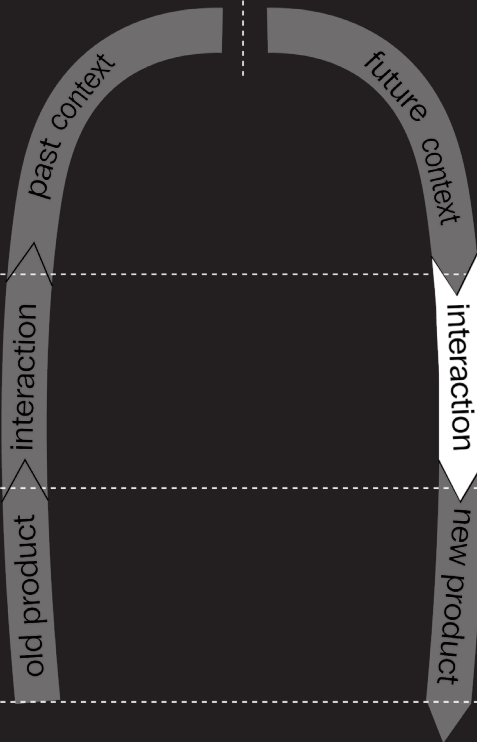
This chapter translates the context factor analysis into a future framework. The framework explores how young people may relate to democracy in 2035 and which future relationships could be preferred.

The chapter first explains how the clusters were structured into two axes. These axes form a 3-by-3 framework of plausible futures. The plausible futures are then used to define worldviews, values, interaction qualities and democratic capacities.

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4.1 From clusters to a framework

The final step in developing the framework involves examining how the identified clusters relate to one another. Through several iterations, two key dimensions are defined: how individuals negotiate their position within the world, and the extent to which power and the surrounding world feel graspable.

These dimensions provide a structure for understanding the relationships between the clusters. They show how different experiences of agency, perception, and orientation interact.



Figure 27: Iteration 1 of clustering to axes.



Figure 28: Iteration 2 of clustering to axes.

4.2 Key tensions in the framework

The first dimension concerns how young people position themselves in relation to the collective. At one end is the Conforming Individual, where behaviour, opinions, and actions are shaped by social environments and dominant group dynamics. Belonging and alignment become more important than individual agency or reflection. In the middle is the Positioning Individual, where young people actively balance self-expression with acceptance. At the other end is the Withdrawn Individual, where young people distance themselves from collective structures and focus more on personal stability and immediate networks.

The second dimension concerns how understandable and coherent systems feel. At one end is Structured Order, where institutions, responsibilities, norms, and forms of participation remain visible and recognisable. In the middle is Contested Order, where authority, truth, and influence are continuously debated through polarisation, competing realities, and conflicting interests. At the other end is Fragmented Order, where shared structures and societal narratives lose coherence, and public life breaks into smaller social realities.



Figure 29: Iteration 3 of clustering to axes.

x-axis

Conforming individual

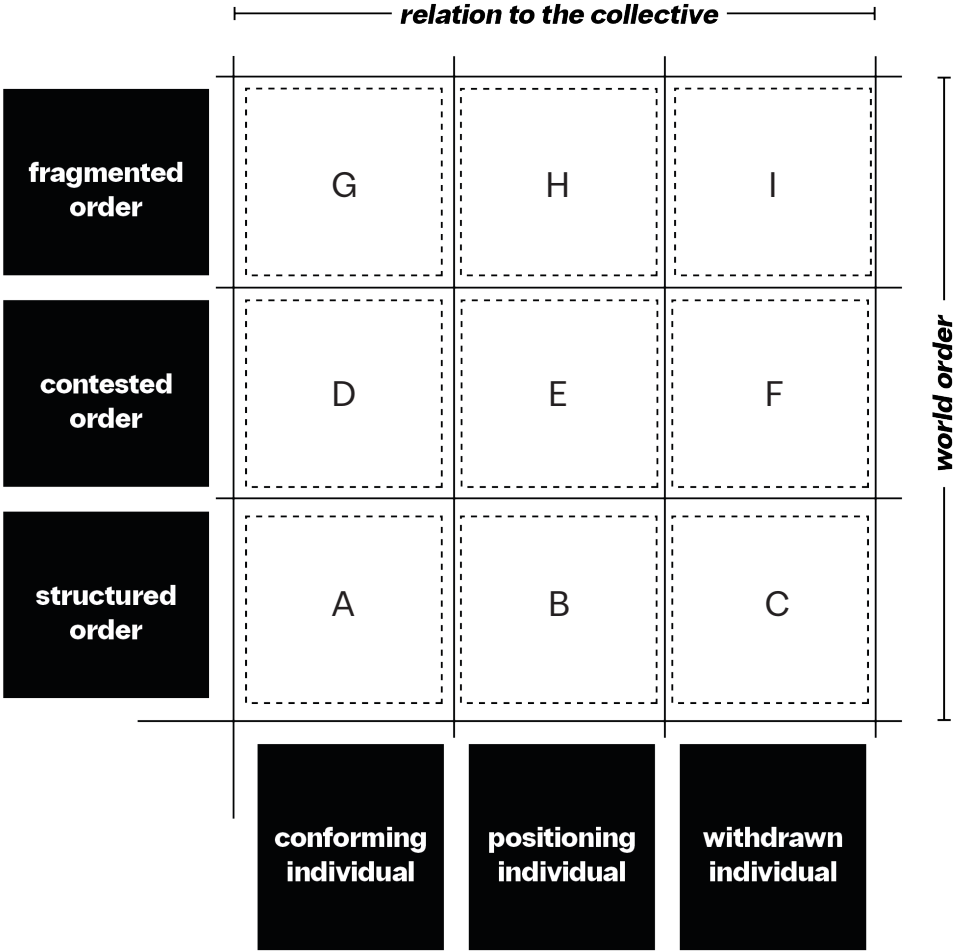
The individual is largely carried by the collective. Young people adapt their behaviour, opinions, and actions to social environments, feedback loops, and dominant group dynamics. Belonging and social alignment become more important than individual agency or reflection.
Clusters: Behaviour before reflection | Amplified relational realities

Positioning individual

In the middle of the axis, the individual continuously negotiates between personal identity and collective belonging. Young people actively position themselves in relation to others, balancing self-expression with the need for recognition, connection, and acceptance within social groups. Democracy emerges through this ongoing interaction between the self and the collective.
Clusters: The need to belong | Identity through difference

Withdrawn individual

At the other end of the axis, the individual distances themselves from collective structures and shared societal frameworks. The focus is mainly on personal stability, immediate networks, and individual survival. The connection between the individual and the collective becomes weak.
Clusters: Negotiating self and the collective | The elusive sense of certainty | Contested togetherness | Unequal decline



y-axis

Structured order

Democratic systems are experienced as structured, stable, and recognizable. Institutions remain visible and authoritative, creating the expectation that systems are still capable of organizing and protecting society. Young people grow up within relatively clear structures, where responsibilities, norms, and forms of participation remain defined.
Clusters: The expectation of systemic care | The withdrawing state

Contested order

Democracy is experienced as unstable and continuously negotiated. Authority is challenged by polarization, competing realities, and conflicting social interests. Society becomes a space of friction, where adaptation is still possible, but influence and truth are constantly debated.
Clusters: Power without grip | Structures of dependencies | Reality as quantified construction

Fragmented order

At the other end of the axis, collective structures and shared societal narratives lose coherence. Democratic systems become difficult to perceive as unified entities, and public life fragments into smaller social realities. Young people experience uncertainty about belonging, responsibility, and future direction.
Clusters: Ungraspable future

Figure 30: Future framework

4.3 Importance of cultural identity

The framework aligns with research showing that political divisions are increasingly shaped by cultural values and identities alongside traditional economic divisions (Norris & Inglehart, 2019). This supports the focus of the framework on how young people position themselves in relation to others and how they experience the wider world around them.

The x-axis shows how young people negotiate their relation to the collective: moving along, positioning themselves or withdrawing. The y-axis shows how the world around them is experienced: structured, contested or fragmented. Together, these axes frame democracy as a cultural and relational environment.

4.4 Plausible futures

Together, the two axes form a 3-by-3 framework, where each cell represents a different combination of societal conditions and individual positioning. These futures are explorations of how democracy, identity and collective belonging may evolve.

A | Guided belonging

Systems quietly guide behaviour and belonging feels comfortable. Democracy is experienced as something organised for people rather than shaped by them.

B | Conformity in negotiation

Young people balance self-expression with social expectations. Democracy becomes embedded in social positioning, shared values and cultural belonging.

C | Certainty, manipulated

Systems offer stability through personalised guidance, nudges and predictive technologies. Choices become subtly pre-structured.

D | Fragmentation

Public life is shaped by rapid emotional reactions,

online conflict and accelerated attention cycles.

E | Systemic hopelessness

Young people encounter systems that influence their lives but remain difficult to understand or affect.

F | Unequally shaped democracy

Democracy is experienced differently depending on resources, access, networks and social realities.

G | Erratic realities

Crises, trends and public emotions constantly shift, making long-term orientation difficult.

H | Identity struggles

Identity becomes a main way of relating to society, while groups organise around distinct values and worldviews.

I | New forms of togetherness

Young people organise their lives around smaller, emotionally close communities, while trust shifts towards direct relationships and local networks.

The futures make visible that young people may not relate to democracy through one shared route. Some may adapt to guided systems. Others may continuously negotiate identity and belonging. Others may withdraw into smaller communities or personal networks. The framework therefore helps avoid treating young people as one homogeneous group.

4.5 From plausible to preferred futures

After formulating the plausible futures, the next step is to take a normative position towards them. Following the ViP method, the plausible futures are used to define preferred future directions.

To support this step, young people were invited to explore the scenarios in an input session. During this session, participants were placed individually inside one of the future scenarios. Each scenario became a world someone had to inhabit. The group first explored whether they recognised the relationship between young people and democracy described in that future, and whether they considered it desirable.

Because one participant was placed 'inside' the scenario at a time, a distinction emerged between the person living within the future and the others observing it from the outside. This shifted the conversation away from an abstract discussion about 'the future' towards a more personal question: what does this person lose in a world like this? What becomes difficult, impossible or out of reach?

The participant inside the scenario was asked what they would need from peers to relate or deal with the world in that scenario. The others responded from outside the scenario by reflecting on what they could offer to that person. This exercise revealed questions about dependency, solidarity and responsibility. It showed what participants felt was missing in each future and which values they wanted to hold on to. Across the scenarios, they wanted to keep room for individual choice, connection and considering others, while repeatedly asking for more freedom, support, perspective, structure and the feeling of being heard.

These responses were used to sharpen the preferred direction for each future and later informed the formulation of the democratic capacities. The full setup and outcomes of this session can be found in Appendix A.



Figure 31: Young people exploring plausible future relationships during the input session.



Figure 32: Exploring needs and positions within plausible futures during the youth input session.

For each plausible future, a worldview was formulated. Each worldview consists of a sustainability mission and an underlying social or psychological mechanism. The sustainability mission describes the desired behaviour, attitude or relationship within society. The mechanism, derived from the taxonomy of human goals by Ford & Nichols (1987), explains which human concern makes this direction meaningful, such as belonging, responsibility, understanding, autonomy, trust or agency.

Schwartz's Theory of Basic Values (2012) was used to identify which collective values are reinforced within the preferred future direction. Values such as universalism, self-direction, benevolence and security helped articulate the ethical position embedded in the design vision.

Based on these worldviews, interaction analogies were developed. These analogies explore similar relational or behavioural effects in other contexts. They are used to identify interaction qualities that future interventions should embody.

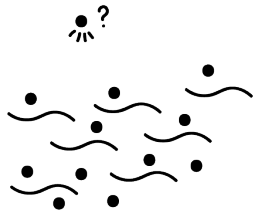
The full table of worldviews, values, analogies and interaction qualities can be found in Appendix B. These qualities later informed the translation from plausible futures to democratic capacities.

4.6 Future conditions to democratic capacities

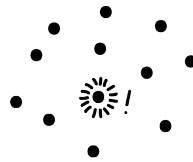
The preferred directions and interaction qualities were translated into nine democratic capacities. Each capacity responds to something that becomes difficult or important within one of the plausible futures.

The capacities make these future needs easier to recognise and work with. Instead of describing an abstract preferred relationship, they describe something young people can practise and that educators can design for. The full translation from future to capacity can be found in Appendix B.

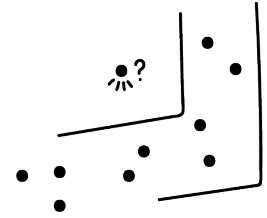
This moves the framework from exploring how young people might relate to democracy towards what they may need to navigate it.



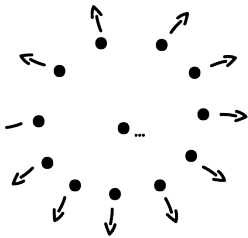
choose consciously
within guided
systems



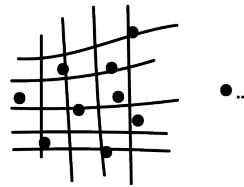
Dare to take a
position within a
group



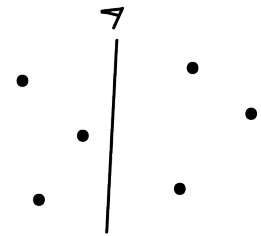
Contribute to the
system you depend
on



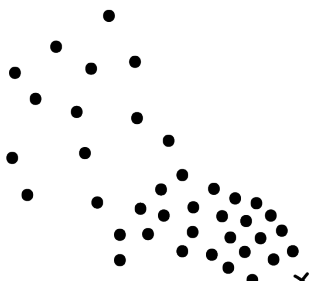
Pause before react



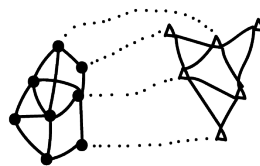
Act without
knowing all possible
consequences



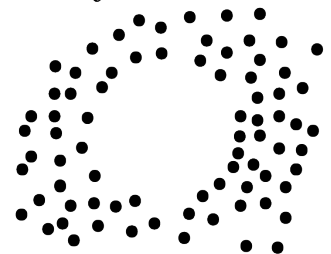
Understand that
fairness feels
different for
everyone



Build shared
orientation within
uncertainty



Connect across
differences



Feel part of
something larger
than yourself

Figure 33: Nine democratic capacities for negotiating democracy in 2035.

4.7 Capacities instead of competences

The term capacities is used rather than competencies. Competences often imply measurable skills or knowledge suggesting that democratic development can be trained towards a stable level of performance.

In contrast, capacities are understood as open-ended orientations. They describe how young people position themselves within complexity and collective life. These capacities function as design lenses. They help identify what a democratic intervention should make possible.

The future framework shows that young people will not relate to democracy in one single way. The design direction should therefore support different forms of recognition, positioning and contribution, instead of one universal democratic learning path.



Alkibiades: 'Bestaat er volgens jou een absolute waarheid?'

Socrates: 'De som van de 3 hoeken van een driehoek is gelijk aan de som van 2 hoeken van een vierkant'

A: 'Weet u wat het probleem is met dat soort absolute waarheden in de context van de politiek en het openbaar bestuur? Ze zijn als tirannen Socrates, en democratie houdt niet van tirannen'

S: 'maar je kunt niet ontkennen dat ze waar zijn.'

A: 'Als ik wordt geconfronteerd met een onwelkomen waarheid die ik onmogelijk kan weerleggen beweer ik gewoon het tegenovergestelde van die waarheid en ik zeg dat dat nu eenmaal mijn mening is. En door jouw gelijk te bestrijden met mijn mening, reduceer ik jouw waarheid ook tot een mening. En over meningen kun je discussiëren en op grond van die discussies kun je meerderheidsbesluiten aannemen.

S: Maar wat doe je dan met de feiten?

A: Feiten? Wat zijn feiten? Feiten zijn niet meer dan toevalligheden niet net zo goed anders hadden kunnen zijn. De geschiedenis ontbeert logica, Socrates, dat heb jij mij zelf geleerd. De waarheidsverteller heeft geen schijn van kans tegen de vrijheid van de leugenaar. De leugenaar is wendbaar als een acteur die elk moment van masker en kostuum kan veranderen en elke rol kan spelen die hij wil.

