

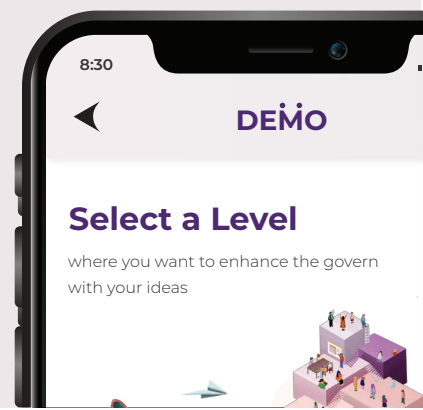
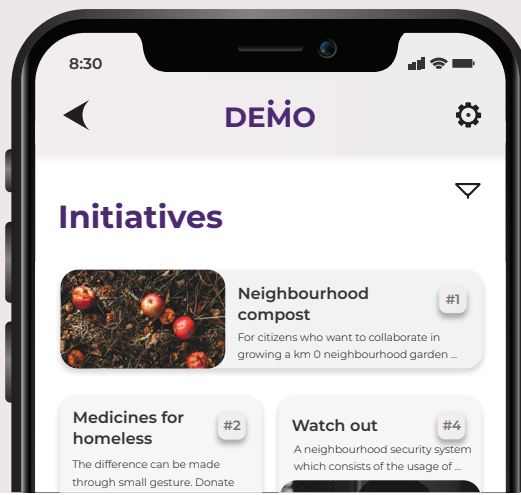
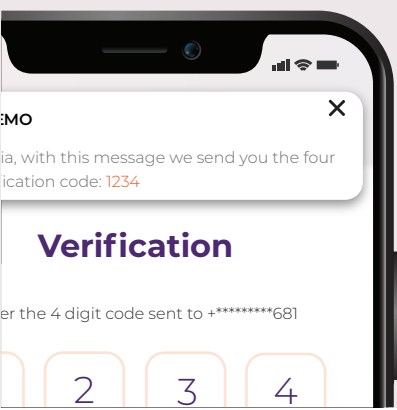
DEMO

bridging public opinion for shared governance

Strategic Product Design
Master Thesis by Giulia Bacchi

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Date
19th October 2020

Graduation Report
from research to result

DEMO

bridging public opinion for shared governance

Strategic Product Design
Master Thesis by Giulia Bacchi

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Master thesis

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Start

Executive Summary

*For those who believe that changes can be triggered.
For those who have lost hope and gave up.
This is for you.*

The presence of a gap in the relationship between citizens and the political system is a phenomenon that knows no boundaries, which affects governments and political institutions at different scales.

Citizens are dissatisfied about the current one-way political interaction held by an elite which is perceived as corrupt and distant. They would like to see a change, but they do not know how to obtain it. On the other hand, politicians promise changes that are hardly or too slow implemented, reinforcing the perception that the political system is an immutable static entity despite democracy is a dynamic process. Despite numerous initiatives undertaken by organizations and private citizens, aim to turn the tide, they fail to trigger significant changes.

In this scenario, where citizens are questioning the current quality of democracy, while some are discouraged in manifesting their concerns, others are pushed to ask for participation extension and shared governance firmly. However, they perceive how they currently lack adequate instruments capable of bridging the noisy flows of information and enabling their request to shared governance come across.

From here the relevance of this thesis which aims to apply a conjoint combination of strategic mid-set, interaction practices and design for democracy purposes to investigate how to bridge the current gap in the relationship between citizens and the political system and design a solution (desirable, feasible and viable) to enable society in achieving the democratic future they aim for. Thanks to the insights obtained from the extensive multidisciplinary research have been possible to harvest evidence concerning how the current gap is nurtured by the lack of reciprocal information, communication and education which affects citizens and politicians alike. Therefore the importance of realizing an intervention at the interaction level capable of providing citizens and governmental institutions with the adequate instruments to establish an ongoing bi-directional interaction which will enable

to bridge public opinion and share governance representing an extension in participation beyond the moment of voting.

Upon this goal, ideation and further data collection led to the realization of DEMO as final design articulated on three concepts: DEMO App for citizens, DEMOs Software for institutions and DEMOc Community, a “sub-partes” guarantor for adequate technical functioning and ethical usage of all the parts.

Validation shade light about the authentic potential that an instrument like DEMO would have in improving the dynamics (in terms of information, communication and collaboration) and so the overall relationship between citizens and the political system across societal segments and institutional levels. Although several limitations have been identified regarding the ethical sustainability of the concept (which have been addressed in the dedicate reflection section) results remarked the capability of DEMO in activating the participatory spirit in respondents which declared to have lost it.

In light of the positive reactions harvested along with its development, DEMO, as an overall concept, aspires to bring further the discussion about how to enable society to achieve a democratic future in which public opinion is bridged, and governance is incrementally shared between institutions and citizens at local, regional, national & international level.

In the end, everything starts with an attempt;
everything starts with a DEMO.

*With all my heart,
Giulia*



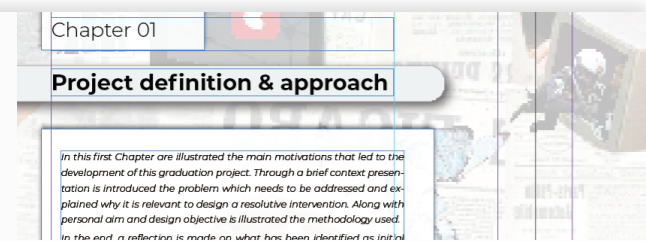
Reading Guide

The reading guide aims to support the reader in understanding the structure of the report by indicating the meaning of recurring graphic elements.

Chapter introduction

At the beginning of each Chapter is provided a brief description of the content covered and what its purpose is. For accuracy enhancement, it is reported the number and title of the various sections into which the Chapter is divided. Using the same visual style notes if present are reported in the adjacent page.

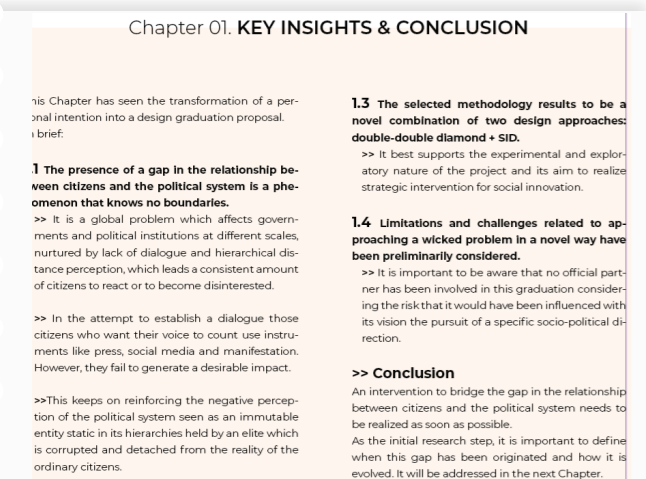
Example



Chapter key insight (important for the final design) & conclusion

At the end of each Chapter, there is a concluding section which summarizes the main insights collected. These will be the fundamental design evaluation parameters playing the role of a rationale for the realization of the final design and subsequent reflections. The reader who in lack of time cannot read the entire content of the report can just go through those sections.

Example



Examples

Within the various Chapters, are provided examples as an occasion for deepening and contextualization of the topics covered.

Example

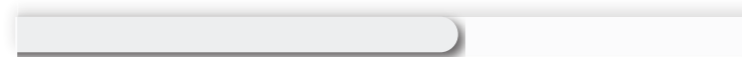


Different font usage

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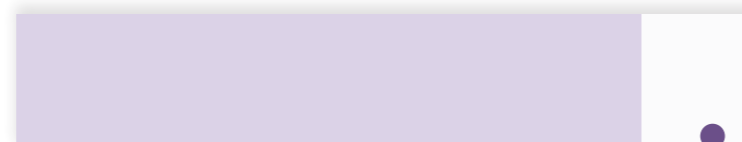
- **bold black text** (font size 25) is used for the main sections' title. It results also highlighted by the usage of a grey label.

Example



- **semibold purple text** (font size 14) is used for the sub-sections' title;
- light black text (font size 9) is used for the ordinary text;
- *light italic black text* (font size 9) is used for citations of authors and quotes from the interviews. Among the quotes the interesting ones are highlighted with clear orange boxes.

Example



- **semibold black text** (font size 9) is used to highlight important information;
- light dark grey text (font size 9) between “[]” is used to indicate that in-depth information can be found in the appendix.

Icons

The following icons indicate:

-  research through literature review
-  research through interviews
-  research through surveys
-  research through online observation
-  research question
-  design evaluation parameters

Images

With images are intended both pictures and illustrations which are self explanatory of a presented concept. Every image has its own caption.

Example

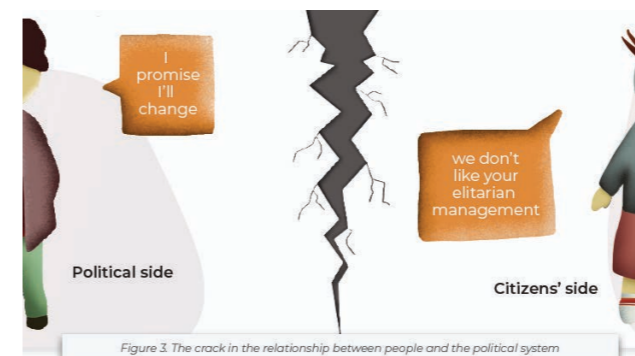


Figure 3. The crack in the relationship between people and the political system

Privacy and identities

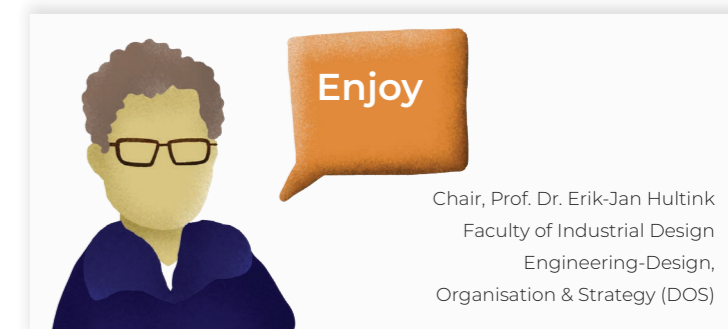
The identity of the participants is anonymized both to protect their privacy and to avoid any possible bias regarding their person (especially in the case of politicians).

Latin words used

- *Sub-partes* = above the parties, neutral
- *Dictat* = imposition, no mediation possible
- *In primis* = in the first place

Abbreviations

- *pp.* = page
- *Chpt* = chapter
- *CTZN*° = Citizen Numbers
- *BLM* = Black Lives Matter
- *M5S* = Movimento 5 Stelle



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Index & Report Structure

The index shows the structure of the report broken down by Chapters and sub-sections.

On the left, it is indicated the main design phase addressed by each chapter. The colour of the bar used will be reported as the default header of the corresponding chapter.

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Chapter 01

Project definition & approach

In this first Chapter are illustrated the main motivations that led to the development of this graduation project. Through a brief context presentation is introduced the problem which needs to be addressed and explained why it is relevant to design a resolute intervention. Along with personal aim and design objective is illustrated the methodology used. In the end, a reflection is made on what has been identified as initial challenges and limitations.

Sections in this Chapter

- 1.1 "Project origins & intentions"
- 1.2 "Setting the graduation project"
- 1.3 "Design methodology"
- 1.4 "Limitations & challenges"



1.1 Project origins & intentions

In this first section [1.1] it is explained how this project originated from my direct experience of the socio-political crisis in the fragile scenario of central Italy still devastated by the earthquakes that occurred in the last decade. Preliminary research, presented in section 1.1.2, allowed to ground my assumptions further, define the relevance of an intervention in the socio-political field [1.1.3] develop my personal intention [1.1.4].

1.1.1 My experience of the crisis: the case of L'Aquila

During the summer of 2019, I have visited the Centre of Italy, where a significant portion is still devastated by the earthquakes that happened nearly a decade ago. Norcia and L'Aquila, among the others, were (and still are) impressively destroyed. Their people are living in borderline conditions and directly experiencing their distress touched me deeply. It was like knowing everything for the first time. Hearing, reading and watching the news from a screen implies a different involvement.

Overall the **population was disappointed by how the political system** was behaving with their case: talking promises and pretending to listen to their needs while distracted by other issues. Politicians were seen to take their situation to heart only when elections were in the air in the attempt to attract media attention and enhance their reputation.

In this scenario, in which the political system was perceived as distant, people, whose desire was to be heard and change things started to **raise their voices**. With this purpose in mind, to have a house again to call home, they started to use all the instruments they have: **press, social media, protests and manifestations**.

Like the lady in Figure 2 who as a sign of protest and resignation hangs the keys of the house to which she will never return to a grate.

The **impossibility of establishing a dialogue with the political system, perceived as an immutable entity static in its hierarchies, has led many citizens overtime to reject politics through rebellion or abstention**.

Despite the solidarity shown by fellow compatriot and non-profit institutions, many citizens I spoke to revealed their high level of dissatisfaction and reluctance toward the political system.

Trying to make contact with them is like shouting

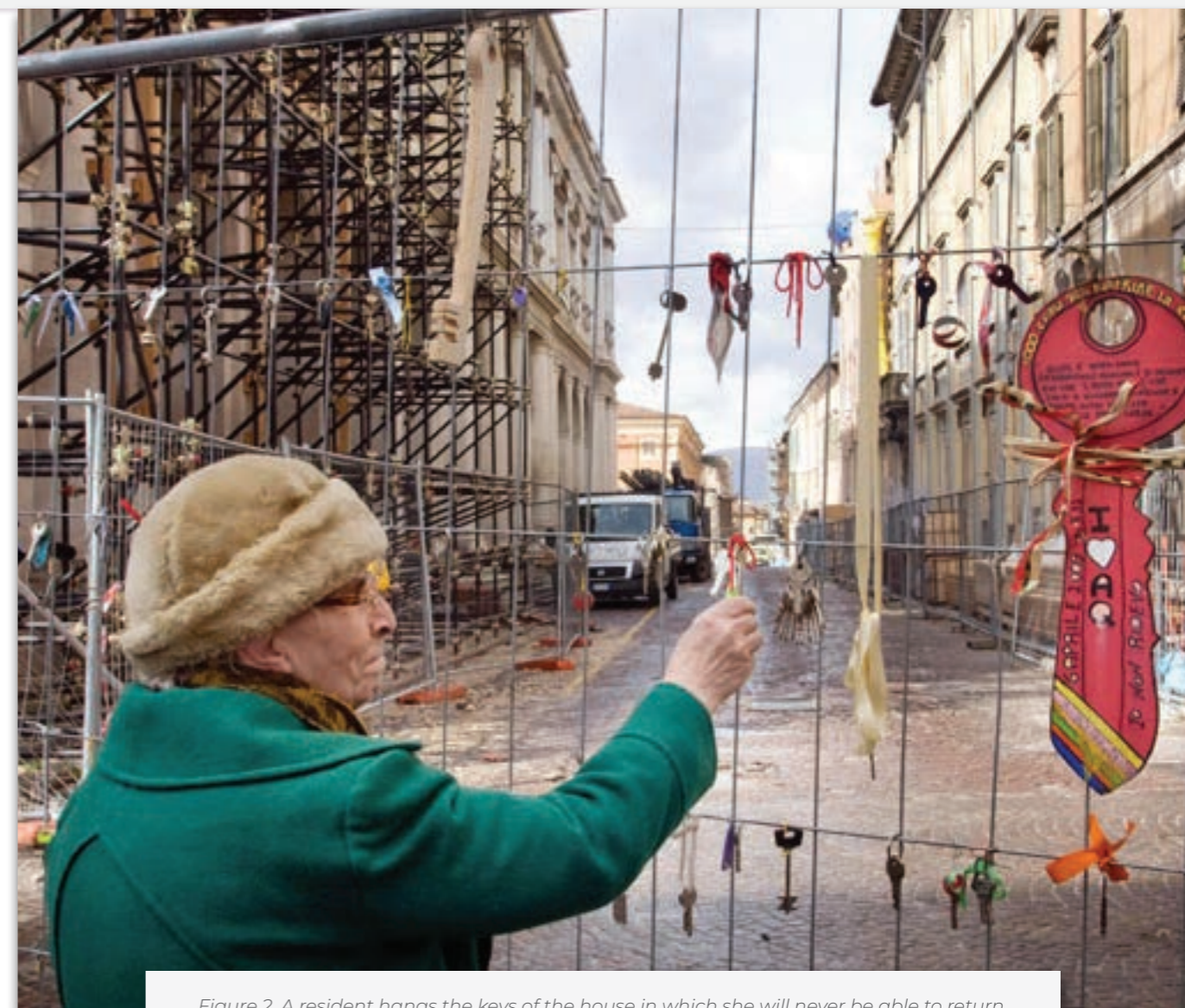


Figure 2. A resident hangs the keys of the house in which she will never be able to return. L'Aquila, Centre of Italy after the earthquake in 2010. Source: Sky news

into the void.

1.1.2 A clear vision

I A diffused problem in Italy

Broaden the analysis more widely to the whole Italian territory, I have found many similar dissatisfactory signs. Overall they seem to indicate that something is going wrong in the relationship between people and the political system. As also supported by Cerruto, (2012) above all, there is a consistent electoral turnout decay accompanied by a progressive lack of interest in socio-political information especially, on behalf of young people. [Annex G for more]

In fact, it is estimated from surveys carried out at the national level that over 25% of the young generation was absolutely uninformed on the matter.

II A diffused problem worldwide

Further zooming out my view, thanks to preliminary research, I have seen how the **lack of dialogue and the distance perception** between citizens and the

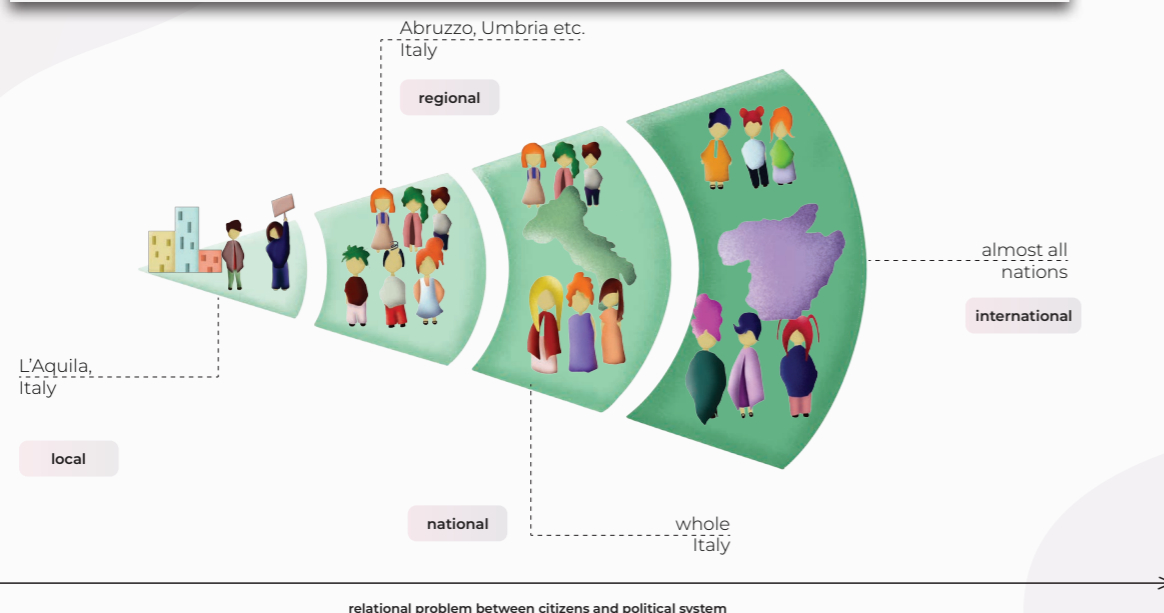
political system is an universal phenomenon that **knows no boundaries**. It is a decay that affects more than half of the democratic establishments worldwide. (Künzi, 2019; Freedom House, 2020; Repucci, 2020)

Data are impressive about it. Fourteen major protests are currently ongoing worldwide since 2019 in the desperate attempt to restore a dialogue with politics. Brexit in the UK, the Hong Kong protest, the Catalan independence in Spain, the Sardines movements in Italy, are only a few examples. Moreover, the current scenario has acquired an even greater weight in light of all the protest movements that have come to life in 2020 like the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement.

III Preliminary conclusion

These few yet relevant data made me reflect upon the fact that **the relationship between people and the political system is a global problem that needs to be addressed**. Especially considering the future

Figure 1. A problem at different levels



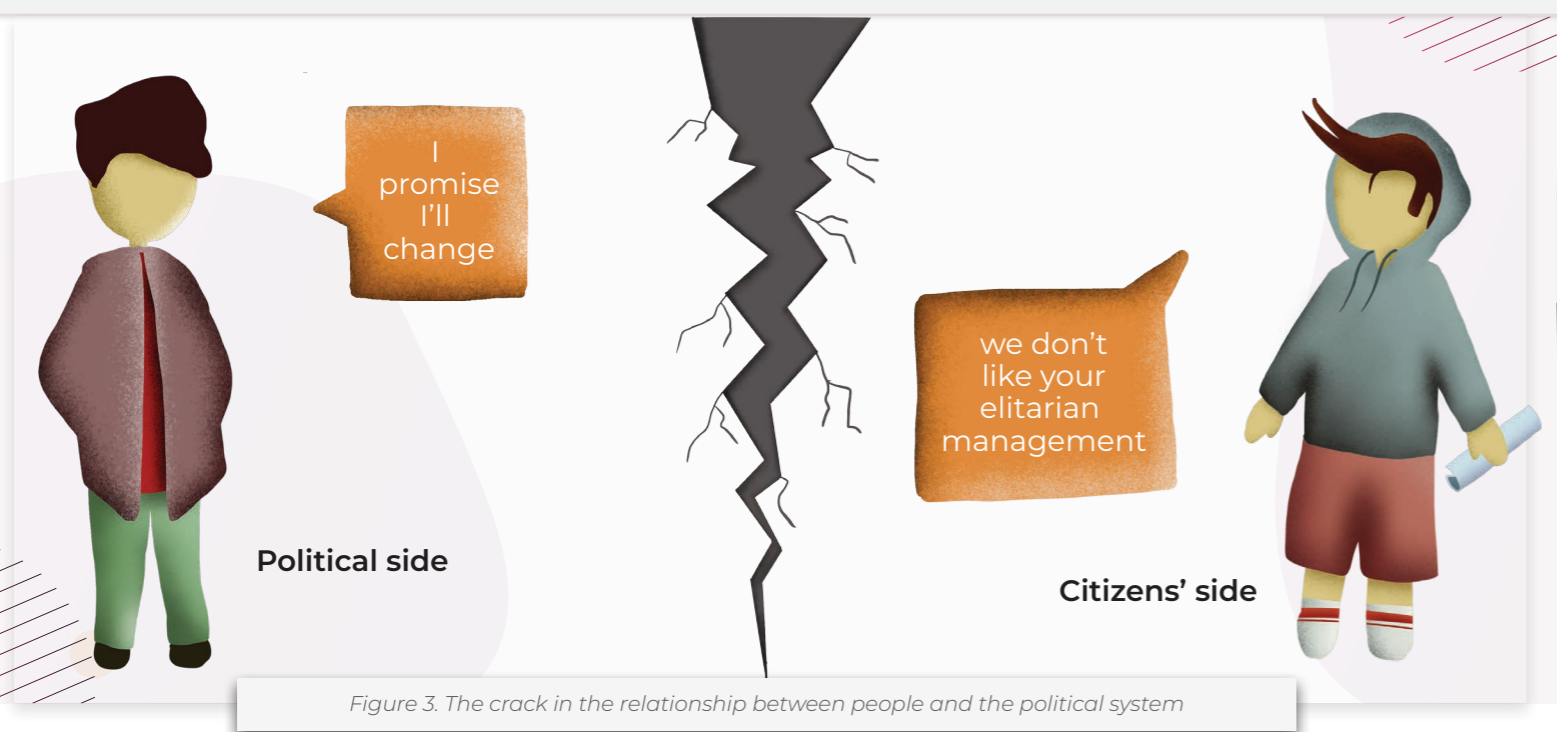


Figure 3. The crack in the relationship between people and the political system

scenario that demonstrators, as well as other many people, want to achieve. A future where sustainability, climate balance, gender equality, individual rights and social well-being is a reality.

1.1.3 Project relevance

The increasingly perceived distance in the relationship between citizens and the political system has led to the formation of a crack. [Figure 3] This crack due to the previously established events it has become a **consistent gap** which needs to be closed before further erosion will turn it into an unbridgeable void.

This research wants to be a step towards understanding what are the main problems that worldwide nurture the relational gap and developing a solution to help in bridging it. Recreating a connection between citizens and the political system is fundamental to enhance governmental and social interaction, and thus democracy.

1.1.4 Personal intention

Reflecting upon my experience and the evidence preliminary collected about the socio-political malfunctioning, I have seen a call to action. An urgency, an opportunity to apply strategic design as an ap-

proach to analyse a persistent problem under a new lens help society reaching the future that it envisions. This because similarly to Nynke Tromp & Paul Hekert (2018), I believe design is not just useful to forge beautiful and functional products. Still, it can be applied to our daily life to shape society for the better.

With this graduation project, I tend to carry out an intervention to **bridge the gap which obstacle the relationship between citizens and the political system**. [Figure 4]

I hope to be able to design a "sub partes" instrument that can be beneficial in stimulating the interaction between citizens and the political system at different levels. Something that can help all those citizens who like the inhabitants of L'Aquila want to be heard by the institutions. Something that can be considered interesting by the new generations and thus reactivate their interest in politics.

I do believe that ignoring the problem and not intervening would be not only a missed opportunity but also an act of negligence. This thesis is my attempt as a citizen and designer to do my part.



Figure 4. Bridge the gap

1.2 Setting the graduation project

In this section, the graduation project is set up based on the information obtained from the preliminary research and the personal motivations defined in the previous section [1.1]

1.2.1 Democracy as domain

Preparatory research propaedeutic to the realization of the graduation proposal enabled to have a taste about the complexity and depth of political dimension. Worldwide there are different regimes: dictatorships, tyrannies, oligarchies, democracies and mixed establishments (Freedom House, 2020). Among all, **democracy has been chosen as a domain for this graduation project**.

[See Annex A for extensive information about preliminary research]

I Why democracy?

The choice of the democratic regime was weighed based on three main criteria [Figure 5]:

- **intervention opportunities;**
- **individual and societal freedom;**
- **personal experience.**

In democracies, thanks to the average openness of institutions to collaboration and innovation, data can be easily retrieved, prototypes tested and ideas implemented.

In democratic regimes, individual and society enjoy freedom as regulated by constitutions. Participation is encouraged and providing positive/negative feedbacks to governmental proposals is considered a

standard practice.

Last but not least, democracy represents the reality in which I luckily have grown up being Italian, and it is the reality I am still surrounded by living in The Netherlands.

1.2.2 Problem definition

Preliminary findings in section 1.1.2 further validated by recent events (e.g. Covid-19, Black Lives Matter protests) made evident the **presence of a gap in the relationship between people and the political system at all institutional levels**. Citizens are dissatisfied about the current one-way political interaction held by an elite which is perceived as corrupt and distant. They would like to see a change, but they do not know how to obtain it.

On the other hands, politicians promise changes that are hardly or too slow implemented. Consequently, political parties, as a mediation system between the private and the public programmatic spheres, seems not enough. As also supported by Preziosi (2018) what is needed is a "sub partes" facilitation function capable of improving the communication and the relationship between the Representative Democracy (typical of the citizens) and the Deliberative Democracy (typical of the political system).

Numerous initiatives to turn the tide and reinforce



Figure 5. Criteria kept into account for the selection of democracy as domain

democracy are realized, but they often fail to impact the political system positively.

1.2.3 Project aim

By introducing a strategic design approach in the social-political field, this graduation project has the aim to **have an impact in the domain of democracy** by investigating how to bridge the gap in the relationship between citizens and the political system. The priority is to explore how people interact/relates to politics, what makes them satisfied, what dissatisfied. By directly listen the protagonists' voices, the objective is to discover new opportunities that can be used as a strategic pivot point to reframe their interaction dynamics and realize a "sub partes" design.

1.2.4 Project scope

The scope of this project is open, defined together with the graduation committee, along with the research steps. This approach has been chosen to mirror the exploratory nature of this thesis and do not limit possible unexpected directions. Decisions are highlighted in the various Chapter and generally taken on the bases of:

- insights patterns;
- promising intervention areas;
- identified target groups' priorities.

1.2.5 Target group

This project is meant to support both citizens and the political systems of democratic countries in **improving their relationship in terms of interaction dynamics** by bridging the gap which obstacles their daily exchange.

Under the term "citizens" or "people" are intended all individuals without distinction of gender, age, ethnicity, social extraction who have rights because born in a particular country.

With the term "political system" or "political institutions" is intended the system formed by citizens who have undertaken a political career at a different governmental level (without distinction for ideologies, party orientation and position) and the decision-making process they produce.

I No specific target group

A specific target group was not voluntarily pre-defined as it would mean excluding large segments of the population for which the final design could be beneficial.

1.2.6 Stakeholders

The TU Delft graduation committee was the only team involved continuously for the entire duration of the project.

No official partner, as intentionally wanted for the sake of the final results, was added.

Nevertheless, many citizens experts have contributed by sharing their knowledge and experience during all the project's phases: journalists, politicians, trade unionists, psychologists and art estimators. [A detailed overview of all the people involved in the graduation project is presented in section 1.3.2]

1.2.7 Research questions

Considering the current gap in the relationship between citizens and the political system, the following research questions and sub-questions have been formulated:

1. "What is causing the gap in the relationship between citizens and the political system?"

1.1 "how do citizens and the political system perceive their relationship?"

2. "What has been done so far to try to bridge the gap?"

2.1 "what was effective and what was not? Why?"

3. "What needs to be done to close the gap effectively?"

4. "Which kind of design can better support a bidirectional interaction between citizens and the political system?"

5. "Which are the design implications in the near and far future?"

Figure 6. Answers to the questions

Where to find the answers to the research questions?

- 1.....Chpt 6
- 1.1.....Chpt 5
- 2.....Chpt 4
- 2.1.....Chpt 4
- 3.....Chpt 5
- 4.....Chpt 9
- 5.....Chpt 9/10

1.3 Design methodology

In this section, it is presented and explained the methodology used to carry out this project as a result of the combination of two approaches: strategic design (double-double diamond) and SID (Social Implication Design).

1.3.1 A combination of two approaches

Considering that this thesis aims to create a strategic design for social innovation intervention, the methodology used is the result of the combination of a strategic approach (double diamond) Social Implication Design (SID). [Figure 7]

I Double diamond

The double diamond as a strategic design approach was chosen considering the exploratory nature of the research. Four main stages form it: Discover, Define, Develop and Deliver (Calabretta et al. 2018).

For major completeness, two minor stages have

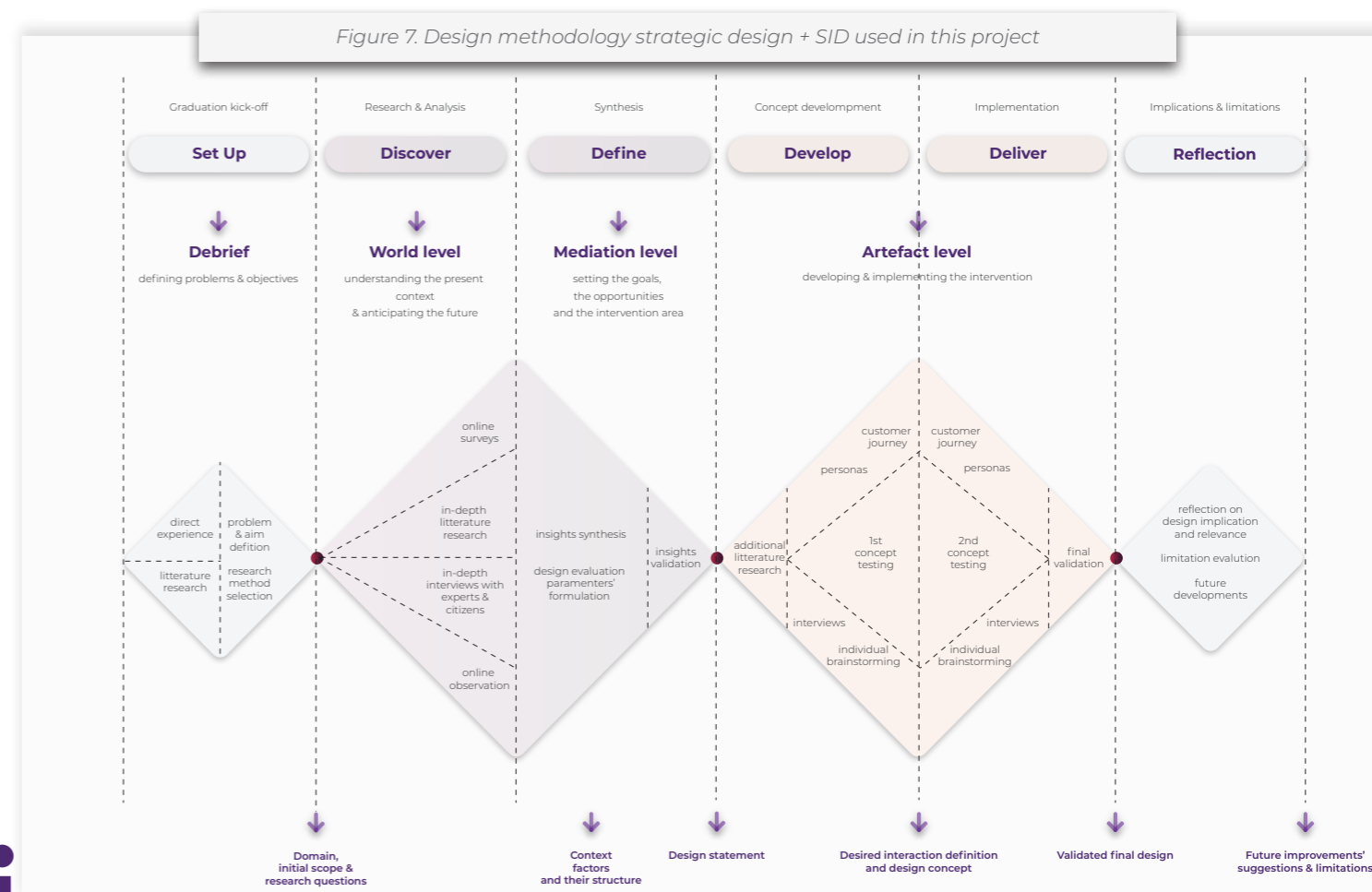
been added: an introductory one, Set up and a concluding one, Reflection. From a graphic point of view, the final result is a double-double diamond.