S: Ik heb de waarheid altijd als mijn schild beschouwd.

A: Het is niet aan mij om vast te stellen hoe de dingen daadwerkelijk zijn. Van mij wordt verwacht dat ik de wereld verander. De waarheid is daarbij onbruikbaar. In plaats van te constateren dat het regent, zeg ik dat de zon schijnt. Omdat de mogelijkheid om dat te kunnen zeggen bewijst dat wij vrij zijn. De vrijheid van de mens ligt niet in zijn onderwerping aan de waarheid, maar in zijn vermogen om de werkelijkheid te veranderen door te liegen. Daar ligt de oorsprong van de opstand van de mens tegen zijn eigen omstandigheden zie hem toevallig zijn opgedrongen zonder dat hij daarom heeft gevraagd. Daar ligt de essentie van het geloof van de mens dat hij in staat is om een betere wereld te creëren. Ik houd mijn blik gericht op de horizon waarachter, en dat weet ik zeker, nieuwe en betere waarheden liggen.

S: Mijn lieve, mooie Alkibiades. Als ik jou hoor spreken raak ik zo zeer betoverd dat ik vergeet wie ik ben. Alles waaraan ik mijn hele leven heb geweid laat jij in een oogwenk verdwijnen. Ik denk dat het voor mij onmogelijk is geworden om jou te bereiken op de olympische toppen waar jouw vleugels van ambitie jou naartoe hebben gedragen. Er rest mij slechts nog 1 vraag. Je zei dat je met mij wilde spreken over schaamte?

A: Mijn lieve Socrates. Ik weet, dat jij weet, dat wij exact daarover zojuist hebben gesproken.

S: Jij bent nog altijd de mooiste, Alkibiades.

Remedy: Text from the performance of Alkibiades.

(Pfeijffer, I. L. (2023). Alkibiades. De Arbeiderspers)



Move beyond analysis

After seeing Alkibiades, I felt two things at once. I was impressed by how precisely the performance described the seduction and danger of political power pressure of the outside world on us. I also felt dissatisfied.

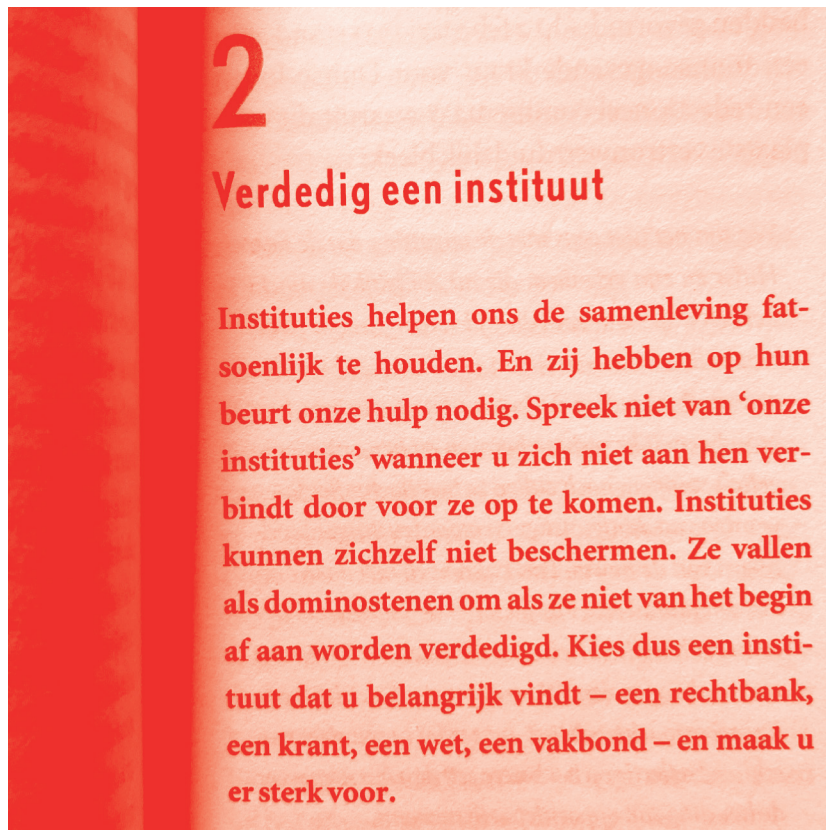
The people on stage understood the problem. The audience probably understood it too. I understood it. But somehow, that understanding did not move us anywhere.

That moment made me more critical of analysis. There is pleasure in describing democratic decline sharply. It can make me feel perceptive, without forcing me to decide what should happen next.

This became important when moving from plausible to preferable futures. The future framework needed to do more than extend current fears into 2035. It needs to create enough distance from the present to imagine different relationships and behaviours.

In week 14, when I saw Sef perform Voor alles altijd bang, I felt the urgency of the project. Again. Fear can make people move away from each other, but when Sef sings it and the crowd sings along, that fear doesn't feel lonely. I felt the need to search for ways to move ourselves towards each other.

I will use analysis to understand what is happening, but I will not stay there for too long. At a certain point, I need to formulate what is the reason I do what I do. I will make that transition explicit: from concern, to defining the values, relations and behaviours the design should support.



Remedy: Timothy Snyder's book *Over Tirannie* resonates with the same urge I feel to come together and stand up against tyrants.

Name your values

Turning the future framework into democratic capacities felt like a major step. Until then, I had mainly analysed how young people might relate to democracy. The capacities stated what I believed my target audience might need.

That made me nervous. I was making a normative proposal.

The conversation with Tom van der Meer helped me understand this more clearly. He recognised that the capacities are politically content-neutral. Which was nice that my intentions became clear to other people as well. At the same time, he questioned whether the democratic system in its construct was present enough.

I left the conversation energised. His feedback was critical, but it did not flatten the project. It sharpened it. Because I had something concrete to show, he could respond to the work instead of to a vague ambition.

It made me realise that bringing democracy into everyday life also creates a responsibility to connect it back to formal democracy. The capacities should remain connected to formal democratic principles without becoming lessons about the political system. I need to think about how the experiences, values and questions that emerge between young people can eventually find their way back to institutions and to the people working within them.

Name and show the ideas values that guide my design decisions. This helps me be transparent about my position.

5 //

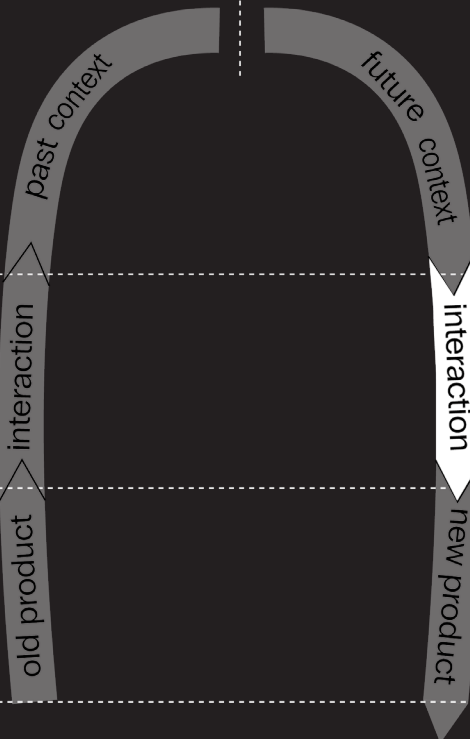
Design gap; between content and instrumentarium

In this chapter, current ProDemos practise, the future context, and strategic conversations are brought together to define the central design gap of the project. ProDemos already creates strong democratic experiences, yet its instrumentarium holds further potential to support young people in recognising, practising, and connecting democratic moments in everyday life.

Figure 2: The Vision in Product Design process used in this project.

deconstruction
preparation

designing



- ① domain/time
- ② context factors
- ③ context structure
- ④ statement

⑤ human-product
interaction

- ⑥ product qualities
- ⑦ ideas and concepts
- ⑧ detailing

5.1 From experience to experiencing

The deconstruction of DemocratieLAB and Eindbazen showed that ProDemos has strong tools for making democracy accessible, active and engaging. Both programmes invite young people to form opinions, take part in activities and reflect on democratic values or decision-making.

At the same time, ProDemos does not yet use the full potential of these experiences. The programmes activate young people during the moment itself, but the experience often remains connected to that specific setting. During ideation, I realised that one moment is not enough to create lasting behavioural change.

The future context asks for this more continuous approach. Young people will need to navigate disagreement, influence, uncertainty, social pressure and unequal experiences in many parts and moments of their lives. Democracy is and will be an environment they continuously move through.

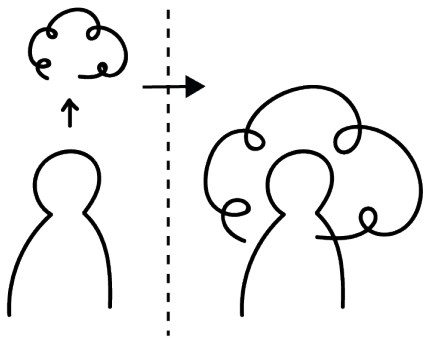


Figure 34: From experience towards experiencing.

This creates the shift from offering democratic experiences to enabling experiencing. An experience is one activity where democracy is explained and experienced. Experiencing is more continuous. It happens when young people recognise democratic tensions across situations and connect these moments to a broader understanding of living together democratically.

5.2 Experience as strategic direction

This shift appeared in conversations about ProDemos' future strategy too. Matthijs van Tuijl (Programme manager at ProDemos) and Tom van der Meer (Professor of Political Science at the University of Amsterdam) both referred to the importance of experience, while giving the word a different emphasis.

In the conversation with Matthijs van Tuijl, experience was mainly connected to making democracy more vivid through ProDemos' existing context and assets. He described experience in relation to physical and historical environments, such as old buildings, institutional spaces and the atmosphere of places where democracy is represented or performed (see Appendix X). In this interpretation, experience helps make democracy more concrete by bringing young people closer to the spaces and symbols of democratic life.

Tom van der Meer spoke about experiencing democracy in a way that came closer to the direction of this project. For him, experiencing democracy means that young people start to recognise democracy across different situations (see Appendix X).

This distinction is important for the design challenge. Experience can mean experiential access: making democracy visible, concrete and memorable. It can also mean democratic experiencing: helping young people connect situations, recognise tensions and understand themselves as part of democratic relations. This project builds on both interpretations and focuses on the second. It takes the need for a broader democratic story as a strategic starting point, while the design contribution lies in the instrumentarium: how ProDemos can make the lived dimension of democracy more recognisable, repeatable and connected to young people's own worlds.

This positions the project between ProDemos' long-term vision, the changing relationship of young people with democracy, and the democratic content through which this relationship is addressed.

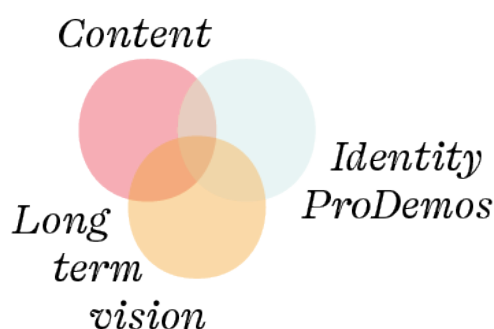


Figure 35: Postition of this project.

5.3 Design lever: instrumentarium

A key distinction in the reframing is the difference between democratic content and democratic instrumentarium.

The democratic content is the story that is being told about democracy: institutions, the rule of law, rights, responsibilities, values, procedures and the question of what democracy should become. This content is essential, but it is not something this project can redefine on its own. It belongs to a broader public conversation between ProDemos and partners, but even more among democratic institutions, researchers and policy makers.

The instrumentarium concerns the practical forms through which young people encounter democracy: tools, formats, questions, moments, guides, partners, platforms and feedback loops. This is the designable layer of the project.

The project therefore does not propose a new democratic story. It proposes an expanded instrumentarium through which young people can experience, recognise and contribute to democratic life. But, perhaps the instrumentarium can create a feedback loop through which young people's experiences become input to form the new story.

5.4 From knowledge to navigation

The future framework points towards a shift from knowledge about democracy to democratic navigation. Knowledge remains necessary. The democratic environment of 2035 also asks young people to position themselves within complexity and to deal with uncertainty.

This shift can be understood through the analogy of moving from buoys to swimming lessons. Buoys help someone stay afloat in a specific moment, but they do not teach someone how to swim. In the same way, democratic knowledge and institutional explanation can offer orientation, but young people also need repeated practice in navigating democratic situations themselves.

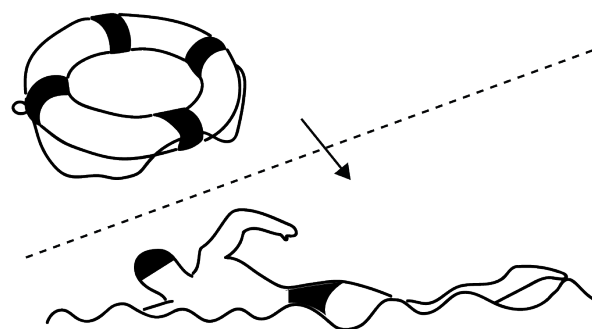


Figure 36: The buoy-to-swimming analogy.

The nine democratic capacities function as lenses for this shift. They help identify what young people may need in order to negotiate democratic life: recognising influence, staying reflective before reacting, taking a position in a group, understanding different experiences of fairness, staying connected across difference and building shared orientation within uncertainty.

The role of ProDemos can therefore expand. It can explain democracy and also help young people practise democratic navigation.

5.5 The reframed design challenge

The reframed challenge can be formulated as follows:

How can ProDemos use its instrumentarium to move from separate democratic experiences towards recurring moments in which young people recognise, practise and contribute to democracy in everyday life?

This formulation makes three things clear.

1. The project focuses on ProDemos' instrumentarium: the interactions, tools, moments and structures through which democratic development can happen.
2. The project shifts from isolated experiences to programmatic experiencing. Democratic development can become recognisable across different places and moments in young people's lives.
3. The project positions young people as contributors. They can notice democratic tensions, take a position, propose changes, test ideas and receive a visible response through their democratic capacities.

This reframing becomes the starting point for the design direction in the next chapter.

ProDemos needs to use its potential to move from separate democratic experiences towards recurring democratic experiencing. This makes the instrumentarium the main design lever: the tools, moments and structures through which young people can recognise and practise democracy in everyday life.



Remedy: Testing an unfinished version at a secondary school. Seeing how students actually responded helped me understand what the work still needed.

Share before it is 'ready'

Sharing unfinished work often felt exposing. During my midterm presentation, it felt as if I was showing people my diary. The work contained research, but also fragile connections, ambitions and assumptions I could not yet fully defend.

In week 7, I started sharing more of my work and noticed that it gave me energy. Explaining an idea to someone else helped me experience the project again. After the midterm, when I found it difficult to re-enter the process and felt like I was cycling in circles, showing the work to others helped me move forward step by step, although slowly.

The development of Lieve Toekomst depended on this. The programmatic approach did not appear in one perfect moment of inspiration. It became visible because I repeatedly had to explain what I wanted to achieve, why one intervention did not feel sufficient, and how different moments in young people's lives could be connected through a shared programme.

Sharing made the work more specific. Other people could ask questions, point out weak spots and respond to what was actually there, instead of to what I still had in my head.

I will share work before I fully understand it, because explaining it to someone else helps me see what is still unclear.

6 //

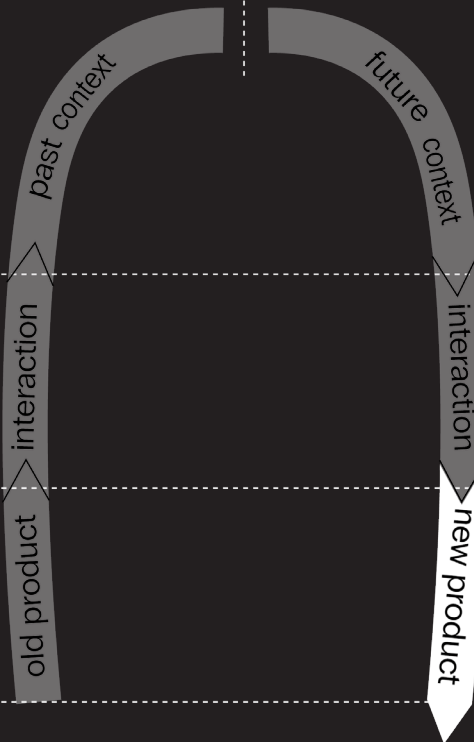
Design direction; expanding the instrumentarium

The reframing in the previous chapter positions the instrumentarium as the main design area of this project. It shifts the focus from separate democratic experiences towards recurring democratic practise in young people's everyday lives. This chapter develops this reframing into a design direction by specifying how such a practice could work.