II SID

The Social Implication Design approach (SID) has been chosen as an integration to the double diamond since it provides important guidelines to understand how to create "a solid design proposal" capable of being beneficial both for individuals and for society as a whole (Tromp & Hekkert, 2018).

[See Annex A for extensive information about individual and societal dimension].

Four main stages form it: Debrief, Anticipating the Future, Goal Settings and Developing the interven-



tion.

1.3.2 The stages in detail

The 6 stages that form the methodology used in this project are introduced below.

I Set up

With the help of preliminary research, this stage aimed to transform a personal experience [see section 1.1.1] into a graduation project proposal. It led to the selection of research methodology and the definition of democracy as a domain where this thesis wants to intervene in bridging the gap in the relationship between citizens and the political system.

II Discover

This stage aimed to research and analyse the world level intended as a democratic context, to understand what has caused and continues to keep alive this relational gap between citizens and the political system. To understand the present context it has been used a combination of on-line surveys, in-depth literature research, in-depth interviews with citizens and experts and on-line observation.

It led to a rich data collection which provided a better understanding of the evolution of the problem over time.

III Define

The synthesis of the obtained insights led to the definition of:

- electoral democracies as context of investigation and several context factors (which are not likely to change in the short term) responsible for the development of different mid-sets and attitudes which keep the gap alive;
- design evaluation parameters fundamental for the

final design' development.

Thanks to the rearrangement of the factors according to a cause-and effect chain it has been possible to outline the context structure crucial to determine where, when and how a "desired social impact is best achieved".

In light of this information, it was finally possible to establish, at the mediation level, a precise area of intervention and goals which have been validated through interviews with citizens.

As a final act of this step, the design statements have been formulated.

IV Develop

This stage focuses on the development of a preliminary design concept using the design statement as a starting point for the ideation.

After additional literature research, the development and implementation of the artifact has been carried through several iterative rounds. With the auxilium of brainstorming (individual, with experts and citizens), in-depth interviews with citizens and experts, customer journey and persona has been possible to identify what is the desirable interaction and how to achieve it best. This iterative process allowed the initial concept to evolve into an almost definitive one.

V Deliver

Marks the delivery of the final design concept after a final validation round during which citizens and politicians have been interviewed.

The feedback received during these interviews then contributed to the drafting of the final reflections.

VI Reflection

As a final act, an in-depth reflection was made on the relevance of the final concept and the implications of its introduction in the real world, possible limitations and future developments of the project.

1.4 Limitations & challenges

Approaching a wicked problem in a novel way, as in the case of this graduation project implies a series of initial limitations and challenges to be aware of. Here below has been done a reflection upon some of them.

1.4.1 Limitations

I No official client or external partner involved.

As stated in the stakeholder's section [1.2.6], no official client or external partner have been involved, unlike most graduation projects.

Although aware that this choice could have backfired like a boomerang, it was outweighed by the motivation of creating a "sub-epartes" design without any branded (political or organizational) cues so to be ideally appealing to all individuals regardless of their beliefs.

This personal choice was extensively discussed with the graduation committee which recognized how the presence of a partner in the team could have influenced with its visions the development of the project in a certain direction and therefore compromised the realization of a "sub-partes" design.

II Pandemic: COVID-19

On the 9th of March, I had my kick-off meeting at the faculty. Starting from the 12th, the lock-down forced us to change our lives and stay home where we still are.

The entire project was carried out in a 12 square meter room where technology allowed, albeit not as planned, to continue researching and conducting interviews. However, I realize that the development of a socio-political topic needs that direct social interaction which unfortunately has failed with Covid-19.

Luckily, external events did not significantly impact the project, and some minor adjustments were discussed with the graduation committee.

1.4.2 Challenges

I Hazard or winning move?

Every time we bring design out of its natural context of application to approach and analyze a field in a novel way we are executing an experiment which

always contains a certain percentage of risk and a possible degree of failure. Although the methodologies used in this project (double diamond and SID) are proven practices, their combination and application to the socio-political context results to be entirely new and make this project a challenging experimental attempt.

Therefore, the scope has left open and flexible, perfectly matching the exploratory nature of the project. [See Annex B for the original graduation project proposal].

II Design beyond prejudice

Despite the usage of design as a mean to create a better world has been proposed by academic like Bauhaus and progressist as Buckminster Fuller Design, it is a profession still widely seen with scepticism and not as an opportunity to generate benefits in different disciplines. No matter all the successful projects done by designer together with remarkable companies, in the mind of many, designer is not a strategist, nor a mediator or researcher, but the one capable of making beautiful drawings. For this reason, it may be challenging to **recruit stakeholders and participants, mainly belonging to the political world.**

III Appreciation in the long run

Design application to the socio-political field is a relatively new practice. Therefore, it is necessary to consider the possibility that consistent results will not be generated immediately differently from the area in which design is the norm (e.g. marketing, product engineering or branding).

The challenge, in this case, would be to arouse the interest of political institutions they usually prefer rapid interventions in a short time rather than future-oriented ones.

Figure 8. Overview of people and professionals involved over the steps

	Set Up the debrief	Discover the context	Define and validate statement	Develop and validate concept	Deliver and validate final design	Reflection upon implementations
Citizens		13	5	9		8
Politicians		4			3	
Journalists		3				
Trade unionists		3				1
Other experts		1	2	3		
Academic		permanent team: graduation committee + graduating student				

V Zoom-in, zoom-out. Shifting between levels.

The socio-political one is a massive topic. Addressing the big picture might us forget about the details. It is one of the main challenges when tackling this kind of issues. Zoom too much out will enable of course

to have a better overview of what it is going on at a macro level, but on the other hand, it makes us overlook what happens at a micro-level. Therefore there is a high risk to feel overwhelmed by data and get lost between the different levels, which happened to me.

Chapter 01. KEY INSIGHTS & CONCLUSION

This Chapter has seen the transformation of a personal intention into a design graduation proposal. In brief:

1.1 The presence of a gap in the relationship between citizens and the political system is a phenomenon that knows no boundaries.

>> It is a global problem which affects governments and political institutions at different scales, nurtured by lack of dialogue and hierarchical distance perception, which leads a consistent amount of citizens to react or to become disinterested.

>> In the attempt to establish a dialogue those citizens who want their voice to count use instruments like press, social media and manifestation. However, they fail to generate a desirable impact.

>>This keeps on reinforcing the negative perception of the political system seen as an immutable entity static in its hierarchies held by an elite which is corrupted and detached from the reality of the ordinary citizens.

>> Here the **relevance** of this graduation project that wants to investigate how to bridge the gap in the relationship between citizens and the political system and realized a "sub-partes" design capable of improving their interaction dynamics.

1.2 Considering intervention opportunities and testing possibilities, democracy has been chosen as a domain where to have an impact.

>> Concerning democracy as domain the research scope, target, stakeholders and research questions have been defined.

1.3 The selected methodology results to be a novel combination of two design approaches: double-double diamond + SID.

>> It best supports the experimental and exploratory nature of the project and its aim to realize strategic intervention for social innovation.

1.4 Limitations and challenges related to approaching a wicked problem in a novel way have been preliminarily considered.

>> It is important to be aware that no official partner has been involved in this graduation considering the risk that it would have been influenced with its vision the pursuit of a specific socio-political direction.

>> Conclusion

An intervention to bridge the gap in the relationship between citizens and the political system needs to be realized as soon as possible.

As the initial research step, it is important to define when this gap has been originated and how it is evolved. It will be addressed in the next Chapter.



Democracy is messy, and it's hard.

It's never easy.

Robert Kennedy, JR

The New York Times

WE DON'T HAVE A VOICE

BAME

MINI SKIRTS FOREVER

Chapter 02

Introduction to democracy

This Chapter presents the historical analysis performed as the first step of the literature review. It aimed to understand how and when the relational gap between citizens and the political system was generated by retracing the main phases of the history of democracy from its origins to the present day. For this purpose, texts on history, anthropology, sociology, political science, political thought and communication, as well as democratic indexes, were in-depth consulted and compared.

Sections in this Chapter
2.1 "History of democracy"



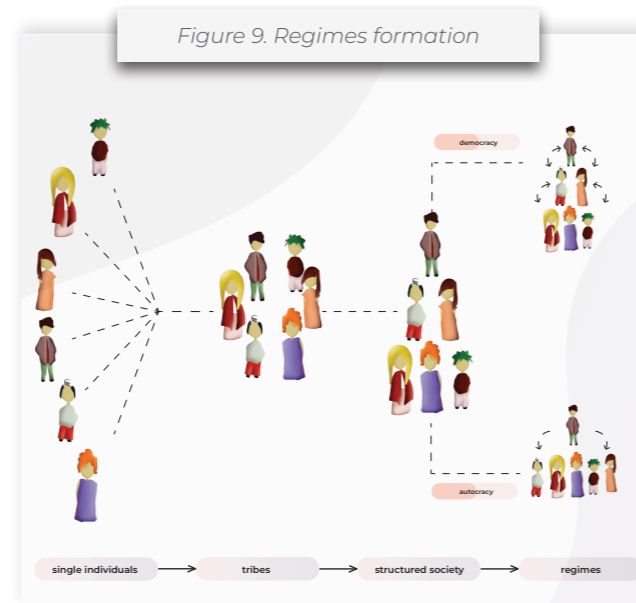
2.1 History of democracy

In this section is retraced the origin of the relational gap formation by providing an answer to the following questions,

- 2.1.1 "What is the origin of democracy?"
- 2.1.2 "How democracy has evolved?"
- 2.1.3 "How is democracy today?"

2.1.1 Origin of democracy

Democracy, intended as a **social product**, was originated when individuals on mutual agreement started gradually to organize in tribes (Lavi, 2015). The primary aim was to protect themselves from the ferocity of other individuals, thrive and live in peace. Tribes, which structure was initially linear and straightforward, evolved in increasingly complex and articulated societal form. (Ellwood 1909; Ronfeldt, 2006). To achieve excellent management, keep order and maintain stability power was conferred to some individuals upon the community (Rousseau, 1762). How power and freedom are managed led to the formation of various types of regimes, from **autocracies** to **democracies**. [Figure 9]



The first form of democracy witnessed dates back to Ancient Times, 508-507 BC to be precise, when in Athens the decision-making process of the *polis* (the Greek city-state), indicated as politics, was exercised by citizens (Cartwright, 2018). Hence, the origin of two important terms:

- **democracy**, from the Greek **δημοκρατία** [dēmokratīā] formed by *dēmos* "common people" and *kratos* "strength", literally meaning "rule by the people";
- **politics**, from the Greek **Πολιτικά**. [politiká], formed

In democratic societies government activity is delegated to those individuals who, elected by the population, have the responsibility to safeguard's individual rights through law enforcement.

To allow people to actively participate in political life, the political system (which varies from State to State) recognizes them, among all rights, the one of **voting**. Through the exercise of voting, whoever responds to certain citizenship requirements, is allowed to express his/her preference (legislative elections), agreement or disagreement (referendum). (Kelsen, 1955; Brezhnev, 1980; IDEA International 2012).



Figure 11. Florida, 2018. Democrati pacific protesters ask to Republicans where democracy is gone.

by *pòlis* "proper of the city-state" and *téchnē* "technique" literally "technique to administrate the city's affairs".

2.1.2 Evolution of democracy

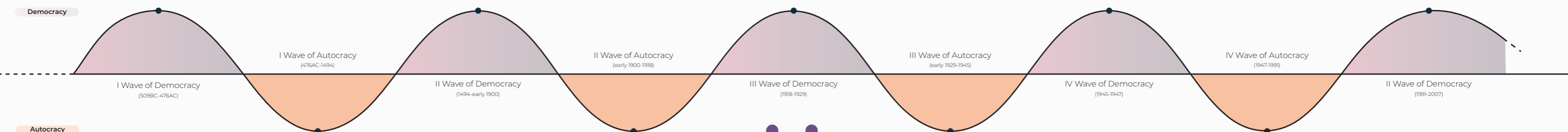
Over the millennia, democracy has gone through various phases because of alternating with autocracy (Künzi, 2019), resulting in five waves of democracy and five of autocracy. [Figure 10]

[See Annex C for extensive information about the evolution of democracy]

I Wave of democracy

Initiated by Greeks, it flourished during the Roman Republic (509BC-27AC) despite limited recognition of citizenship, **episodes of corruption** and the **perception that politics was an elitist prerogative**. This perception became a reality when the form of government turned into an oligarchy first and an Empire later (27AC-476AC) (Hattersley, 1930). Both were a **consequence of personal ambitions and needed to centralize power to speed up the strategic management of vast territories**.

Figure 10. Democracy and autocracy waves



When the Roman Empire collapsed the vast territorial **fragmentation** left was a fertile ground for the settlement of small political realities known as feudal regimes (MI Rostovtzeff, 1926). Their formation symbolically represented the beginning of Middle Ages (476-1494) and so **dark times for democracy**. Centuries of violence, oppression and social disparity (Cartwright, 2018).

II Wave of democracy

Slow democratization of Europe **restarted when parliamentary institutions were formed as a common platform to discuss issues common people had** (Payling, 2020). This new wave of democratization led to the formation of new societal classes and the drafting of written documents [e.g. Magna Charta Libertatum, England, 1215] for the legal recognition of fundamental human rights like freedom.

During the 17th, 18th and 19th Century, the **desire to preserve and extend rights** became the priority. To guarantee pluralism **political parties**, as a group of individuals sharing collective visions and ideals, were formed for the first time in England (1642-1651) and America (1792-1824) (MacCaffrey, 1965; Plumb, 1969; Parry et al., 1992). However, not all social achievements have occurred peacefully. Numerous **revolutions from the bottom**, like the French one (1789-1799) happened to obtain suffrage extensions and slavery abolition (Tocqueville, 2010).

III Wave of Democracy

The climate of optimism infused by the new social conquests gave a strong impetus to the new wave of democratization that interested Europe at the begin-

ning of the 20th Century (Stearns, 2001 pp. 413–801). The events of the World War I, ended in 1918, led to the formation of a new democratic system who suffered a strong seat-back as a consequence of an unprecedented **economic crisis** known as Great Depression (1929-1939) (Garraty, 1986). It invested North and South America, Europe, Asia and the colonies. The critical scenario was a fertile ground for the **populistic leaders** which, once gained power, led to the formation of totalitarian regimes as Nazism in Germany and Fascism in Italy (Martinelli, 2018).

IV Wave of Democracy

Once the conflicts linked to the II World War ended and a balance was reached, started again slow democratization of Europe with countries declaring their independence from external dominance. (Huntington, 1991)

V Wave of democracy

Democracy as we intend it today started growth massively in Central Europe and the Balkans after the end of the Cold War (1947-1991) (Csaky, 2020). In 1993 the formation of the EU gave rise to democracies to the total number of 120 at the stroke of the 21st Century (Freedom House, 2020; Repucci, 2020)

2.1.3 Democracy today

Despite local problems and conflicts, democratization reached its **maximum diffusion between 2005-2006** with **123 democracies worldwide** (Freedom House, 2015 & 2016; Repucci, 2020). However, the **growth trend stopped in 2007**. As a consequence of the return to totalitarian regimes, the number of democracies has progressively decreased until today to 115.

Data show how, for the 14th consecutive year, democracy is experiencing a crisis which implications gets worse year after year. (Kotler, 2016; Repucci, 2020).

I The massive uptake of the internet

From a historical point of view, a factor that undoubtedly influenced the development of democracy has been the **massive uptake of the internet** (Van Dijk et al., 2017). The invention of smartphones, apps and social media as exchange platforms have contributed to the exponential growth of web users worldwide. The little more than 2.6 million consumers in 1990 become 1.026 billion in 2005 and 4.54 billion in 2020. [Figure 12]

The uptake of internet and digital media has accelerated the possibility to **reach a more significant portion of the population** with political content penetration between 70-95% (ITU, 2017). With more people joining the discussion, according to Van Dijk et al. (2017) *“new ecology of cross-media relations of traditional and digital media”* emerged, which **changed the political communication** profoundly (Chadwick, 2013; Jenkins et al., 2013).

[This aspect will be in-depth analyzed and discussed in Chapter 5]

II Digital democracy

Becoming a common practice rapidly the usage of digital media gave started to the era of **Digital democracy** even if the bases for its correct functioning were missing (Van Dijk, 2013; Van Dijk et al. 2017). [Figure 13]. Therefore, the positive claims regarding the possibility to maximize citizens political experience through the usage of the internet were replaced by the evidence that having governance different from the outside world (Shahbaz & Funk, 2019), it had the power to become a division element. Consequently, a consistent amount of citizens, **gave up in participating and getting informed even if these are fundamental constitutional rights**.

This Chapter has seen a brief reconstruction for descriptive purposes of the fundamental stages in the history of democracy. In brief:

2.1.1 Democracy is a social product designed by individuals who have decided to organize themselves in communities where the decision-making process is shared.

>> Citizens, which have met the requirements stated in the constitution the Nation has, exercise the governmental authority through voting.

2.1.2 Democracy is also a social process in continuous evolution where moments of ups and downs alternate cyclically.

>> Up moments are provoked by: occasions and platforms created to discuss issues common people have; fundamental rights are recognized by law; pluralism is guaranteed; collaboration

>> Down moments are provoked by: episodes of corruption; perception of politics an elitist prerogative; politicians personal ambitions outweigh the common good; lack of explanations about strategic power choices; organizational fragmentation; power abuse; revolutions from the bottom go out of the control of their organizers; economic crisis.

2.1.3 Since 2007, democracy is experiencing a progressive crisis.

>> The massive advent of the internet with the introduction of a new cross-media ecology contributed to disrupting the political scenario changing the communication profoundly.

>> Digital democracy has gone from being a potential instrument to maximize citizen political experience to a division element due to the different governance.

>> Conclusion

The relationship between citizens and the political system has never been idyllic. Since the origin of the democracy itself, there have always been factors that have started to crack the relationship (e.g. corruption and elitism). However, since these factors strongly depend on the context from which they are detected, it is necessary to narrow down the broad democratic domain to a specific context. In the next Chapter is explained why electoral democracies have been selected as a context for further explorations.

Chapter 02. KEY INSIGHTS & CONCLUSION

Figure 12. Internet uptake timeline

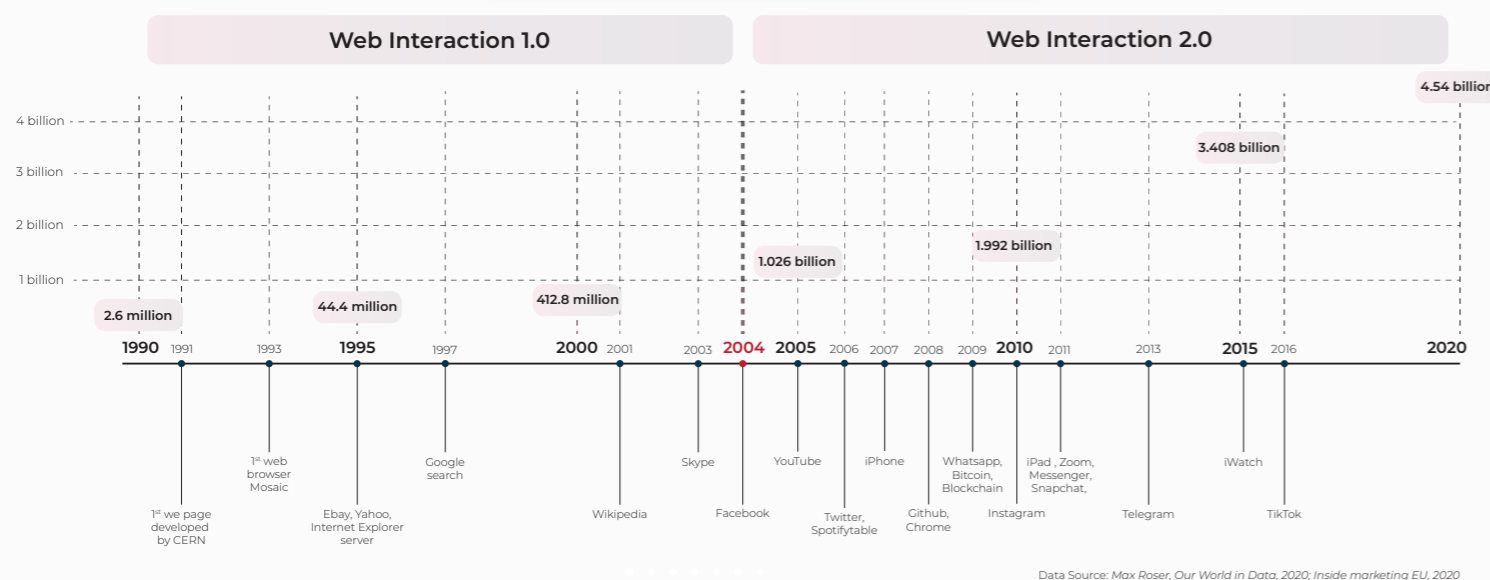
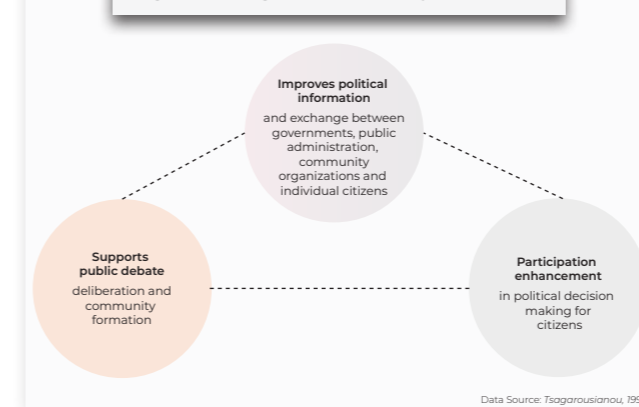


Figure 13. Digital democracy manifesto



Chapter 03

Context definition

In this Chapter is presented how the investigation domain is restricted to a very specific context which is that of representative democracy. The choice was made after comparing multiple scientific papers and democratic indices in light of the possibilities of intervention and implementation.

Sections in this Chapter

3.1 "From domain to context"



3.1 From domain to context

In this section, the different types of democratic regimes are compared until representative democracies with a multi-party system as a specific context for the conduction of further research are selected.

Considering that to generate desirable outcomes, according to Van Dijk (2017) it is crucial "to specify what type of democracy is under investigation" it is necessary to narrow down the investigation domain to a specific context.

In Chapter 2 has been described how in democratic regimes citizens exercise the governmental authority through voting (Kelsen, 1955; Brezhnev, 1980; IDEA International 2012) as established by the constitution (Frederick, 1970).

Despite specific peculiarities, a government to be recognized as democratic needs to guarantee at least four key principles: a political system to choose the government through fair elections; active participation of citizens; warrantee of human rights and individual freedom; law regulation to make their application equal to all. (Diamond, 2004)

The lack of one of them jeopardizes the stability of the whole democratic structure.

In fact, despite the concept of democracy is associated with the one of freedom, not all democracies are equally free (Freedom House, 2020).

3.1.1 Electoral democracies

The level of democratic freedom of a nation is measured and reported by various indexes.

Among the most authoritative ones, there is Freedom House which annually ranks states according to the political right and civil liberties in three ranges: free, partially free and un-free. (Partially free and un-free countries are not objects of this thesis). [See Annex D for extensive information about how the various scores are assigned and countries ranked].

The countries labelled as free are identified as electoral democracies since "have met certain minimum standards for political rights and civil liberties" (Freedom House, 2020).

I Direct & indirect democracies

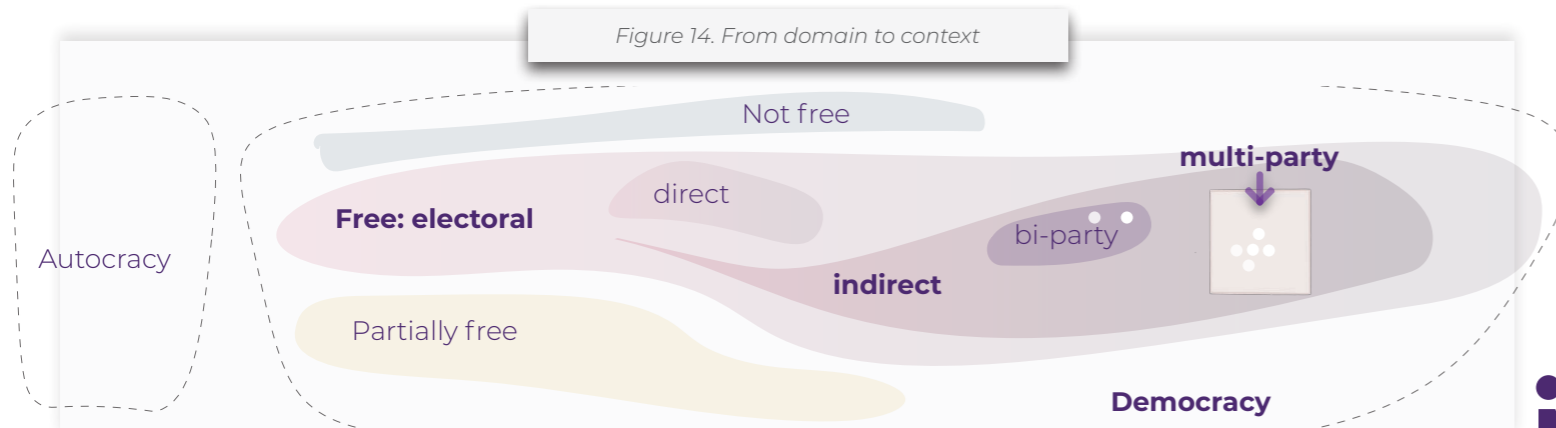
Electoral democracies can be grouped in two leading families: direct, when people directly vote policies (e.g. Switzerland) and indirect when they elect representatives to do so (e.g. The Netherlands & Italy) (Budge, 2001).

II Bi-party & multi-party systems

Indirect forms, also called representative democracies, can be further distinguished according to their party system: bi-party or multi-party.

This classification for Mair (2001) reflects a clear distinction between almost stable "consensual democracy" as the US (bi-party) and "more unstable or conflictual democracies" like Italy, Weimar in Germany and the Fourth Republic in France (multi-party).

Figure 14. From domain to context



3.1.2 Multi-party democracies

Although a multi-party reality is better capable of guaranteeing pluralism as "interpretation of social diversity" (Yumatle, 2015) and challenge power from multiple perspectives, at the same time for Klüver and Spoon (2015,) it is a very fragile ecosystem. This because for governing at national levels, and make their voice count, parties need to reorganize themselves into coalitions.

How parties group, as revealed in the study by Klüver and Spoon (2015), directly affects power balance, voter's responsiveness and subsequent political participation.

3.1.3 Context selection

Based on the collected insights, it appears clear how major relational problems between citizens and the political system are likely to happen in multi-party systems. Considering the aim of this graduation project (see section 1.2.3), these types of electoral democracies offer a promising intervention context on which focus further research and test the final design concept in later stages.

Despite the selected context concerns multi-party electoral democracies it is not excluded the possibility that the final design concept will also be suitable for bi-party realities. Furthermore, it is reserved the possibility to use in the next Chapters UK and USA as illustrative examples for the introduction of specific context factors.

KLÜVER & SPOON

As analysed by Klüver and Spoon (2015) on a cluster of 55 political parties, voters easily feel betrayed in multi-party systems. Typically it happens that they have expressed their preference for a political party because of the attention reserved during electoral campaign to a specific issue. However, often happens that "due to the need to compromise and coordinate disagreement over the issues, to avoid intra-cabinet conflicts [...] coalition parties are less responsive to the voters' issue priorities". Whereby, prioritizing the dialogue between political leaders in an attempt to maintain balance the bound between voters and parties is weakened. (Dalton et al., 2011; Lawson, 2005).

In this chapter has been discussed which one of the various democratic regimes would be the best context to carry out the project.

In brief:

3.1.1 Although few fundamental principles are enough to define a regime as democratic, not all democracies are the same.

>> The ones generally identifies as free are the electoral democracies.

>> Indirect forms of democracy are also defined as representative democracies which can be further grouped in bi-party or multi-party systems.

3.1.2 Multi-party democracies offer major intervention opportunities and therefore are selected as context.

>> Despite capable of better guaranteeing pluralism and challenge power from different perspectives are a fragile ecosystem since to govern parties need to reorganize themselves into coalitions.

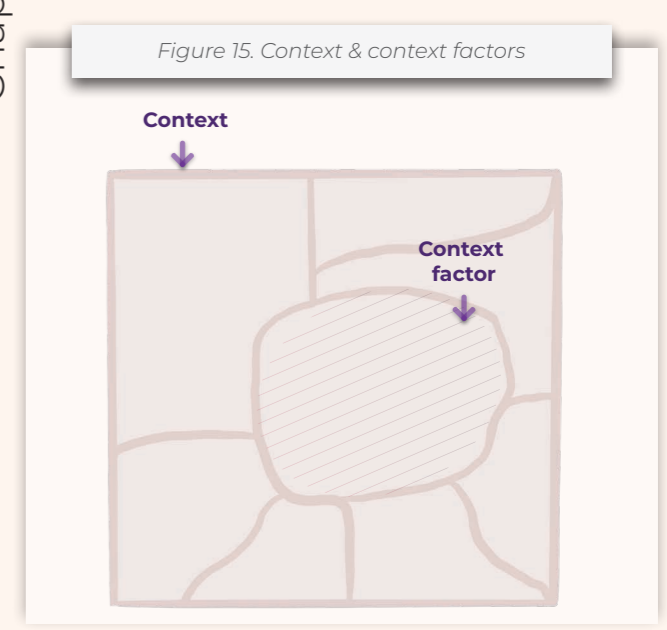
>> How parties decide to group has an effect on power balance, voter's responsiveness and so political participation.

>> Conclusion

Electoral democracies with multi-party systems are piked as context of reference from here onward. In the next Chapter are described the factors which have been identified as responsible of nurturing the gap in the relationship between citizens and the political system.

Chapter 03. KEY INSIGHTS & CONCLUSION

Figure 15. Context & context factors



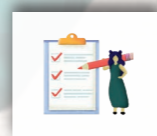
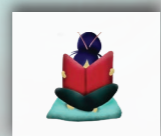
Chapter 04

Exploring the context

After a brief introduction about what context factors are, the ones identified as responsible for nurturing the relational gap between citizens and the political system in electoral democracies are discussed in details. Their definition has been possible thanks to a combination of literature research, expert interviews, on-line surveys and observations. Furthermore, it is explained how despite those factors describe the current scenario they are assumed valid also for the description of the future for which this thesis aims to design for.

Sections in this Chapter

- 4.1 "Context factors"
- 4.2 "Misrespect of democratic principles and lack of regulations"
- 4.3 "Economic and financial crisis leverage strategies"
- 4.4 "Politics: a field of manipulation"
- 4.5 "Branded politics"
- 4.6 "Cross-media ecology usage"
- 4.7 "Negative political perception"
- 4.8 "Evolving political attitude"
- 4.9 "Initiatives to turn the tide"



Note 1: considering the richness of information which characterize every section of this Chapter a list of key insights is reported at the end of each one in order to guide the reader. At the end of the Chapter will be presented a brief recap and a conclusion.

Note 2: at this stage it has been looked electoral democracies with multi-party system in broad without any particular criteria in mind. The aim was to understand which are the average communitarian context factors so to generate a model which could be potentially applied to multiple nations.

4.1 Context factors

In this section is briefly explained what a context factors is and which is its role.

4.1.1 Introduction

Context factors are described by Tromp & Hekkert (2018) as elements capable of perfectly portrait individual aspects of the scenario for which we are designing for.

Generally, since the intended scenario is a future one, to make sharper assumptions, a distinction is made between different types of factors: trend, development, state and principle.

Their definition is provided below directly citing extracts from the book "Designing for Society" (Tromp & Hekkert, 2018).

I Trend

"A trend refers to shared experiences, beliefs and behaviours that are in flux" and their signal varies in intensity from strong to weak.

II Development

"A biological, political, technological or demographic" change which characterizes the world around us.

III State

"A static description of the context as it is now, and fro which the designer does not expect change in the near future".

IV Principle

"Laws (e.g. physics and mathematics) that govern human life" and are used as principles to understand phenomena.

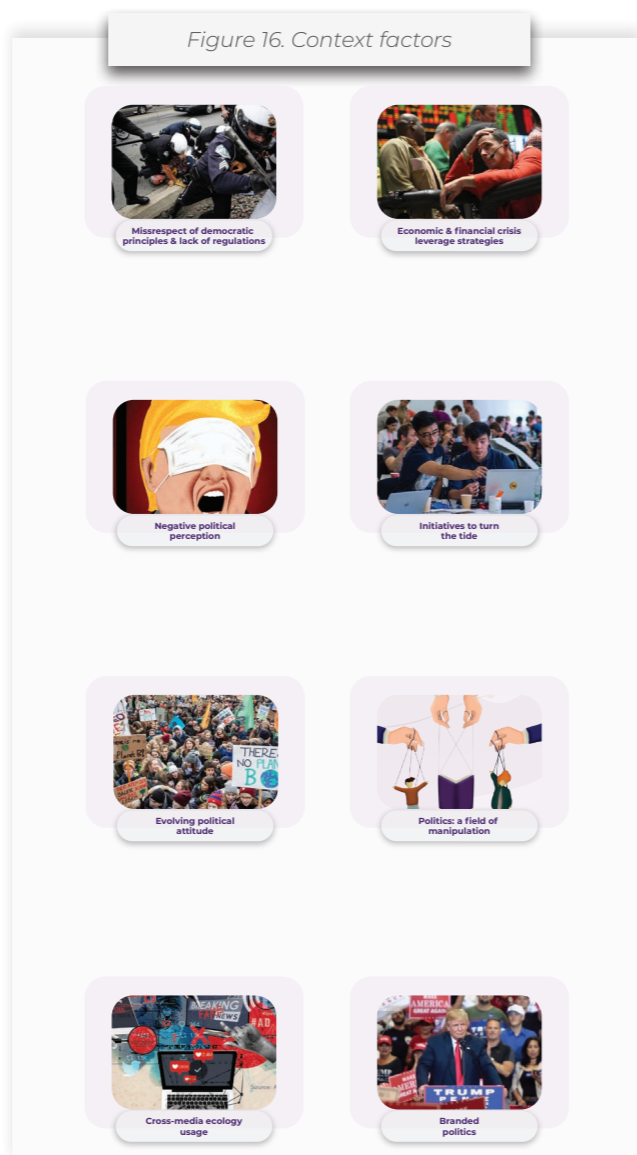
V Preliminary conclusion

As stated at the end of Chapter 1, it is necessary to take actions as soon as possible to bridge the relational gap between citizens and the political system. Therefore, for what concerns this thesis has been **chosen to treat all context factors as "states"**. The choice, weighted with the graduation committee, was considered as pertinent since the factors presented in the following pages are unlikely to be sus-

ceptible to change over (at least) the next 5 years.

4.1.2 Context factors preview

Here below, it is presented an overview of the main context factors that have been identified and presented on the next pages. [Figure 16] How they are linked and even interconnected will be discussed in Chapter 6 in which the context structure is defined.



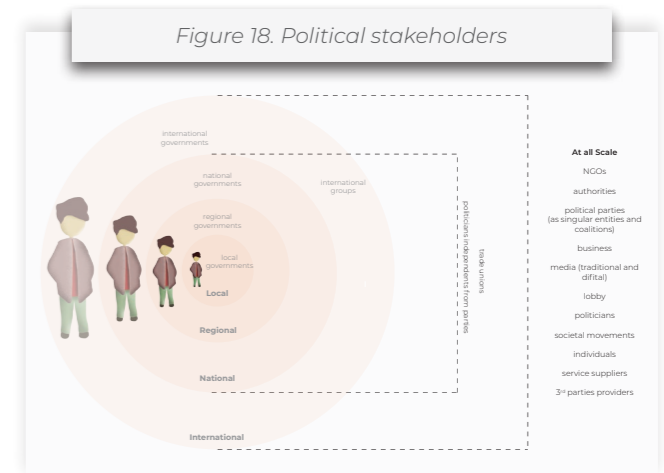
4.2 Missrespect of democratic principles & lack of regulations

As stated in Chapter 3, every democracy is funded at least upon 4 main principles from which democratic values are derived (Diamond, 2014). [Figure 17] However, in the current scenario, these principles are put under assault by the behave of both citizens and politicians jointly to a lack of effective regulations. Each fundamental principles is treated in a dedicated paragraph.

4.2.1 Electoral fairness

There are four primary levels at which political institutions operate: **local** (municipality), **regional** (region, state), **national** (state or confederation), **international**. Common to all, there is the usage of the electoral campaign as a medium to promote issues and win voters support (Biscoe & Goff, 2016; Aceproject, 2020). Campaigns are just one of the phases of the **electoral cycle** as the official channel to call citizens to participate through voting periodically. [See Annex E for extensive information about the traditional electoral cycle phases]

The traditional distinction among electoral phases distributed on three periods (pre-election period; electoral period; post-election period) remain such only on paper. This because "digital disruption has hit the political establishment" (Lamper and Ceta, 2018) profoundly **changing timing, language and channels** (Pedersen, 2001; Delwit, 2011; Woolley & Howard,

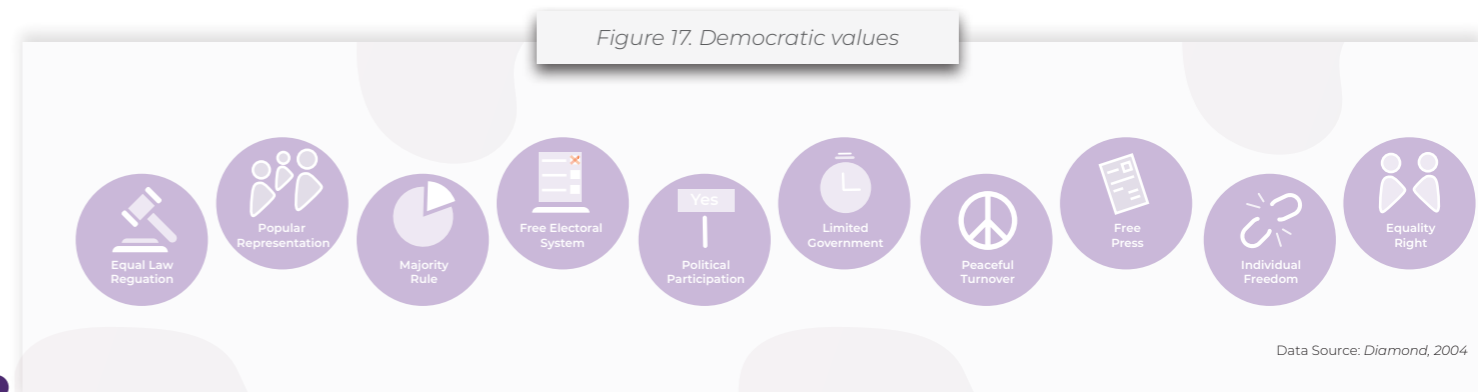


2016).

Especially now through **cross-media ecology** theorized by Van Dijk et al. (2017), it is performed **perennial propaganda** where contents are continuously consumed and created by an increasing amount of stakeholders and **form different public opinions** [Figure 18].

Moreover, the lack of clear regulations is exploited to subtle drive entire electoral campaigns through **media interference** (e.g. India and Brazil) (Lamper and Ceta, 2018; Freedom House, 2020).

[See Annex F for examples of electoral interference] As a consequence, it has become **tough to check the realised information's quality and electoral fairness**.



Data Source: Diamond, 2004



4.2.2 Political Participation

Cassese (2018), Italian academic and jurist, supports how we need to **get used to an increasingly less participated democracies** despite according to Schattschneider (1960), voting a right and duty “*which it is a part of the social condition of the people*”. In fact, despite more citizens are eligible to vote compared to two centuries ago, less are willing to do so. Among the causes of the reduction in political participation, various studies identify:

- **pursuit of truth discouraged by the lack of quality information** (Reporters Without Borders, 2019);
- **political parties volatility** (Crabtree & Golder, 2017);
- **increase in alternative forms of political participation beyond voting** (Norris, 2012).

[See Annex D for extensive data about political participation extension and Annex G for turnouts data]

Figure 19. Los Angeles, 2020. One of the numerous episodes of police brutality.
Source: International Business Times



4.2.3 Human Rights & Individual Freedom

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1948 supports the assumption that “*freedom for all people is best achieved in liberal democratic societies*”. However, as added by Scruton, British globally estimated philosopher, to make this concept reality and **guarantee personal and political freedom, it is required the support of civil societal institutions**.

The truth that emerges in the current context is that often the institutions that should guarantee an effective governmental administration by protecting the above-mentioned rights are the first to infringe

them. Events like the police brutality regarding the case of George Floyd (2020) or Stefano Cucchi (2009), or politicians electoral interference (pp. 39) do nothing but **decrease the degree of individual freedom** (Repucci, 2020) **and increase the distance took by citizens** from politics.

This phenomenon results mirrored in the data displayed by the various democratic indexes which report an overall decay in the level of democratization of nations. [See Annex D and G for an extensive overview of the democracy and human rights decline through data]

4.2.4 Law Regulation

With **democratic principles and pluralism “under assault”** as analysed by Repucci, (2020) an increasing number of **minorities** (religious and ethnic) reported the **abuse from governments** which remained democratic only in paper. Political elites, to preserve current assets, introduce **new restrictions and law enforcement** to the point of undermining those democratic principles which they should instead guarantee. [See Annex G]

Among the uncountable examples, there is India which, through a series of policies, have been abrogated rights for increasing segments of Muslim populations and America in which the racism regarding black people has culminated with several murders (e.g. Eric Garner-2014, Alton Sterling-2016, Stephon Clark, 2018, Breonna Taylor 2020)

In response to those practices, an **increasing amount of protest is taking place worldwide** (Norris, 2012; Krastev, 2014).

Section 4.2. KEY INSIGHTS

- >> Lack of regulations and respect of the norm from institutions harms individual freedom and human rights. Consequently, the distance took by citizens from institutions undermines the legitimacy of governmental administrations.
- >> The distance took by citizens is caused by three main factors: the pursuit of truth discourage by lack of quality information; political parties volatility; increase in alternative forms of political participation.
- >> An increasing amount of protest is taking place worldwide to aware the public opinion regarding politicians misconduct.



4.3 Economic & financial crisis leverage strategies

Economic and governmental stability has always been linked (Aristotle; McCormack, 2012). Despite “*economy should not be tied to ideology, [...] economic choices can only be political choices*” (Tria, 2019). In fact, since the economy of a country is part of public affairs, it is one of the duties of politics to administrate it through the appropriate minister. For this reason, an **economic recession is always accompanied by political strains** (McCormack, 2012). Examples are the Great Depression (1929-1939), The Great Recession (2007-2008), Stock Market Crash (2020-present). [See Annex I for more details]

Figure 20. Crash in the stock market.
Image courtesy of Business Insider.



4.3.1 Electorate Polarization and Change in Political Competition

During economic crisis differences among the various citizens' segmentation are maximized, leading to an **unbalanced society** (Coveney et al., 2016). People empirically pace the blame to the ruling administration (Bellucci, 2014) which, despite manoeuvres to restore stability and preserve social order often becomes “*weaker, while opposition coalitions grew stronger*” (Sufi, 2016). In fact, in what Edsal

(2012) describes as a “*dog-eat-dog political competition*” oppositions who wants to exploit the severity of the situation to their favour (Kriesi & Hutter, 2019) fuel public hanger and radicalize electorate (Poli, 2016) through the practice of **populism**. [See Annex I for more details]

It is in this scenario that many movements as Podemos in Spain, Movimento 5 Stelle in Italy, Front National in France gained increasing power and changed political balances at all institutional levels. Their success resides in the capability of offering **recognizable storylines of what is happening and where society is heading**” (Lamper & Ceta, 2018) and in the **promise to turn popular will into reality** (Molloy, BBC 2018).

However, as history teaches, the risk that populism, especially from right parties, evolves into autocracies is more robust in Europe. It happened last century after the First World War, and it happened in March 2020, when at the beginning of the Corona emergency Orban, the Hungarian prime minister, has acquired full powers.

Section 4.3. KEY INSIGHTS

- >> Economical crisis are always accompanied by political strains, and differences within society are maximized.
- >> While opposition, especially through the usage of populism as strategy try to polarize the electorate further to win power, the ruling class tries to maintain societal balance through emergency manoeuvres.
- >> Populism easily gains powers thanks to the usage of storytelling easy to follow and the promise to transform into reality the popular will.
- >> Governments are trusted when the financial and organizational machine it is seen to work properly.

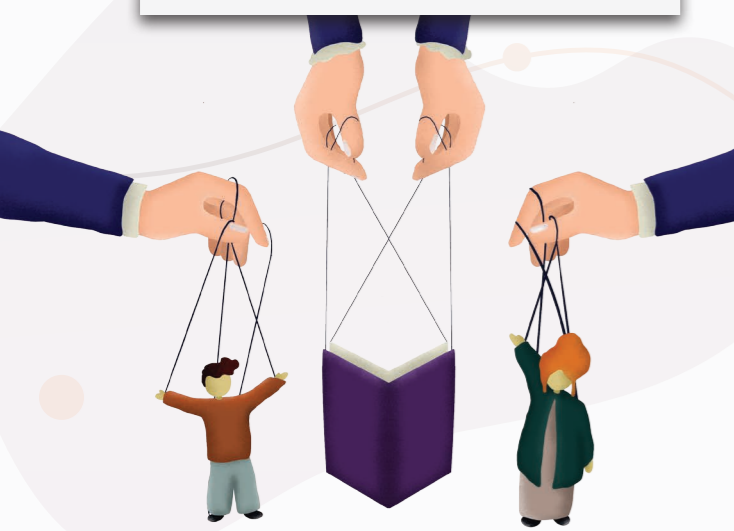


4.4 Politics: a field of manipulation

Strategies are not applied by politicians only during a critical situation but are increasingly used as a common practice of coercive interference into citizens' lives (Whitfield, 2020) As emerged from literature, the most used manipulative strategies by politicians to gain or defend status can be grouped in:

- **psychological strategies**, about the manipulation of people perception and beliefs;
- **informational strategies**, based on the coordinated usage of hyper-partisan commentators via different stakeholders and apparatus;
- **technical strategies**, related to corruption, information restriction and monitoring;

Figure 21. Illustration about manipulation



- **legal strategies**, individual arrest for political expression. Those can be actuated through different channels, both digital and non. [Figure 22]

4.4.1 Psychological strategies

The psychological tactic to leverage consent is based on **storylines easy to follow** and **to relate**. Their primary aim, according to Adam Curtis (2004; 2016), is to create the illusion of a bond among individuals as well as an hypernormal reality to **overcome crisis or**

hide significant problems.

Examples of psychological strategies are: **divide et impera, power of nightmares, the regime of terror, common enemies, theatricalization, alienation and agnosticism, religion and mythology.**

[See Annex L for a detailed description of each psychological strategy]

Many of these practices can be recognized in the wider one of **populism**.

4.4.2 Informational strategies

Over the past decade's politicians, who with their claims wanted to reach the most massive audience possible, have developed the awareness that **controlling the channels through which people interact with politics is the key to engineering consent around their persona** (Gramsci; De Grazia, 2002).

From Nazi and Fascist controlling radio and newspaper to Prime ministers owning television broadcasters (like Berlusconi with Mediaset), we have reached the current scenario where the majority of politicians abuse social media to convey their version of events (Woolley & Howard, 2019).

Therefore mass media, both traditional and digital, from a liberating resource to voice opinion turned to be an illiberal means to **distort reality, drive entire elections and affects people life's quality**. (Van Dijk, 2017; Freedom of the Net, 2019; Woolley & Howard, 2019).

Especially now in the Digital Era (Calabretta & Kleinsman, 2017) *"the manipulation of public opinion over social media platforms has emerged as a critical threat to public life"* (Bradshaw & Howard, 2018).

Examples of informational strategies are: **propaganda, creation of "filter bubble", fake news distribution, trolls, bots usage**. [See Annex L for a detailed description of each informational strategy]

The copresence of all those practices *"algorithms, automation and human curation"* give lives to what Bradshaw & Howard (2018) have defined as **computational propaganda**.

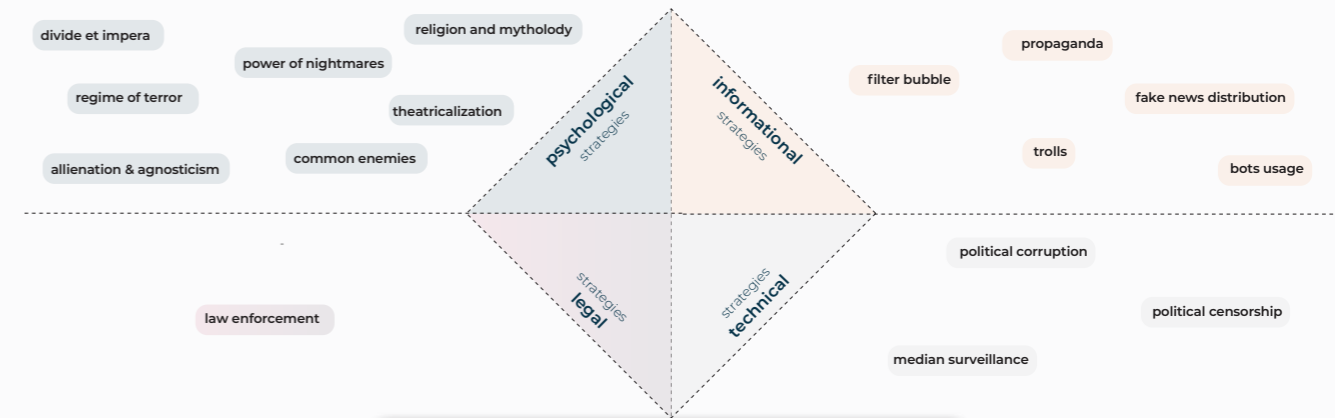


Figure 22. Manipulation strategies overview

4.4.3 Technical strategies

To control information, channels and actors, the most accepted practices are **political corruption, political censorship and media surveillance**.

I Political corruption

Used worldwide by the political system, since the Classic Era, can happen at different governmental scales with different forms (from bribery to embezzlement) (Elliott, 1950). Politicians use it as a **"do ut des practice"** through which concessions are offered in exchange for something belonging to personal purposes (Heidenheimer & Johnston, 2001).

II Political censorship and media surveillance

The practice of censorship, as reported by Abrahms (2001), is based on the notion that *"speech matters"* till the point that people can *"be persuaded by it, moved by it, spurred to action by it"*. To **discourage individual initiatives**, politicians tend to use censorship to deprive journalists of their role of mediator and citizens from a reliable source of information.

Censorship is subtle and challenging to be identified, especially on digital channels, since masked by politicians with what Abrahms (2001) defined as code words like *"Responsibility [...] accountability [...] values [...] stability [...] public morals"* generally enclosed under the **"politically correct"**.

In the attempt to discover it, various forms of web and media surveillance are undertaken (Shahbaz & Funk, 2019). However, despite the good intentions, instead of protecting the quality of information, social media surveillance ends up with **eroding fundamental rights**. It violates privacy, enables discrimination, threatens migrants' rights, restricts free expression, discourages freedom of association, disrupts freedom of assembly, undermines due process. (Van Dijk, 2017; Bradshaw & How

4.4.4 Legal strategies

In some cases, to ensure the respect of norms, regulation and restrictions, Governments use legal strategies in the form of **law enforcement**. As a consequence *"citations are issued, arrests are made, and force is employed [...] as punishment to enforce obedience"* (Roufa, 2019). Who does not comply with the law is considered as a criminal, no matter the motivation behind his/her actions.

That is how journalists, who violate censorship for the sake of knowledge are *"harassed, detained, fined and imprisoned for their reporting"* (Reporters Without Borders; The Committee to Protect Journalists; the International Press Institute; IFEX (2020). That is how politicians like Trump in the name of *"law and order"* to quell protests have *"considered using military 'tanks' and ordered helicopters to blast protesters with their downdraft"* (Ruiz, Daily Mail, 2020).

Section 4.4. KEY INSIGHTS

- >> Strategies are not only used during emergencies, but as common practices of coercive interference into citizens' life. However, as collateral effects, they lead to poor decision making harmful outcomes for society as a whole.
- >> Psychological strategies create the illusion of a bond among individuals through the usage of easy to follow stories.
- >> Informational strategies, applied to the channels people use as a source of information, can distort reality to the point of not distinguish true and fake.
- >> Technical strategies have the power to directing public opinion and eroding fundamental rights.
- >> Legal strategies, in the form of law enforcement, aim to discourage all initiative that goes in a different direction of the one of the ruling power.



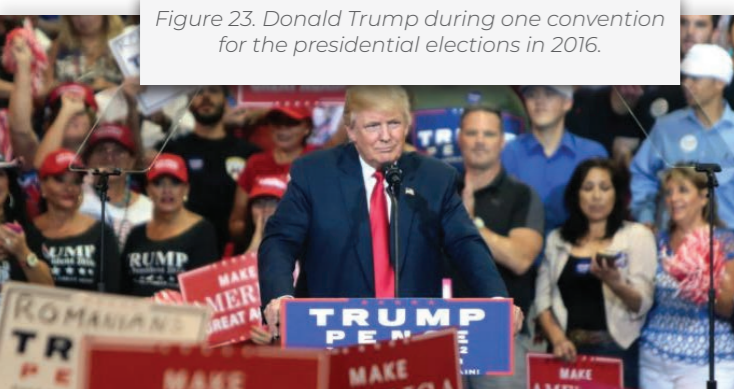
4.5 Branded politics

To understand why and how politics has become the branded product we know today, and citizens their consumers, we have to make a step back to the beginning of 900' when Bernays, the father of modern advertising, recognized how group psychology could be used for political achievement. Applying strategic design practices (previously used to market products) to a mixture of psychological and informational cues, he conceived **propaganda** as a medium to popularize political parties' agenda.

4.5.1 Propaganda

Propaganda it is used to showcase political brands intended as “set of expectations, memories, stories, and relationships” (Godin, 2019) and bring them to

Figure 23. Donald Trump during one convention for the presidential elections in 2016.



life through “symbols, stories and experiences” as well as logos, slogans and merchandising. Around those ideological symbols, following the “consciousness of kind” (Gusfield, 1978) people, who believe in the same things, feeling reciprocal connection (Muniz and O’Guinn, 2001) build communities.

I Archetypes

Archetypes as the symbolic stylization of essential human traits are one of the most potent instruments through which entire campaigns are branded to appeal to people (Lampert & Ceta, 2018). Archetypes, represent **subconscious frame which people use to develop stories capable of making sense of the world**. Politicians, who are aware of it, increasingly

use them to engage people and engineering consent toward their figure (Blotz, 2016). Examples of archetypes are the Rebel (used by Donald Trump & Salvini) or the Ruler (used by Hillary Clinton & Merkel).

4.5.2 Hyperpartisanship

The objectives of branding are not only campaigns but even ideas and initiatives. As never before in this historical period, politics is the hostage of party ideologies to the point of becoming an hypernormal disease (Curtis, 2016; Hankins, 2020).

The hyperpartisanship of political action has four main adverse effects:

- **makes political parties discuss opinions rather than facts**, as can be empirically appreciated;
- **motivates politicians to defend their parties proposal** based on “escalation of commitment” rather than feasibility (Barry, 1997);
- **laws are approved or repealed based on who has proposed it** rather than on effectiveness (Lampert & Ceta, 2018);
- **prevents politicians from recognizing the good done by others** (Guttman & Thompson, 2013).

Example is what happened to Obama health care reform known as **Obamacare**. Once propose none of the Republicans voted for it and as soon as Trump gets to the White House tried to repeal it in 2017 and 2020 (Repubblica, 2020). Who pays the price of those behaviours is society as a whole (Lampert & Ceta, 2018).

KEY INSIGHTS

>> Design is used in politics to brand campaigns and model archetypes through which people subconsciously frame to develop stories capable of making sense of the world.

>> When ideas and initiatives result branded hyperpartisanship is created, leading to poor decision-making. For instance, it dangerously lead to not recognize the good done by other and discard projects despite their positive value.

Section 4.5



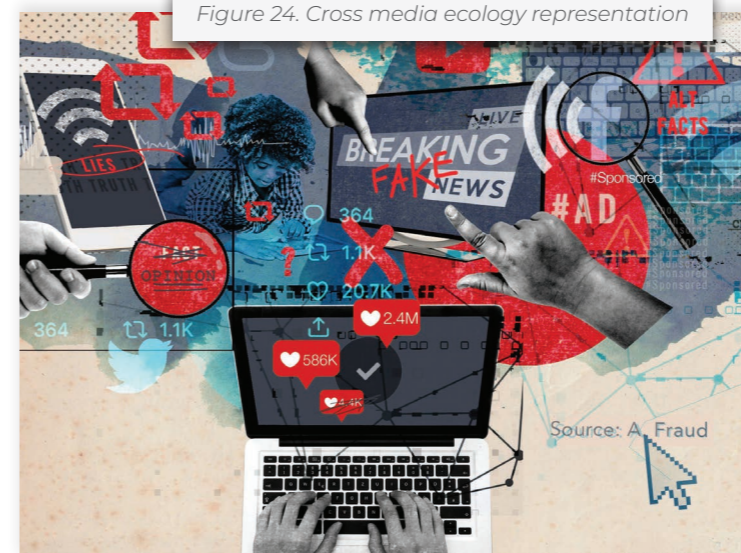
4.6 Cross-media ecology usage

People have changed a lot their lifestyle in the past decades (Both, 2019). Globalization and digitalization have accelerated the rhythm of everyday life, redefining both the global and the self context (Morsello, 2016).

With the **Internet of Things and Industry 4.0**, everything that was analogical is gradually shifting to digital through the creation of a “digital twin”. As can be empirically appreciated we have now newspapers both on paper and digital, advertising and propaganda on billboard and online, as well as encyclopedias can be consulted in libraries and through browsers.

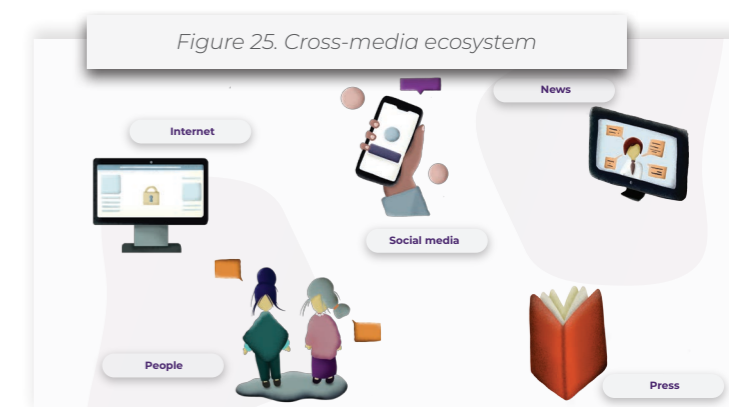
[See Annex M for extensive information about the future mega and macro technological trends]

Figure 24. Cross media ecology representation



Internet which has become an “integral component of our daily and working lives” (TrendExplorer, 2020) has led to the creation of a **new cross-media ecology** (Van Dijk et al. 2017) where, using social media as organizational mean, 3.8 billions of individuals are comprehensively connected **sharing and consuming data** retrieved from face to face exchange and traditional media. [Figure 25]

In this scenario, traditional media have faded into the background. Their role and the media journalist profession have been strongly dimensioned in terms of



timing, language and channels (Pedersen, 2001; Delwit, 2011; Woolley & Howard, 2016) leading the entire sector experiencing a deep crisis.

In the attempt to survive and “further relinquishing their influence on public opinion” (TrenExplorer, 2020) in recent years almost all important newspapers have opened accounts on free social platforms and changed their style(e.g. CNN, BBC, Financial Times have Facebook and Instagram pages).

I Experts interviews for deepening

To better appreciate the digital transition impact on the cross-media ecology (from here on indicated as media), three professional journalists (called as Media-1, Media-2 and Media-3) have been interviewed. The used research format was in-depth semistructured interviews with memos writing in parallel for reacher data. [See Annex U for sampling strategy, respondents information, interview guide, consent form and cluster overview]

The aim was to understand:

- the complex dynamics which interest the cross-media ecosystem used by billions of people every day;
- how the informational role of media has evolved;
- how their content creation has changed and which is the impact on the relationship between citizens and the political system.

The collected knowledge is presented in the next pages.

Note: further insights from these interviews will be reported in Chapter 5.



Figure 26. Satirical cartoon about media (unknown)

4.6.1 Self-mediation

The interviewed journalists agreed in recognizing their profession the mediation expertise. Their role, as stated by Media-2 is to “mediate the political message [...] and the complexity around it” make it digestible for the average citizen as well as being the “watch-dog of the public opinion” who controls and reports how institutions are functioning [Media-3]. However, they stated how their role is changing a lot since editorial dictact made them move to the digital format so to meet people needs.

I Positive aspects

Participants recognize how digital means and social media enabled to expand the number of people who can join the discussion. Bypass geographical and hierarchical distance has been recognized as a positive element capable of fostering inclusivity and democratization of the information.

II Negative aspects

What Media-2 does not consider positive is the self-mediation idea infused by the very nature of social media. Since there is **no mediation**, no filtering system news can directly reach people and, at the same time, **individuals think they can acquire the role of journalists** and talk about topics which require minimum expertise.

In this scenario, as explained by Media-3, politicians

who have understood that social media give the power to establish “a direct contact, almost populist, with the public opinion” use them to invite people to freely react and avoid as much as possible the critical meditation of journalist or whoever can question their position.

However, as counter effect, according to Media-3, no critical mediation makes people “suffer the information”. In fact, the lack of shared underlying truth and the diversity of speculative opinions makes it difficult to distinguish between authoritative information and distorted ones to the point that, as added by Media-2 “fake news are generated even involuntary”.

This phenomenon, according to Media-1, can be seen as a form of “dis-mediation” of concept and actions which can drive the public opinion in the wrong direction.

Consequently, media experts, as agreed by the interviewed ones, feel **disempowered from their role of being the meeting point in the socio-political dialogue**.

4.6.2 Snack news

With digitalization and social media uptake also the way of making information changed a lot. As highlighted by Media-3 social media triggered an enormous **shift in terms of communicational parameters** (timing, language and format) making information to acquire the appearance of “snack news”

which people can autonomously consume through their smartphone. This because, as remarked by Media-2, all kind of information needed to be re-designed to fit the new social format so to be instantly consumed and digested by the users, like snacks.

Following the new mantra according to which “news that today worth a hashtag tomorrow has no value”, all communication required to be “drained, simplified, often trivialized” as added by Media-3. It is the reason why currently the primary qualities which media content seek are “sharpness, shortness”. When concepts are hard to articulate, “and avoid that are left behind” [Media-1] images and short videos are then used as common practice for further simplification and fit the average user attention, which is around **30 seconds**.

This reduction in the attention span, which science recognizes as the “goldfish effect” is one of the main deficits induced by social media themselves due to their **massive informational turnover**. About it, Media-3 recognized how social media give “the impression that we are living in a perpetual present” and this “premature” memory loss is exploited by the average politician which “can say whatever he wants” since people will not remember it.

4.6.3 Infotainment

In a scenario which Media-2 describes as clogged by information (produced, consumed and discussed by numerous interlocutors which daily grows) if news wants to sell they need to stand out. Consequently, journalists, as lamented by the interviewed experts, are “obliged” to pack their work in such a way to make it publishable, appealing, consumable and sharable. This practice leads to having an increasing **subtle line between making information and making entertaining news**.

Media-3 made strong critics toward this practice. He believes that “information should not be compared to a commercial product” despite being aware that newspapers use information as currency to generate revenue. Therefore, journalists use **infotainment as a strategy** to maximize earnings.

The usage of infotainment, intended as information for entertainment, is highly lamented also by Media-1. He identifies in this practice a precise unethical formula meant to obtain virality through “newsworthiness and sensationalism” leading to a sort of theatricalization of the information.