The direction is gradually concretised through design exploration, conversations and early testing. This chapter defines how separate interactions can connect over time, what young people should practise, what these interactions should make possible, and where they can take place. These decisions are brought together in five programme principles that guide the development of the final concept in Chapter 7.

deconstruction
preparation

designing



- ① domain/time
- ② context factors
- ③ context structure
- ④ statement

- ⑤ human-product interaction

- ⑥ product qualities
- ⑦ ideas and concepts
- ⑧ detailing

6.1 Expanding the instrumentarium

The first implication of recurring democratic practice concerns time. A single educational interaction takes place at one moment, while a programmatic approach connects interactions across different moments in young people's lives.

Following the previous chapter, the instrumentarium therefore becomes a programme structure. The structure consists of moments where young people encounter democracy, the partners who can host these moments, the tools that help open the democratic question, the capacities and questions that help young people recognise and reflect on what happened.

Within this structure, individual interactions can differ in place, partner and format. The same capacities and related questions are proposed as recurring elements through which separate interactions can be connected over time.

This expansion was sharpened in a second conversation with Tom van der Meer, in which the developing proposal was discussed as a programmatic approach. His feedback supported the idea of a framework that can return across multiple moments in young people's lives. His distinction between structural moments, natural moments and moments of the state provided different types of entry points through which such recurrence can be organised. These are further developed in section 6.4.

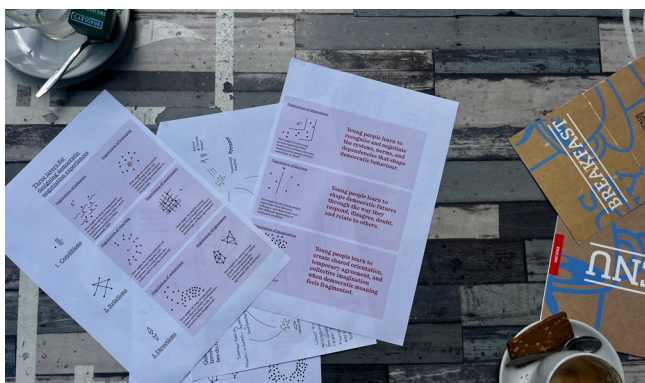


Figure 37: Picture made during second conversation with Tom van der Meer.

6.2 Capacities as design and reflection lenses

The nine democratic capacities are defined as open-ended orientations that young people can develop through experience, reflection and repeated practice. Within the new instrumentarium, two uses are proposed for these capacities.

As design lenses, makers can use a capacity before an interaction to determine what young people should be able to practise. The guiding question becomes: what should become possible in this situation for young people to practise this capacity? This translates a capacity into an educational intention for the interaction.

As reflection lenses, young people can use the same capacity after an interaction to recognise what the situation asked from them and how they responded. Using the capacities before and after an interaction connects the intended practice with reflection on the experience.

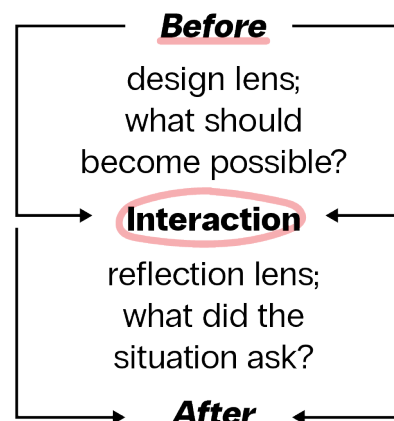


Figure 38: Capacities as design and reflection lenses before and after an interaction.

6.3 From capacities to interaction

In Chapter 4, nine democratic capacities were formulated as possible directions for democratic development. In Section 6.2, these capacities were given a role as design and reflection lenses. For the design of an interaction with the capacities, one further step is needed. Through a capacity, the intended practice for young people can be specified, while further decisions are needed about what should become possible within a specific situation.

For this step, the design qualities behind the capacities were revisited in relation to the three rows of the future framework. Within each row, three capacities are linked to a similar condition in the democratic environment, while differences remain in how a young person relates to the group. The design qualities within each row were compared to identify recurring interaction needs. A shared design concern was then formulated for each row and translated into three interaction layers: Conditions, Relations and Directions. Figure 39 visualises this translation.

Conditions is based on the capacities connected to a structured order. The focus lies on the structural factors that shape a situation, such as rules, systems, institutions, platforms and dependencies. In an interaction, attention can be given to how these factors influence available choices, where room for action exists and how young people can respond to the conditions around them.

Relations is based on the capacities connected to a contested order. The focus lies on interaction between people when positions, interests or experiences differ. In practice, this can involve taking a position, listening, comparing perspectives, negotiating disagreement and considering different experiences of fairness.

Directions is based on the capacities connected to a fragmented order. The focus lies on finding orientation when a shared way forward is uncertain. Young people can explore common ground, connect their own position to a wider context and contribute to a possible direction together with others.

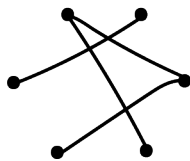
As visualised in figure 39, the three layers form a broader design focus around the individual capacities. The differences along the second axis remain part of each capacity: young people may move along with a group, develop their own position or withdraw. The interaction layers therefore add another level of abstraction to the original framework.

This translation forms a bridge between an educational direction and interaction design. After selecting a capacity, a maker can consider what young people should be able to examine, practise or contribute to within the situation. Conditions focuses this question on what shapes their room to act, Relations on what happens between people, and Directions on how shared orientation can be developed. In the following sections, these three perspectives are used to structure ideation and further define the design direction.

1. Conditions



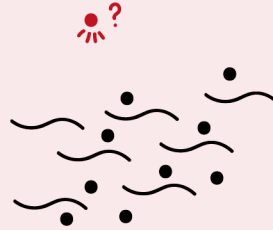
2. Relations



3. Directions

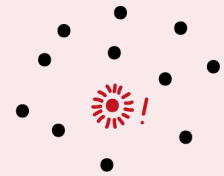


Negotiation of influence



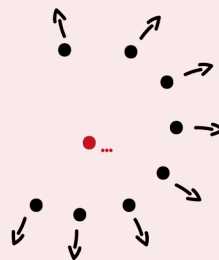
How might we help young people recognise when systems shape their behaviour, so they can take a more conscious position within democratic life?

Negotiation of belonging



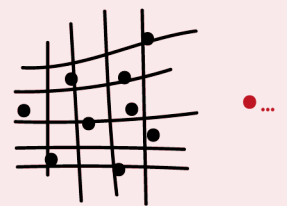
How might we create spaces where young people can express their own position without losing connection to the group?

Negotiation of reacting



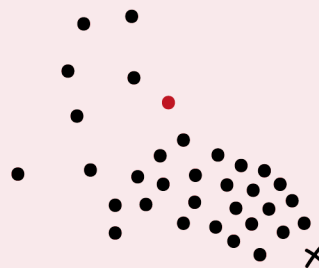
How might we create moments of pause between impulse and response, so young people can reflect before taking a position?

Negotiation of uncertainty



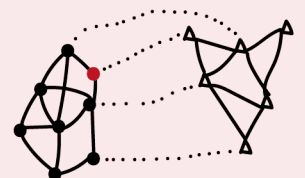
How might we enable young people to act (together) without needing full certainty, complete knowledge, or final agreement?

Negotiation of orientation



How might we help young people create shared points of orientation when information, truth, or direction feels fragmented?

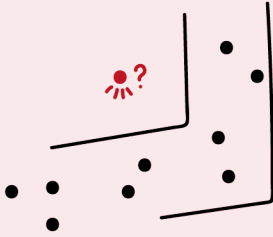
Negotiation of agreement



How might we enable young people to temporarily commit to a shared perspective without requiring full agreement with each other?

Figure 39: Translation from the nine democratic capacities to the interaction layers Conditions, Relations and Directions.

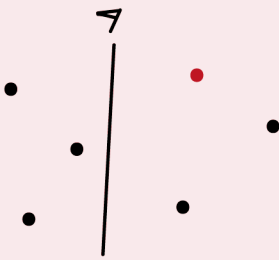
Negotiation of dependence



How might we let young people experience that democratic systems only keep working when people actively contribute to them?

Young people learn to recognise and negotiate the systems, norms, and dependencies that shape democratic behaviour.

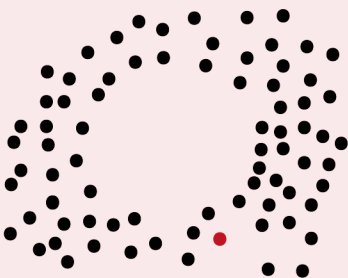
Negotiation of fairness



How might we let young people experience that fairness, influence, and democracy can feel different depending on someone's position?

Young people learn to shape democratic futures through the way they respond, disagree, doubt, and relate to others.

Negotiation of imagination



How might we invite young people to imagine a shared democratic future beyond their own individual reality?

Young people learn to create shared orientation, temporary agreement, and collective imagination when democratic meaning feels fragmented.

6.4 Everyday moments as entry point

After defining what young people may practise and how this can be supported through interaction, the next step concerns where this practice can take place. In the preferred future relationship from Chapter 4, young people recognise democracy as part of everyday life. Everyday situations are therefore used as starting points for the design direction.

These situations often start with something concrete in everyday life: a rule, a shared decision, a disagreement or an encounter with a public institution. For example, a new school rule, a decision within a sports club, an online disagreement, the use of a shared public space or turning eighteen.

These moments start close to young people's everyday lives. Their recognisability makes it possible to connect a concrete experience to a broader democratic question.

Recurring practice also requires opportunities across different parts of young people's lives. In a second conversation, Tom van der Meer distinguished three types of moments through which this could be organised: structural moments, natural moments and moments of the state (Van der Meer, interview, 2026; Appendix X.3).

Structural moments take place in recurring environments, such as schools, sports clubs and associations. Natural moments occur around life transitions in which citizenship or responsibility becomes personally relevant, such as turning eighteen or applying for a passport. Moments of the state are encounters with public or democratic institutions, such as a visit to parliament, Democracy Week or a public festival.

These three types offer different opportunities for democratic practice over time. Structural moments allow practice to return within familiar environments. Natural moments connect democratic questions to changes in a young person's own life. Moments of the state connect everyday experiences to wider public and democratic structures. Together, they create entry points across different places and stages of young people's lives.

Within this design direction, an everyday democratic moment is understood as a concrete situation in which young people encounter a democratic tension and receive room to engage with it. Such moments provide concrete situations in which the capacities and interaction layers can be explored through design.

6.5 Translating a moment into practice

To explore the generative value of the interaction layers, an ideation session was organised with fellow design students. Conditions, Relations and Directions were used as separate prompts to generate intervention ideas for concrete situations.

Different types of ideas emerged from the three prompts. Conditions resulted mainly in ideas that opened rules, systems and forms of influence for examination. Relations resulted in ideas around comparing perspectives, negotiating and making choices together. Directions resulted in ideas that connected personal experiences to a wider group, place or future.

The differences between the outputs provided a first indication that the three layers can give distinct directions during ideation. They were therefore retained as part of the design structure. The design steps from Sections 6.1 to 6.5 are brought together in figure 42 as the basis for the programme principles.

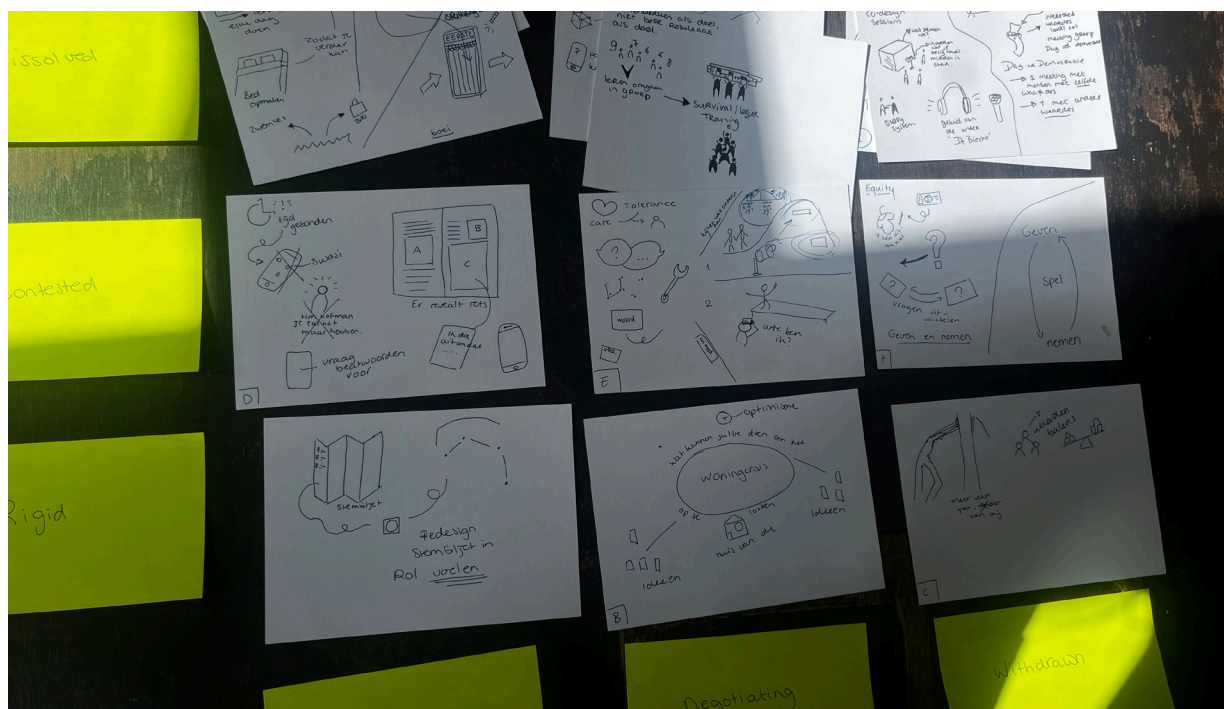


Figure 40: Ideation outputs generated using the three interaction layers.

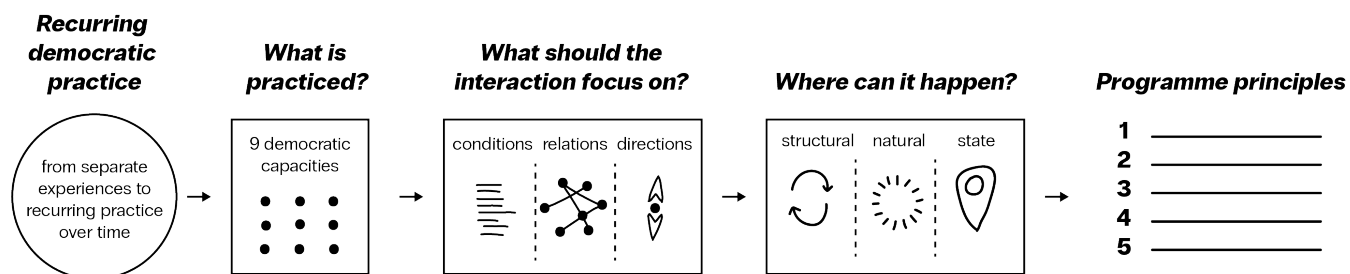


Figure 41: Overview of the design direction: from democratic capacities and interaction layers to programme principles

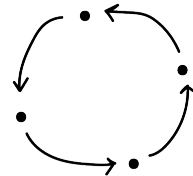
6.6 Programme principles

At this stage, the design implications were compared at programme level. Implications with a similar function were combined and formulated as one requirement. This synthesis resulted in five programme principles.

Repeat and connect practice moments

The same set of capacities and related questions should return across different places and moments, so young people can connect one practice moment to another. The same name will be used to make it more recognisable.

1



Turn a capacity into something young people can do

For each practice moment, a capacity is selected and translated into a concrete action, question or choice that young people can practise.