Despite many journalists, as observed by the experts,

refuse the usage of infotainment and the oversimplification which make information ineffective, they have to use it to meet the editorial guidelines of the press/media agency for which they work. Especially this point has been used by experts to start a broader reflection on the ownership of newspapers themselves. Media-2 and Media-3 denounced how journalism has been reduced to a commercial instrument by the retail groups which by controlling newspapers, aim to put pressure on politics and through them pilot the informational “needs in people”.

>> Globalization and digitalization have accelerated the rhythm of everyday life, redefining both the global and the self context. The introduction of social media has brought to the creation of a new-cross media ecology through which billions of people share and consume data.

>> To better appreciate the implications and dynamic of this new-cross media ecosystem 3 media experts and journalists have been interviewed.

>> From one side digital means and social media enabled to foster inclusivity and democratize information making it available for more individuals. From the other side, the lack of critical mediation executed by an expert, lead to the incapability to distinguish truth from fake.

>> Politicians are increasingly using these channels to directly target people, invite them to action and avoid the critical mediation of journalists. Consequently, this category feels disempowered from their role of “watch-dog” of the public opinion.

>> The introduction of social media in the cross communicational system triggered a content shift in terms of timing, language and format. The new model to follow is represented by the “snack news”. Information packed in such a way to be easy to grasp. However, oversimplification can lead to ineffective communication and misleading content production.

>> Newsworthiness of information led to the creation of an overcrowded scenario in which if news want to sell they need to stand out. This is the reason why the editor often decides to follow the line of sensationalism as strategy and design infotainment to pilot people’s needs.

Section 4.6. KEY INSIGHTS



4.7 Negative political perception

As stated by Calrk (2013) "politics is always about perception". Perceptions depend on how individuals order, recognize and interpret sensory information to make sense of the outside world (products, people, situations). (Schacter, 2011). Citizens, to make sense of the political world use **individual actions** (Noe, 2004), **group dynamics** (Backstrom, 2006), **cultural factors** (Masuda and Nisbett, 2001), **informational references** (networks, medium, sources) (Tsfat & Cohen, 2013) and **influential people** (family members, educator or closer friends) (Roslan, 2018) to shape their political identity and drive their behaviours. On average, from a combination of literature research and online surveys, has emerged how citizens have a negative political perception. Let's see which are the main reasons.

Figure 27. New Yorker cover about COVID-19



Note: this dimension will be further explored and validated in Chapter 5 through a series of interviews, additional surveys and social media observations conducted with respondents of different nationalities and expertise.

4.7.1 Lacking Qualities

The University of Sheffield (the UK, 2014) which has in-depth investigated the relationship between cit-

izens and the political system has discovered how more than ¾ of the interviewed perceived that politics is **lacking** seven main **qualities**:

- **transparency** of decisions and processes;
- **communication** on how decisions are taken and their status;
- **reliability** that everything is done for the common good following a shared agenda;
- **principles** to filter voices and ideas;
- **inclusivity** of the opinion of common people (in addition to the experts) to enable authentic pluralism;
- **accessibility** to engage with the political system during precise occasions especially regarding topic closer to their interest;
- **integrity** to recognize who is behaving following law and code of conduct.

In light of the overall lack of the above-mentioned citizens **do not perceive as valuable their engagement in politics**. [See Annex N for more]

Another fundamental quality lacking, according to Ortiz-Ospina & Roser (2020), is **trustworthiness**. Trust, according to the two researchers of Our World In Data, is a "fundamental element of social capital, a key contributor to sustaining well-being outcomes."

I Trust effects on power and authority: the survey

The Centre of Systemic Peace (2020) analysed how "in democracy, political authority is commensurate with public trust". Data provided by the General Society Survey (GSS) have revealed how trust in the political system is lower than interpersonal trust. It means that people are more likely to trust their peers that the governmental representatives. Therefore, the **lack of trust is dangerous for political stability**.

To better appreciate if the current political perception affected how people respect power and authority, a survey has been conducted with a random sample of 290 participants. The survey, which was designed on Google Surveys, was made available for participants to anonymous-

Total amount of respondents: **290**. The survey was spread through Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and Whatsapp. The "word of mounth" and sharing of frieds was valuable for the survey diffusion.

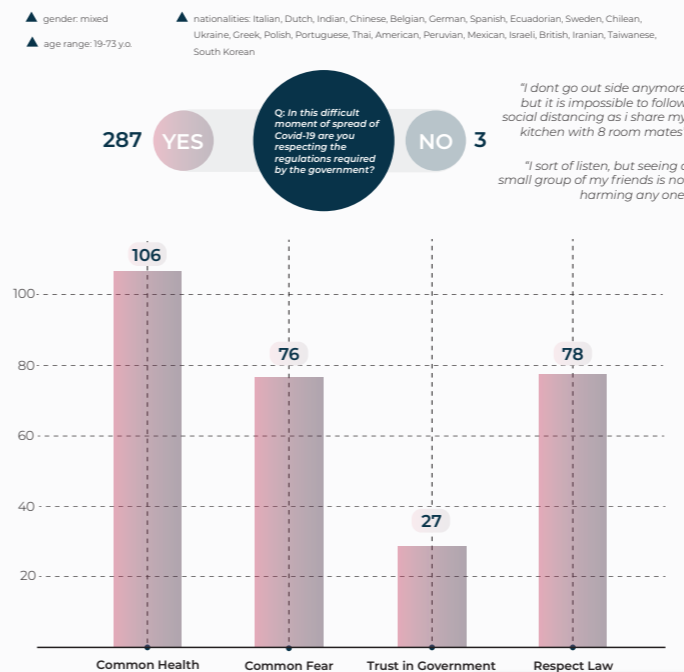


Figure 28. Survey on power & authority

ly fill in from 20-23 March 2020 at the beginning of Covid-19 pandemic. The new exceptional circumstances were used as a scenario to understand if citizens were respecting the governmental safety measures because they trusted the government or for other reasons.

105 participants stated they were following governmental instruction due to trust and law respect reasons. 182 said they were taken to heart measure due to cross solidarity regarding their peer, trusting the positive impact collective actions will have. They feel the responsibility to safeguard the common health and are scared that through their behaviours can pass on the virus to others. This results reflected and further validated the vision of the Centre of systemic Peace according to which **people trust and respect more their peers rather than political authorities**.

4.7.2 An obstacle to progress

Baldwin (2017) claims that "in our current state of affairs, our government seems to have a mantra that is the antithesis of the progress" and this mantra is based on three key pillars "disrupt, repeal, repeat". It generates the frustrating loop through which citizens are going in, either consciously and unconsciously. A loop where "disagreements between parties keep us from making any stable form of progress" simply because, politicians, closed in their ideological bubble "shut themselves in a cave for some time only to emerge gloriously with ludicrously lengthy bills". Similarly, Glocalities stated how "societies are changing, people are changing, but political leaders and

Common Health

- "I feel that it's our time to do something good for the society. They are doing everything they can so it's our role to respect and try to collaborate with them"
- "To protect myself and the others"
- "Only if everyone does the same will it work"

Common Fear

- "To survive"
- "I want to be safe. And don't want to make my family too worried"
- "Because a lot of people are dying"

Trust in Government

- "I trust the government and the national health care institute on which they base their regulations. These are experts in what they do, their regulations are reasonable"
- "I believe they have better information and knowledge about the situation"
- "They base their policies on scientific insights"

Respect Law

- "Because regardless of political ideas it is necessary to follow what the Prime Minister dictates and above all why it is necessary to stop this situation"
- "It is right and it is important"
- "Because yes"

systems seem paralyzed and unable to incorporate change."

It represents a real obstacle to progress, especially considering the data obtained by the University of Sheffield and the Electoral Commission according to which citizens are asking for more participation opportunities since believe that through their involvement they can make the difference. [See Annex N for Sheffield's data in details]

>> On the average it emerged how the current political perception is widely negative because of lacking qualities and incapability to innovate.

>> Citizens perceive that the political system is lacking fundamental qualities: transparency, communication, reliability, principles, inclusivity, accessibility, integrity and trustworthiness. Especially lack of trust is dangerous for political stability because it questions authority. This trend has been confirmed by the conducted survey from which emerged how citizens trust and respect more their peer than the political authorities.

>> Political institutions are seen as an obstacle to progress because stack in a dissent loop activated by parties which make the entire system unable to incorporate changes. In an attempt to make a difference, citizens are asking for more participation opportunities

Section 4.7. KEY INSIGHTS



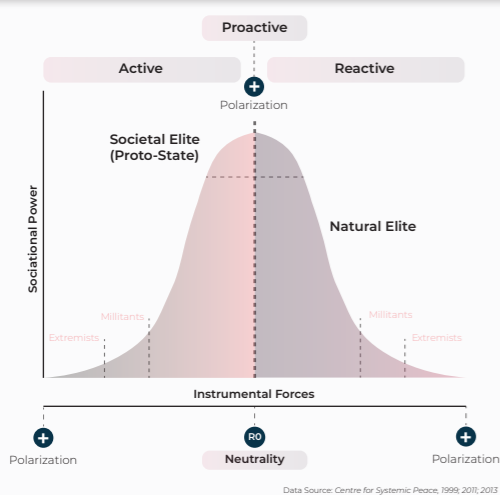
4.8 Evolving political attitude

According to how politics is perceived people manifest different attitudes.

For Marshall (2011), a researcher at the Centre for Systemic Peace, there are four significant ones: **neutral, active, proactive** and **reactive** to which, we can empirically say correspond different behaviours. [Figure 29]. How these attitudes are distributed within society determines whether governance is more democratic or autocratic. [See Annex O for extensive information]. One of the main factors responsible for attitude distribution and relative behaviours is **dissatisfaction**.

Note 1: considering that this thesis focuses on democratic regimes and assuming that reactive forms are more likely to happen in autocratic governs, those are considered beyond the scope of the project.

Figure 29. Attitudes distribution in Societal Systems



I Dissatisfaction

Dissatisfaction in the socio-political context is generally described by scholars like Lyons et al. (1992) and by Goodwin and Jasper (1999) as one of the first reactions that citizens have regarding different issues which affect how the institutions operate.

Dissatisfaction as a reaction both triggered by **intentions never listened and actions wrongly performed**, lead to two main behaviours as dissatisfaction statements: manifestation and abstention [See

Annex P for a more detailed classification].

4.8.1 Manifestation

There are various forms citizens use to actively manifest their dissent: from physical gathering (protest, demonstrations) to digital campaign or drop a protest vote in the ballot (blank or "None of the Above"), unless peacefully performed they can be considered as a **democratic channel to challenge the political structure and achieve socio-political changes**. [See Annex P for more examples].

According to political scientists, there are three main reasons why people manifest: lack of quality standards and expectations not met (e.g. Friday for future), status deprivation and condition worsening (e.g. healthcare manifestations), solidarity toward an analogous social group (e.g. BLM movement).

The aim behind "took the streets to express discontent with existing systems of government" (Repucci, 2020) is to obtain the attention of institutions and open a dialogue with them to obtain the democratic participation they are publically demanding.

In that sense, **manifestations can be seen as a market metaphor** (Klandermans & van Stekelenburg), where citizens play the role of consumers which demand changes in the social product, which is democracy.

When demonstrations, due to the global relevance of the defended values, are capable of arose, media interest can **succeeding in overtaking the geographical boundaries and end up being a worldwide phenomenon despite a local start**. e.g. BLM movement.

I Young generations

The data collected by Friedman, Pulitzer winner for international political journalism, show how are mostly **young people** who take the streets to manifest in the name of their high standard of living and liberty [e.g. "Friday's for future, Figure 30]

However, despite their good intention, they seem **not to be reunited under a joint program**, a shared vision about which direction they want society to fol-



Figure 30. Students protesting for Friday for future to raise awareness about sustainability and climate change.

low. As reported by Krastev (2014), internationally appreciated political scientist, those manifesters, who "aspire to do without existing institutions [...] have few if any specific leaders, and mostly leave formal organization aside, relying instead on the Internet and ad hoc assemblies for collective debate and decision making". Consequently, **despite many movements, there are few revolutionary outcomes**.

II Digital forms

In parallel with the massive uptake of the internet, many forms of **demonstration dissent went digital**. Initially used as a convenient means of organizing, social media, discussion forums and chats have become the **daily medium to which people entrust their dissatisfaction**. They are specially used by adult generations which see in this means a way to be more efficient (it takes less time for a Tweets or post on Facebook) and protect their anonymity (using a pseudonym people feel can prevent their persona from persecutions).

III Factors that discourage manifestation

A sizeable amount of people look positively at manifestations and recognize them the capability to showcase "leaders that problems exist in society and government." (Roger Werner, 2017) as well as the capability to empower participants in joyfully experiencing their involvement (University of Sussex, 2002). However, others are still skeptical about their power. In fact, two main factors make citizens doubting the effectiveness of manifestation and prevent them from taking part in one: **security** and **effectiveness**.

Although manifestations are generally peaceful movements, in the collective imaginary are associated with riots, civil revolutions and rebellions, espe-

cially when the government decided to employ the police as a form of law enforcement. Therefore people are afraid for their personal security.

The other main reason while people do not take part in manifestation concern their effectiveness. In fact, the common sensation is to consider manifesting like "shouting into the void". No matter if joined by a sizable amount of people, the problem is that they are hardly capable of establishing a dialogue with the government and discuss follow up activities to implement a change.

4.8.2 Abstention

Abstention is a silent form to manifest dissent which is performed in the intimacy of the own private sphere. In the academic world, there are numerous theories regarding voting behaviours to explain the deep turnout crisis affecting many democratic countries. [See Annex G for more data about the drop out crisis].

Bangura et al., (1996) stated how **demographics** (e.g. gender, age, nationality, educational level, income) are the "major determinants of why some people vote". According to Downs (1957), it is all a matter of convenience since "for every rational individual, if the cost of voting outweighs the returns, s/he will abstain from voting". Instead, for Winter & Bellows (1985) it depends on perception.

Citizens generally do not vote and therefore do not participate when:

- they perceive politics as a "**futile exercise due to a sense of personal inadequacy**" induced by the "**feeling that political forces cannot be managed, or that a large gap exists between democratic ideals and political reality**";
- their **perception is positive** because "simply satisfied with their political system".

Racounter.Net, an agency specialized in research "information gaps" to the question "why people do not vote" (2019) have spot four central answers: **lack of interest, lack of knowledge, disillusionment and impossibility**.

Furthermore, Brookshire (2016), identified as reasons to abstention: **time management, educational discrepancy and apathy**.

Overall, Dr Ruth Fox, Director of the Hansard Society, supports how "voting levels are a manifestation of the bigger problem of disengagement across the board, linked to a declining sense of the efficacy of

politics generally and their role in it, and a sense that the parties are all the same, the politicians are all the same, they are not like us, it does not make any difference". Anyway this disengagement do not need to be confused with apathy. David Babbs, director of 38 Degrees, supports how "you have people who care a lot and are by no kind of ordinary measure of the word apathetic but don't see the point in registering to vote or don't vote."

I Young generations

A strong apathy toward voting is especially widespread among **young people**, as highlighted by Young Service America (YSA) organization which promotes young commitment. They have reported how young generations do not vote because they **do not feel to be directly targeted by politicians, not thought about voting practices and not provided with enough information to decide for whom to vote for**. Therefore party affiliation results particularly poor among youngs.

[See Annex P for extensive information].

4.8.3 Alternative participation

Although dissatisfaction prevents many people from having a propositive attitude and actively pursuit changes through manifestation or voting, has emerge how the political attitude is evolving toward the direction of alternative forms of participation.

Professor Hendrik Wagenaar, among the others, consistently recognizes how there is a lot of participation going on, as well as engagement, beyond voting. Democratic Audit has collected evidence about it reporting how "public engagement in politics beyond the ballot box has increased; **more people see non-electoral participation such as signing a petition or attending a protest as a substitute rather than complementary to voting**." Cybersalon.org, in one of its research, discovered how "**young people are very active on single-issue campaigns, signing online petitions, attending issues related meetups, voting via allocating money on online crowdsourcing platforms to their chosen projects, participating in street protests, and even arranging sit-ins**". But that they did not "**engage with traditional politics**" since fail to appreciate the impact of their involvement in the future.

>> According to how politics is perceived and dissatisfaction managed, citizens manifest different attitudes and behaviours. The main two are manifest and abstain.

>> Manifestations are legitimate forms of democratic deliberation of ideas and emotions through which citizens showcase criticism toward government and ask for changes.

>> Young generations are the ones that took the streets more and manifested in the name of the high living standard. However, their movements often fail to develop a program with a clear goal, and due to this, they end up of being associated with unpurposeful complaining.

>> With the massive uptake of social media many forms of manifestation went digital and are preferred since seen more time-efficient and able to protect personal identity through the usage of a pseudonym.

>> Despite many forms of movement and manifestation there are few revolutionary outcomes which make many citizens question the value of manifestations. In fact, many people do not take part in them since skeptical about the possibility of triggering a positive reaction in government.

>> Skepticism is the emotion that makes an increasing amount of citizens to abstain. This mind-set is built upon the conviction that there is a gap between democratic ideals and political reality nurture by lack of communication and shared knowledge. In the specific, young generations feel not to be the target and therefore considered by politicians.

>> Despite dissatisfaction generally prevents from having a propositive attitude toward politics, an increasing amount of people is demanding for more occasions beyond voting to participate in the socio-political decision making at different levels with different degrees of involvement. On the average citizens, especially young generations, demonstrated to be active on single initiatives matching their share of concerns and interests. They like do petitions and crowdfunding since they can monitor and contribute to have a say on the outcome directly.

>> Young generations, which are highly pragmatic, do not engage with traditional voting since fail to perceive the future impact of their involvement.

Section 4.8. KEY INSIGHTS

4.9 Initiatives to turn the tide

Even if located in different geographical areas all around the world, an increasing amount of initiatives are undertaken by governments, organizations and private citizens to reverse the democratic decay trend. The shared vision is unitary: to stop arbitrary governance is necessary to educate people and encourage them to be an active part of the socio-political process. This vision, as described by Bauer (2012), is like a calling for good governance management and political participation. Initiatives can be grouped in: **governmental approaches, emerging political parties approaches, organizations, platforms for socio-political education and orientation, platforms for socio-political activation and pop-cultural expressions**. [Figure 31]

[See Annex Q for extensive information about the initiatives undertaken at different levels]

Figure 31. Initiatives overview



4.9.1 Governmental approaches

Among the most innovative approaches are those of Taiwan and Norway.

I Taiwan

Audrey Tang, Taiwan's digital prime minister, during an interview conducted by Hunt (2019), narrated how the government where she works **combine empathic nature with the digital knowledge to provide ab-**

Figure 32. Hackathon team in action



solute transparency to people. This combination of human touch and technology (mainly AI) enables to create a "**collaborative, non-coercive**" governance where democracy is crowdsourced, people moderate each other, political institutions are more responsive and the consensus is created along the way.

To "**breaking the barriers between the government and citizens**", live, and digital face to face meeting are used to promote an active discussion between citizens and political institutions. In this way, **citizens can both share their experiences and see that "public servants are people too"** and alike activate a **cross-generation solidarity** which **combines the young's horizontal power attitude with the elderly vertical one**.

According to this view, relational cracks and communication gaps are seen as a trigger to pursuit social innovation and invite citizens to collaborate in finding a solution by exchanging knowledge and bridging collective wisdom. One of the main occasion to perform so it is during hackathons.

II Norway

In a scenario of global democratic decay has unanimously emerged how Norway is the best democratic country in the world since 2010.

Of course, this favorable political condition is nourished by the Norway economic wellbeing (McWhinney, 2020). However, what appears to contribute to its success significantly is the **good communication dynamics** that exists between citizens and govern-

ment.

Citizens revealed a cross-age perception that participating in political decision making is a normal spontaneous act as well as an occasion to monitor how their engagement and taxes are spent. To nurture this positive attitude, Norway commits to **empower people to join the socio-political discussion by providing them with all the necessary information and instruments**. For instance, on the governmental website are made available all the **strategies** according to which goal is planned and resources distributed and sets of possible **scenarios** to provide a better contextualization.

This data transparency revealed to improve the trust toward government and prevent from speculation.

4.9.2 Emerging political parties approaches

In the attempt of making politics closer to people and enhance the involvement in the decision-making process, new political parties with new mindsets are emerging. Their practices are harvesting consent, especially among the young generations. Remarkable are the initiatives promoted by two political parties: VoltEuropa and Movimento 5 Stelle (M5S)

Both promote how complex challenges can be faced

Figure 33. VoltEuropa & M5S key points

VoltEuropa	M5S
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> smart digital state 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> transparent elections
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> social equality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> local, regional & national consultations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> citizens empowerment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> citizens can vote initiatives & make proposals
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> global balance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> see number of votes, results and participants

only through collaboration which can be achieved by directly involving citizens and co-design with them feasible proposals. However, it is interesting to reflect on how despite some of their initiatives can be found interesting by multiple citizens, participation is "limited" to those who are affiliated. This factor represents a barrier for those who like the initiatives, but do not share their political manifesto.

4.9.3 Organizations

Many governmental and para-governmental organizations are developing and promoting platforms for the exchange of knowledge and feedback as a practical attempt to enhance citizens participation.

I g0v (gov zero)

It is a "**grassroots and decentralized community**", original from Taiwan, where "**every participant proposes and decides what to work on**". G0v is a collaborative, spontaneous online community, and all the project's results are made **open-source** for the public good on GitHub. It wants to show how the **usage of technology in a positive way can do the interest of citizens by empowering them to shape civil society through the easy accessibility of vital information**. It is based on the idea that "*opening up and making data public allows the people to take a closer look at politics and important issues*".

g0v is managed by a multidisciplinary team composed of 40% coders, 10% designers, 20% NGO workers and civil servants, 30% of citizens from all walks of life.

Among the services online offered there are: collaborative working spaces, dictionary to understand the jargon used, data visualization tool to support an easy comprehension of a political decision, compare them over time and provide feedback.

Figure 34. g0v website homepage



II vTaiwan

It is an online-offline platform which offers a prototypical consultation process open to the whole society, from experts to ordinary people, to **engage the different groups in "a rational discussion on national issues"**, analyze relevant topics, reflect on possibilities and propose policies. By having contributors up voting or down voting ideas, **disagreement is bridged with dialogue**. Thanks to this practice it is ensured "**incremental governance**".

4.9.4 Platforms for socio-political education and orientation

Understanding that citizens feel the urgency to be assisted in their candidate selection during the election period and supported in the formation of their personal political orientation, several digital platforms worldwide have been designed to fulfill these purposes.

Platforms like the German "BPB" and the "International IDEA", recognize how the **quality of democracy of a nation directly depends on who participates**. Therefore they create initiatives, educational programmes and activities to help citizens in developing comparative knowledge as well as **create the occasions to exchange it with institutions across hierarchical levels**.

Others, like the Dutch "StemWijzer" or the German "WahlMat", are tools for people interested in voting, but still not sure about which is the best options according to their priorities. Those platforms help in reliably solving the dilemma by calculating which party better fits the user political position on the bases of the answers provided to questions regarding issues proposed by the parties which are campaigning.

4.9.5 Platforms for socio-political activation

Especially after the rise of movement like the already mentioned "Friday's for future" and "BLM" it is possible to appreciate how an increasing amount of digital platforms created with the intent of spread awareness about different topics and mobilize citizens to act. Despite the good intentions and their capability to create and share knowledge, they seem to stop their power at the campaign and manifestation level. Their main weakness is lacking to provide solutions possibilities and implementation plan to which establish a purposeful dialogue with political institutions.

4.9.6 Pop-cultural expressions

Pop cultural expressions from music, cabaret, movies, and visual art play a cardinal role in the **political discussion** (Edelman, 1995). Thanks to its capability of evoking both "*intellectual and moral outlook*" art has the potential to be "*far more influential in politics than polemics*" because it embuses "*discourse and action*". JR (2012), a visual artist introduced the portmanteau term "**artivism**" to describe his being both an artist and a political activist.

I Artivisms

Artivists, through their work, contribute to the political discourse (Möller, 2016). Capable of transcending "*the mere recognition of established opinion*" (Shapiro, 2015) art has the power of **intellectually emancipating, promoting pluralism, self-reflection and problem-solving**. (Möller, 2016).

To enhance knowledge, democratization and maximize the possibility to inform "*society about communal, social and economic problems*" (Demirel & Altintas, 2012) artivism pieces are visible in streets (graffiti, posters) or free on digital platforms (songs, audiobook, photos). Songs with sharp sentences as the one rapped at the speed of light by Eminem, street art with evocative and powerful images like the ones realized by Banksy are used to denounce the current situation and awake people on the societal topic (e.g. migration, climate change, power abuse, the societal disparity).

According to Heble (2000), they play "*a formative role in the constitution of social life, in how people take responsibility for creating their histories, for participating in the management of their own social and political realities*".

Now with the digitalization and instant sharing possibilities, pop-cultural expression' penetration has been enhanced, and both artworks and artists acquired a new gravity. (Möller, 2016).

The target of this form of peaceful activism is both ordinary people and politicians which agenda tries to push through the mean of art (Enslar, 2011).

II Experts interviews for deepening

To better appreciate the underlying motivations behind artivism, the activist Alessio Bonini has been interviewed (www.alessiobonini.com). About its art and mission, he said: "*I consider my art and projects as a form of protest because they have the specific purpose of externalizing concepts, through visual representation which questions how the current political system is administrating society. [...] I do believe that Art can change the world by shaping awareness and triggering reflection, which can be turned into functional outcomes*".

Figure 35. Bonini
Lapilli vulcanici plastica e sabbia su tela





WHY BANKSY IS SO FAMOUS

Banksy is a graffiti artist, formed in the Bristol underground scene best known for his "political and satirical style" (Doughty, 2017). Since his works often leave a political message, he is commonly considered as a political activist. The fascinating thing about him is that despite his celebrity, he has been capable of managing its anonymity. This mystery enabled to increase its legacy further and make his message even more powerful. Do not knowing who he is makes him really "the people".

The British journalists of MyArtBroker wondered about the reason why Banksy has become so famous and asked people why they love him so much.

- Here the answers:
- 42% replied, "Banksy's art is powerful yet simple to appreciate".
 - 39% said, "politically charged yet cheeky."

To the question "how Banksy's art makes you feel" people stated:

- 51% thoughtful
- 24% happy
- 22% rebellious

No one said "makes me feel stupid", these because 77% replied that his art was easier to get than the other artists despite being still "complex and deeply emotive". Thanks to its visual power Banksy is recognized as able to make complex concepts accessible to people and make them develop awareness.

Ian Syer of MyArtBroker.com said "now we have definitive reasons as to why Banksy is so famous. Not only does Banksy capture the hearts and minds of all generations, but the art produced is also considered to be complex and emotive yet simple to digest and appreciate. It is an incredibly rare and pleasant combination in the art world."

Figure 36. Banksy "Flower Thrower"



>> An increasing amount of initiatives is undertaken by governments, organizations and private citizens to activate social participation and reverse the democratic decadent trend. Initiatives can be grouped in: **governmental approaches, emerging political parties approaches, organizations, platforms for socio-political education and orientation, platforms for socio-political activation** and **pop-cultural expressions**.

>> Taiwan combines human empathy with digital efficiency to create a collaborative environment where citizens and civil servants exchange knowledge and experience across generations and hierarchical levels. Any possible relational crack and communicational gap are bridged through non-coercive dialogue and transparent data exchange.

>> Norway invests in engineering communication dynamics so to empower people in joining the socio-political discussion. To enable that data, operations, strategies, and possible scenarios are shared through the governmental website. Thanks to this transparency, trust in government is enhanced.

>> Emerging political parties aim to enhance citizens involvement in the decision-making process by offering them the opportunity to monitor, propose and vote ideas through the dedicate platforms. However, the "mandatory affiliation" to the specific parties prevent from a wide range of participation.

>> Organizations like g0v and vTaiwan aim to activate citizens participation in the socio-political life by offering them digital platforms through which knowledge and feedback exchange enable to realize and incremental governance. They believe that technology can be used to shape civil society positively, make data accessible and engage different groups in rational discussions where disagreement is bridged with dialogue.

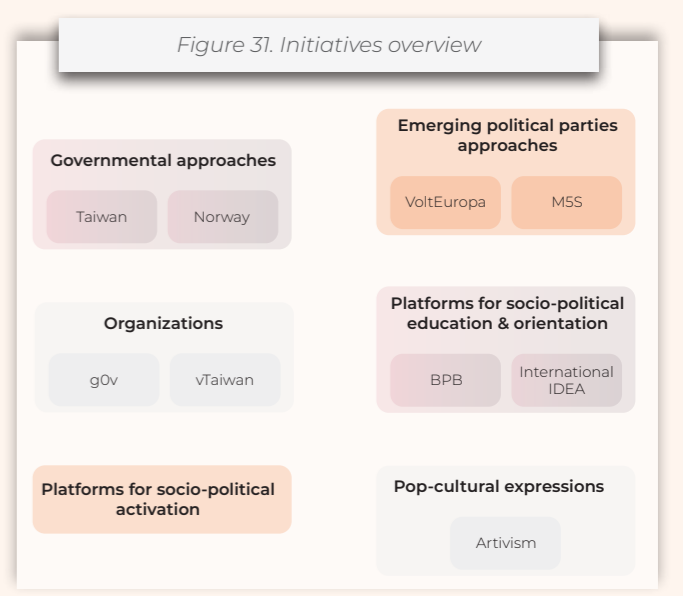
>> Platforms like "BPB" and "International IDEA" aim to create direct exchange occasion between citizens and institutions since believe that the quality of democracy directly depends on who is involved. Other digital realities like "StemWijzer" and "Whal O Mat" want to help citizens in becoming aware of their political orientation. There is also a third typology of digital platforms whose goal is to mobilize citizens to demand changes actively (e.g. "Friday for future"). However, since often lacking a clear action plan, they

fail to establish a purposeful dialogue with political institutions.

>> Pop-cultural expressions especially in the form of activism (e.g. movies, music, art and cabaret), are used as a formative tool to activate political discourse around burning topic, promoting democratic values such pluralism and inclusivity as well as trigger problem-solving dynamics.

>> The impact which simple yet effective forms of art have in shaping awareness and triggering reflection has been maximized with social media and viral trends. The symbol is Banksy. Banksy results to be particularly appreciated thanks to its capability of conveying complex messages into a simple yet intuitive way which does not make people feel intellectually inadequate. Moreover, the fact that the identity of the artist is still unknown is a fascinating element which makes all people feel represented thanks to the absence of identification cues.

Section 4.9. KEY INSIGHTS



This Chapter has seen the identification of the main **context factors which are responsible for nurturing the relational gap between citizens and the political system** in electoral democracies. All of them are considered as “states” since not likely to change within the next 5 years. The factors are:

4.2 Missrespect of democratic principles and lack of regulations

>> harm individual freedom and human rights. Citizens react by taking distances from political institutions which blame of not being capable of providing quality information and stable references.

4.3 Economic and financial crisis leverage strategies

>> which ending up to polarize the electorate rather than stabilize society. Those are the occasions in which populism flourish since seen by people as a safe port where storytelling easy to follow promise to transform popular will into reality.

4.4 Politics: a field of manipulation

>> where psychological, informational, technical and legal strategies are used as a common practice of coercive interference into citizens' life. Stories easy to follow, fake bonds among individuals, information distortion, media surveillance and law enforcement have all the common goal of driving the public opinion into the direction established by political forces.

4.5 Branded politics

>> is responsible for the formation of hyperpartisanship which leads to a generally poor decision making. For instance, it dangerously lead to not recognize the good done by other and discard projects despite their positive value.

4.6 Cross-media ecology usage

>> through which contents are created and exchanged both online and offline, enable to connect billions of individuals simultaneously. Despite the achievement of democratizing information, making them easily available, the lack of critical mediation executed by an expert, lead to the incapability to distinguish truth from fake. Politicians who are

aware of these dynamics exploit them to their advantage.

4.7 Negative political perception

>> because of lacking qualities (transparency, communication, reliability, principles, inclusivity, accessibility, integrity and trustworthiness) and incapability to innovate. Therefore, in an attempt to make a difference, citizens are asking for more participation opportunities

4.8 Evolving political attitude

>> that swing between manifestation and abstention according to how dissatisfaction is managed. Manifestations are especially used by young generations as legitimate forms to showcase criticism toward government and ask for changes. However, their movements often fail to establish a dialogue with the political system since lacking a clear goal. This is the reason why, weighting time-efficiency and the benchmark of success, especially adult generation, question the effectiveness of manifestations and find more valuable to entrust their grievance to social media. Moreover, the awareness that there is a gap between democratic ideals and political reality and the conviction it hardly can be bridge it what makes an increasing amount of citizens (again mainly young) to abstain. However, despite skepticism and disillusionment prevents from having a propositive attitude toward politics, an increasing amount of people is demanding for more occasion beyond voting to participate in the socio-political decision making at different levels with different degrees of involvement.