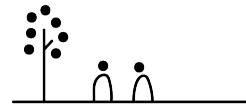
2



Start from everyday situations

Practice starts from a concrete situation that already has meaning in young people's lives and opens a wider democratic question.

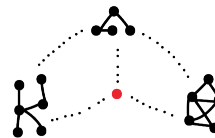
3



Create moments in existing settings

Recurring practice across different parts of young people's lives requires a distributed structure. Schools, libraries, sports clubs, municipalities and other partners can create practice moments within their own context.

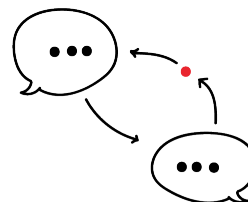
4



Always respond to what young people contribute

When young people raise a question, idea, proposal or observation, the school, club, municipality or institution involved responds with what was heard and what can happen next.

5



Together, these principles define the further development of the design direction.

Figure 42: Programme principles

6.7 Testing the design direction in a choice process

A small classroom test was conducted to explore whether the capacities could help students recognise democracy in an everyday choice process. The test took place in a havo 4 class in The Hague and used three cards: a card for individual use, a card to use as in pairs and a capacity card (figure 44). The full test setup, materials, notes and student quotes can be found in Appendix A.

Students first wrote down something they would want to change at school. They then worked in pairs and chose one idea to continue with. Only after this choice process were the nine capacities introduced. Students selected the capacity that best described how they had made their choice.

The test focused on three questions:

1. Could students formulate a personal position based on their own school experience?
2. Could students move from two individual ideas towards one shared choice?
3. Could students use the capacities to recognise what their choice process involved?

- 1** 

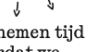
We zien waar we wel en geen keuze hebben (binnen de regels van school)
- 2** 

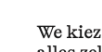
We zeggen wat we zelf vinden
- 3** 

We zijn deel van school, dus dragen we verantwoordelijkheid
- 4** 

We nemen tijd voordat we antwoorden of kiezen
- 5** 

We kiezen zonder alles zeker te weten
- 6** 

We vragen; voor wie is dit eerlijk?
- 7** 

We zoeken iets waar we allebei achter staan
- 8** 

We bespreken waar we verschillend over denken
- 9** 

We kijken wat dit betekent voor school en anderen

Figure 43: The democratic capacities translated into usable language for the classroom test.

1

Voor volgend jaar zou ik willen dat er verandert op school:

Dit gaat voor mij vooral over...

☐
Vrijheid

☐
Eerlijkheid

☐
Veiligheid

☐
Samenhangigheid

☐
Invloed hebben

☐
Verantwoordelijkheid

☐
...

Ik vind dat belangrijk, omdat...

Lieve Toekomst

2

Onze 2 ideeën:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Wij kiezen _____

Omdat... _____

Hoe kozen we?

- ☐ Snel eens
- ☐ Gestemd
- ☐ Overtuiging van 1 iemand
- ☐ Ideeën combineren
- ☐ Meest haalbaar
- ☐ Meest eerlijk
- ☐ --

Lieve
Toekomst,

3

Wij maakten een keuze door vooral...

Kies 1 uit de nummers en beschrijvingen van het bord

Nummer:

Beschrijving:

Feedback:

Omdat...

Lieve Toekomst

Figure 44: Three cards used to structure the classroom choice process.

6.8 Design implications

Different situations bring different capacities forward

The shared choice process made some capacities more immediately recognisable than others. Capacities related to shared direction, wider consequences, fairness and positioning were selected most often. This indicates that the capacity practised depends partly on the situation that is created. Future practice moments should therefore be designed around a deliberate capacity, rather than expecting all capacities to emerge within the same activity. Further tests can use situations specifically designed around the less frequently selected capacities to explore how these become recognisable in practice.

Invite young people to look beyond their own position

When students were asked to develop their ideas further, they connected personal wishes to consequences for other people and the wider school environment. This resembles a form of systemic perspective-taking: considering how one choice relates to other people, responsibilities and the wider situation. Practice moments can support this by asking who else is affected, what changes for them and how one decision connects to the larger context.

Build negotiation into the interaction

Working in pairs created a concrete need to compare positions and arrive at a shared choice. Democratic capacities can therefore be practised through the structure of the interaction itself, rather than through reflection alone.

Make reflection a facilitated and collective step

Short written answers became more elaborate when follow-up questions were asked. A collective closing can then connect these individual reflections to their democratic meaning. Future practice moments should therefore include guided reflection after the action, with room to name what happened, compare experiences and connect the situation to a wider democratic question.

The collective closing moment needs to be stronger

Most of the activity happened individually or in pairs. The final discussion with the full class was limited, which meant that the democratic meaning of the activity remained partly implicit. Some students described the activity as neutral. This neutrality made the exercise accessible, while also showing that the connection to democratic practice needs a clearer collective reflection.

These implications are based on one classroom activity and require further testing across different capacities and situations.

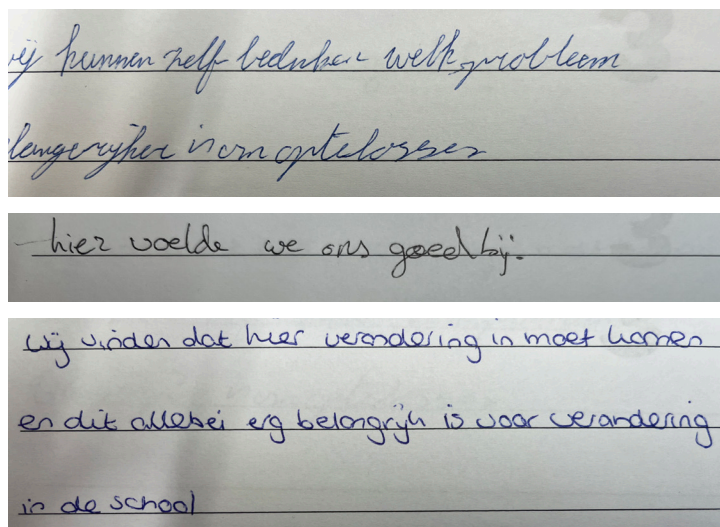


Figure 45-47: Pictures of classroom test of the capacities in a shared choice process.

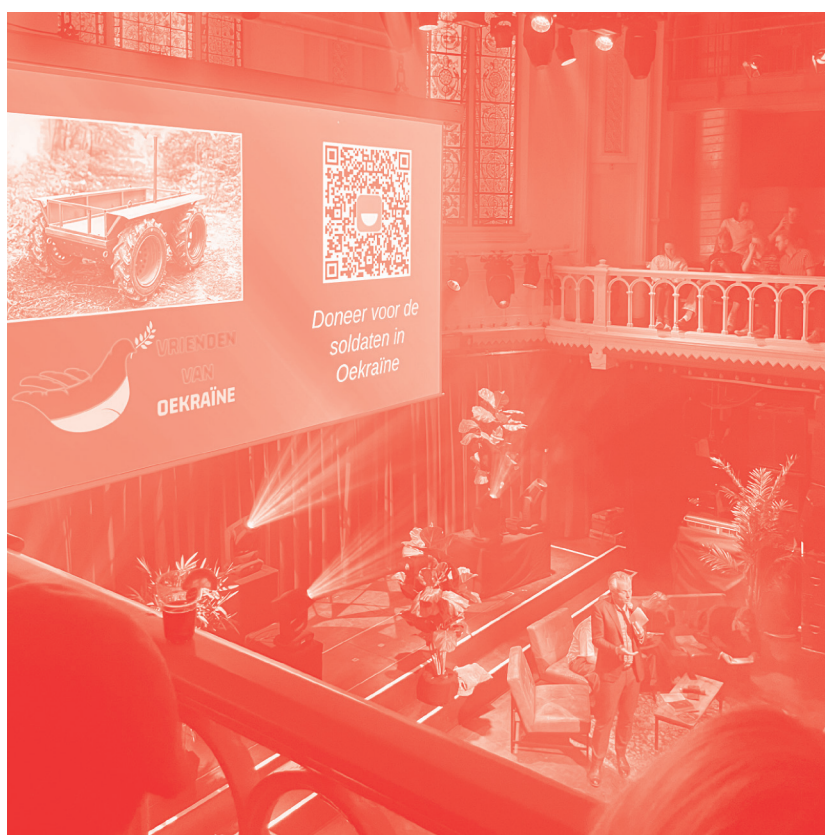


Figure 48: Picture of classroom test of the capacities in a shared choice process.

Figure 49: Facilitated reflection and written responses from the classroom test.



The design direction shows how democratic capacities can be used as practical design lenses. The final concept should therefore make these capacities usable in concrete situations, recognisable for young people and applicable across recurring practice moments.



Remedy: Joris Luyendijk at Europeanacht, using his talk to raise €5,000 for soldiers in Ukraine. Seeing someone turn his engagement and activism into something concrete really inspired me.

Let the idea become

Week 13 contained both a low point and a high point. After feeling stuck, the programmatic approach suddenly gave the project direction. Instead of designing one intervention, I could connect multiple moments in young people's lives through a shared programme and practice.

My usual response to a promising idea is to examine it immediately from every side. I like generating possibilities and tend to keep generating them. That is one of my strengths. But it can also prevent me from staying with one direction long enough to understand what it can become.

In week 14, I realised that I needed time to get used to the concept. I needed to let it be good enough for a moment. A concept cannot become concrete while it is constantly being compared with new alternatives.

At the same time, I had to remain accountable to the research. Because I like to 'float', I sometimes had to force myself back to the framework. The design could not remain an attractive systems diagram, and the components had to connect back to the analysis.

After choosing a direction, I will temporarily stop generating alternatives and reasons 'why'. I will try to give the idea form, prototype it, test its assumptions, and trace design choices back to the research.

7 //

Lieve Toekomst, a programmatic practice

The design direction from the previous chapter is translated into Lieve Toekomst: a programme and platform for democratic development. Lieve Toekomst is designed as a programmatic instrumentarium through which ProDemos, local partners and young people can organise recurring democratic practice moments in everyday life.

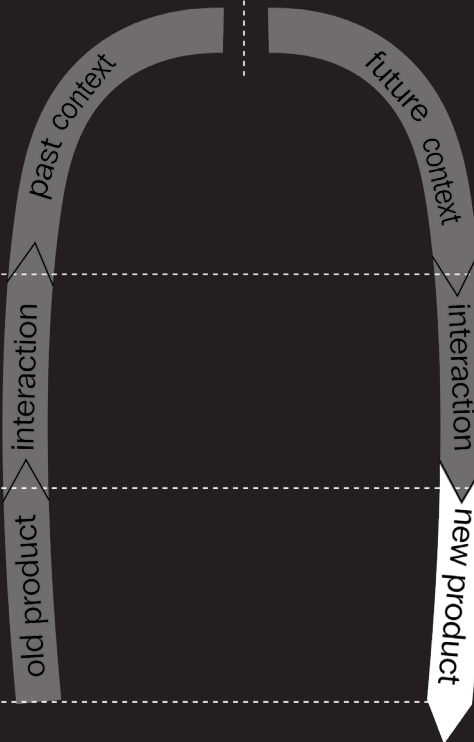
Lieve Toekomst builds on the distinction between content and instrumentarium. The content remains a shared and evolving public question. Lieve Toekomst is the practical structure through which young people can encounter democratic questions, practise democratic capacities and contribute experiences that feed back into the programme.

Lieve Toekomst is primarily developed for educators and other makers who create democratic practice moments with young people. Young people take part in these moments by choosing, questioning, reflecting and contributing ideas or experiences.

Sections 7.1–7.5 explain the programme as a whole and how young people could encounter it across recurring moments. Section 7.6 focuses on the booklet and examples developed for use in educational practice today. Section 7.7 then moves towards 2035 and sets out how the practice, network and roles could develop over time. Section 7.8 brings together expert perspectives on the concept and its strategic direction. Section 7.9 reflects on the conditions for responsible further development.

deconstruction
preparation

designing



- ① domain/time
- ② context factors
- ③ context structure
- ④ statement

- ⑤ human-product interaction

- ⑥ product qualities
- ⑦ ideas and concepts
- ⑧ detailing

7.1 What is Lieve Toekomst?

Lieve Toekomst is a shared educational practice programme that connects young people's everyday experiences to democratic development.

The programme starts from situations that young people already encounter, as discussed in Chapter 6: a rule at school, a decision in a group, organising something at a sports club, becoming eighteen, an election, a local issue, an online discussion or a visit to a democratic institution. These situations are translated into small democratic practice moments through questions, cards, tools, activities or invitations.

Each practice moment activates one or more democratic capacities. Young people are invited to take a position, recognise the conditions that shape a situation, negotiate differences, search for shared direction or contribute to something they are part of.

Lieve Toekomst is the shared name that connects these moments across different places and organisations. It makes individual interventions recognisable as part of a broader educational practice and provides a common language for developing and sharing them.

The name follows from the future-oriented approach used earlier in the project. Possible futures were used as a way to prepare for what may come: future situations helped identify what young people may need to practise today. This logic is reflected in the name Lieve Toekomst.



Lieve	because young people are addressing something that is still taking shape
Toekomst	because it all comes from learning from and acting upon possible futures

Figure 50: Programme name explanation.

Five components support this shared practice:

1. Structure: A framework

The framework describes different ways in which young people may relate to the world around them and to the groups they are part of. It forms the underlying structure of the educational practice.

2. Learning: Nine democratic capacities

The capacities translate the framework into nine educational directions. They describe what young people may need to recognise, practise and contribute within democratic situations.

3. Practice: A booklet for practice today

The booklet helps educators apply the capacities in their current practice. It supports them in recognising a relevant situation, choosing a capacity and deciding what they can add so that young people can practise it.

4. Application: Examples from practice

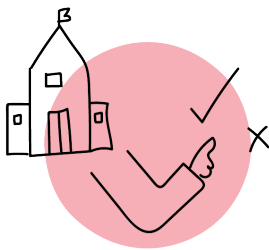
The examples show how a situation and a capacity can be translated into a concrete educational intervention. The collection starts with proposed examples developed within this project and can later be expanded with interventions created and tested in practice.

5. Strategy: A roadmap towards a shared practice

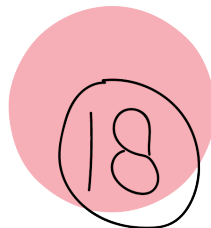
The roadmap describes how Lieve Toekomst can develop from an approach first used by ProDemos into a recurring educational practice shared by different partners. It identifies the steps, roles and collaborations needed to start today and develop the practice towards 2035.

The framework, capacities, booklet and first examples form the most concrete parts for practice today. The broader network, recurring practice across contexts and changing roles describe the direction towards 2035. A shared name and visual language make separate practice moments recognisable as part of Lieve Toekomst. Over time, this recognition could grow through repeated encounters across different contexts and, if useful, could later be supported by communication materials or a wider campaign.

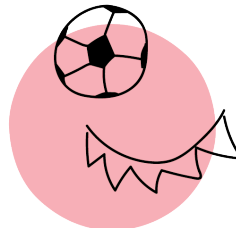
Everyday situations in the life of young people



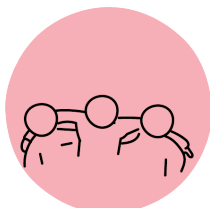
following a
rule at school



turn
18



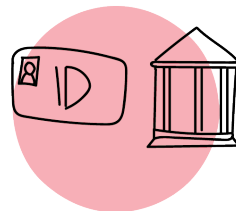
organising
something at
the sport club



joint
celebration



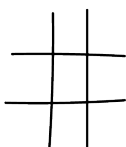
making a
decision



Getting official
documents at the
municipality

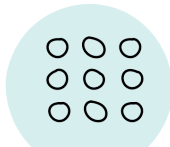
Recurring opportunities to practise democracy

framework



structure

capacities



learning

booklet



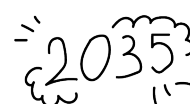
practice

examples



application

future vision



strategy



life of a young person



recurring practice



moment



capacity



Practice

Lieve Toekomst,

Programme for recurring
democratic practice

Figure 51: Programme explanation.

7.2 How Lieve Toekomst works

Across different situations and formats, the same basic programme logic can be used. Figure 52 visualises this sequence. A maker begins with a situation, selects a democratic capacity and translates this into a concrete practice moment. What young people contribute can then receive a response and become input for later practice moments.

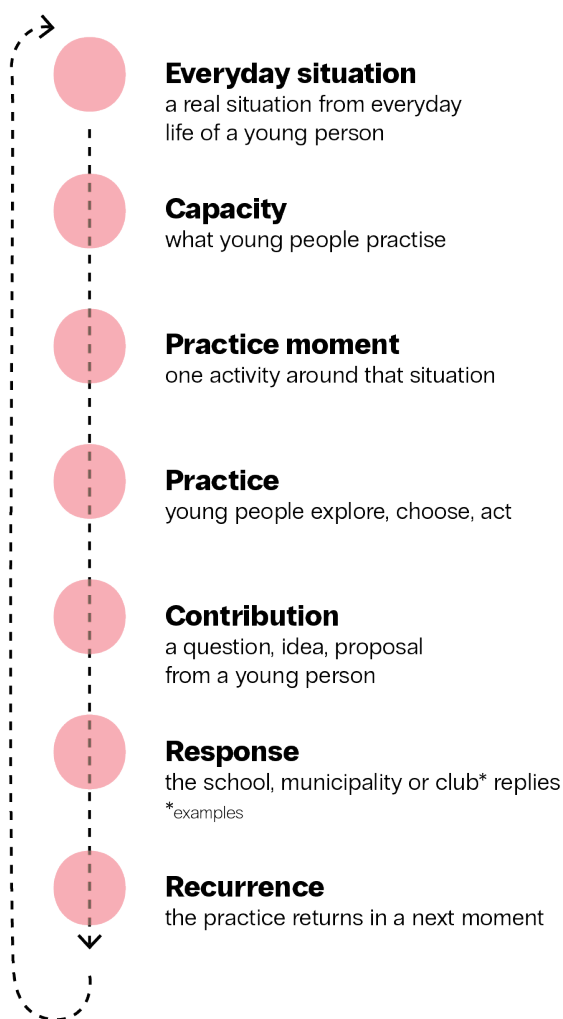


Figure 52: Programme logic of Lieve Toekomst.

The programme principles from Chapter 6 are reflected in this structure. Practice starts from everyday life, takes place in existing settings and is connected through recurrence and the shared Lieve Toekomst identity.

7.3 Roles in a practice moment

Several roles are needed around a democratic practice moment. At this stage, the roles are described by their function within the practice. Their development as the network grows is discussed separately in Section 7.7.

ProDemos

As described in the roadmap, ProDemos initiates Lieve Toekomst and develops the first booklet, examples and approach. ProDemos supports other makers, connects learning across contexts and safeguards the democratic and educational intention of the practice.

Guides

ProDemos guides facilitate practice moments and help young people engage with the choices, differences and responsibilities within a situation.

Education experts and makers

Education experts, teachers and facilitators use the capacities to create interventions in schools, libraries, youth organisations and other educational settings. They create conditions in which young people can recognise democratic tensions, practise capacities and contribute from their own experience.

Local partners

Schools, libraries, municipalities, youth organisations and sports clubs host Lieve Toekomst in places where young people already are. They connect practice moments to their own context and provide the local knowledge and relationships needed to make them relevant.

Young people

Young people are more than participants only. They question and reflect during practice moments. Their contributions form part of the practice itself.

Responding organisations

When a contribution concerns a concrete setting or responsibility, the school, club, municipality or institution involved can respond to what young people have contributed.

Responsibility

Local makers are responsible for the quality, facilitation and follow-up of individual interventions, while ProDemos remains responsible for the shared framework, capacities and educational intention of Lieve Toekomst.

Together, these roles provide the basic structure around a practice moment: makers design, guides facilitate, young people practise and contribute, relevant actors respond and ProDemos safeguards the shared educational foundation.

7.4 The feedback loop

The feedback loop gives relevant contributions a route beyond one practice moment. An activity may produce a question, story, proposal, tension or experience. Afterwards, the maker records which capacity was practised, what young people contributed and which questions remained open.

The first response takes place locally. The organisation involved acknowledges the contribution, explains what will happen with it or uses it in a following activity. Tested interventions and lessons can also be added to the shared collection of examples.

When similar questions or tensions emerge across different contexts, ProDemos can combine them into field signals. These signals help develop Lieve Toekomst and can be shared with ministries, planning agencies or advisory bodies as qualitative input for research, policy and democratic debate.

The scale of the feedback loop can grow together with the practice. At the start, the emphasis lies on response within the local context. As practice moments are created across more settings, experiences and lessons can be compared between makers. Towards 2035, recurring signals from different contexts can also provide input for wider institutional learning.

Each contribution follows a route that fits its context. The purpose is to connect local response, shared learning and, where relevant, the wider conversation about what democracy may need to become. Figure 53 shows this process.

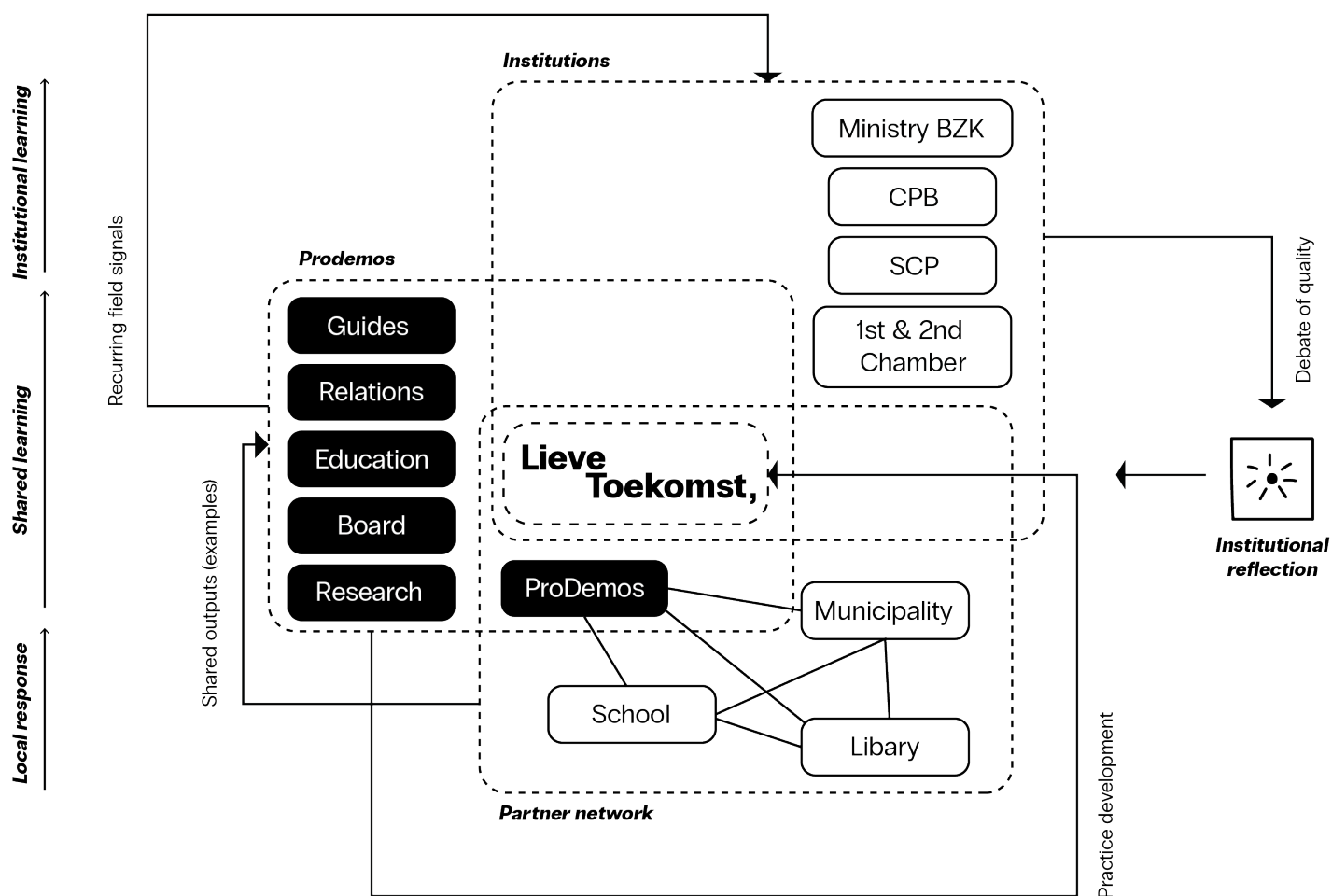


Figure 53: The feedback loop of Lieve Toekomst.

7.5 Three journeys through repeated practice

The roadmap describes how Lieve Toekomst could develop into a recurring practice across different places. Conversations with Eric Stokkink and Matthijs van Tuijl from ProDemos showed the need to make this future concrete from the perspective of young people.

The journeys below show three possible routes from different starting positions. Across all three, the intended movement is similar: from unaware to recognising the democratic dimension of everyday situations, to consciously navigating them, contributing to what is shared and eventually helping shape the future. Lieve Toekomst returns through recognisable interventions at different moments. The journeys are illustrative scenarios rather than tested or guaranteed learning outcomes.

Jayden

Jayden is unaware

Jayden is sixteen and mainly associates democracy with elections and political parties. He sees the name Lieve Toekomst on a poster at school and later at the youth centre, but does not yet connect it to his own life.

Jayden recognises how choices are shaped

During a lesson, the class discusses a new rule about phone use. As part of Lieve Toekomst, students receive cards with three versions of the rule. Before choosing, they examine who created the options, whose interests are represented and which option is missing. Jayden adds an exception for assignments that require a phone.

Jayden becomes aware of his own position

A year later, Lieve Toekomst returns during a discussion at the youth centre about the use of a shared room. Everyone first writes down an individual position before seeing what their friends think. Jayden discovers that he disagrees with the group, but explains his position and remains part of the conversation.

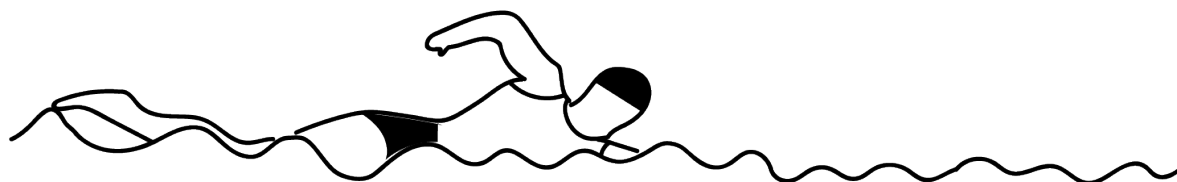
Jayden contributes to a shared decision

During a municipal activity about a public square, Jayden recognises the name and approach. Young people compare the proposed options, map different interests and develop an additional proposal. The municipality later explains which parts can be included in the plan.

Jayden helps shape his school environment

When the school later considers changing another rule, Jayden organises a proposal with his classmates. They collect different experiences, discuss where their interests conflict and formulate how students want to be involved in future decisions. Jayden presents the proposal to the school board and discusses which parts can be put into practice.

Unaware → recognising influence → taking a position → contributing → shaping shared decisions.



Lina

Lina feels uncertain

Shortly before turning eighteen, Lina receives information about voting, insurance, finances and official responsibilities. The information feels fragmented, and she does not know where to begin. A Lieve Toekomst invitation from the municipality introduces these new rights and responsibilities as something she can explore step by step.

Lina turns uncertainty into questions

During a session at the library, participants sort cards into what is clear, what remains uncertain and what they can already act on. Lina formulates her own questions and identifies where she needs more information.

Lina acts without knowing everything

Lina chooses one practical step she can already take and writes down what still needs to be resolved. Afterwards, she receives a response with relevant information. She experiences that acting does not require every possible consequence to be known in advance.

Lina recognises different experiences of fairness

Later, Lieve Toekomst returns during a school activity about housing. Students compare how the same proposal may affect young people with different incomes, family support and living situations. Lina notices that a decision that feels fair from her position may have a different effect on someone else.

Lina improves the future for others

During a Lieve Toekomst activity organised with the municipality, Lina and other young people identify which parts of turning eighteen feel unclear and what information or support they miss. Their questions and suggestions are collected as part of the activity. The municipality later responds with what it can change, what it cannot change and why. Some of the input is used to improve the information for the next group of young adults.

Noah

Noah belongs without seeing his role

Noah is fifteen and plays football several times a week. He feels strongly connected to his club, but mainly experiences it as something that is already there for him.

Noah recognises shared responsibility

During a team meeting, the players take part in a Lieve Toekomst activity. They receive cards about the field, training, equipment, atmosphere and welcoming new members. They write down what they use, who makes it possible and what they could contribute themselves. Noah sees that the club also depends on the behaviour of its members.

Noah becomes aware of different experiences

A year later, Lieve Toekomst returns during an afternoon with several teams. Players write down what helps them feel included and what sometimes excludes them. Noah discovers that younger and newer players experience the same club differently.

Noah organises a shared change

The players choose one improvement to develop together. Noah helps organise a buddy system for new members. After several months, the club collects responses and adapts the system based on what participants experienced.

Noah helps shape a shared public space

When Noah is eighteen, he encounters Lieve Toekomst during plans for a public sports area. He recognises the questions about use, different needs and shared responsibility. Together with young people from different groups, he organises a proposal that combines space for football, skating and informal meeting. They present it to the municipality and remain involved while the plans are developed.

7.6 Intervention for practice today: the booklet

The wider concept describes recurring democratic practice over time. The booklet forms the most developed intervention for starting this practice within current educational work.

7.6.1 Design considerations from education expert feedback

During the midterm presentation, I presented several first intervention ideas to ProDemos education experts to understand which directions felt relevant to them. To structure this feedback, I developed worksheets that allowed the education experts to assess and comment on each idea. This took place before the programmatic approach of Lieve Toekomst was developed.

Although these intervention ideas were not developed further, the feedback was relevant because the booklet and the other components of Lieve Toekomst are intended to support the education experts in developing new democratic practice moments. Their responses showed what educators pay attention to when assessing a new educational concept and therefore provided important considerations for the design of these components.

Their responses were strongly grounded in existing programmes, educational needs and possible risks. Figure 54 shows a picture of the meeting and an example of one of the comments. This expertise is valuable for feasibility and content quality, but can also keep new ideas close to current programme formats. The booklet and other components of Lieve Toekomst should therefore build on educators' knowledge of practice, while the new direction also asks educators to explore possibilities beyond existing programme formats.

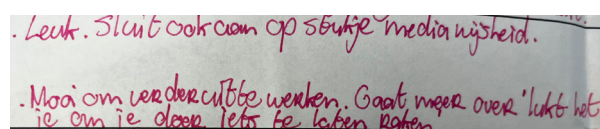


Figure 54: Education expert feedback on early ideas.

The booklet therefore needs to connect to educators' knowledge of practice while providing enough structure to design from a democratic capacity rather than from an existing format. A summary of the feedback can be found in Appendix A.

7.6.2 A booklet for practice today

The Lieve Toekomst booklet is the first concrete application of the framework and the nine democratic capacities. It is designed for makers of educational programmes of ProDemos and helps them use the capacities when developing a new activity or adapting an existing one.

The booklet starts from situations that young people already encounter in everyday life. These may be situations in which they make a choice, relate to a group, encounter a rule, deal with difference or share responsibility. The purpose of the booklet is to help makers recognise the democratic potential of such situations and turn them into opportunities for practice.

The introduction explains how the nine capacities were developed from two questions: how graspable the world around a young person feels, and how a young person relates to a group. The combination of these questions makes different democratic tensions visible. The booklet also explains when an everyday situation becomes a democratic practice moment.

The interaction layer behind each capacity informed the questions and design suggestions in the booklet. The booklet leaves room to adapt an intervention to a specific place and group, while keeping several elements consistent.

Using a capacity

Each capacity is presented through the same structure. A visual first shows the position of the young person within the framework and the movement they may practise. The accompanying text then answers five practical questions:

1. What does the visual show?
2. Where can young people use this capacity?
3. When does the capacity become relevant?
4. What can the maker concretely add?
5. What do young people do and practise?