4.9 Initiatives to turn the tide

>> are undertaken by governments, organizations, emerging parties and private citizens to improve individual's socio-political participation and contrast the decadent democratic trend. Overall the combination of human touch and advanced technological capabilities results to be a winning formula for incremental governance. Therefore, certified digital platforms result to be a performing environment for transparent knowledge and feedback exchange, cross-generational and hierarchical communication, collaborative decision-making process

Chapter 04. KEY INSIGHTS & CONCLUSION

and data tracking. However, two main weaknesses can lead to reinforce the gap between citizens and political institutions rather than bridge it: mandatory affiliation to the political party who manages the platform and lack of a clear action plan on behalf of the organization which then fail to activate a purposeful dialogue with political institutions. Last but not least, a remarkable role is played by pop-cultural expressions, especially in the form or activism which, through the usage of simple image succeed in making digestible complex messages.

>> Conclusion

I First research question partially answered

Although the obtained insights provide us with an understanding of what elements are causing the gap in the relationship between citizens and the political system to fully answer to the first research question (and sub-question) further investigation is necessary. In fact, before being capable of defining the context cause-effect structure, which will be discussed in Chapter 6, it is necessary to directly listen to the voice of the protagonists and observe their behaviours. Therefore, the next Chapter will investigate through in-depth interviews, online surveys and observations, how citizens and the political system perceive their relationship.

II Second research question answered

Considering the insights and relative conclusions obtained from section 4.9, we can reasonably say that the second research question and the relative follow up have been answered.

Figure 16. Context factors



Research questions friendly reminder

- 1. “What is causing the gap in the relationship between citizens and the political system?”**
 - 1.1 “how do citizens and the political system perceive their relationship?”
- 2. “What has been done so far to try to bridge the gap?”**
 - 2.1 “what was effective and what was not? why?”

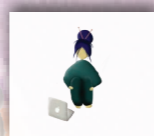
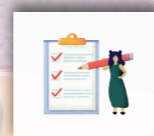
Chapter 05

Listening & observing the protagonists

This Chapter is dedicated to listening to the voice of the protagonists and observing their behaviours. After a brief introduction about how research has been structured, the main insights are reported in dedicated sections. In the end, a final reflection is made comparing how respondents see the current relationship between citizens and the political system (present vision) and how they would like to see it ideally implemented (future vision).

Sections in this Chapter

- 5.1 "Research set-up"
- 5.2 "Interviews with citizens"
- 5.3 "Interviews with politicians"
- 5.4 "Interviews with civil society"
- 5.5 "Interviews with professional journalists"
- 5.6 "Online surveys % observation"



Note 1: considering the richness of information which characterizes every section of this Chapter a list of key insights is reported at the end of each one in order to guide the reader. At the end of the Chapter will be presented a brief recap and a conclusion.

Note 2: at this stage it has been looked at electoral democracies with a multi-party system in broad without any particular criteria in mind. The aim was to understand which are the average communitarian context factors so to generate a model which could be potentially applied to multiple nations.

5.1 Research set-up

In this section is briefly explained how the research presented in this Chapter has been structured and conducted.

5.1.1 Introduction

This phase wants to investigate, through in-depth interviews, online surveys and observations how citizens, politicians, media and the civil society in between, perceive the current socio-political scenario and how they would like to see it implemented. With the term of civil society are identify all the organizations that do not belong to the state which are capable of influencing people's attitude and public pluralistic opinion (e.g. associations, initiatives, social movements, trade unions and clubs) Blauer (2012).

Then, comparing the obtained findings against the ones discussed in the previous Chapter from the literature review, the aim is to validate possible overlap and spot new opportunities which will enable to define a final context structure.

5.1.2 Interviews

Considering the exploratory nature of this research, a qualitative approach has been used in the form of **in-depth, semi-structured interviews** with all the categories of respondents. [Figure 37]

The sampling strategy was done following Patton

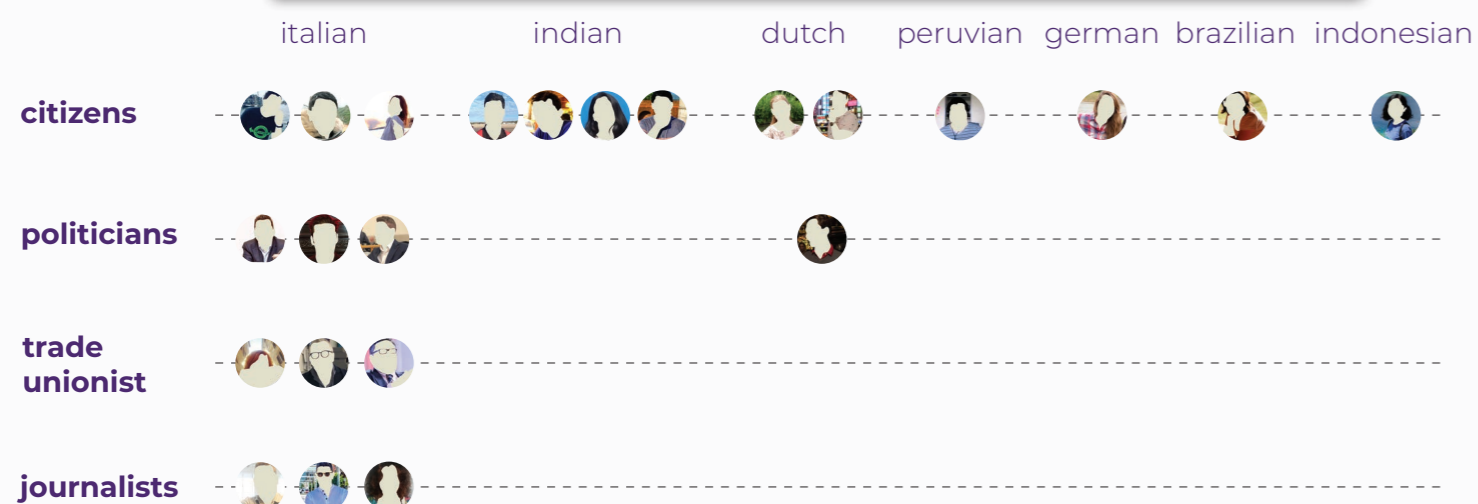
(1999) purposeful sampling strategy in which "key informants" are seen as "people with great knowledge or influence who can shade light" to a phenomenon thanks to their influence. Citizens have been generally considered as experts of their own experience while for politicians and civil society members have been considered 10 years threshold of expertise.

Interviews characteristics, respondent information, methodology limitations and key insights are separately discussed in the dedicated sections.

5.1.3 Online surveys & observation

Considering that, from the literature review has emerged how a consistent amount of energy is spent on social media by citizens in the attempt to trigger changes in the political system it has been considered valuable to observe their digital behaviours. For three months, 2 political discussion Facebook groups have been daily monitored, and 2 surveys have been providing them to measure their perceptions and feelings. Not less important, it would have offered me the opportunity to have a first-hand experience of the dynamics which happen on those social groups.

Figure 37. Research respondents overview belonging to different electoral democratic contexts



5.2 Interviews with citizens

5.2.1 General information

I Participant's recruitment

For this research phase, citizens from different democratic countries have been recruited on a voluntary base. Recruitment happened to post an announcement on the leading social media: Whatsapp, Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn. During their selection has been made sure that people with a different participatory attitude were involved. More than 25 replied and 13 had been interviewed till reaching **saturation**. Saturation happens when the last interview conducted is not capable of generating significant new codes, and further data collection is unnecessary (Saunders et al., 2017).

Respondent identity has been anonymized respecting the consent form they have signed.

II Interview guide

The adopted interview has been articulated on five main thematic blocks. [Figure 38] The aim was to start from the general question so to make participants at their ease and then gradually move into the analysis of their current and ideal relationship with the political system.

The graduation committee has approved the guide before being piloted.

III Interview's execution

Interviews lasted on the average 45-75 minutes and were conducted through digital platforms. All of them have been audio recorded to enable subsequent analysis. Memos regarding participant emo-

tions were taken on the side to make a richer data collection.

IV Interview's analysis

All the interviews have been transcribed using the verbatim technique. The interviews with Italian native experts have been held in Italian to make them feel more comfortable. Only after the analysis stage, the generated codes have been carefully translated into English.

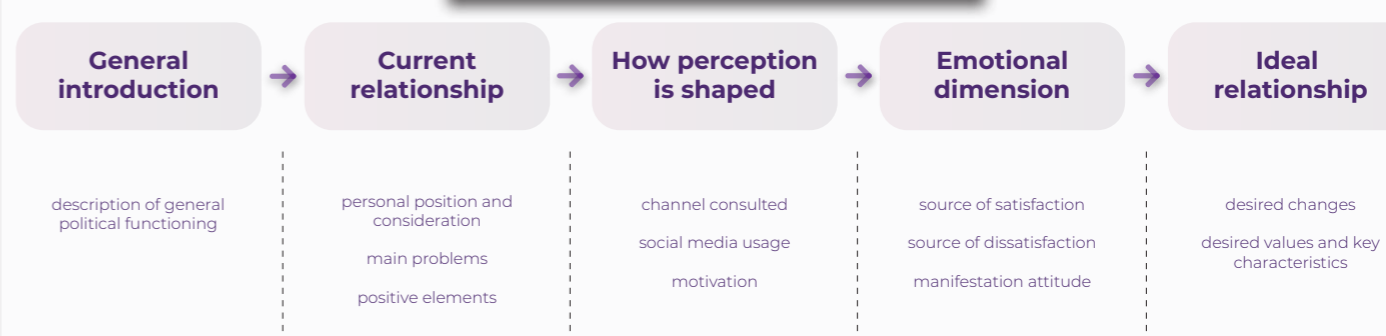
For the analysis part the programme Atlas.Ti has been used, and the Grounded Theory Method (GTM) consisting of initial, focused coding and data categorization, memos writing, and theoretical coding (Birk & Mills, 2015) have been applied.

IV Methodology's limitations

Due to timing, geographical constraints and Covid-19 restrictions, all the interviews were held on remote via Skype and Zoom. 9/13 respondents were MSc students and all highly educated individuals. This selection aimed to see whether, despite cultural differences, citizens were experiencing a similar problem and **validate the assumption that their relational crisis with the political system knows no boundaries**.

Note: to verify if the findings obtained from this section can be extended to other societal segmentation, participants from other walk of life are considered during observation and further validation interviews. [See Annex R for more information about citizens interviews and visualize the cluster's code book]

Figure 38. Interview guide structure and aim



5.2.2 Key insights

I General introduction

Despite most of the times, a generic description has been provided, respondents found difficulty in explaining with simple words the complex political reality of their country. Cit-3 admitted to never had a look in detail about how the political mechanism works. Cit-10 and Cit-8 due to the fragmentation of the socio-political asset in their nation were afraid to have provided wrong information. Long pauses and frequent silences (0.3-0.12 minutes) often taken by participants reflected how, the political scenario, **being hard to understand it is so to explain**, which represents a barrier in its communicability

II Current relationship: main problems and positive elements

Respondents identify **several problems** which negatively affect their relationship with politics.

- **Lack of accountability** stressed by the issue of **corruption** and **miscommunication**. These factors lead many, as Cit-6 to question, whether their actions (voting and active participation) are *“strong enough to impact on the important decision taken by authorities.”*

- **Noisy information** which, according to Cit-9 provoke confusion about the goals of politicians and **reinforce the gap between citizens and politics resulting** *“toxic for people which do not know whom to believe”* [Cit-11].

- **Branded ideology trend** adopted by politicians and political parties which further complicate the understanding of situations and result **far from stimulating a constructive discussion**.

- **Be distant from real problems and common people needs**. Cit-5 stated how politics, at all its levels, *“remain too far away from concrete problems belonging to the daily life”*. The reason why, according to the same citizen, needs to be researched in the tendency that politics has to oversimplify issue to the point of making them meaningless. Differently, Cit-9, identify in the chronic distancing a counter effect of being elected. In fact, he believes that whenever a new leadership get to power it also starts losing touch with the reality of ordinary people. To reverse this trend, according to Cit-13, it would be necessary to **extend citizens participation beyond voting**. In agreement with it, there is the position taken by Cit-11 who believes how to enhance participation will be fundamental to activate inclusivity, encourage more people to have a say and provide their contribution.

- **Lack of common language**. Cit-4, for instance, lamented how the complicate jargon currently used by politicians to resonate authoritative results not understandable by the majority of people.

- **Lack of actions, as a follow-up activities to elections and discussion** which reinforce the absence of trust toward politics. In fact, as highlighted by Cit-9, although he is aware, he can express his opinion through voting (personal right and civic duty) **“there is a gap between expression and implementation”**.

This gap is what makes citizens questioning whether their vote matters or not.

Beyond negative elements, respondents also identified a few **positive aspects** that they find valuable to preserve and even improve in the current context. What they appreciated the most is the **structure** and the **constitution** their political systems have.

In particular, the constitutions has been indicated by Cit-4, Cit-5, Cit-11 as the element which, despite difficulties and problems, still guarantee pluralism, involvement and collaboration between political institutions and civil organizations.

III How perception is shaped: channels and motivation

The main drivers to get informed about politics are **personal motivations and interests**. Despite being sometimes painful, respondents revealed to keep on consulting different channels in order to shape their knowledge regarding what it is going on in the socio-political scenario. They do it due to a sense of responsibility they prove toward their role as citizens as well as a sign of **self-respect for what concerns personal interests**. Cit-5 stressed how having a political knowledge is an **act of social responsibility** to understand how things are managed indeed. Similarly, Cit-3 stated how maintaining alive the interest in politics is fundamental to *“understand what they (politicians) are talking about and also understand a bit what my power as a citizen is”* and better get the connections between what has been said and how things work in practice.

However, respondents recognize how it is not easy to find reliable sources of information since the ones easy to find are either too complex or too simple. Therefore, they have demonstrated the tendency to consult multiple sources: press, orientation websites, referential people (experts, closer friends and family members) and social media. Social media are used in different ways according to personal priority scales.

Cit-2, Cit-6 and Cit-7 use them as primary informational sources. On them, they can follow the main pages of the critical news agency and directly consult the official profiles of politicians. Others, like Cit-3 and Cit-4, support how they use social media, but not for consulting political news.

The ones who asserted to use them revealed that the purpose was not to engage in debate but retrieve passive sources of information. Generally because, as explained by Cit-2 *“I don't want to invest time in so to be very vocal about what I feel or what I think”* since **uncomfortable** in taking part in conversations which happen in a crowded and not regulated digital environment. Others, like Cit-12, on the other hand, use this social media precisely for the purpose to debate even if they prefer to keep some issues for a private discussion with the family.

On the other hand, Cit-1 and Cit-13 appeared to be **skeptical** and against the usage of social media for political information. They believe socials uncover more danger than benefits. As highlighted by Cit-1 are missed effective moderation dynamics which will give the right to people of being silent and not only speech. In fact, Cit-8 stated to feel often demotivated by the overwhelming reality social media are capable of creating. According to her, missing moderation between parts makes lose an appropriate balance in the content produced and nurture her skepticism *“about the current political narrative”*.

IV Emotional dimension: sources of satisfaction and dissatisfaction

Participants demonstrated genuine excitement when asked what provokes in them satisfaction about politics.

They are happy when they see fundamental values, usually taken for granted, respected and even promoted. According to their opinion politicians who practice **coherence** and **transparency** result to be *“closer to people needs”* [Cit-5].

Alike proper **management**, especially in a critical situation as the Corona crisis, is a source of pride. Cit-13 revealed to be satisfied when he sees in his neighbourhood things **directly implemented**, and this is also motivating him in getting more informed and done his part. When **implementations** and **progress**, through **fair inclusivity** of new representatives and opinion is realized, it is reviving the faith toward the political intuition and a better future.

According to the citizens' perspective, those elements needs to be kept into account for the future this thesis aims to design for.

Regarding which are the sources of dissatisfaction citizens mentioned many elements which have been already discussed as “main problems”. Nevertheless, they are deeply dissatisfied when:

- **truth is hidden with manipulation;**

- **information essence is made encrypted by a layer of complexity** which lead to an overcrowded data reality;

- politicians behave according to **personal interest** rather than societal wellbeing, disrespect core democratic values (e.g. inclusivity) and lack innovation foresight;

- **fake transparency, openness** and **inclusivity** is promoted, giving the impression that political institutions are open to dialogue with citizens even they are not [Cit-9]. About it, Cit-4 provided a vivid witness. He revealed how painful and stressful is reading what politics is saying and not doing regarding topics on which he could have an impact if he would have the possibility to deliver its contribution (e.g. AI and climate).

Consequently, like a sort of immunity defense against negative emotions, citizens revealed to start detaching from political participation by either increasingly do not vote or vote strategically. In fact, as expressed by [Cit-2, Cit-11] voting is not seen anymore as a powerful act since ruined by the widespread political corruption and the **failure to measure the impact of the vote itself**.

How then dissatisfaction is manifested result to be a personal affair. Respondents manifested different attitudes according to their perception of politics bringing to the surface different mind-sets:

- The **pro-active** ones, to change the current scenario, **try to be vocal, support movements** and **attend manifestations**. They find value to do constructive debates even with opponents so to *“understand different perspectives and have a better idea”* [Cit-7]. Few like Cit-5, despite never took part in a real manifestation, expressed to be **ready to protest for issues close to their feelings**.

- The **disillusioned** ones find **no value in manifesting** and do not perceive it as an engaging activity. As revealed by Cit-10, this is a bias inducted by how its country is governed, where follow up actions to manifestation are taken only when the political leadership has interests in it.

- The **pragmatic** and **reflective** interviewed, like Cit-11 and Cit-12, use their dissatisfaction as a starting point to make inner reflections and try to improve the world through their daily actions. If they cannot have an impact on who has control on society, they can control their own actions to affect society.

- The **resigned** ones like Cit-1 revealed to have taken part in a manifestation only once and since it did not lead to something made he feel to have lost time. This experience has further reinforced its static perception of politics.

V Ideal relationship

What politics represents for the interviewed people depends on their level of involvement and knowledge on the subject. From a real mystery [Cit-6] to a recent discovery [Cit-2], politics is ideally seen as a **powerful instrument to manage the innovation, keep cohesion and administrate the society.**

As one of the last questions has been asked participants to imagine that they have the power to entirely redesign the relationship between citizens and the political system and which one would have been the ideal core characteristics. Following their priority scale, they provided different answers.

- **Transparency** and trust. For Cit-1 the relationship *"must be transparent, controllable, verifiable"* so to *"make things clear for all people"* as added by Cit-6. According to Cit-8 to truly enabling transparency, there is a need for more dialogue to so build, as added by Cit-3 *"mutual trust between people and politicians"*. Moreover, a restored conversation will enable both sides to better support decision-making and subsequent follow up activities, said Cit-7.

- **Inclusivity and communicability.** For Cit-1 politics *"must be a tool for the use of the citizen, not a tool for using the citizen"*. To enable this change in mind-set, Cit-2 observed that politics need to work on its accessibility. One step in this direction will be represented by educating politicians in using a language which is *"universally understandable"* and **improve the overall literacy.** Otherwise, as added by Cit-4, the risk is that the message of politicians will be only collected by the *"upper layer of the society"* and not by the average person.

Another step, as Cit-2 continued, will be represented by enabling tracking and comparability over time of political actions.

- **Educate** people in understanding their power and role as citizens.

- **Accessibility** in terms of concepts and **participation beyond the moment of voting** to the different institutional layers at which politics operate. By doing so as supported by Cit-13 *"people can perceive to have the power to change the world around them"* since *"democracy is not just alone voting but rather how you are involved in the surroundings and how much of influence you have"*. As indicated by Cit-6, there is the need for *"more direct way of influencing politics"* and better tools because the population *"together wants to coordinate all the aspect of the public life"* [Cit-7] and reform because *"progress is part of political actions"* [Cit-8].

The ideal way indicated by various citizens to enhance participation would be through a shared common platform through which exchange feedback and monitor implementations at the various institutional levels. In this way, people can feel that their voice matter both at a personal and societal level.

- **Smartness** in using the freedom of taking actions and the responsibility of verifying their coherence with planning and widespread willingness.

- **Responsiveness** and **accountability** for the undertaken decisions which, as urged by Cit-2, have to give proof of tangible outcomes.

>> Many problems have been identified which reinforce, from citizens perspective, the perception that politics is a distant entity on which is hard to generate an impact. Those problems are:

- **lack of accountability**, reinforced by widespread **corruption** which makes question the value of personal commitment;

- **noisy information** (overcomplicated or oversimplified), **miscommunication** fostered by the **lack of common language** and moderation especially on social media;

- usage of **branded ideology** which fail to stimulate constructive discussions;

- **distance from real problems and common people needs**;

- **lack of responsiveness** and actions as follow-up activities to elections and discussions.

Section 5.2. KEY INSIGHTS

>> As positive aspects have been identified the **constitution**, which protect democratic principles, and the **political structure**, which maintains power division.

>> Dissatisfaction toward the political system results to be further reinforced when:

- **truth is hidden** with **manipulation** under overcrowded data, and **information essence is made encrypted by layers of complexity**;

- **politicians personal interest overweight societal wellbeing**;

- **fake transparency, openness** and **inclusivity** is promoted;

- it is **failed to measure the impact of personal contribution** and the weight of actions.

>> Respondents manifested different attitudes according to their perception of politics bringing to the surface different mind-sets [Figure 39]

>> What makes citizens genuinely excited is the practice of:

- **coherence**;

- **transparency**;

- **wise management**;

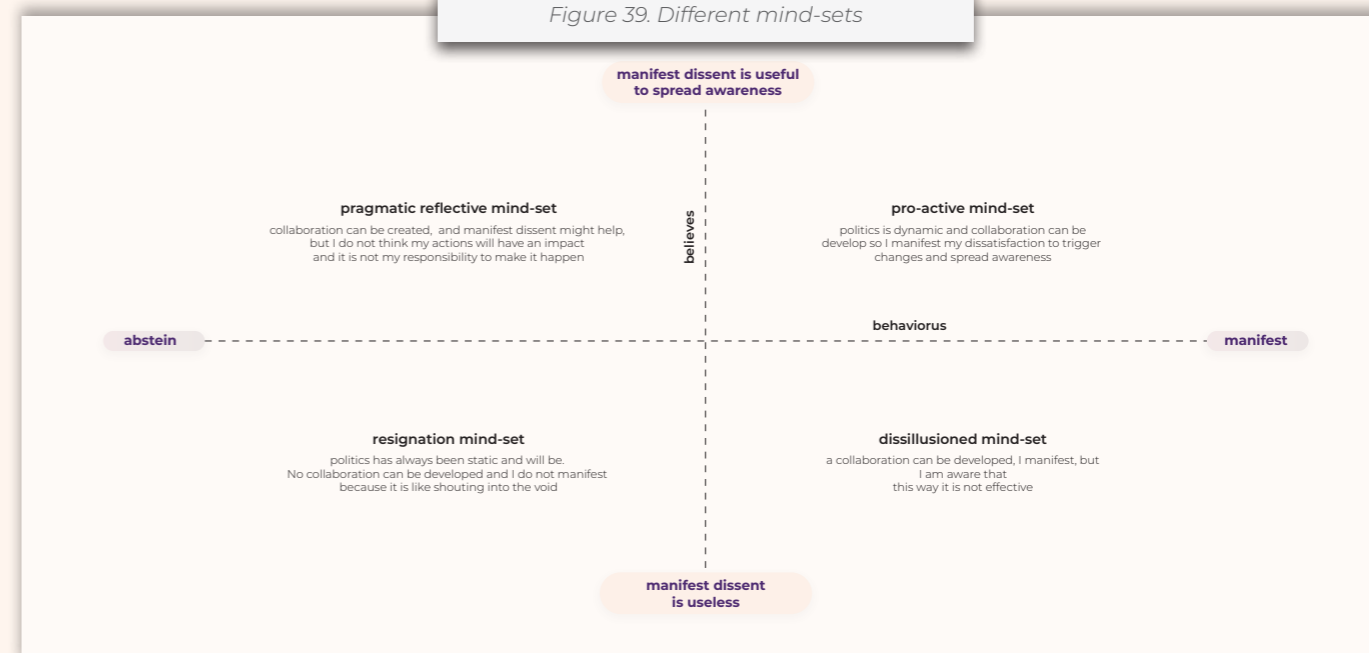
- **concrete proposal implementation**;

- **progressive and future-oriented mindset**;

- **fair inclusivity**;

- **respect of core democratic values.**

Figure 39. Different mind-sets



5.3 Interviews with politicians

5.3.1 General information

I Participant's recruitment

For this research phase, more than 35 politicians from different political parties, orientations and nationalities have been contacted. 28 never replied.

3 after a first email exchange stop to answer. While 4 demonstrated immediate interest for an interview and accepted to release one.

Their identity has been anonymized to respect the consent form they have signed and to avoid any possible political orientation bias toward their persona.

II Interview guide, execution and analysis

The interviews divided into 4 thematic blocks [Figure 40] lasted on the average 45-75 minutes and were conducted through digital platforms and phone calls. For what concerns the followed protocol for guide, execution and analysis, is considered valid what stated for the citizen's interviews (section 5.2.1).

IV Methodology's limitations

Due to timing, geographical constraints and Covid-19 restrictions, 2 interviews were conducted on Skype and 2 over the phone. Among the interviewed experts, 3/4 politicians were Italian. The interviews were conducted between March and April 2020. Considering the emergency and the few positive replies received, has been decided to carry out a purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002). Thus, the involvement of available, experts willing to help (Bernard, 2002; Spradley, 1979) enabled to extract rich information from limited resources.

[See Annex S for more information about citizens interviews and visualize the cluster's code book]

5.3.2 Key insights

I General introduction: how people need and concerns are detected

As stated by Pol-1 information about citizens needs are not constantly monitored but researched when "there is an election" so that "parties evaluate at 360° which are the values" they can propose during their campaigns. To retrieve that information "channels are calibrated to have an impact on a precise level" which can be local, regional or national. The traditional channels used are **surveys, focus groups** and **big data** from social media which analysis is entrusted to external consultancy agencies. However, despite surveys help in "get informations on what citizens find important" [Pol-4], as supported by Pol-2 they often reveal to be an inadequate instrument to straightforwardly portrait the current scenario and predict how it is going to evolve. This explains why often after elections the final scenario is different from the one initially envisioned.

Consequently, to obtain a more accurate overview of citizens problems and needs Pol-2 and Pol-4 said to frequent adopt **co-creation practices** and **crowdc-racy techniques**.

II Internal and external communication dynamics

From the interview emerged how political communication dynamics vary with the interlocutor. Overall,

both internal communication (within a political party) and external (with others) resulted in the lack of clear guidelines and shared code of conduct which lead to foster friction rather than dialogue. In particular, Pol-4, who belongs to an emerging party, lamented how the current scenario is far from being a talkative environment. To be seriously taken into account, it is required to have a minimum size rather than propose evidence on societal needs. According to Pol-2, those are the same discriminatory dynamics which makes many to look at civil society (mainly trade unions) as an obstacle to reaching people rather than an important intermediary in the discussion.

III Interaction with citizens

Social media resulted in being the preferred channel used to directly reach citizens since enabling better timing and coverage than traditional media and face to face practices. However, politicians recognized how they hide several counter effects of which it is important to be aware of.

- **Lose future focus.** According to Pol-1, social media lead politicians to focus on the "news of the moment" while losing the emphasis on "what should be at least the goals for the next five years".

- **Filter Bubbles.** A loop, as lamented by Pol-4, for which posts made by a political party end up with always reaching the same segment of the electorate.

- **Ephemeral duration.** Social media, for Pol-1, extremize the timing through which a politician gain and lose power leading to a continuous turnover of consent and dissent.

- **Manipulative persuasion** leading to open rooms for tailored semiotic and sentences to address latent feelings.

When asked politicians what they think makes citizens **interested** in getting informed about politics, they replied:

- **See politicians do their job**, "working to find a solution" [Pol-4] triggering particular positive response when actions are taken regarding a topic close to personal and societal interests. In fact, as narrated by Pol-2 when "people feel to be touched within their personal sphere, are more concerned and therefore tend to inform more".

- **Understand what happens** since "things are brought on a level that can be easily understood".

- There are **referential leaders** which activate the civic sense in individuals.

Nevertheless, according to Pol-3, it is not that easy to determine what makes people interested in politics as much it is to establish what makes them disinterested.

As sources of **disinterest** have been identified:

- **lack of future visions** and **innovation** mainly recognize by emerging parties when looking at how major realities behave. Pol-3, quoting De Gasperi, stated how the problem is that "politics is too focused on the next elections rather than on the next generations" making the entire socio-political scenario stuck within consolidated practices rather than open up to new ones.

- **Missing actions** by political institutions which reinforce in people the conviction that their issues hardly succeed in be collected and addressed. According to Pol-3, this failure is one of the collateral effects of the used data collection techniques which make politics "focus on a portion of the electorate" leading to neglect the remaining portion.

- **Internal fights** between parties that discuss about philosophical ideals rather than interventions.

- **Lack of understanding** about what it is happening in the political scenario especially when politicians manifest the "inability to provide answers to the choices done" [Pol-2] and when "misexplanation and misunderstanding" are fostered through a "non balanced information exchange between parties" [Pol-1].

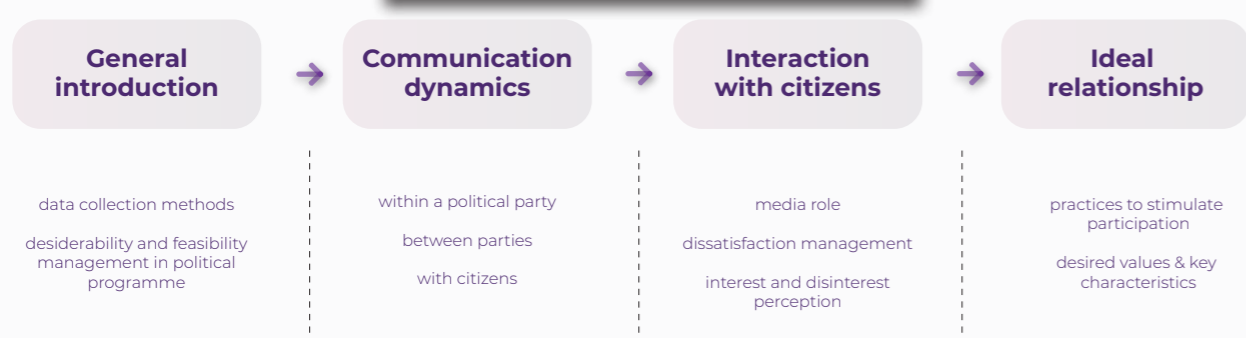
Consequently, respondents recognized how fidelity and affiliation to a party are becoming increasingly rare.

IV Ideal relationship

The interviewed politicians recognize that to stimulate citizens' participation at all levels it is necessary to **engineering communicational dynamics** making them more **constructive, accessible** and **directly engaging**. To succeed in this purpose, Pol-1 and Pol-2 recognized the potential that **digital platforms** have, especially during this time of physical distancing, in making people feel directly targeted, chosen, and so involved.

Pol-4 supported how thanks to social media, it is already possible to appreciate the positive benefits of dialogic political approaches. When citizens are capable of engaging in discussions, also thanks to the usage of infographics which makes them easily understand the situation [Pol-1] "get enthusiastic

Figure 40. Interview guide structure and aim



and [...] empowered". These practices, really help in making citizens part of the process, "bring back trust in the political system" and "what before was done by neighbourhood committees" and has been lost, along with people voices, when eliminated by law [Pol-2].

However, to enable the transition toward an ideal restored relationship, several systemic problems need to be addressed:

- **Lack of adequate instruments and meeting moments** through which bond with citizens. As stated by Pol-2 what is needed is "a link between politicians and citizens for a reciprocal exchange to enable the perception of major involvement" and defeat the sensation of being questioned only when elections are in the air. However, the main difficulties, according to Pol-1, it is to identify an adequate channel since in this polyhedric media ecosystem relevance is volatile.

- **Innovation fear** and rejection toward the new, which is an obstacle by useless bureaucracy as an attempt to slow down changes, before suddenly opt for a slow adoption [Pol-2].

- **Failure to recognize the good done by others** and preserve it when it generates beneficial results for the society. Pol-2 provided an interesting example narrating how a participatory approach employed to address a societal problem despite leading to appreciated solutions have been removed once a new leadership went to power.

- **Detachment from reality and social problems** which highlight the necessity for politics to return "down on earth, between people". [Pol-2]

In the end, since politics has been recognized to be a process, what is needed would be something to **support its continued evolution enabling more listening, "a continuous tracking" of citizen's feelings** [Pol-2], and **providing explanations** which will "take away a lot of annoyance or anger" [Pol-4]

Section 5.3. KEY INSIGHTS

>> Many problems have been identified by politicians as responsible for the reinforcement of citizen's perception that politics is a distant entity on which is hard to generate an impact. Those problems are:

- **lack of future vision and innovation**, nurtured by the usage of bureaucracy as law enforcement to slow down transitional changes;

- **missing actions** due to a wrong focus on internal ideological fights which lead to being blind in recognizing and preserving the good done by other political forces;

- **lack of understanding regarding citizens concerns** caused by a chronic detachment from reality and social problem as intrinsic collateral effect present in the very nature of the political career;

- **lack of adequate instruments and meeting moments** through which bond with citizens and exchange knowledge.

- **uncontrolled usage of social media** as a communicational channel.