Each capacity concludes with an example showing how these questions can be translated into a small educational intervention. For example, young people may first investigate how the answer options in a dilemma guide their choice before selecting, changing or adding an option. The booklet offers a way of thinking that helps makers move from a situation and a capacity towards an educational addition.

The final part of the booklet connects these individual practice moments to the broader purpose of Lieve Toekomst. Makers are encouraged to record which capacity was practised, what young people noticed, chose or added, and which questions remained open. By organising a response and sharing what was learned, separate activities can gradually contribute to a larger and recognisable democratic practice.

Development through iterations

The booklet developed through several iterations. A first version was tested with fellow design students, as shown in the pictures in figure 55 and figure 56.

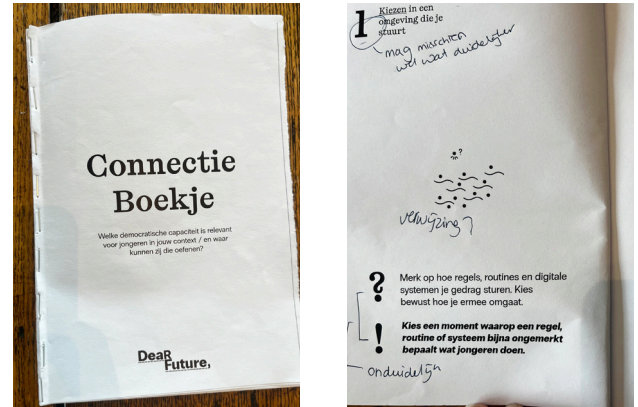


Figure 55-56: Booklet version 1 with notes.

This test showed that the introduction and sequence needed to become clearer, that the connection to democracy had to be more explicit and that the examples needed to be more concrete and lively.

A second version was reviewed by Anita Rademakers from ProDemos. Her assessment as an education expert focused on whether the capacities were educationally understandable and whether the booklet connected sufficiently to the practice of programme makers. This led to more direct language and a clearer distinction between what happens in a situation, what a maker can add and what young people practise.

The final version was subsequently tested with ProDemos education experts to assess whether the booklet could support them in developing programme ideas from the democratic capacities. This final test is discussed in the following section.

7.6.3 Examples from practice

To explore how the interaction layers from Chapter 6 could be translated into practice, one example was developed for each democratic capacity. Each example combines a situation, a capacity and a concrete intervention that allows young people to practise it.

For now, these examples function as starting points that educators can adapt when developing their own interventions. As Lieve Toekomst is used in practice, they can be supplemented or replaced by real examples developed and tested by educators and partners.

Two examples are shown in Figure 57; the complete set can be found in Appendix D.

[illegible]

```

graph LR
    A[Analogue] --> B[Key Moment]
    B --> C[Affordances]
    C --> A
  
```

Analogue
Swimming on your back

Key Moment
Collecting passport/ID/ (State)

Affordances

1. State (Key moment)
2. Direction-driven (Capacity layer)
3. Orienting, positional, stabilising, reflective (Analogy)

Capacity
Build shared orientation within uncertainty

Question
How might we help young people orient themselves within democracy when formal systems feel distant or abstract?

Paspoort card

This intervention uses the moment of collecting an official document as a small civic orientation point. When receiving a passport, ID card, or driver's license, young people also receive a Citizen Compass card. The card asks simple orientation questions: What does this document give you access to? What does it ask from you? What do you stand in relation to the state?

Like swimming on your back, the intervention creates a moment of orientation rather than immediate action. Young people do not have to choose a political direction yet; they first become aware of their position within a larger democratic system.

Posters for campaign

Met dit paspoort kun je...

- ☐ Op reis naar...
- ☐ Ugaan
- ☐ -

Dit wilt ik nog niet...

- ☐
- ☐

Figure 57: Two examples translating democratic capacities into practice.

7.6.4 Testing the booklet as an educational practice

The final test focuses on whether ProDemos education experts can use the booklet to move from an everyday situation and a democratic capacity towards a new programme idea. Attention is given to how the capacities are interpreted, which parts of the booklet provide direction and where additional explanation or support is useful.

Test setup

The booklet was tested with four ProDemos education experts, including Anita Rademakers, who also supervised this project. The aim was to examine whether educators could understand the capacities and use the booklet to develop a new democratic practice moment.

During the session, two parts were completed. First, participants reviewed the booklet individually and marked what helped them, what was unclear and what they missed. Additional explanation was kept to a minimum so that questions and different interpretations could become visible. Afterwards, participants worked in pairs. They selected a concrete situation, chose a relevant capacity and developed a first intervention in which young people could practise that capacity. Figures 58 and 59 show the session in progress.

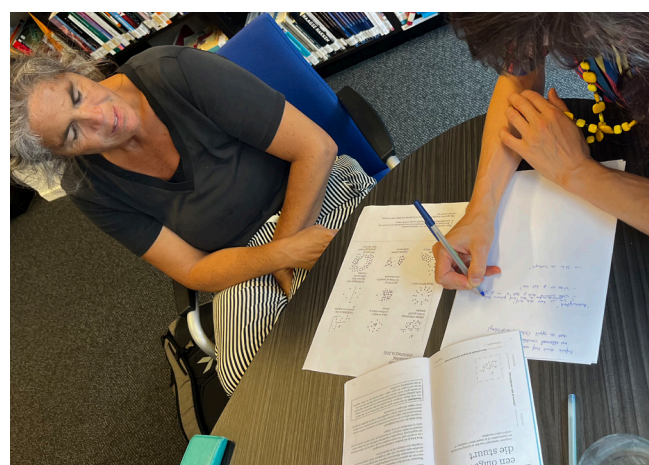


Figure 58: Final booklet test with Education Experts.

Findings

1. The relation between the future research and practice today needed more explanation.

The first review took more time than planned. Questions concerned the distinction between the present and 2035, the relation between the nine capacities and the intended user of the booklet. Several visuals and terms also required additional interpretation. At the same time, participants valued the illustrations, the possibility to choose between capacities and the shared name Lieve Toekomst.

2. Selecting a situation and capacity required the most support.

During the design exercise, participants spent most time identifying a concrete situation and deciding which capacity fitted it. After this combination had been made, both pairs developed an intervention by drawing on their own educational expertise. One pair connected capacity 8 to different positions around a rainbow captain's armband at a football club. The other pair explored how young people could examine the choices and wider consequences connected to a letter from the Ministry of Defence.

3. The capacities were useful as an underlying design perspective.

Participants described the capacities as inspiring and saw particular value in using them as an 'onderlegger' for programme development and discussion. Their educational expertise already supported the development of activities; the greatest added value therefore will be in providing a different perspective on what young people could practise within a situation.

Design implications and final iteration

Three main changes were incorporated into the final iteration.

First, the introduction was revised to make the connection between the future research and present-day educational practice more explicit. The origin of the capacities in possible situations towards 2035 is introduced earlier, together with their purpose for programme development today.

Second, more guidance was added around the step from an everyday situation to a capacity. The overview of the nine capacities received a more prominent role, so educators can first compare possible directions before moving into the detailed pages.

Third, the booklet was positioned more clearly as a design aid for educators. The capacities provide a shared perspective and starting point, while educators retain room to use their own knowledge of the context, target group and educational format. Visuals and wording that required explanation during the session were also clarified.

Finally, there is an addition of an 'overview card'. A card with the capacities and a short 5 steps plan to create a learning moment. This card is placed at the center of the booklet, in red, as the heart of the book.

Figure 60 shows selected pages from the final design of the booklet and a picture of the overview card in the middle.

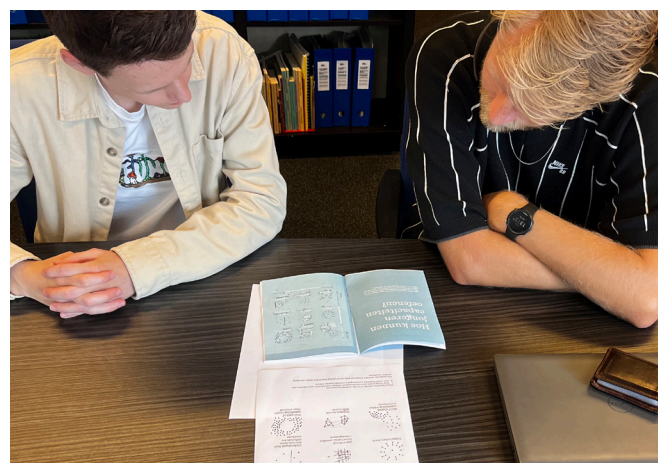


Figure 59: Final booklet test with Education Experts.

Lieve Toekomst,

Een praktische gids voor educatieve programmamakers om alledaagse momenten te benutten als democratische oefening voor jongeren

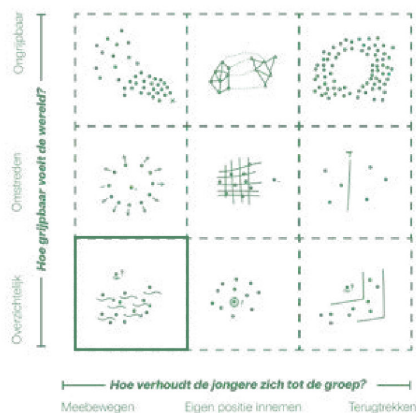
TU Delft
ProDemos

Jongeren komen democratie tegen in hun dagelijks leven. Als zij zich tot een groep verhouden, keuzes maken binnen bestaande regels, omgaan met verschil en samen verantwoordelijkheid moeten dragen.

2

1 Bewust kiezen in een omgeving die stuurt

Jongeren herkennen hoe hun omgeving hen stuurt en onderzoeken of zij daarin willen meegaan, of anders willen handelen.



12

Wat kan een jongere met deze capaciteit goed?

Jongeren herkennen dat keuzes niet neutraal worden aangeboden. Zij onderzoeken welke richting een vraag, regel, of systeem geeft en onderscheiden deze sturing van hun eigen voorkeur.

Waar kunnen jongeren deze capaciteit gebruiken?

Op een moment of in een situatie waarin jongeren een keuze maken. Denk aan dilemma's, stemopdrachten, quizvragen, schoolregels, digitale keuzes en opdrachten met vaste antwoordopties.

Wanneer wordt deze capaciteit relevant?

Wanneer de opdracht weinig aanleiding geeft om de keuzemogelijkheden zelf te onderzoeken. Bijvoorbeeld wanneer veel jongeren vanzelf bij dezelfde optie uitkomen, een regel als gegeven wordt aangenomen of mogelijke alternatieven niet ter sprake komen.

Wat kun je als maker concreet toevoegen?

Laat jongeren vóór het kiezen bekijken hoe de vraag en de antwoordopties zijn opgebouwd. Vraag welke mogelijkheid ontbreekt, wie de opties heeft bepaald en welke richting in de formulering zit. Geef daarna ruimte om een optie te veranderen of toe te voegen.

Wat doen en oefenen jongeren?

Jongeren oefenen om sturing te herkennen, te benoemen wat hun keuze beïnvloedt en hun eigen voorkeur daarvan te onderscheiden. Vervolgens onderzoeken zij welke andere mogelijkheden er zijn en bepalen zij bewust of zij volgen, bevragen of aanpassen.

Voorbeeld: Op een school geldt de regel dat telefoons de hele dag in een kluis blijven. Jongeren onderzoeken wat deze regel van hen vraagt, welk gedrag daardoor vanzelfsprekend wordt en voor wie de regel goed of minder goed werkt. Daarna bedenken zij verschillende manieren om ermee om te gaan: de regel volgen, vragen stellen over de reden erachter of een aanpassing voorstellen.

Figure 60: Selected pages from the final Lieve Toekomst booklet.

7.7 Strategy: Roadmap towards a shared practice

The booklet and the first examples make it possible to start creating democratic practice moments today. The following strategy concerns the development from these first interventions towards a wider recurring practice.

For recurring practice to spread across contexts, the ability to create practice moments must gradually shift to people who already work with young people. This direction was discussed with Eric Stokkink, director of ProDemos. He indicated that renewal can also take place through partners who use and adapt parts of the practice within their own contexts.

The roadmap therefore proposes a changing distribution of roles towards 2035.

Maker

ProDemos initially develops and tests the method. This creates the practical knowledge, examples and support needed for others to start working with the capacities.

Education experts are the first makers working with the new approach. Guides facilitate the resulting practice moments, while young people participate and contribute.

Coach

As others begin to create practice moments, ProDemos supports them in interpreting the capacities and adapting the method to their own situations. The educator or partner becomes the maker of the intervention. Coaching helps makers examine whether their interpretation still supports the intended capacity and democratic learning process.

In this phase, schools, libraries, sports clubs, municipalities and youth organisations can increasingly create practice moments within their own contexts. Guides can also develop towards a field-listening role by observing recurring questions, tensions and experiences. Young people can increasingly contribute ideas and feedback to the development of subsequent moments.

Steward

When the practice is carried by a broader group of makers, ProDemos safeguards the shared foundation of Lieve Toekomst. It maintains the capacities and educational intention, connects learning across contexts and supports the continued development of the practice.

Within this future situation, educators and local partners carry much of the practice themselves. Young people can move further from participant towards contributor, co-designer or initiator. Recurring signals from different contexts can also be shared with ministries, planning agencies and advisory bodies.

The intended shift is therefore broader than a changing role for ProDemos alone: the responsibility for making, contributing, listening and responding becomes distributed across a wider network, while the shared educational foundation remains with ProDemos.

Figure 61 shows the roadmap, activities and collaborations needed to support this transition towards 2035.