>> What politicians think makes citizens interested in politics are:

- **see politicians do their job** especially regarding topics belonging to the personal sphere of interests and concerns;

- **understand what happens** thanks to the usage of targeting the individual civic sense;

- **presence of leaders** capable to target the individual civic sense.

>> Overall has been recognized how politics is a process which needs something to support its continues evolution enabling more listening, constant tracking of citizens feelings and provide them explanations regarding the decision-making process. To **engineering communicational dynamics** making them more **constructive, accessible and directly engaging** some respondents recognized the potential that **digital platforms** have, especially during this time of physical distancing, in making people feel directly targeted, chosen, and so involved.

5.4 Interviews with civil society

5.4.1 General information

I Participant's recruitment

For this research phase, 6 civil organizations from different fields and nationalities have been contacted. Only 3 Italian trade unions replied and demonstrated immediate interest in an interview, but in the end, only 2 organizations for a total of 3 representatives gave their availability and released an interview. Their contribution has been considered relevant, especially for what concerns their role in mobilizing citizens in taking part in manifestations.

II Interview guide, execution, analysis and limitations

The interviews divided into 4 thematic blocks [Figure 41] lasted on the average 50-80 minutes and were conducted through digital platforms and phone calls. For what concerns the followed protocol for guide, execution and analysis is considered valid what stated for the citizen's interviews (pp. 63). [See Annex T for more information about citizens interviews and visualize the cluster's code book]

5.4.2 Key insights

I Role, manifestation & interaction

Over the years, the role of trade unions has evolved along with society complexity [TrUn-3]. From exclusive worker's right advocate, they have become a societal mediator.

However, especially in recent time, they fail to involve citizens and anticipate their needs. TrUn-2 and TrUn3 pace the blame to:

- **their rusty structure** which is reluctant to approach the new digital means despite seeking new means to maintain contact with the grassroots organization and organize collective actions;

Figure 41. Interview guide structure and aim



- **be confounded with politics**, but **not be considered** by them unless succeed in reunite a sizable amount of people [TrUn-1].

Especially the lack of attention from the political side increasingly prevent people from taking part in manifestations and reinforce their sense of **defeat** due to the impossibility to change the situation.

II Ideal relationship

To revive citizen's participation, TrUn-1 recognized the importance of **providing personal consideration**, demonstrating to people (especially to young generations) how their potential can be employed to implement their wishes into concrete outcomes. However, to make this level of involvement possible, it is necessary to invest in adequate digital instruments [TrUn-3]. Despite being a difficult endeavor in a scenario where institutions "change everything to change anything" [TrUn-1], it would give to trade unions "another rhythm in terms of timing and mindset", enhance the communication of their initiatives as well as maximize the possibility of reach people that might find those interesting. Therefore an ideal relationship between citizens, civil society and political institutions should be:

- **open to listening, innovation, citizens involvement and collaboration;**

- **transparent in showing citizens the presence of a structure behind ready to help.**

>> In recent times trade unions fail to involve citizens in join manifestations since do not perceive to be capable of impacting political institutions. They try to revive their interest by providing personal consideration and support.

>> They believe the role, as well as the relationship with and between citizens and the political system, can be revived by **investing on the appropriate digital means which will enable better listening, involvement, participation and creation of initiatives closer to citizens interests.**

5.5 Interviews with journalists

5.5.1 General information

I Participant's recruitment

For this research phase, 6 journalists have been contacted. Only 3 Italian journalists replied and demonstrated immediate interest giving their availability for an interview.

II Interview guide, execution and analysis

The interviews divided into 4 thematic blocks [Figure 42] lasted on the average 40-60 minutes and were conducted through digital platforms and phone calls. For what concerns the followed protocol for guide, execution and analysis is considered valid what stated for the citizen's interviews (pp. 63).

Note: the first three thematic blocks of these interviews have been employed in Chapter 4 (section 4.6 pp. 45) to explore the implications of the digitalization of information. In the present section will be only discussed the last block regarding the ideal relational characteristics of the relationship between citizens and the political system from the journalists perspective.

5.5.2 Key insights

According to the journalists before the present democratic crisis citizens used to get informed more since "had an awareness of the possibility to count more in the collective life" [Media-3]. This sensation is still present at the local level where "citizens feel to be more protagonist and less left behind".

The current reduced interest has to be attributed to:

- **informational chaos**, where data spectacularization overweight the importance of essential truth [Media-2];
- **feeling of not being targeted** fostered by the usage

of a jargon hard to understand by common citizens;

- **lack of time** for "reordering the disorganized flow of information" which come from multiple channels.

On the other hand, respondents that getting informed about politics is still pleasing for people that like to be posted "especially about issues which regards them personally" and result to be close to their concerns [Media-3]. However, distinguish truth from fake it is not an easy task. According to Media-2, it is missing a form of mediation, especially at the digital level, which also needs to unify citizens informational needs.

In the attempt to revive citizens informational interest, the journalists are trying to do their part by simplifying data to "trigger discussion" [Media-3] and varying format assortment (e.g. infographics, videos) "to stimulate their attention" and get across societal levels. However, they recognized how there is not only a "problem of participative democracy", but also of "representative democracy". Therefore it is necessary to conjointly "be back to a culture which award participation" [Media-1] and where there are more prepared politicians which "have in mind to solve the real issues that citizens have" as well as to help individuals in developing the mindset "that everything should not be delegated to politicians." [Media-2].

>> Journalists identified how the reduced interest in getting informed about politics is generally infused by informational chaos, feeling of not being targeted and lack of time to unify fragmented information retrieved from different channels. Although some still like to get informed regarding an issue close to their interests and concerns.

>> Journalists identified the urgency to: have **better mediation at a digital level so to unify citizens informational need; return to a culture which award participation; have more prepared politicians closer to citizens needs; educate citizens that everything should not be delegated to politicians.**

Section 5.5

KEY INSIGHTS

M

5.6 Online surveys & observation

5.6.1 General information

From the Facebook socio-political discussion groups which have been daily monitored for three months have emerged similar data to interviews and literature review.

I Surveys

Two surveys have been published as a post on the various Facebook groups which have been made available for the subscribers after being approved by the page's manager. Despite only a few people, compared to the total amount of subscribed, replied they characteristics enable to have a good assortment of different societal segments in terms of nationality, age and gender.

The first survey [Figure 43] and the second one [Figure 44] enable to confirm further the portrait of the content which emerged both from literature and interviews. No relevant new insights have been produced.

II Observation

The observation part result to be a very insightful experience. By being subscribed to those groups, I had the opportunity to understand better how the amount and poor quality of the information exchanged can easily create an overwhelming reality. Clearly emerged how social media, especially when used to discuss burning topic, are **lacking an effective mediation instrument capable of indicating people when tones become too harsh and when not a reliable source of information is shared.**

Despite their aim to create a dialogical environment, those social groups easily turn to be an echo chamber for hyperpartisanship used to complain rather than trigger changes. Moreover, since they use a social media channel and not an institutional one, their energy and feedbacks fail to be channeled, collected and therefore implemented by institutions. Elements that further reinforce their conviction that political institutions are distant and static entities which cannot be reached.

One question arose spontaneously at this point: "how to channel all the energy that people spend on different channels in the attempt to have a say on the socio-political decision-making process?"

Figure 43. Survey about main problems

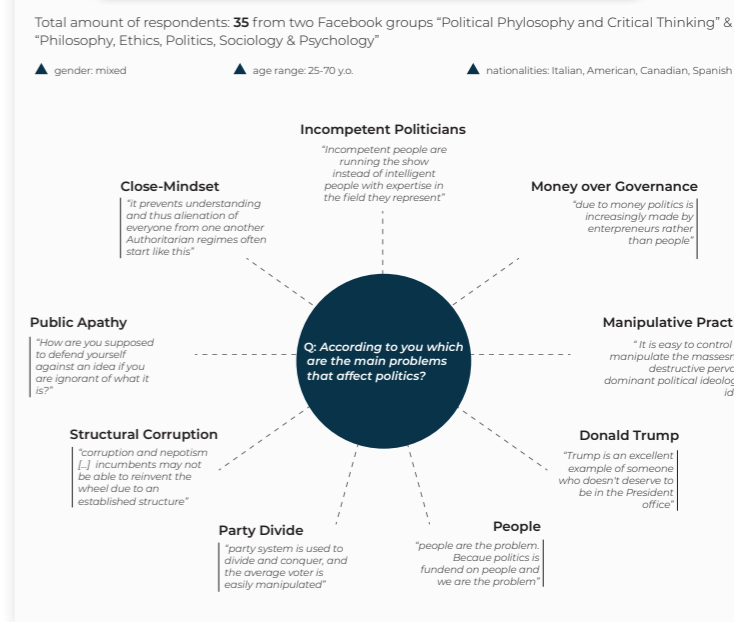


Figure 44. Survey about ideal relationship

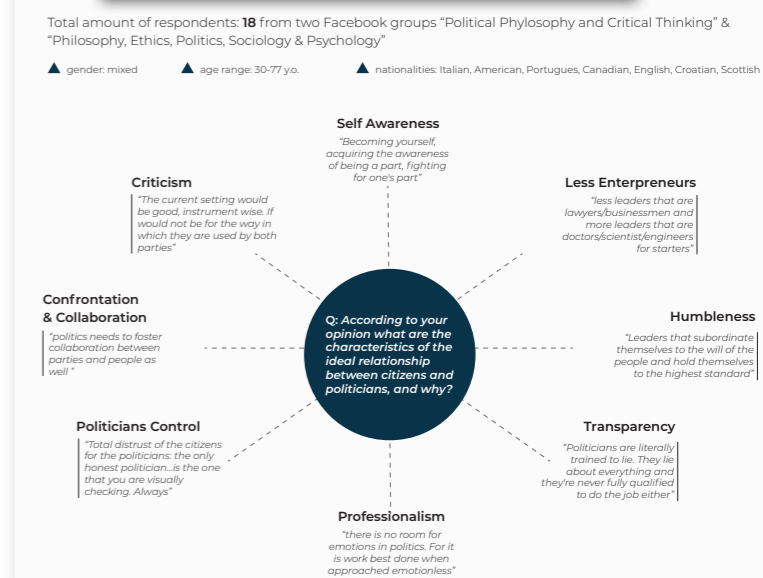
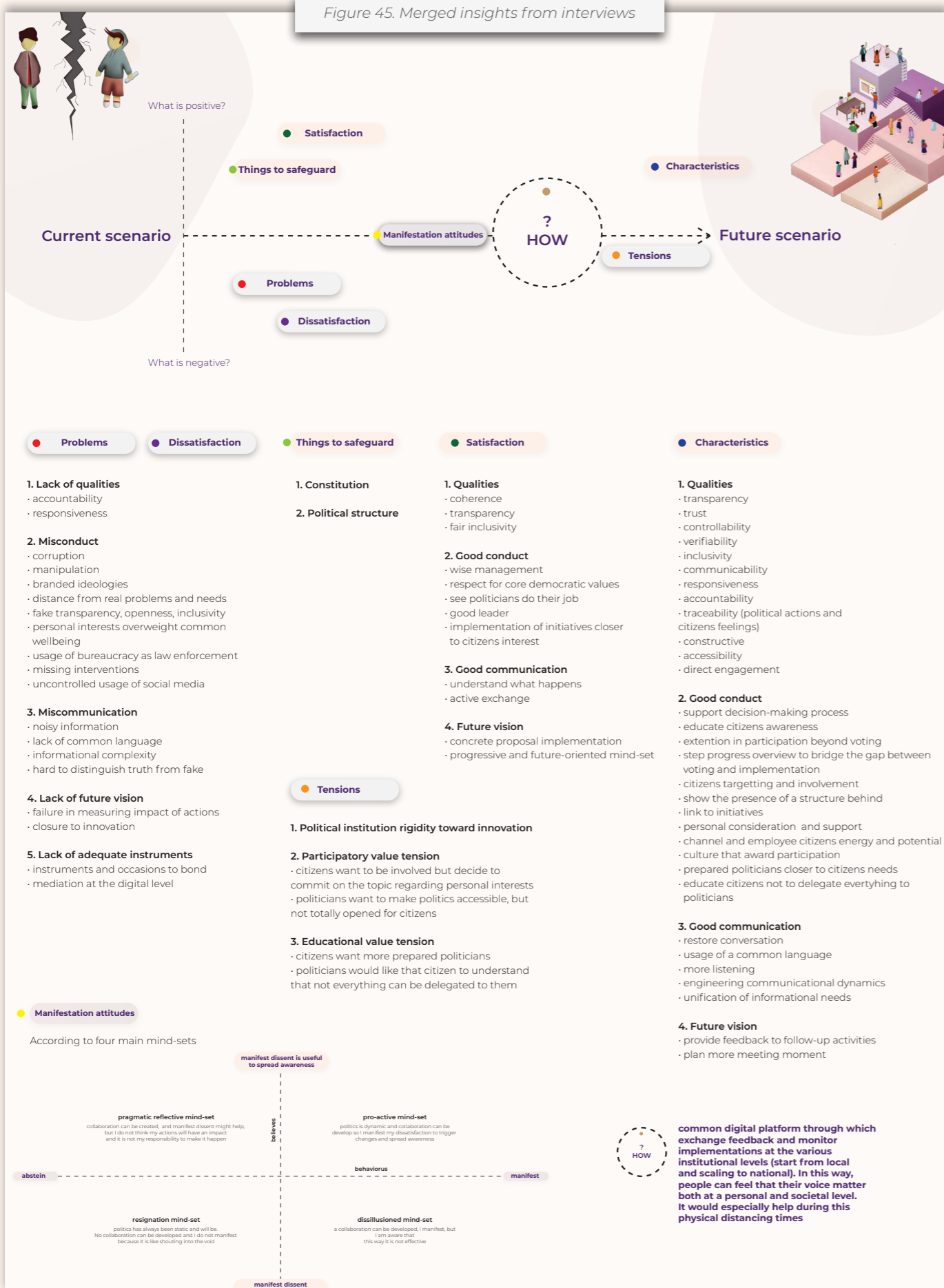


Figure 42. Interview guide structure and aim



Chapter 05. KEY INSIGHTS & CONCLUSION

Figure 45. Merged insights from interviews



>> This Chapter has enabled to deeply understand how citizens and the political system perceive from a personal perspective their relationship. To enrich the portrait of the current context and better appreciate how the future one can be implemented has also been considered the perspectives of media and civil society (trade unions) since having an important role on how perceptions are shaped. The main insights have been retrieved through in-depth semi-structured interviews and validated by on-line surveys and observation.

What has emerged, illustrated in Figure 45, is a shared vision about how citizens and the political system negatively perceive their relationship and what would necessary to do in order to achieve an ideal collaborative scenario.

>> In particular what resulted to be a spot on element was that all parties involved despite differences in nationality, role and demographics agreed on:

- current problematics and sources of dissatisfaction;
- elements to protect and safeguard;
- sources of satisfaction;
- value alignment on ideal characteristics of the future relationship;
- value tensions regarding participatory and educational implications;
- **investment on the realization of a common digital platform to enable information exchange, involvement and participation across institutional levels and societal segments.**

involvement and participation across institutional levels and societal segments.

>> Conclusion

I Validated assumption: "The relational crisis between citizens and the political system knows no boundaries"

From the obtained insights has emerged how, despite different demographics and standpoints respondents portrait a similar present context characterized by analogous problematics and sources of dissatisfaction. Alike they also shared similar implementations ideas.

II Research questions 1.1 and 3 answered

Considering the insights and relative conclusions obtained from this Chapter, we can reasonably say that the research questions 1.1 and 3 have been answered.

III First research question almost answered

The obtained insights supplied a better definition of the contexts factors relative to "Negative political perception" and "Evolving political attitude" identified in the previous Chapter. They provided us with a complete portrait of the current context which will enable to finally define in the next Chapter the context structure crucial to determine where, when and how a "desired social impact is best achieved". Last but not least, it will make it possible to fully answer the first research question and move in the direction of design a solution.

1. "What is causing the gap in the relationship between citizens and the political system?"

1.1 "how do citizens and the political system perceive their relationship?"

3. "What needs to be done to close the gap effectively?"

Chapter 06

Structuring the context

This Chapter is dedicated to the definition of the context structure by applying a cause-and-effect chain to the context factors identified in Chapter 4 and 5. After a brief description of the situation, in which attention is paid to the contrast between the present vision and the desired future one, it is defined where exactly to intervene at the mediation level to generate impact. Goals are finally defined with the design statement upon which ideation is done next.

Sections in this Chapter

- 6.1 "Context structure"
- 6.2 "Problem and scope redefinition"
- 6.3 "Design statement"



6.1 Context structure

In this section, the context structure is defined using a cause-and-effect chain as one of the indicated methods in the SID methodology.

6.1.1 Cause-and effect chain

To create order in the “chaotic jungle” of insights obtained and better observe how the various context factors interact with each other, a cause-and-effect chain has been chosen as an approach to structure the context. [Figure 46]

Each portion of the chain is explained separately

I A>>B

The story that emerges tells how the current democratic crisis is provoked by an explosive mix of practices which harm fundamental democratic principles (A):

- lack of regulations;
- manipulations strategies;
- misconduct fostered by an abusive usage of media channels;
- branding.

Those elements brought to the surface a series of a systemic problem in terms of mind-set, education and interaction both from the side of citizens and politicians. (See Chapter 5 conclusions).

In the specific evidence indicates how the current negative perception that citizens have about politics (B) it is nurtured by the perception of:

• **Unbalanced communication dynamics.** Despite using the same channels, while the information exchange by politics succeeds to come across all societal segments, the ones produced by citizens fail to have the equivalent impact on the institutional levels [Figure 47].

• **A mismatch between the rigid and static building blocks of the political system in contrast with the fluidity and interactivity of social media.**

• **A mismatch between the openness and the participatory inclusivity promoted by institutions and the real possibility for citizens to have an impact on the governmental decision-making process.**

Consequently, the feeling that communication happens in a mono-directional way plays the role of a reagent that trigger different behaviours in citizens which, as in a vicious loop, reinforce their perception that politics is a distant entity.

II B>>C

As a consequence of their perceptions, citizens develop different mind-set and behave according to them. Mainly manifesting dissatisfaction in various forms or abstaining. (C)

Who manifests use physical and digital channels

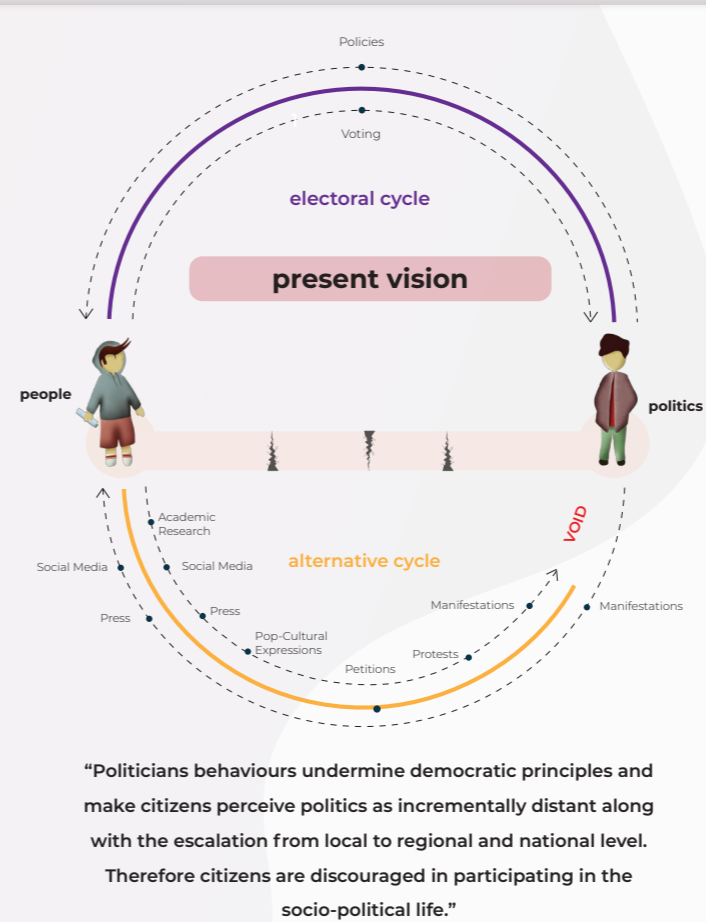
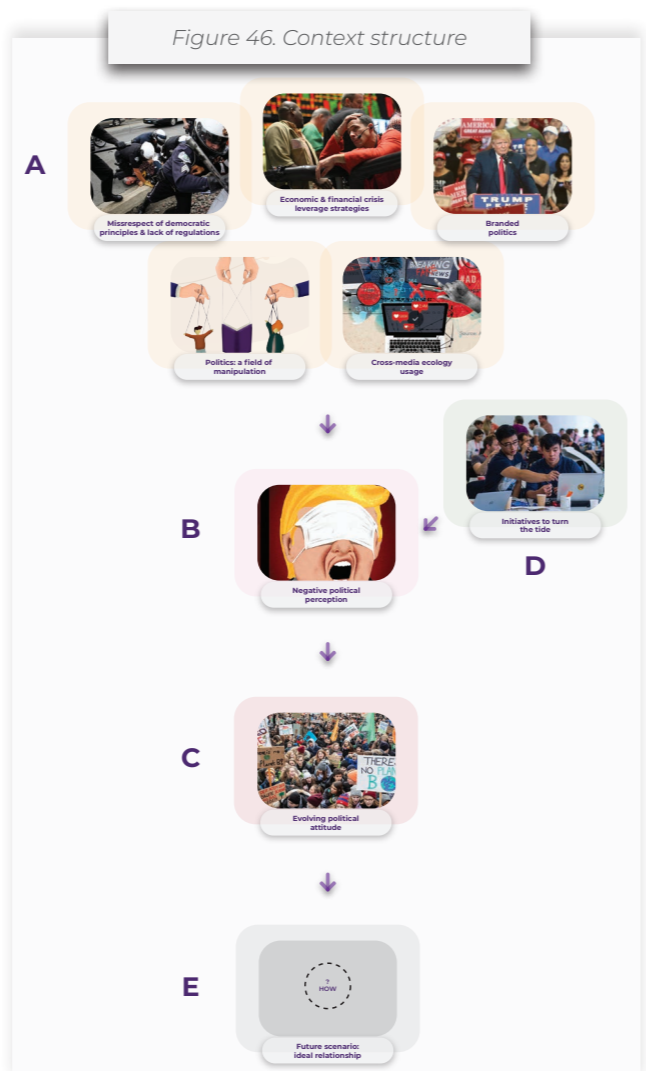


Figure 47. Present and future vision

with different purposes:

- releasing frustration;
- making proposals;
- demand to the political system more transparency and accountability;
- request participation extension beyond the moment of voting.

Those who abstain do not believe in the possibility of having a personal impact on politics.

III D>>B

To improve citizens political perception [Figure 47] and support them, several initiatives are undertaken worldwide by governments, organizations and pro-active citizens (D). However, the majority of those since focus on providing political orientation and information, fail to channel citizens' energy and help them to have an impact on the political system directly.

IV C>>E

To turn into reality, the future ideal scenario (E) that citizens, politicians and civil society aim to achieve it is necessary to realize an intervention at the mediation level, which would allow:

- more frequent and effective communication dy-

namics;

- to channel all the energy that it is currently spent by people through various means, from manifestations to social media;
- to encourage people in manifesting their opinion by showing them how follow-up activities capable of implementing societal wishes into concrete outcomes are possible.

As emerged from the respondent's vision alignment realized at the end of the previous Chapter, a desirable solution would consist in the **realization of a common digital platform to enable information exchange, involvement and participation across institutional levels and societal segments.**

V Validation

These insights have been validated with 5 semi-structured interviews with respondents from different age and occupation. Overall they agreed on current and future context. One stressed how it would be important to have an intervention since politics is a service for which he pays taxes, however **“it is not like that you pick up the phone and text politics to say what is wrong for you.”**

[See Annex R for more]



6.2 Problem & goals redefinition

In light of the insights obtained from the previous section regarding context structure, current and future vision, problem, target and goals of this project are redefined before moving to the design phase.

6.2.1 Problem

The behaviours of the political institutions are leading people questioning the current quality of democracy. While this discourages some citizens in manifesting their concerns, push others to ask for participation extension and shared governance firmly. However, the lack of an adequate instrument to channel people's energy and bridge the public opinion makes proposals hard to come across.

6.2.2 Target mind-set

Pro-active citizens, especially committed at the local level, which currently use different manifestations forms to provide feedback to the political system. Their aim is to be included in the decision-making process beyond the moment of voting. [Figure 48]

I Sub-client

Citizens that are dissatisfied about the current political interaction practices and:

- manifest their unease despite being aware that it is

a waste of time due to current ineffective channels available;

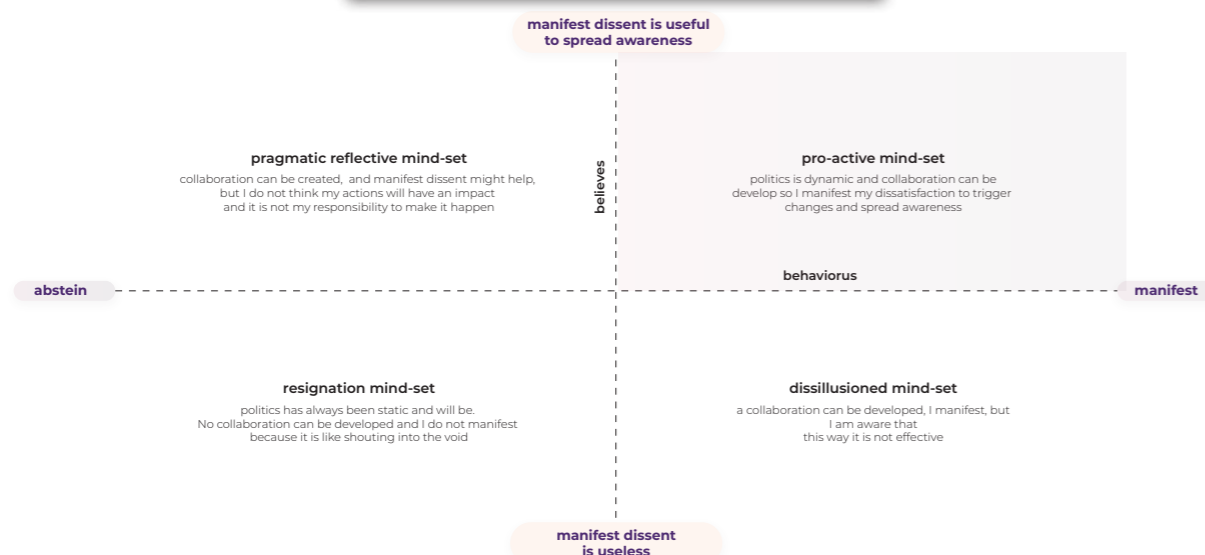
- would manifest their unease if ensure that it is not going to be a waste of time;
- do not manifest their unease because convinced that it is going to be a waste of time due to the unreachability of the political system.

6.2.3 Goals

The following design goals have been identified:

1. change citizens and politicians relationship dynamics enabling a bi-directional interaction and reduction in the distance perceived;
2. establish a stable connection and ongoing dialogue between citizens and political institutions;
3. help citizens in developing socio-political awareness and responsibility regarding their rights and duties;
4. provide instruments which enable to channel citizens energy, bridge public opinion and share governance representing an extension in participation beyond the moment of voting;
5. include citizens perspective into the political decision-making process to develop sustainable governmental decisions.

Figure 48. Mind-set targets



6.3 Design statement

The statement, defined following the SID methodology, serves to explain how changes are intended to be created within the context of electoral democracies through design.

To **improve the quality of democracy, increase participation and reduce the distance** from the political institution, I wish to **encourage citizens to responsibly manifest their concerns** by **collecting their abstract wishes** and transform them into **concrete interventions**

- social implication of the behaviour
- behaviour to support through design
- meaning of the behaviour

Chapter 06. KEY INSIGHTS & CONCLUSION

>> Through a cause-and-effect chain the structure of the context has been defined, enabling to establish the direction to follow to realize an intervention as soon as possible.

>> The redefinition of problems and goals, as well as the identification of a referential target segment (based on mind-set), led the formulation of the design statement upon which ideation is realized in the next Chapter.

>> Conclusion

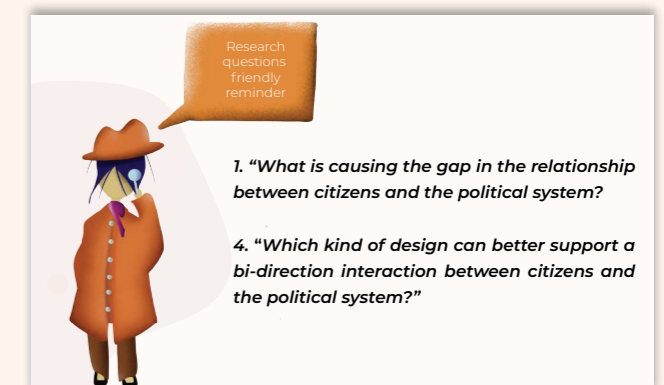
I Research questions 1 answered

Considering the insights obtained from this Chapter, we can reasonably say that the research question has

been answered.

II Research question 4 partially answered

The obtained insights have enabled to identify a desirable direction to follow, consisting of an on-line platform, regarding which further ideation is needed.



Chapter 07

From insights to design

In this Chapter, the main insights obtain from the research phase are summarize and presented visually. Based on them, it is explained how it has been elaborated the framework (containing design pillars, evaluation parameters and values) used as a guide during the ideation phase. Besides the main iterative steps followed are introduced.

Sections in this Chapter

7.1 "Ideation set-up"

7.2 "Iterative ideation"

Note 1: besides the insights obtained from the previous sections, one important factor personally kept into account has been the L'Aquila case introduced at the beginning of Chapter 1. In fact, my wish is to realize a design which, improving the communication and collaboration dynamics between citizens and institutions, would result to be beneficial to effectively resolve situations still problematic, like the L'Aquila one, which have been stalled for too long.

The l'Aquila case will be included as example to valuate the concept capabilities.

Note 2: Although I would have liked to directly ideate, test and develop a design together with the L'Aquila citizens, due to the Corona emergency, it has not been possible. Considering the graduation planning against geographical constraints and participant's recruitment ease has been decided to stick to a different reality which is the one of my hometown, La Spezia (Liguria). Nevertheless, to bring a fresh perspective into the design ideation, as well as have a taste of its potentiality in another context than the Italian one, respondents from different background and nationalities have been involved into the process.

7.1 Ideation set-up

In this section, it is briefly explained how from the goals identified in the previous Chapter has been developed the framework used as a guide during the design ideation.

With the ideation it officially starts the design phase which objective is the realization of an artifact capable of bridging the gap in the relationship between citizens and the political system.