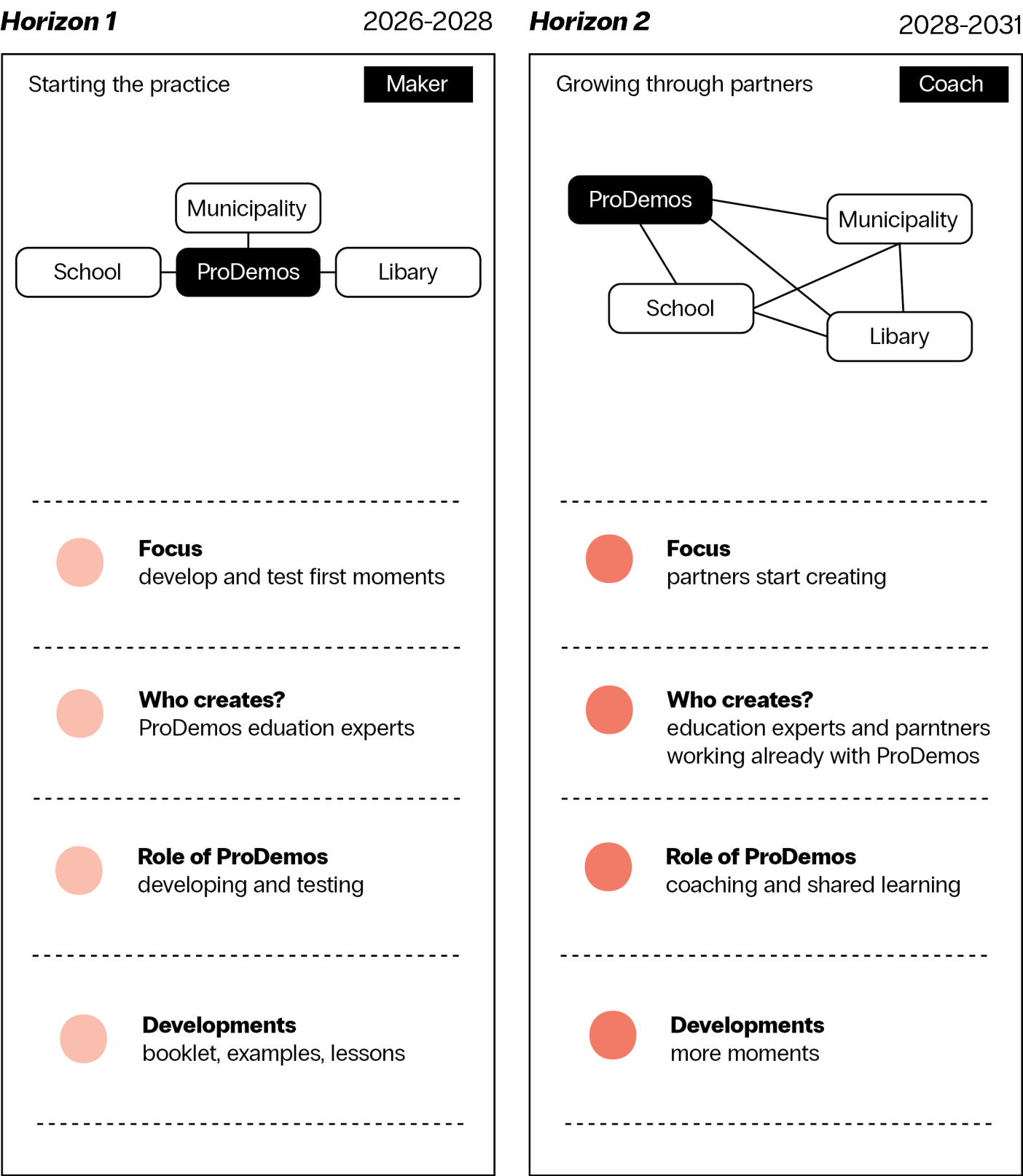
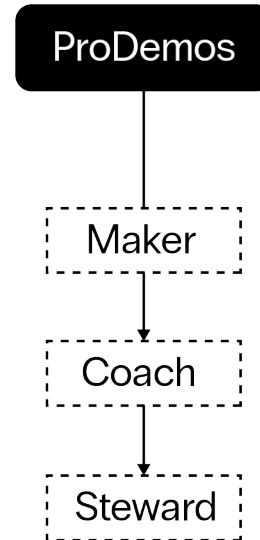
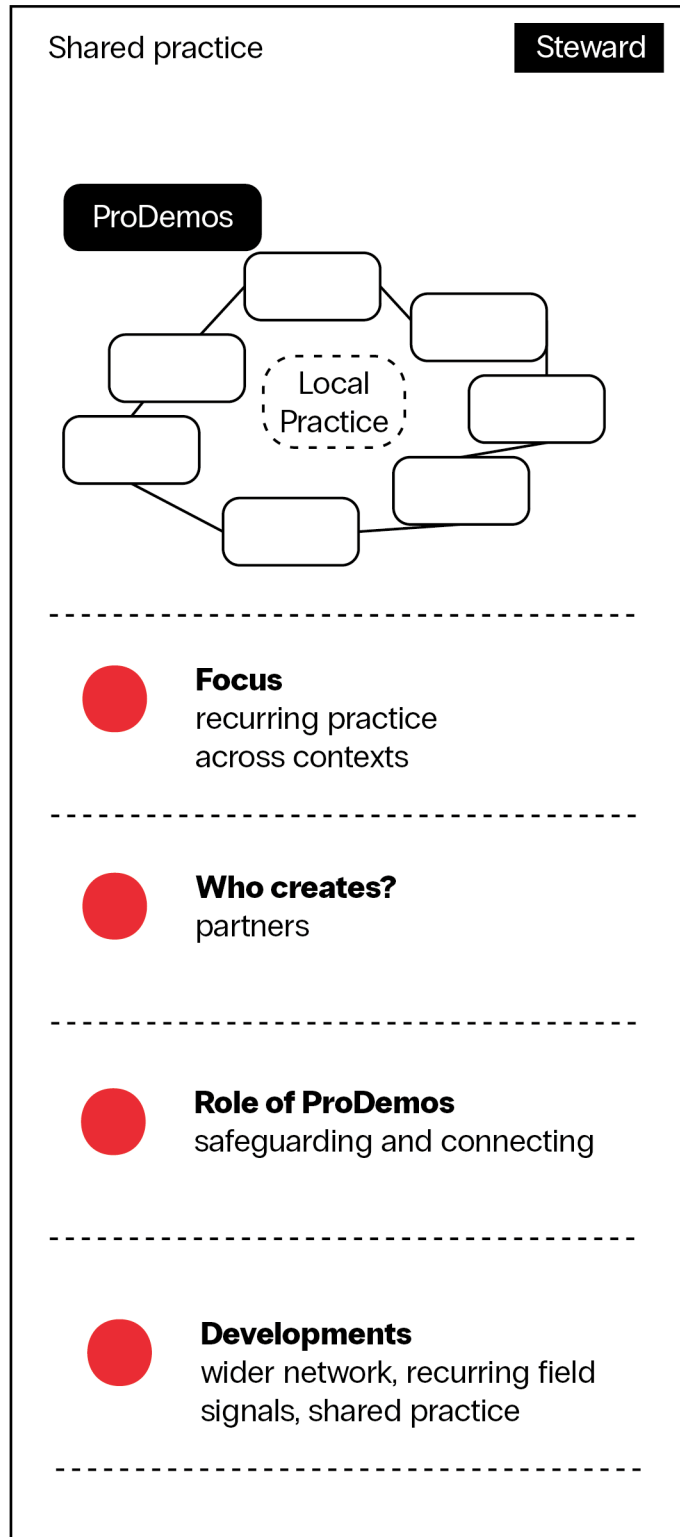


Figure 61: Roadmap for developing Lieve Toekomst from first practice moments towards a shared practice.

Horizon 3

2031-2035



7.8 Expert perspectives on Lieve Toekomst

The concept and strategic direction were discussed from political, organisational, practical and institutional perspectives. These conversations were used to examine both the potential of Lieve Toekomst and the conditions required for development. Full summaries of all expert conversations can be found in Appendix X.

Political perspective | Laurens Dassen, Member of Parliament and parliamentary leader of Volt

Near the end of the concept development, Lieve Toekomst was discussed with Laurens Dassen to explore what the programme's output could mean from a political perspective. The conversation focused especially on the feedback loop and on how policymakers might receive and use the signals collected through the programme.

Dassen recognised the broader concern behind the project. He noted that conversations about democracy under pressure often remain defensive, while politics also needs a more constructive story about what people can do to strengthen democracy. In this context, he saw value in the nine capacities because they make democratic behaviour more concrete and easier to discuss.

The conversation helped sharpen the role of Lieve Toekomst as more than a participation format.

Through Lieve Toekomst, insight can be gained into how young people experience democratic life before it becomes formal politics, rather than only recording their opinions on predefined political issues.

Dassen also emphasised the importance of continuity. Democratic development should not depend on one visit to parliament or one citizenship lesson. Moments such as turning eighteen, receiving a passport, elections, school situations and public events could all create opportunities to activate democratic awareness and practise capacities.

Based on this reflection, the feedback loop gained additional relevance. While young people practise democratic capacities, their experiences can also help institutions and political actors understand where democracy is felt, challenged or strengthened in everyday life. Lieve Toekomst could therefore provide a different kind of democratic input.

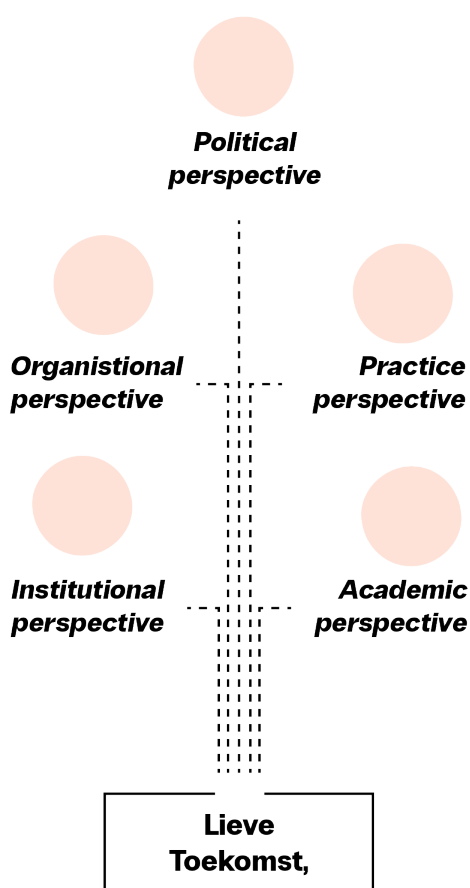


Figure 62: Expert perspectives used to reflect and evaluate on the development of Lieve Toekomst.

Organisational perspective | Eric Stokkink, Director of ProDemos

The programmatic direction was also discussed with Eric Stokkink, director of ProDemos, when the concept was shifting from separate interventions towards a broader and shared practice.

Stokkink indicated that ProDemos is looking for renewal and sees a role for partners. Partners could carry and adapt parts of the practice within their own contexts. This supported the strategic direction described in the roadmap: ProDemos can gradually move from creating the first practice moments to coaching other makers and stewarding the shared practice.

For ProDemos, renewal does not have to mean developing and delivering more programmes itself. Lieve Toekomst could instead support a shift towards enabling others to create democratic practice, while ProDemos safeguards the shared foundation.

Together, these reflections support both sides of Lieve Toekomst: its capacity to generate meaningful democratic insight and its potential to grow through collaboration.

Practice perspective | ProDemos' guides 1 and 2*

**Names anonymised as a request of the participants.*

Guide 1 and Guide 2 responded very positively to Lieve Toekomst and encouraged further development with other ProDemos guides. They recognised the capacities from their own work with young people, but saw particular value in the wider programmatic direction: using guides not only to facilitate activities, but also to recognise what is happening in practice and bring those insights back into the organisation.

They also felt that this direction would require a cultural shift within ProDemos. In their view, programme development is still often reactive and relatively distant from what guides encounter with young people. Lieve Toekomst asks for a more proactive position, with stronger connections between development, facilitation and learning from practice. Importantly, they did not see this shift as a reason to slow the concept down, but as a development ProDemos needs to make.

Their response positions Lieve Toekomst as a possible first step towards this cultural change: a way to connect guides, programme makers and young people more closely, while moving ProDemos towards a more proactive role in democratic education.

Institutional perspective | Hella van der Velde, Head of the department Influence and Participation, Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations

Lieve Toekomst was also discussed with Hella van der Velde from the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations. The conversation focused on the relevance of the approach for citizenship education and on how young people's experiences could contribute to the further development of democracy.

Van der Velde recognised the value of connecting democratic development to different moments in young people's everyday lives, such as school or a sports club. She distinguished two purposes within the approach: developing democratic capacities through practice and collecting experiences, questions and ideas from young people that may become relevant for democratic development.

Two directions are combined within Lieve Toekomst: young people develop democratic capacities, while their experiences can provide input for the further development of democracy.

From an institutional perspective, she saw potential in connecting these local experiences to a wider network. Possible connections could be with organisations working on citizenship education as well as ministries and other public institutions. She emphasised the importance of keeping the approach visual, accessible and playful so that educators and other professionals can use it in practice.

The distinction between democratic learning and the feedback loop was made more explicit in the final concept. The final concept will be presented to the department Influence and Participation at the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations after the completion of this project to explore how this direction could connect to their work.

Academic and democratic perspective | Matthijs Rooduijn, Associate Professor of Political Science, University of Amsterdam

Lieve Toekomst and the nine capacities were discussed with Matthijs Rooduijn from an academic and democratic perspective. He recognised strong connections between the capacities and his existing democratic research, particularly in 'Connect across differences', 'Feel part of something larger' and the emphasis on contribution rather than passive knowledge. He also supported the shift from teaching democracy mainly through formal politics towards practising it in everyday settings such as schools and sports clubs.

Rooduijn questioned whether the capacities should be understood as relevant only for young people. In his view, they describe orientations that are important for democratic life more broadly. He suggested starting much earlier than age sixteen. He saw value in working with partners that already have close and varied relationships with young people.

His perspective broadens the meaning of the capacities beyond the original target group: rather than only preparing young people for democracy, they may describe ways of participating in democratic life that remain relevant throughout society. This opens a further direction for research into how such capacities can develop through repeated, everyday experiences.

He also recognised connections with his own research on storytelling and strengthening liberal democracy, suggesting a possible direction for further research into how different forms of experience can contribute to democratic development.

7.9 Safeguarding the practice

As Lieve Toekomst grows, different people and organisations will adapt the capacities to their own contexts. This flexibility is necessary, but requires clarity about responsibility, political influence, educational quality and the use of young people's contributions. These questions emerged during the green light discussion and were further explored in the expert conversations. As responsibility is gradually shared with more makers, these boundaries become increasingly important.

1. Shared responsibility and interpretation

ProDemos safeguards the framework, capacities and educational intention of Lieve Toekomst. Local makers are responsible for adapting, facilitating and following up their own practice moments.

The form of an intervention may differ between contexts. Local makers keep the intervention connected to a democratic capacity and create room for different positions. Within the practice, young people examine and navigate a situation while developing their own position.

2. Democracy as a means

Lieve Toekomst presents democracy as a way for young people to influence the situations and futures they share with others. Practice moments therefore start from issues that already matter to them, rather than from democracy as an abstract subject.

3. Protecting educational depth

The capacities function as open-ended directions for practice. Development takes place through meaningful situations, facilitation, reflection and repeated practice over time. A single activity can introduce or activate a capacity; recurring practice gives young people opportunities to use it in different situations.

4. Interpreting contributions carefully

Questions, stories and tensions from the feedback loop provide qualitative insight, but should not be treated as representative of all young people. Signals should remain connected to their context and be compared across different places and moments.

Through Lieve Toekomst, the ViP vision is translated into a programmatic instrumentarium. Within this direction, ProDemos can shift from making separate interventions towards enabling a wider network in which young people practise, contribute to and help shape democratic futures.



Figure 63: Front of the booklet.

3 Bijdragen aan waar je samen afhankelijk van bent

Jongeren
voorzien
bijdrage

Ongrijpbaar

Omstreden

Overzichtelijk

Meer

Hoe gripbaar voelt de wereld?



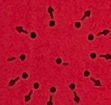
Samen houvast vinden als iets onzeker is



Verbinden met anderen zonder het helemaal eens te zijn



Je onderdeel maken van iets grofs



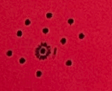
Pauzeren voordat je reageert



Handelen zonder alles zeker te weten



Kiezen in een omgeving die stuurt



Eigen positie durven innemen in een groep



Invullen dat oerlijkheid voor iedereen anders is



Invullen aan je naam

Wat kan een jongere met deze capaciteit goed?

Gedeelde plekken, voorzieningen en systemen blijven alleen werken doordat mensen afspraken maken, taken uitvoeren en verantwoordelijkheid dragen. Jongeren onderzoeken waarvan zij afhankelijk zijn, wie daarvoor zorgt en welke bijdrage bij hun eigen rol past.

Waar kunnen jongeren deze capaciteit gebruiken?

Bij een bibliotheek, buurtwinkels, sportclub, buurttuin, openbaar vervoer, enzovoort. Het gaat om de mensen die mensen

atie moet bieden, et nodig is. Het sen blijven liggen

nodig is om uitvoert. Vraag vereren en wat bij

ennen, n verschillende een haalbare en,

n om prettig in es, stopcontacten, n eiten. Daarna ezoekers zelf houden afval samen met een uit te proberen.

Lieve Toekomst, helpt ProDemos en partners om van lokale democratische ervaringen benutten om de democratische oefening te maken.

Figure 64: Inside the booklet, with the red overview card as a heart of the book.

Gift

Czesław Miłosz

A day so happy.
Fog lifted early, I worked in the garden.
Hummingbirds were stopping over honeysuckle flowers.
There was no thing on earth I wanted to possess.
I knew no one worth my envying him.
Whatever evil I had suffered, I forgot.
To think that once I was the same man did not embarrass me.
In my body I felt no pain.
When straightening up, I saw the blue sea and sails.

Remedy: Poem by Czesław Miłosz. The poem suggests that a sense of absence is not answered by having more, but by becoming more present to what is already around us. Through work that asks for care, patience and attention, we can give something of ourselves and, in doing so, find a steadier relation to the world.

As cited in: Huff, P. (Ed.). (2024). *De gedichtenapotheek: Poëzie op recept voor het hart en het hoofd*. Prometheus.

Design beyond myself

At the beginning of the project, I mostly thought about what ProDemos could do for young people in a world where democracy is in decline. The final direction asks a different question: how can ProDemos create the conditions in which schools, municipalities, libraries, facilitators and young people can develop democratic experiences together?

This shift is visible in the three horizons. ProDemos starts as a maker, becomes a coach, and eventually acts as a steward. The organisation gradually moves from producing interventions to supporting a (new) distributed practice.

This also became a personal lesson. I often felt that graduating required me to prove that I could make all the important decisions myself. When I needed confirmation, I sometimes judged myself for it. I thought independence meant being able to know, alone, when something was good enough.