7.1.1 Framework

Upon the goals redefined in the previous Chapter has been developed a basic framework to guide the entire ideation process better. [Figure 49]

For a brief reminder the goals are:

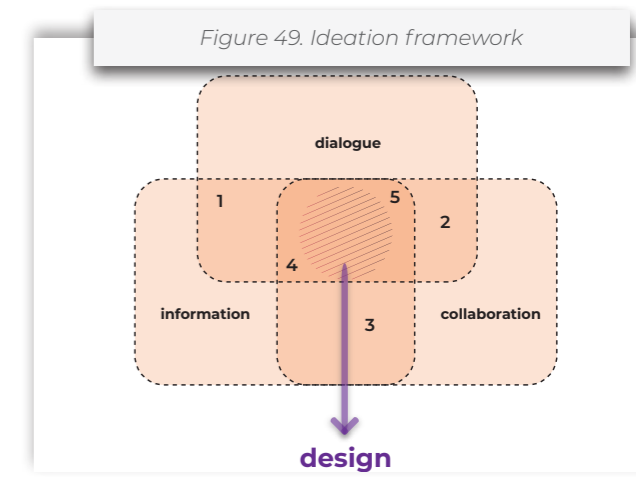
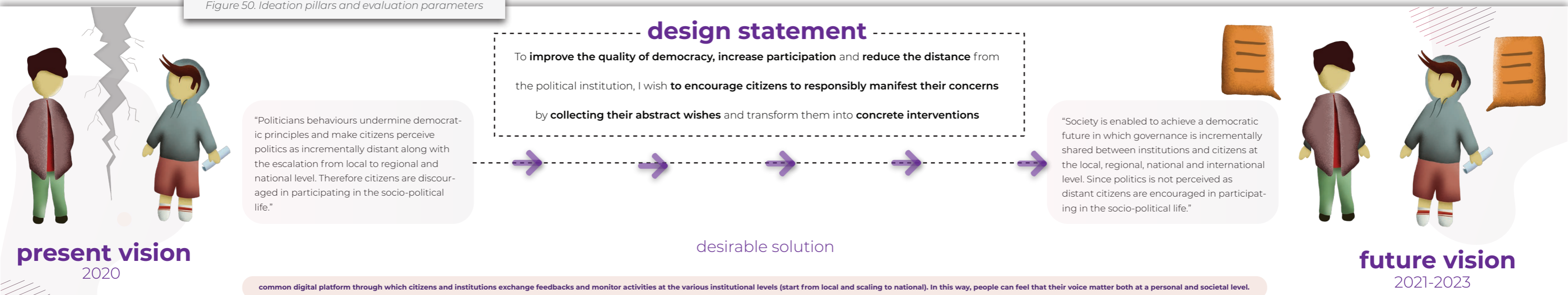


Figure 50. Ideation pillars and evaluation parameters



common digital platform through which citizens and institutions exchange feedbacks and monitor activities at the various institutional levels (start from local and scaling to national). In this way, people can feel that their voice matter both at a personal and societal level.

present vision
2020

future vision
2021-2023

design to realize

design pillars

design evaluation parameters

values

information	dialogue	collaboration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · impartiality (01) · reduce distance through collaboration (04) · encourage the pursuit of truth with quality information (04) · offer easy to follow yet complete narrative through the employment of infographics and video (04) · avoid noisy information and prose contents in an appealing way (04) · importance to know that information is not provided by fake users (04) · transparent data exchange (04) · engineering communication dynamic like Norway (04) · important to share data, strategies, visions (04) · data accessibility help to engage different groups (04) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · create direct communication channels between citizens and institutions (04) · share a clear action plan (04) · explain complex messages simply and intuitively as Banksy does (04) · it is important not to make feel people intellectually inadequate (04) · usage of a common language (05) · enable to distinguish truth from fake (05) · inform about misconduct · monitor whether politicians do their job (05) · enable the formation of a political culture with clear rights and duties (05) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · reduce distance through dialogue (04) · activate a constructive feedback loop · important to activate social participation (04) · knowledge and experience exchange (04) · bridge gap through non-coercive dialogue (04) · engineering communication dynamic to help people to join the discussion (04) · create direct communication channels between citizens and institutions (04) · offer mediation at the digital level (05) · enable both citizens and institutions to proposed ideas (05)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · awareness · control · trustworthiness · reliability · integrity · accountability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · coherence · fairness · verifiability · traceability (of political actions and citizens feelings) · empowerment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · communicability · responsiveness · assistance · support · relevance · resonance
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · personal consideration makes feel citizens targeted more (05) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · scalability (01) · co-evolution (02) · reduce distance through collaboration (04) · guarantee action consistency (04) · provide official forms of participation (04) · help maintain societal balance (04) · recognize the good done by others (04) · combine human empathy with digital efficiency (04) · across societal segmentation and hierarchical levels (04) · enable citizens to monitor developments make proposals (04) · possibility to vote ideas (04) · exchange feedbacks and enable incremental governance (04) · create direct collaboration channels between citizens and institutions (04)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · importance to give citizens room for self-expression (04) · citizens collaborate more at the local level and are more engaged regarding things closer to their interest and concerns (05) · enable people to measure the impact of their actions (05) · provide instruments and occasions to bond (05) · peer feeling, but maintain role distinction (05) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · belonging · inclusivity · accessibility · shared management · engagement · commitment

- other parameters**
- respect for democratic principles (01)
 - avoid polarization and manipulation (04)
 - avoid branded ideologies and political party's cues (04)
 - digital media foster inclusivity, democratize information and result appealing for young generations (04)
 - digital platforms enable the creation of shared environments (on-line, off-line) useful in this distancing time (04)
 - have purposeful intents (04)
 - time efficiency (04)
 - anonymity is ok if ensured by authentication (04)

- tensions**
- 1. Political institution rigidity toward innovation**
 - 2. Participatory value tension**
 - citizens want to be involved but decide to commit on the topic regarding personal interests
 - politicians want to make politics accessible, but not totally opened for citizens
 - 3. Educational value tension**
 - citizens want more prepared politicians
 - politicians would like that citizen to understand that not everything can be delegated to them

NOTE: the number between "()" refers to the Chapter where information can be found



1. change citizens and politicians relationship dynamics enabling a bi-directional interaction and reduction in the distance perceived;
2. establish a stable connection and ongoing dialogue between citizens and political institutions;
3. help citizens in developing socio-political awareness and responsibility regarding their rights and duties;
4. provide instruments which enable to channel citizens energy, bridge public opinion and share governance representing an extension in participation beyond the moment of voting;
5. include citizens perspective into the political decision-making process to develop sustainable governmental decisions.

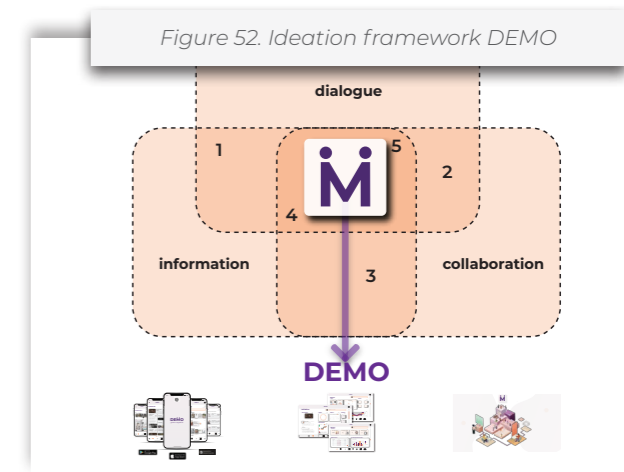
The framework consists of three main pillars: **information**, **dialogue** and **collaboration** upon which the

- new interaction design needs to be founded.
- As emerged from the insights obtained combining literature research, interviews, surveys and observation, this new design needs to [Figure 50]:
- enable a smooth transition from the present vision to the future one following the design statement;
 - be realized as soon as possible, therefore the future vision that goes from 2021-2023;
 - follow the design evaluation parameters which contain key elements to define what desirable and necessary to realize;
 - provide the indicated value to turn the current negative political perception;
 - keep into account the identifies tensions;
 - consider the desirable design indicated by respondents during interviews as promising starting point.

can exchange feedback and monitor activities at the various institutional levels (start from local and scaling to national).

To avoid fixation, separate brainstorming sessions have been executed together with experts in interaction design and AI as well as common citizens. The aim was to understand better what encourages citizens to manifest their concerns and what can encourage them to be actively part of the socio-political life. Their insights overall confirmed the potentiality of the platform as design concept, which led to the development of the first version of DEMO tested with TU Delft designers [Figure 53]

Their feedbacks conjointly with the one received from the second round of ideation stressed the importance of:



- having an entire functioning system behind the platform to provide assurance;
- allow the users to perform a various range of actions (e.g. petitions, discover initiatives);
- prevent DEMO from becoming a noisy platform like social media.

All those elements, further enriched by the data collected during validation, lead to the realization of DEMO as final design articulated on three concepts: DEMO App for citizens, DEMOs Software for institutions and DEMOc Community, "sub-partes" guarantor for an adequate technical functioning and ethical usage of all the parts. **DEMO aim is to ensure information, dialogue and collaboration to bridge public opinion and share governance.** [Figure 52]



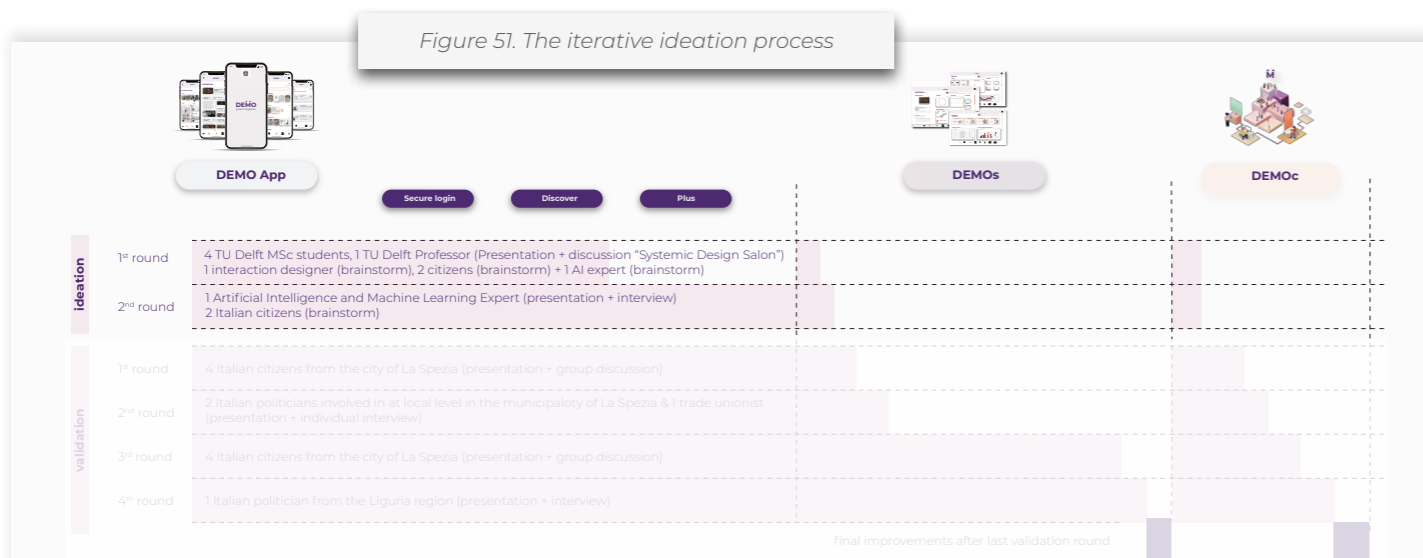
7.2 Iterative ideation

In this section, it is explained how the ideation has been executed iteratively and how it lead to the development of DEMO as a final design concept.

The ideation process, as well as the validation one (which will be explained in Chapter 9), has been done iteratively. It means that relevant insights obtained from one round have been implemented in the design concept to be tested in the subsequent round with new respondents. [Figure 51]

7.2.1 Ideation rounds

As starting point has been decided to individually brainstorm around the desirable concept emerged from interviews in Chapter 5: **a common digital platform through which citizens and institutions**



Chapter 07. KEY INSIGHTS & CONCLUSION

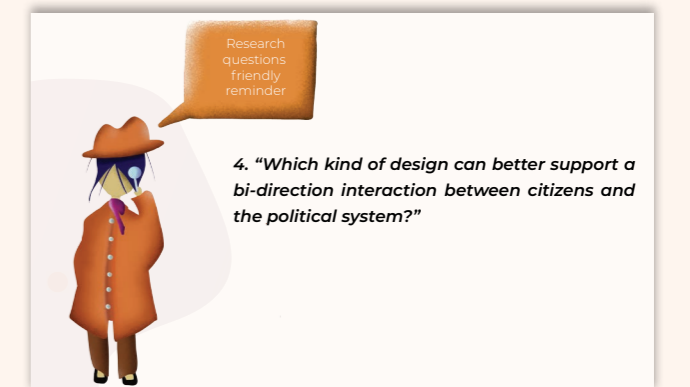
>> Conclusion

Upon the goals redefined in the previous Chapter has been developed a basic framework to guide the entire ideation process better. Its usage, conjointly with the insights obtained from iterative rounds of ideation and validation lead to the realization of DEMO. DEMO is the final design articulated on three concepts: DEMO App for citizens, DEMOs Software for institutions and DEMOc Community, "sub-partes" guarantor for an adequate technical functioning and ethical usage of all the parts. In the next Chapter DEMO and its strategy are presented in details.

II Research question 4 almost answered

The obtained insights have enabled to portrait with

more accuracy the type of design capable of supporting a bi-directional interaction between citizens and the political system. This research question can be considered fully answered in the next Chapter.



Chapter 08

DEMO: #governtogether

This Chapter is dedicated to the presentation of DEMO, a project articulated upon three concepts (app, software and company) which aims to provide citizens and political institutions with the instruments to share governance. After a separate introduction to the concepts, few pages will be dedicated to the analysis of the launch strategy, implementation plan and branding.

Sections in this Chapter

8.1 "Introduction to DEMO"

8.2 "DEMO App"

8.3 "DEMOs Software"

8.4 "DEMOc Community"

8.5 "DEMO roadmap"

8.6 "DEMO DNA & visual identity"

Note 1: *the final design concept illustrated in this Chapter has been iteratively ideated and validated. To present the content in a logical order has been chosen to introduce the ideation process (Chapter 7) and the validation one (Chapter 9) separately.*

Note 2: *the final design, due to time and resources constraints, is still based on certain assumptions which will be laterally addressed in Chapter 10 as part of the final discussion.*

Note 3: *the examples provided in this Chapter are used with illustrative purpose.*

Note 4: *La Spezia municipality and province (local level), Liguria region (regional level), Italian State (national level) are used as test desks for the concept. Based on that, respondents have been chosen accordingly both from citizens and political side.*

8.1 Introduction to DEMO

The final design presented to bridge the gap in the relationship between citizens and the political system in electoral democratic countries it is called DEMO.

I What is DEMO?

DEMO is a project articulated on three concepts (app, software and company) which overall goal is to **provide citizens and governmental institutions with the adequate instruments to establish an ongoing bi-directional interaction which will enable to bridge public opinion and share governance representing an extension in participation beyond the moment of voting.**

Every concept has its specific sub-goal, as illustrated in Figure 55, and they will be discussed in details in the dedicated sections (8.2, 8.3, 8.4).

II How governance is shared?

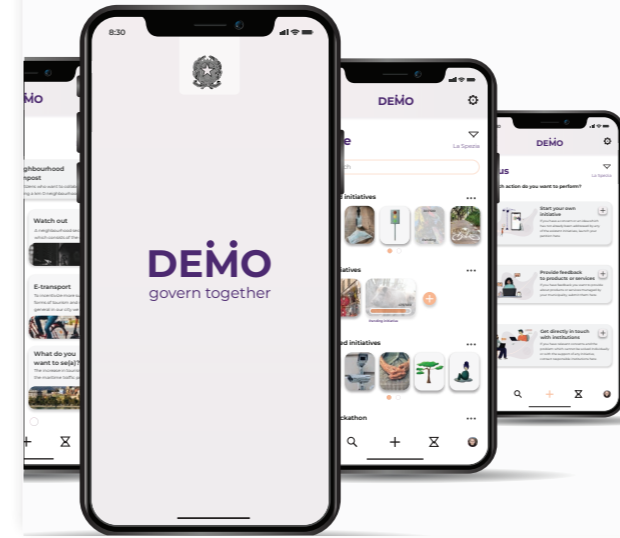
The combination of DEMO App (used by citizens) and DEMOs Software (use by institutions) [and DEMOc Community which control the ethical functioning and usage of DEMO & DEMOs] creates an on-line off-line environment which offers a prototypical consultation process open to the whole society. [Figure 55]. Through them, experts and ordinary people can engage in a rationally constructive discussion on relevant topics at the various governmental levels and decide together an action line. The relevance of the topics to address will be established upon:

- the priority whose resolution has on both civic and institutional agenda;
- the extent to which a solution can be promptly implemented.

The topics on which DEMO, for instance, can help having an impact on are:

- **Practical administrative local problems** e.g. Garbage collection schedule case) which portrait a clear and precise situation solvable in a short time. It concerns a logistic issue which can be managed by aligning citizen's collection needs together with the executive capabilities of the service provider.
Citizens via App: can directly report the problem to responsible administration and express desirable solutions.
Administration via Software: can monitor how many people are experiencing the issue, which is their desirable solution; measure its feasibility and if possible implement it.
- **Emergency situations** (e.g. L'Aquila case which illustrates a practical societal problem at the local level whose resolution depend on the national government decision). Despite it is evident, which is the problem and the concrete solution that citizens want to see implemented, its realization requires a structured implementation roadmap along with extensive collaboration across institutional levels.
Citizens via App: (from the same local reality, as well as other regions) can directly offer their support in the form of initiative and ask for institutions to grant them action permission; submit feedbacks and requests to prioritize the realization of an intervention in the institutional agenda.
Administration via Software: ((at the level to which the proposal is submitted) can verify initiatives adequacy and feed, include them into their action line/bring it to the attention of other levels, speed up the bureaucracy.
- **Societal national problems** (e.g. discrimination and lack of inclusivity) which resolution can be achieved only through a long vision planning and collabora-

Figure 54. On-line off-line environment

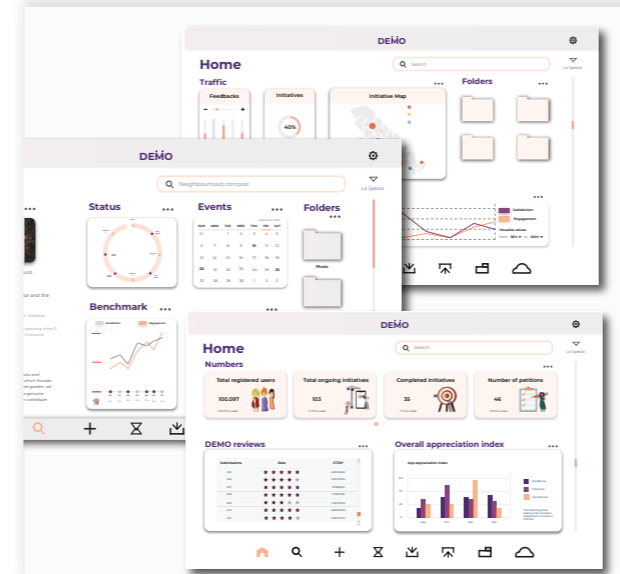


APP

Goal: be a meeting point between citizens and political institutions at local, regional national level, to moderately exchange knowledge, feedback and co-realize initiatives which will result beneficial for the societal wellbeing.

Target: Pro-active citizens, especially committed at the local level, which currently used different manifestations forms to provide feedback to the political system in the attempt to be included in the decision-making process beyond the moment of voting.

Sub-target: Citizens that are dissatisfied about the current political interaction practices, but do not manifest their unease because afraid that it is going to be a waste of time due to the unreachability of the political system.



SOFTWARE

Goal: enable governmental institutions to bridge public opinion by managing the feedbacks and proposal submitted by citizens through DEMO App as well as channeling their wishes and co-design proposal to turn their concerns into actionable implementations.

Target: governmental institutions at the local, regional and national level, which currently used different channels to communicate with citizens and measure their sentiments in the attempt to include the societal perspective into their decision-making process to develop sustainable government decisions.

Note: App & Software work together



COMMUNITY

Goal: guarantee the proper technical functioning as well as ethical usage of the App and Software on behalf of citizens and political institutions. DEMOc Community plays the role of "sub-partes" guarantor which objective is to ensure that the core democratic principles are respected.

Team: multidisciplinary team composed of 40% coders, 10% designers, 10% NGO workers, 10% civil society and govern institutional representative (local, regional and national), 30% of citizens from all walks of life.

Note: when mentioned "DEMO team" it means DEMOc

Figure 55. DEMO App, DEMOs & DEMOc

tion across societal segmentation and institutional levels.

Citizens via App: can propose ideas; start initiatives locally as well as promote educational campaign nationally;
Administration via Software: can harvest citizens ideas; propose practical tips; start hackathons and challenges. Major reflection about them will be done in Chapter 10 after that validation will be conduct in Chapter 9.

DEMO challenge

DEMO wish to become an integral component of the everyday socio-political life by showing how the **use of technology in a positive way can do the interest of both citizens and political institutions by empowering them to bridge difference and shape society together.**



8.2 DEMO App

8.2.1 Introduction

DEMO App is a digital platform for smartphone, tablets and laptops [Figure 56 & 57] which allow **information exchange, involvement and participation across institutional levels and societal segments**. It is a meeting point which enables citizens to engage in a bi-directional interaction with institutions, other citizens and organization to collaborate for the improvement of the everyday life keeping in mind the common wellbeing.

Possible and eventual relational gap are managed and bridge through **information, dialogue and collaboration**.

I What does DEMO do for citizens ?

DEMO plays the role of the personal instruments for shared governance through which citizens are:

- **Supported in becoming aware of their political power** showing how their voice, together with the ones of their peers, can contribute to implementing the decision-making process political administration takes at the various levels. (See 8.2.4)
- **Guided in discover initiatives** closer to personal interest and concerns as well a start new ones. Through them, citizens can directly collaborate with institutions, organizations and other citizens to collectively turn abstract wishes into concrete implementations

(See 8.2.4 and 8.2.6)

- **Posted about developments** on the initiatives they follow feeling to be in control of what happens. Through DEMO, they can also provide feedbacks and receive accountable explanations on how political institutions are behaving. (See 8.2.5 & 8.2.6)
- **Enabled to maintain ongoing communication** with political institutions, civil society and the peers part of the personal circle of interest and concerns. (See 8.2.5 & 8.2.6)
- **Helped in bridging crowded and speculative public opinion**. DEMO can be used as a certified communication tool through which institutions can inform, warn or notify important measures. All the relative documentation can be shared and published on DEMO so to be available for deepening. In case of any issue detected by DEMO regarding the content, measures will be taken promptly. (See 8.2.6)
- **Empowered to retrieve and compare information** exchanged over time thanks to the application of Artificial Intelligence for the management of the database through smart archiving.
- **Ensured that their identity is protected and personal data are safe** following the GDPR complied by the EU. It is up to the citizens to decide whether to display their name and surname or prefer the unique

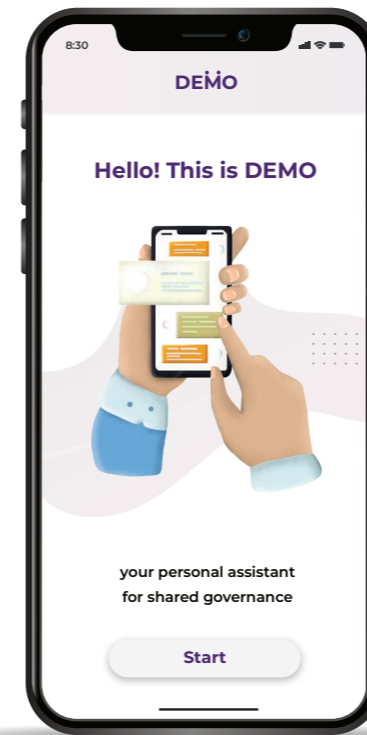


Figure 58



Figure 59

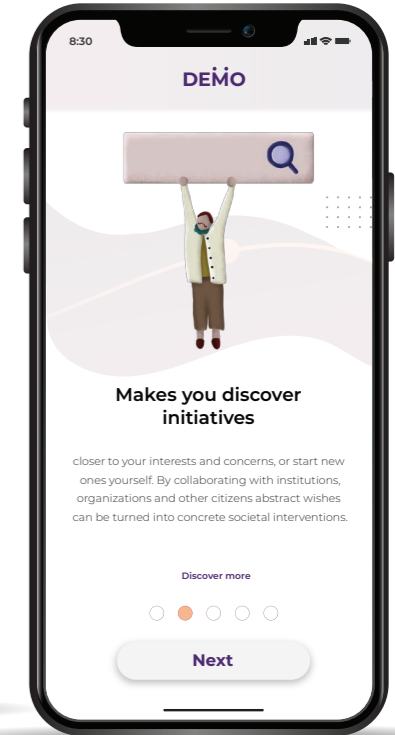


Figure 60

anonymized Citizen Number.

II What can citizens do with DEMO?

Thanks to DEMO as medium citizens can:

- **Form themselves about which are their civic rights and duties** through simple yet exhaustive information (in the form of documents, video, animations and infographics) directly provided by governmental institutions. (See 8.2.4)
- **Discover initiatives closer to their interest and concerns to follow or directly support**. Thanks to

Thanks to DEMO, citizens can also launch petitions and verify whether they are meeting the public and institutional interest before can be turned into operative initiatives. (See 8.2.6)

- **Receive notifications about decisions and developments** taken by peers and institutions on initiatives and societal topics. It is citizens' right to ask for accountable explanations and evidence as well as provide feedback. Notifications are customizable and can be edited according to personal needs. (See 8.2.5 & 8.2.6)

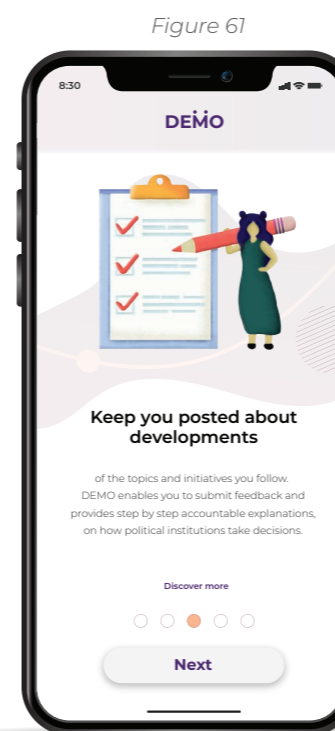


Figure 61



Figure 62

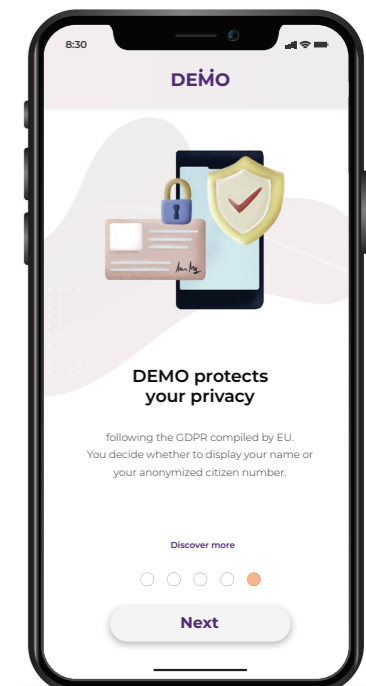


Figure 63

Figure 56. DEMO App on the various stores

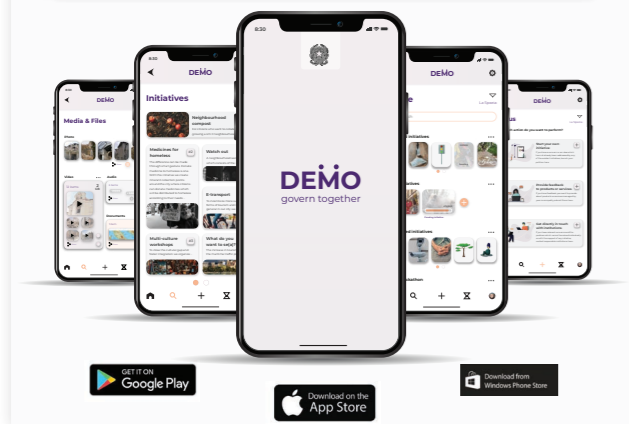
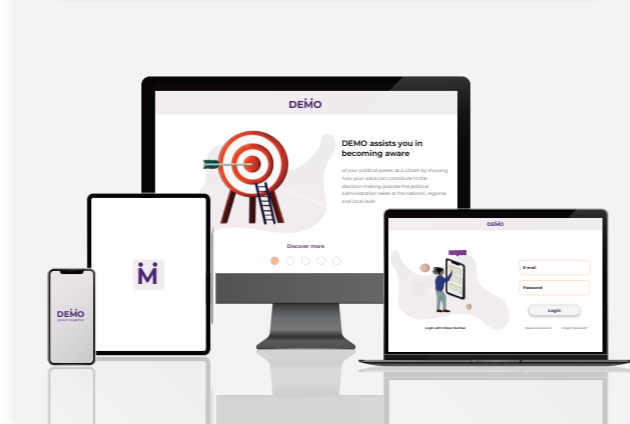


Figure 57. DEMO App all supported devices



- **Get in contact with institutions, organizations and peers** within a reasonable amount of time which will be notified upfront based on the discussion's topic. (See 8.2.6)

- **Directly receive official communication** (warning, notifications or reminders) **from institutions** avoiding the informational noise typical of internet and social media on which understanding is harmed by the lack of mediation and poor verifiability. (See 8.2.5 & 8.2.6)

- **Retrieve, compare, track and monitor** information through keywords into the dedicate search bar. The hard job will be done by the Artificial Intelligence manager responsible for the smart information archiving on the database. It is also possible to store files and important documents as well as share the with other citizens and institutions.

- **Request and obtain the Citizens Number as service** thanks to which citizens can operate in a certified but anonymous manner on DEMO in case of the unwillingness of sharing personal data like name and family name. Nevertheless, personal data protection is a guaranteed following the GPR which respect is further assured by DEMOc, which plays the role of "sub-partes" guarantor. (See 8.4)

- **Contact DEMOc** to ask questions, provide feedback, report functioning problems or doubting about the misconduct of any citizens or institutional members.

For what concerns what citizens can do through DEMO some of the main functionalities and their relative benefits are explained from section 8.2.3 onward [Figure 65]. For more detailed information, settings and functionalities, please refer to "DEMO App user manual" which is provided on a separate file. [Figure 66]

8.2.2 Three levels

DEMO App it is articulated on three levels: local (municipality and province), regional and national. Their availability will follow the release plan presented in Figure 64

I Local level

The local level is the first one to be released in May 2021. The choice to start from the local level has been weighted on the base of three main criteria:

- **Citizens responsiveness and engagement in socio-political topics.** Previous research revealed how individuals are more likely to manifest a pro-active attitude and getting informed for what concerns what locally happens. They perceive that at this level things have a direct impact on their life and vice versa they can better influence decisions.

- **Reduced length of the feedback loop** which will better enable to measure DEMO potential and identify which are the limitations that need to be included in the implementation plan (See section 8.5) and corrected before scaling to the next level.

- **Investment risk management.** Initially maintain the app operative at only one level will enable to understand if it effectively works and if there are the conditions for scaling to the next level.

Within this level, citizens can select the municipality on which they want to enhance government with their ideas. The first municipality used as test desk it is the one of La Spezia. In case of a positive, yet satisfactory functioning, implementations will take place as follow:

- August 2021, DEMO will be available for download in all the province of La Spezia;

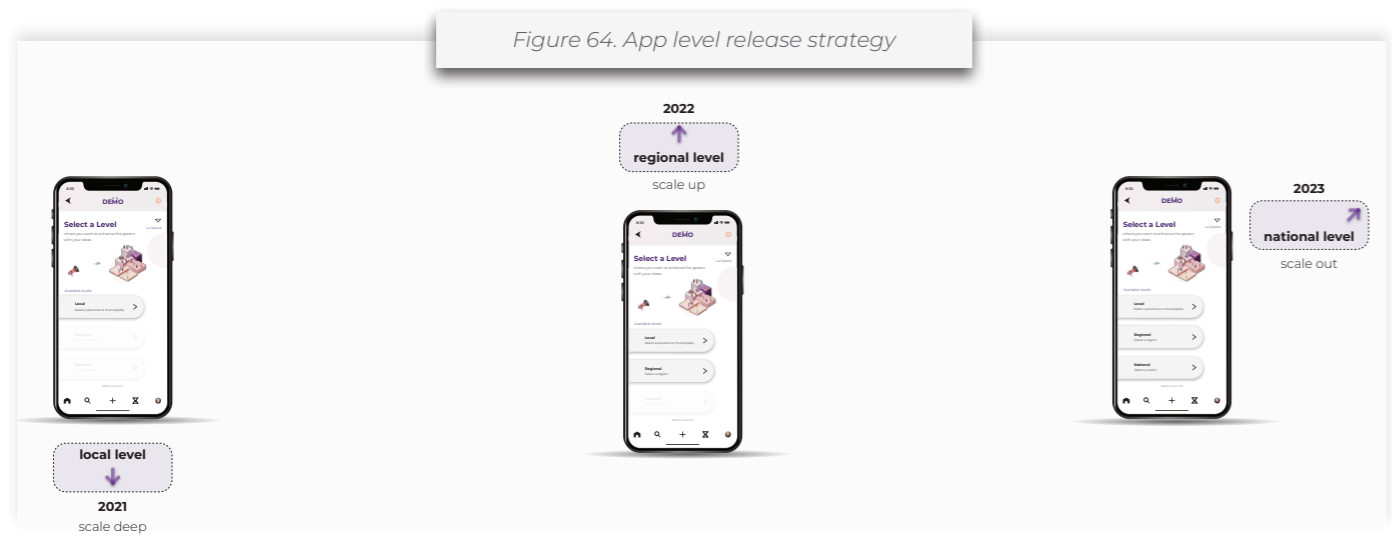


Figure 64. App level release strategy

Source: Lee-Moore, 2015

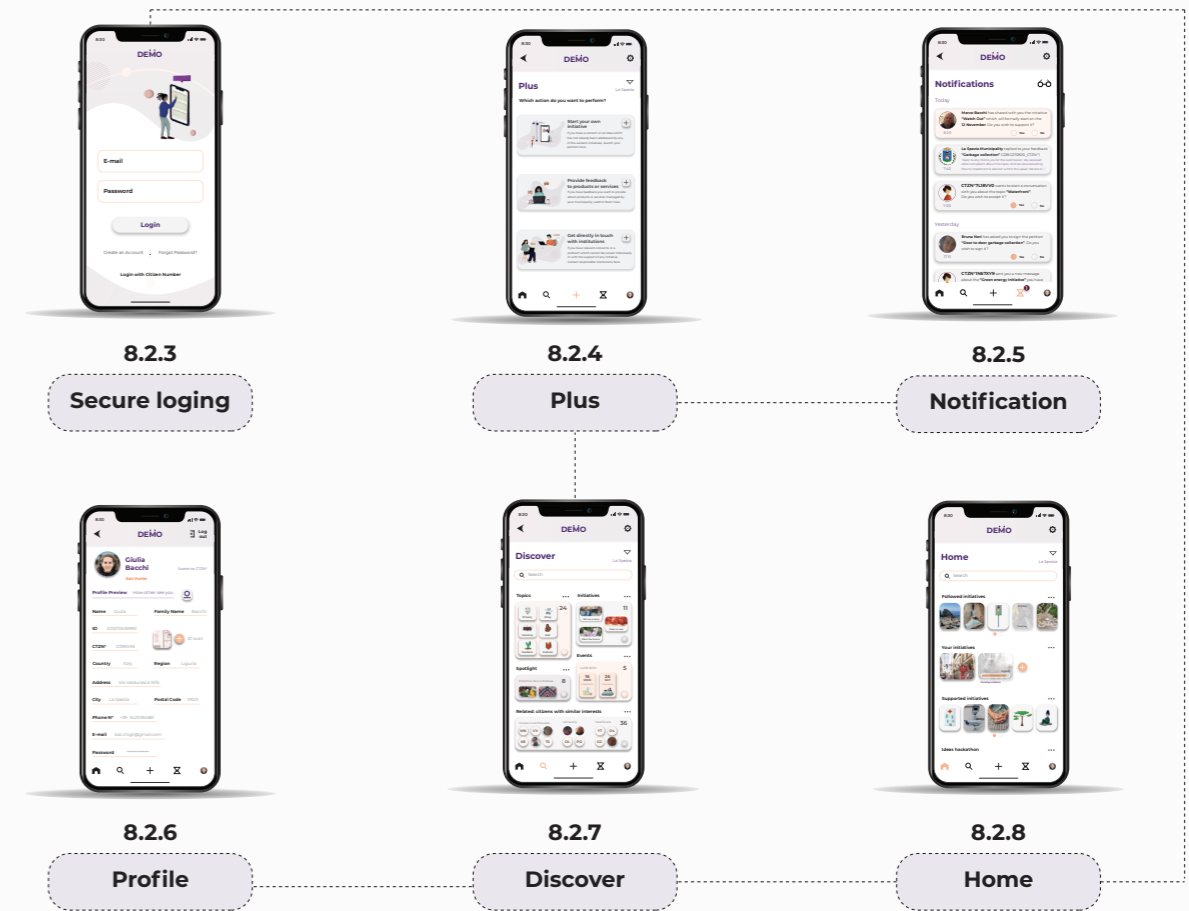


Figure 65. Main functionalities presented

- November 2021, DEMO will be available for download in all the provinces and municipalities of the Liguria region which will play the role of regional test-desk.