But almost every meaningful shift in the project happened in relation to other people. Teachers changed how I understood the context. Matthijs helped me respect complexity. Sharing work brought back my energy. Tom helped me sharpen my position and the one of the programme itself. Performances and poems returned me to the urgency and responsibility I felt.

I feel resilient as a designer when my interactions with others help me keep moving.

8 //

What design can do; Conclusions and further directions

This chapter brings together the research findings and design outcomes to answer RQ1. It explains how the future framework leads to nine democratic capacities, how these capacities shape a new direction for democratic education, and how this direction is materialised through Lieve Toekomst. The chapter concludes with the limitations of the project and directions for future research and development.

RQ2 forms the reflective layer of this report. The positionality statement and resilience principles throughout the chapters address how influence, interpretation, neutrality and responsibility shape the design process.

Democratisch handelen met deze 9 capaciteiten

Deze negen capaciteiten komen voort uit de negen mogelijke toekomstsituaties. Ze beschrijven wat jongeren nodig kunnen hebben om daarin democratisch te handelen. Door deze capaciteiten nu te oefenen, bereiden jongeren zich voor op verschillende situaties die zij in de toekomst kunnen tegenkomen.

Challenging
Omschakelen
Omarmen
Hoe zit ik hierin met de wereld?



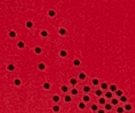
Samen richting vinden in onzekerheid



Verbonden blijven bij verandering



Je onderdeel voelen van iets groter



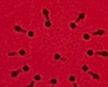
Samen houvast vinden als iets onzeker is



Verbinden met anderen zonder het helemaal eens te zijn



Je onderdeel voelen van iets groter



Pauzeren voordat je reageert



Handelen zonder alles zeker te weten



Inzien dat eerlijkheid voor iedereen anders is



Kiezen in een omgeving die stuurt



Eigen positie durven innemen in een groep



Blijvaden aan wat je samen gebruikt

Leve Toekomst, Help! ProDemos en partners om van onze democratische ervaringen leerrijke democratische oefening te maken.

8.1 Conclusion

This graduation project begins with a concern about democratic decline and the future relationship between young people and democracy. Democracy is understood as a lived relationship between people, groups, institutions and society. Young people encounter this relationship through elections and political institutions, as well as through rules, choices, belonging, group pressure, uncertainty, difference and shared responsibility.

RQ1: How might young people relate to democracy in 2035, and how can design create conditions for them to recognise, practise and contribute to democratic futures?

Future relationships between young people and democracy

The future research resulted in a set of plausible relationships between young people and democracy towards 2035. These relationships explore different ways in which societal conditions and young people's position within them may come together. They depend partly on how graspable the world around a young person feels and partly on how that young person relates to a group.

The horizontal axis describes this relation to the group. A young person may move along with a collective, negotiate an individual position within it, or withdraw from it. The vertical axis describes how the wider world is experienced. Systems can feel structured and recognisable, increasingly contested, or fragmented and difficult to grasp.

Together, these dimensions form a framework of nine possible relationships between young people and their democratic environment. Each relationship reveals a particular democratic tension around how someone acts, relates to others or finds orientation within the surrounding world. The framework structures the contextual findings and creates a design space for exploring what young people may need in future democratic situations.

Nine democratic capacities

The nine relationships lead to nine democratic capacities. These capacities describe how young people can navigate democratic life: by recognising how a situation guides them, forming a position, pausing before reacting, acting amid uncertainty, understanding different experiences of fairness, connecting across differences and contributing to a shared direction.

The preferred future relationship is one in which young people recognise democracy in everyday life and see themselves as able to act within it. They understand how rules, groups and systems influence them, develop their own position, remain connected to others and contribute to the situations they share.

This leads to the central finding of the project: democratic education combines knowledge about democracy with practice in democratic situations. Knowledge supports an understanding of institutions, rights and procedures. Capacities support young people in applying that knowledge while navigating social pressure, uncertainty, conflicting interests and collective responsibility.

From democratic experiences to democratic practice

This finding shifts the design direction from individual democratic experiences towards recurring democratic practice. A single visit, lesson or simulation can create insight. Repeated moments create opportunities for young people to develop how they recognise, navigate and shape democratic situations.

Three interaction layers translate the capacities into an interactional design direction. **Conditions** make visible how rules, systems and environments shape the available room to act. **Relations** create space for positioning, listening, disagreement and connection. **Directions** support young people in connecting their position to a wider context and contributing to what happens next.

These layers help makers translate an abstract capacity into something young people can see, do and reflect on. An everyday situation, such as a school rule or a decision about a shared place, can become a democratic practice moment when an intervention makes different interests, positions or responsibilities visible and gives young people room to engage with them.

A broader design potential

The framework, capacities and affordance layers create a design space that extends beyond the final concept. They offer a language for discussing how democratic behaviour develops through responsibility, fairness, belonging, influence and uncertainty.

Conversations with political and institutional experts show interest in such a language. The capacities may therefore support future applications within democratic education, participation, policy reflection or organisational learning. Each application requires development and validation within its own context. Within this graduation project, this wider potential is materialised through Lieve Toekomst. This direction connects directly to ProDemos' educational practice, allows concrete interventions to begin today and creates a structure for recurring practice over time.

Lieve Toekomst as the chosen application

Lieve Toekomst is a shared educational practice that helps educators and local partners create democratic practice moments in places where young people already are.

The current design consists of the framework, the nine capacities, a practical booklet and a first collection of worked examples. The booklet helps makers recognise a relevant situation, select a capacity and determine what they can add so that young people can practise it.

The examples show how each capacity can become a concrete intervention. As Lieve Toekomst develops, examples created and tested in practice can expand this collection.

The strategic value of Lieve Toekomst lies in the connection between separate moments. A shared name, visual language and recurring type of

invitation allow young people to recognise that activities at a school, library, municipality, youth organisation or sports club belong to a broader practice. Through repeated encounters, they connect different actions: examining a choice, taking a position, relating to difference and contributing to a shared situation.

The roadmap describes how this practice grows towards 2035. ProDemos begins as the maker of the first interventions, develops into a coach for educators and local partners and eventually becomes the steward of the shared practice. The ability to create practice moments gradually spreads to people who already work with young people, while the framework, capacities and educational intention remain shared.

The feedback loop connects these moments to continued learning. Questions, stories, tensions and proposals can receive a local response, inform future interventions and contribute to learning between makers. Recurring field signals can also provide qualitative input for ministries, planning agencies and democratic institutions.

Through this structure, democracy becomes a way for young people to influence the situations and futures they share with others. The intended movement begins with recognising democratic tensions, develops through repeated practice and leads towards conscious contribution. Lieve Toekomst connects these local moments into a larger and recognisable educational practice.

Answer to the research question

The main research question is answered as follows:

Young people in 2035 may relate to democracy in different ways. This depends on how graspable the world around them feels and how they position themselves in relation to the groups they belong to. The nine plausible relationships show these different possibilities. From these, this project develops a preferred direction in which young people recognise democracy in everyday life and see themselves as able to act within it. Design can support this by creating recurring practice moments in everyday life.

The project contributes a new direction for democratic education. The future framework describes possible relationships. The capacities translate these relationships into educational directions. The interaction layers guide the design of interactions. Lieve Toekomst connects these interactions into a shared practice that starts with concrete interventions today and develops towards recurring democratic practice in 2035.

The content of a future democratic story remains open. This project creates a way for young people to practise and contribute to that story.

Relation to the research questions

RQ1.1 is addressed in Chapters 2 and 3.

These chapters examine ProDemos' current instrumentarium and identify the contextual factors that shape the future relationship between young people and democracy.

RQ1.2 and RQ1.3 are addressed in Chapters 4 and 5. These chapters structure plausible future relationships, formulate a preferable relationship and translate the framework into nine democratic capacities.

RQ1.4 is addressed in Chapters 6 and 7. These chapters translate the capacities into interaction layers, programme principles, democratic practice moments and Lieve Toekomst.

RQ2 shows that responsible design for democratic development does not require the designer to be neutral or without influence. Every act of framing, selecting, interpreting and designing already shapes what becomes visible and possible.

Responsibility therefore lies in making these choices and the values behind them explicit, remaining open to perspectives that challenge them, and being able to account for how interpretations are made. In democratic design, this also means distinguishing between supporting democratic values and prescribing political outcomes, and continuously connecting everyday democratic experiences back to the formal systems and institutions they relate to.

The resilience principles document how this position developed throughout the project and translate it into concrete commitments for future design practice.

8.2 Limitations

The future framework and capacities result from an interpretive design process. They combine literature, interviews, observations and conversations and the selection and clustering of these insights shape the final structure. Further research with young people and experts from different social and educational contexts will refine the framework and capacities.

Youth involvement and testing take place on a limited scale. The tests provide insight into whether young people and educators understand and can use the capacities, but they do not demonstrate how capacities develop through repeated practice over several years. The tests provide short-term insight into comprehension and use; long-term development remains to be studied.

The booklet and first examples form the most developed parts of the concept. The roadmap, shared identity, network of roles and feedback loop describe a strategic direction whose practical functioning depends on implementation with ProDemos and local partners.

8.3 Further research and development

The next step is to test Lieve Toekomst as a recurring practice across several contexts. A school, library, municipality, youth organisation or sports club can each develop practice moments using the same capacities and recognisable identity. This makes it possible to study how partners interpret the method, how young people recognise connections between moments and which forms of support ProDemos needs to provide.

A central research question is whether repeated practice actually contributes to the development of democratic capacities. ProDemos' research department can lead a longer-term research programme together with education experts, guides, young people, schools and local partners. Collaboration with universities or other knowledge institutes can support the development of a robust research design.

This research can follow young people across several practice moments and examine how they recognise democratic tensions, form positions, respond to group pressure, act under uncertainty and contribute to shared decisions. Observations, education expert feedback and follow-up conversations with guides can show how capacities develop and whether young people transfer them between contexts. Comparing recurring practice with one-off activities can clarify the specific value of the programmatic approach.

A possible next application is to use the capacities to reflect on existing ProDemos programmes. The deconstruction in Chapter 2 identified differences between what programmes intend to support and what young people are invited to practise within the interaction. The capacities could provide educators with a way to examine which forms of democratic practice already receive attention and where additional opportunities for practice or reflection could be introduced. This application requires further development and testing.

The research department can also examine how the capacities should be operationalised without reducing them to a checklist. This requires indicators that describe observable learning movements while preserving the open and contextual character of each capacity. Young people should take part in defining this.

Further development is also needed for the feedback loop. Local pilots can test how contributions can be collected, how young people receive a response and how recurring signals are interpreted and shared with ministries, planning agencies or advisory bodies.

The capacities may eventually support other applications, such as participation processes, policy reflection, professional learning or programmes for other age groups. These possibilities show the wider potential of the framework. Their development should build on evidence from the educational practice. Lieve Toekomst therefore serves as the first concrete application and as the setting in which ProDemos can test whether the capacities genuinely develop in young people over time.

The designer in the next phase

Much of the real work of Lieve Toekomst still lies ahead. As described in the limitations, more testing with young people is needed, but the next phase is also about finding out what happens when the concept enters practice. Design research is not like social science research, where research ends with a diagnosis. Design works differently because Lieve Toekomst will use what is learned about the present to propose, make and test possible ways forward.

For me, that is one of the fundamental contributions of design, and of the designer. A designer can give form to something that does not yet exist, make it possible to experience and discuss, and then learn from what happens. Lieve Toekomst therefore provides a starting point rather than an endpoint: a clear booklet, nine capacities and a direction to continue from. What Lieve Toekomst can really do will become clearer in what happens next.

Young people prepare for democratic futures by repeatedly practising how to recognise what shapes a situation, relate to others and contribute to shared directions. Lieve Toekomst translates capacities into a recognisable educational practice that can start today and grow towards 2035.





Remedy: A still from the recording of 'Het eindgesprek' I organised with my brother Boet and his friend Jose about democracy and the future. It reminded me how much energy I get from these kinds of conversations.

Make what matters

Getting my greenlight felt like a big moment. After weeks of trying to turn all the research into one coherent story, it was the first time I really felt that the project stood on its own. In the weeks afterwards, I noticed that I trusted what I had made much more. I knew the choices behind it, I believed in the story, and I could finally see the project as a whole.

Towards the end, I asked my brother Boet and his friend Jose to sit down together and reflect on democracy and the future. I deliberately kept my own research mostly out of the conversation. I did not want them to respond to my framework or capacities, but simply to talk about how they see the world, what worries them, what they hope for and what they think might change. I told them too: this is THE last conversation, with you, the youth.

I loved it. Listening to them disagree, build on each other and try to put into words what they find important reminded me of why I started this project in the first place. I realised how much energy I get from conversations like these: from being curious about how people understand the world around them, and then using design to do something with those perspectives.

I also started to feel that what I had made was somehow bigger than me. I had not expected that. Lieve Toekomst no longer feels like only a graduation project, it feels like something I want to keep working with.

That might be the most important thing I take from this project. I want to keep making work that allows me to engage with people and with the society we live in. Work that starts from questions I genuinely care about, brings me into contact with perspectives other than my own, and turns those encounters into something that can continue beyond me. And I know I want much more from that.

I will keep choosing work that brings me close to people and to the questions shaping the society we live in.

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AI Statement

This project is about democracy as something people practise together. For that reason, the human encounters I had throughout this project were essential. I gathered the perspectives of young people, education experts, researchers, policymakers and others and interpreted these encounters myself. I used those interpretations to form the design direction.

At the same time, AI became part of my working process. Throughout this project, I learned where it could be useful within my own way of working as a designer when translating and refining language. Using it in a project like this means to be careful and thoughtful of this use.

Translation tool

I used ChatGPT Pro (version 5.6-SOL) as a writing tool. Because English is not my first language, I used it to improve grammar, sentence structure and tone, while keeping the meaning and argument my own. I also used it to translate the futures and capacities into Dutch when I needed them for tests with participants. The interviews notes included in the appendix were translated using ChatGPT. Sensitive information like names or picture were never put into the AI tool.

Finding the right words

Chat GPT Pro was useful in this iterative design process. Formulating the names for the axes in the framework, for example, took many iterations. I often knew what distinction I wanted to describe, but struggled to find the precise words for it. ChatGPT helped me explore different formulations until I found words that matched what I meant.

AI was not used to generate research findings, analyse participants independently, or make decisions about the final design. The nine capacities, the design principles and the concept Lieve Toekomst were developed through the research process described in this report and informed by real people in real contexts.

Appendices

The appendices of this project can be derived from the repository of the TU Delft.

www.repository.tudelft.nl

A // Research activities

TI02 // Observation day at Eindbazen
TI03 // Observation of DemocratieLAB
TI05 // Civics teacher street interviews
TI06 // Testing plausible futures with young people
TI07 // Midterm input session with ProDemos education experts
TI08 // Classroom test with young people
TI09 // First Lieve Toekomst booklet test
TI10 // Review of the Lieve Toekomst booklet
TI11 // Final Lieve Toekomst booklet test

B // Conversations

IN01 // Cees van den Bos
IN02 // Young people
IN03 // Frank Wanders
IN04 // Abel van Beest
IN05 // Jan Durk Tuinier
IN06 // Renate van der Kuijl
IN07 // Niels Bedijn
IN08 // Cynthia van Putten
IN09 // Ivar van den Brink
IN10 // Tommy Blomvliet
IN11 // Matthijs van Tuijl .
IN12 // Tom van der Meer, first conversation
IN13 // Tom van der Meer, second conversation
IN14 // Laurens Dassen
IN15 // Eric Stokkink
IN16 // Hella van der Velde
IN17 // Matthijs Rooduijn
IN18 // ProDemos guides 1 and 2

C // Research analysis and synthesis

C.1 // Deconstruction of DemocratieLAB and Eindbazen
C.2 // Complete context factor collection
C.3 // From context factors to clusters
C.4 // From clusters to the two framework axes
C.5 // From future relationships to democratic capacities

D // Final design

D.1 // Final Lieve Toekomst booklet
D.2 // Final booklet 'tussenpagina'
D.3 // Final booklet picture
D.4 // Nine examples from practice
D.5 // Additional Lieve Toekomst materials