II Regional level

By May 2022, on the bases of all the data produced, DEMOc will own enough knowledge to appreciate if the platform is adapt to be run at the regional level and if citizens use it. In the case of positive outcomes, DEMO download will be made available for other regions in Italy. Priority will be given to the ones about which citizens have manifested their interest. (See 8.2.3)

The municipalities within the same region are enabled to seamless dialogue and collaborate. Citizens have the possibility to switch from municipality to region following the level at which they want to share knowledge and experiences.

III National level

By February 2023, the aim is to cover the entire Italian territory. DEMO will be the tool through which citizens can communicate their concerns to the political system, exchange feedback and organize themselves around initiatives enhancing the everyday life at local, regional and national level with a seamless

experience.

IV International level

From November 2023, if there are the optimal conditions in terms of desirability, feasibility and viability) DEMO will be further implemented to be operative at the international level starting from the European community.

More information about the various levels can be found in section 8.5.



Figure 66. App use manual & report



8.2.3 Secure login

Once citizens (also indicated as users) have downloaded DEMO on their device can proceed with the creation of an account. There are two options: **creation through the e-mail address** or **creation through the Citizens Number (CTZN^o)**. [Figure 67]

I Account based on e-mail address

For the account creation, citizens are asked to fill in a dedicated form with their personal data, including a valid ID number and scan of the document. By the mean of the ID, it is possible to:

- make sure that the citizens own only one profile on DEMO and that they are using a real identity so to prevent fake account (unlike social media);
- make sure that they have the legal age to use the App according to national regulations.

To further ensure secure login, ultimately avoid possible identity theft and verify that the user who is executing the logging is the real owner of the data, it is asked to chose one of the two available biometric parameters for final authentication. [Figure 68] By choosing the "Face ID Scan" or the "Fingerprint" recognition, compatibly with the technological possibilities of the own device, DEMO will compare these data with the one registered on the scanned ID. While submitting the request for the account creation is possible also ask to receive the Citizen Number.

II Account based on Citizen Number

In case the user does not want to create an account

with an e-mail address, it is offered the possibility to request and login with the Citizen Number. The Citizen Number is a unique code which identifies an individual when deals with governmental issues across at all levels.

When creating a new account using the CTZN^o personal name and family's name as an identification mean are replaced by an anonymized unique code (e.g. EJ911VV7RP instead of, e.g. Giulia Bacchi)

The account creation and authentication practices are the same as the one based on e-mail address.

III Double account

Even if each citizen can create only one account based on e-mail and one based on the CTZN^o, it is nevertheless possible for a single individual to have both. Thanks to the possession of both accounts, which can be uniquely managed through the profile section, citizens can change the view of the account depending on whether they want to make the personal identity known or not. (See 8.2.6)

IV Account request for a location still not available

In case citizens are creating an account for a location that it is still not available, they are immediately notified about it when filling in the mandatory form. It will then appear a notification window asking if they want to leave their e-mail address in order to be notified once the location will be available. [Figure 68]

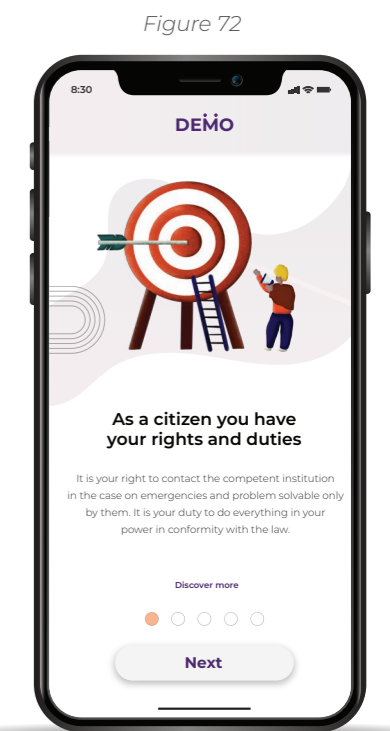
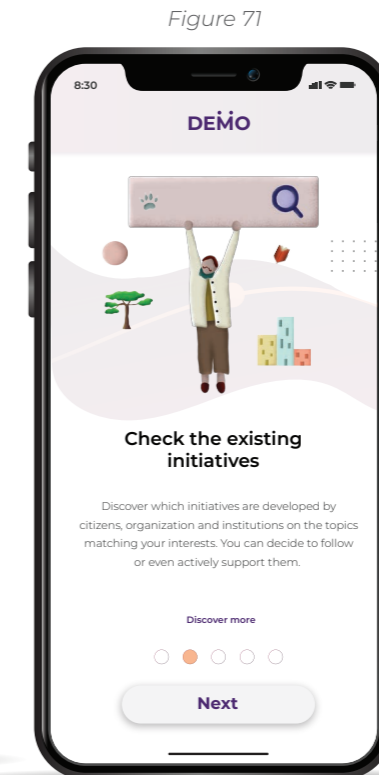
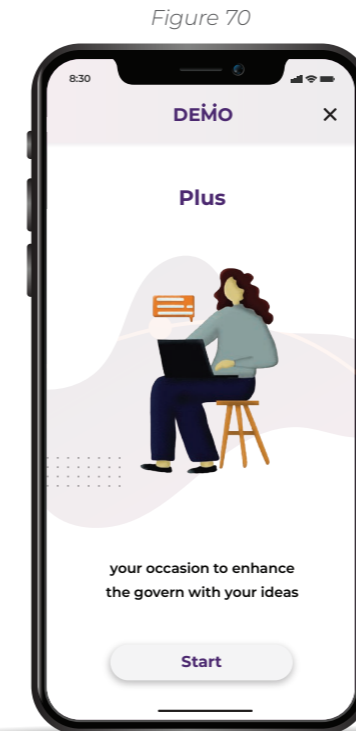
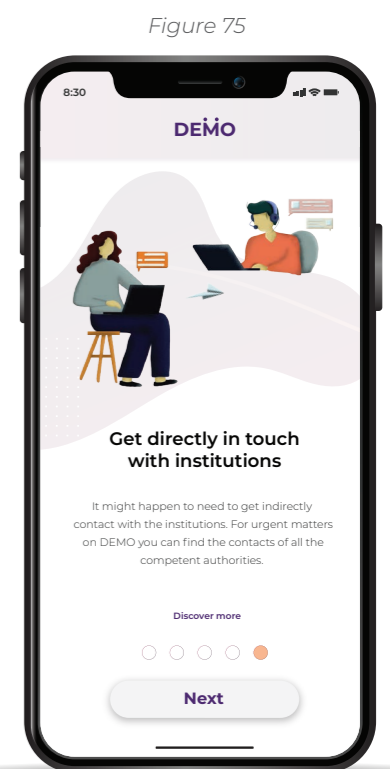
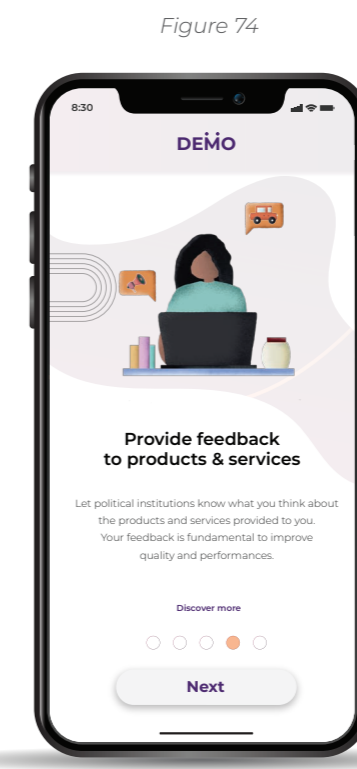
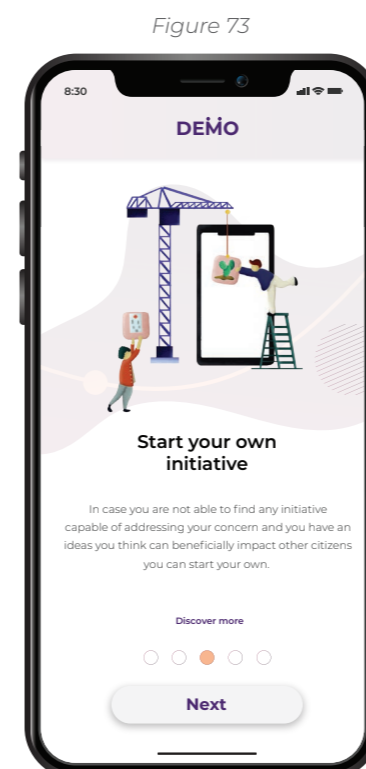
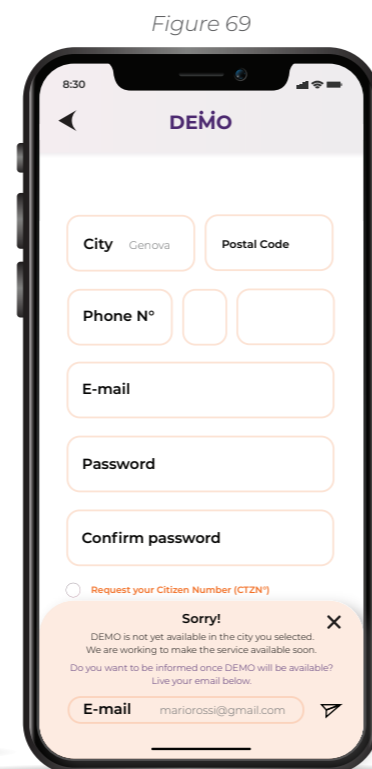
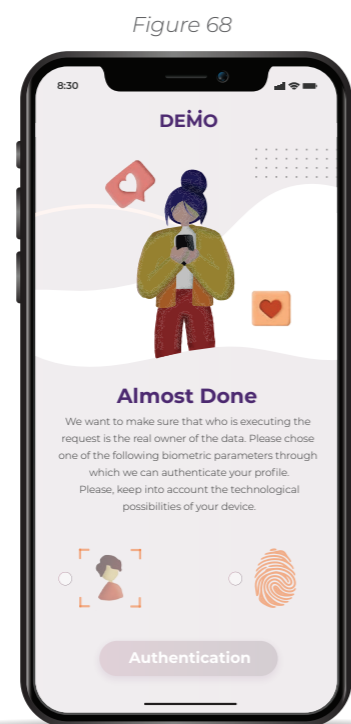
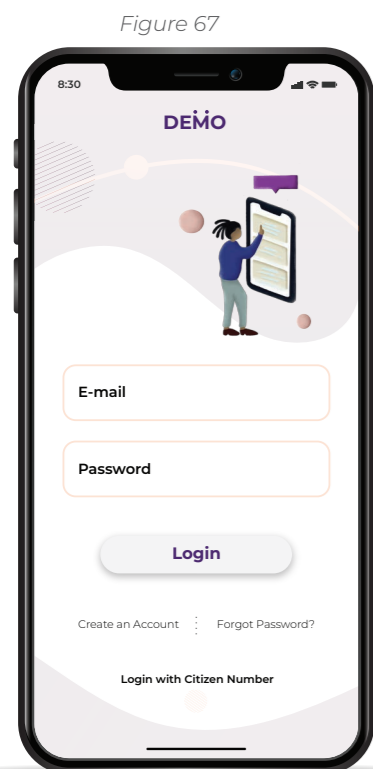
Note: by this mean, it will be possible for DEMOc to measure at which level citizens manifest interest toward the App and organize the strategy accordingly.

8.2.4 Plus

The Plus function enables citizens to perform three main activities through which it is possible to enhance governance directly: **start initiatives, provide feedbacks to products or services supplied by institutions, get directly in touch with governmental authorities**. [Figure 76]

When citizens open the Plus widget for the first time, they are provided with a quick introduction, as shown in Figure 70-75, which aim to:

- explicitly make citizens aware of their civic rights and duties;
- implicitly awake citizens' sense of responsibility by providing them rooms for actions and self-expression regarding societal purposes;
- remind citizens that they can support initiatives to contribute to the resolution of the issue which encounter societal interest;
- prevent citizens from delegate everything to institutions.



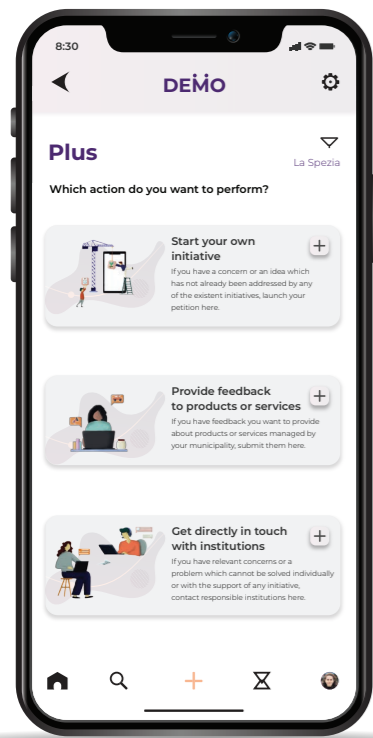


Figure 76

I Start own initiative

In case citizens have concerns or ideas which have not already been addressed by any of the existent initiatives, they can start their own.

To start an initiative, it is necessary to fill in a petition form with all the required information (e.g. description, evidence concerning the relevance of the initiative, institutions involved) and agree with the Terms & Conditions. The petition serves to measure the societal interest and the consent the proposed idea is capable of gathering. [Figure 77 & 78]

To become an operative initiative, it is necessary to reach a signature threshold before being discussed and approved by the competent institution. The threshold for the signatures vary with the institutional level, and it will automatically be displayed on the page. (E.g. at the municipality level in Italy it is necessary to reach 500 signatures). The processing timing will also depend on the institution's management capabilities, and it will

be displayed in the petition form at the level selected by users.

In case if the local institution is a small reality or has reached its maximum processing capability, this information will be displayed and if possible DEMOc will try to provide support without any interference.

If, while processing the submission of the petition, the AI system detects that there are already operative initiatives similar to the one that the user is proposing, a warning window it will be immediately displayed. [Figure 79]

In it is reported a link to the similar initiative and it is asked the user to check it. In case the user is sure that the two initiatives are different from each other, it is asked to provide evidence by briefly explain which are the distinction points.

Once the petition will be successfully submitted, it will be made available for the other citizens to be signed in the dedicated "Spotlight" section (See 8.2.6). At the same time, the user can track its status from the Home (8.2.7).

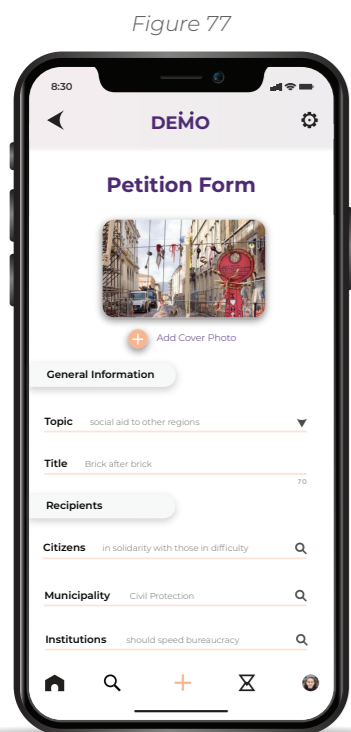


Figure 77

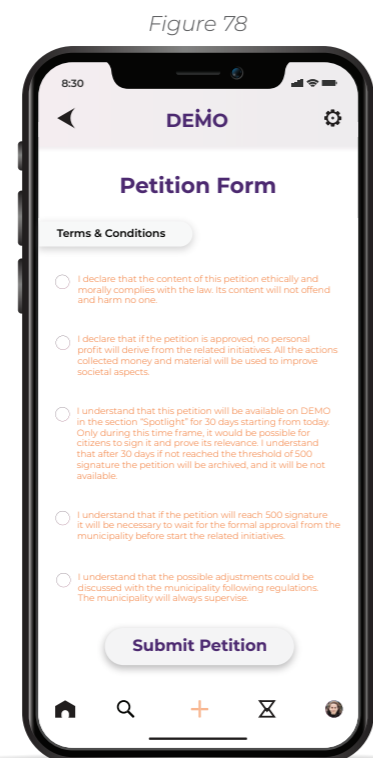


Figure 78

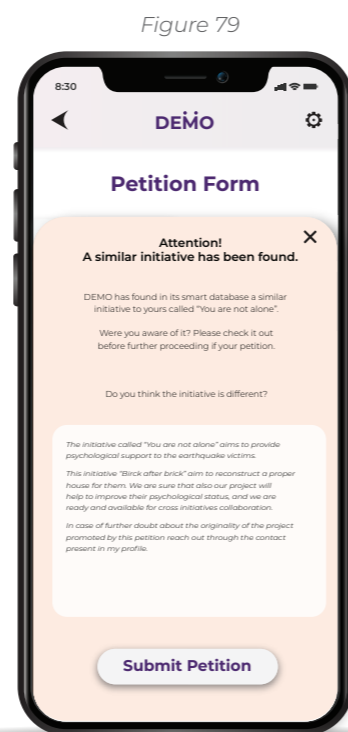


Figure 79

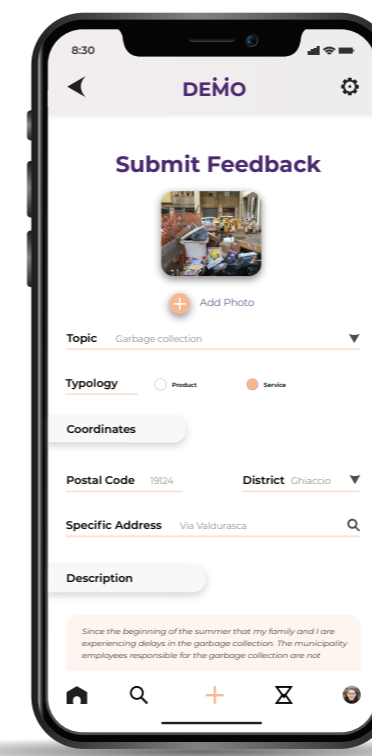


Figure 80

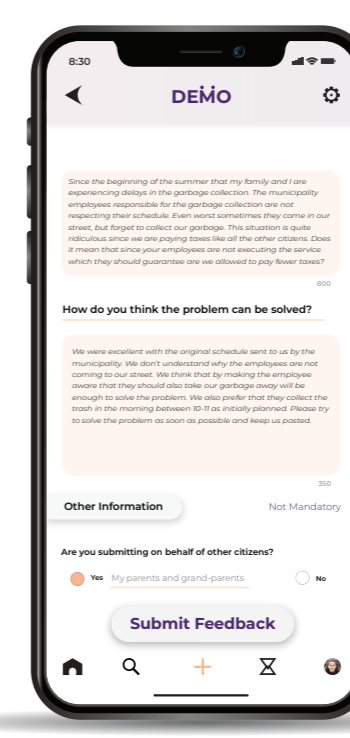


Figure 81

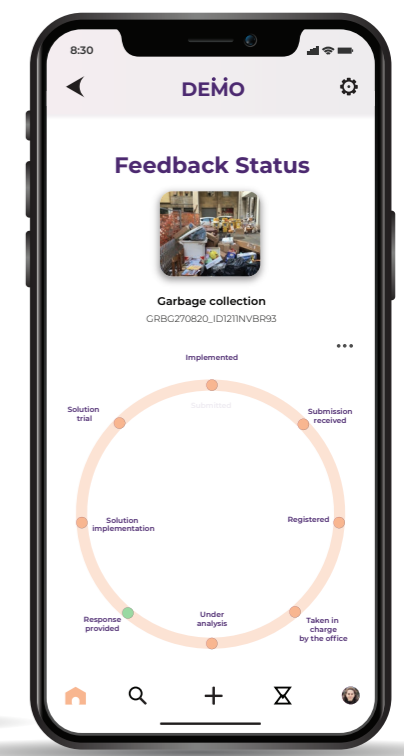


Figure 82

II Provide feedback to product or services

Citizens can submit feedbacks they have about products or services supplied by institutions, directly to the competent authorities.

To submit feedbacks, it is necessary to fill in the dedicated form with all the required information. [Figure 80 & 81]. The form serves to understand concerning what citizens are experiencing annoyance and which one will be the desirable solutions they are envisioning. Once submitted, it is possible to track the status of the feedback from the "Feedback history" widget on the Home (See 8.2.7) and activate the reception of notifications (See 8.2.5). In it are reported the developments of every submission according to the main administrative steps DEMOc and the governmental administration have to go through.

When a phase is completed, the portion of the "progress clock" turns orange. When a step has been completed, its button turns orange. [Figure 82] For every step, it is provided with an estimation of the time required for its accomplishment. Citizens are notified

in case of changes.

Following the type of response provided, the related step's button can turn red, yellow or green. [Figure 83].

- **Red light:** indicates that a solution, based on the feedback received, cannot be implemented and it will be provided evidence explaining the reason why. Generally, a solution not to be possible in the short term when there is a lack of budget, it has already been planned for a future moment, it clashes with the institutional regulations or with the societal and public interests.
- **Yellow light:** it indicates that a solution, based on the feedback, could be potentially implemented since highlighting an aspect of public and societal interest. However, to realize an intervention, it is necessary to collect more evidence and information.
- **Green light:** it indicates that institutions are aware that there is a need for implementation, and they are in the condition of executing it as soon as possible. They have received enough feedbacks and based on those they can provide citizens with a series of options among to which express a preference.

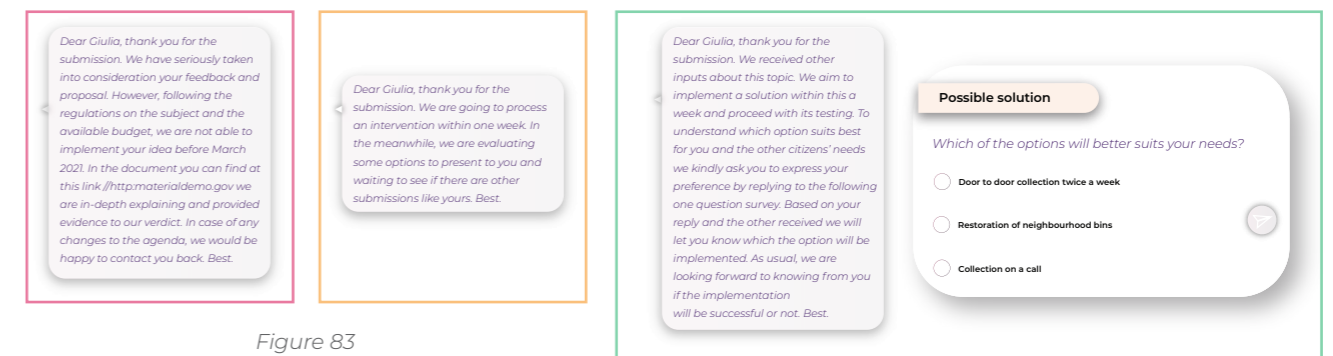


Figure 83



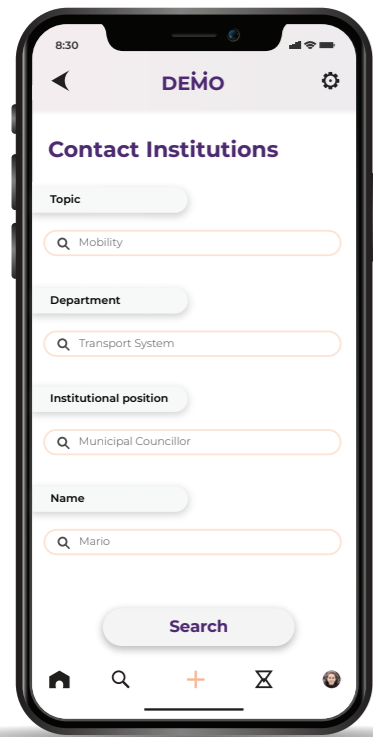


Figure 84

III Get directly in touch with institutions

If citizens have relevant concerns or a problem which cannot be solved individually or with the support of any operative initiative, it is possible to get in contact with the responsible institutions directly.

To reach the competent authority to talk with, DEMO offers a 4 level filtering system [Figure 84]. Based on the result of the filtering selection, citizens are redirected to the profile of the indicated authority which contains his/her data, the initiatives in which is involved as well as the contact options. [Figure 85]

Citizens can choose the desired one based on personal preferences keeping in mind that it is only possible to track and archive the communication that happens using the messaging service directly provided by DEMO through the App.



Figure 85

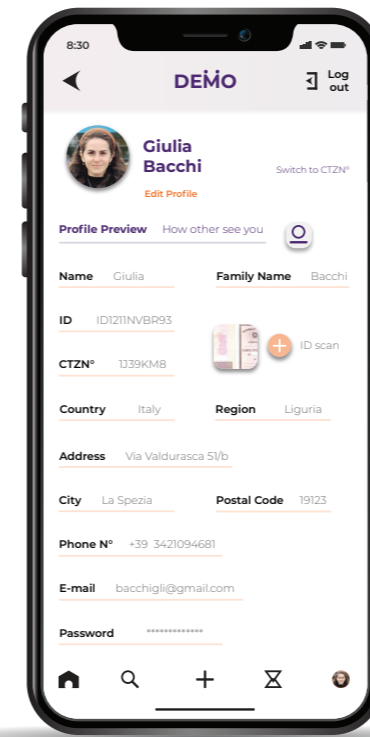


Figure 88

8.2.6 Profile

Through the profile section, citizens who own a double profile (e-mail based + Citizen Number) can switch from one to the other. To make sure which data will be visualized for each profile, a preview can be displayed. [Figure 88]

Through the editing option, citizens can update personal data in case of relevant changes (e.g. ID lost or reviewed).

I PRO-test

The first time user opens the profile section they are asked if they would like to fill in the "PRO-test" a test which will measure their interest, commitment and availability to connect them, in the Discover section (8.2.6) with initiatives that might encounter their interests. [Figure 89]



Figure 89

8.2.5 Notification

The Notification function allows users to display chronologically all the notification received from other citizens, institutions or activities' updates. Users can visualize a preview of the messages and decide if to accept or dismiss conversations, petitions or initiatives invites. [Figure 86]

I Ask to me function

The "ask to me" functionality consists of an "expert chatbot".

Thanks to the chatbot the Artificial Intelligence system integrated into DEMO can assist citizens in better understanding documents published by institutions which might contain a high jargon hard to get, as well as statements and implications which are hard to place in context.

The chatbot can overcome this gap by providing a simplified yet relevant explanation. [Figure 87]

Figure 86



Figure 87



8.2.7 Discover

The Discover section allows citizens to discover topics and activities related to personal interests. The contents in this section (topics, operative initiatives, petitions, events, citizens with similar interests, practical suggestions, ideas hackathons and challenges) are proposed based on the PRO-test results. [Figure 90 and 91]

I Topic

By selecting a topic which encounters personal interest, citizens can access to all the information exchanged and actions performed about it by their peers and institutions alike. From the dedicated areas, it is possible to appreciate which are the available petitions, initiatives, their achievements, pitfalls as well as the next moves that are planned on the agendas. [Figure 92-93]

All information is transparently shared and made available as reference.

Figure 90

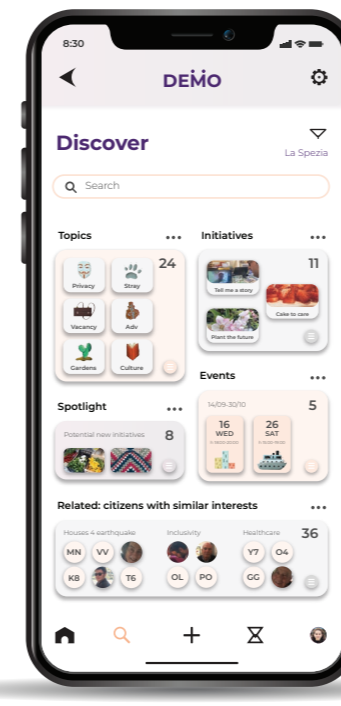


Figure 91

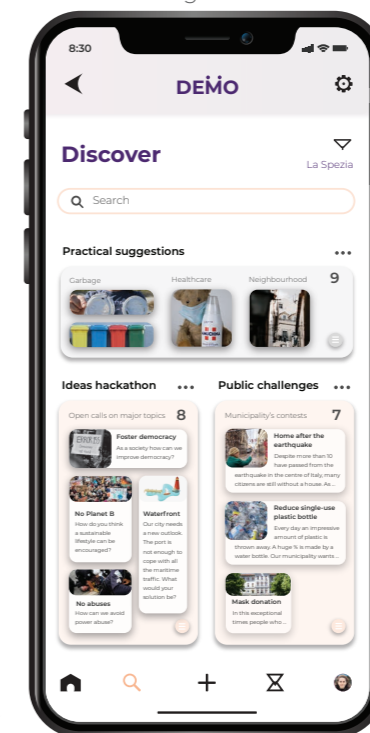
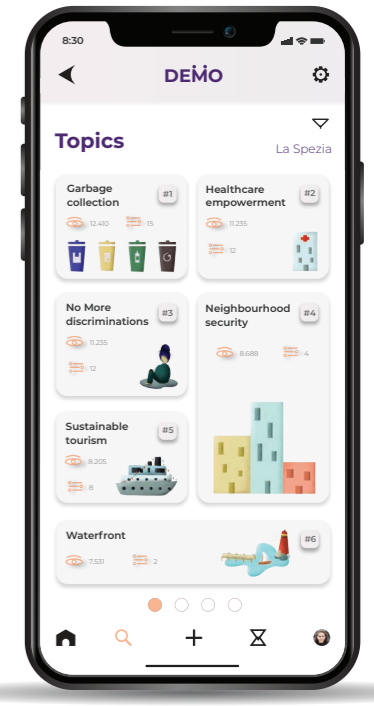


Figure 92



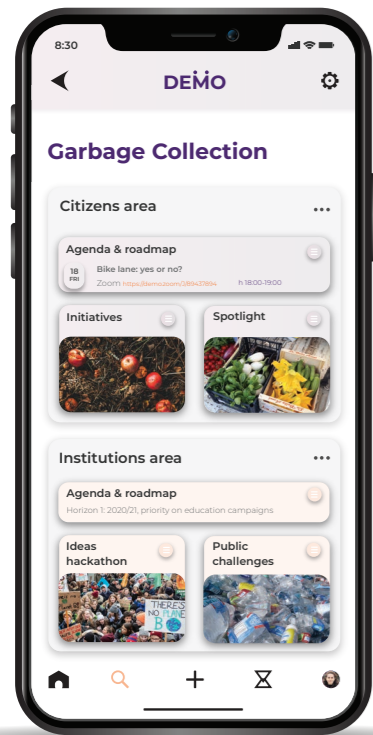


Figure 93

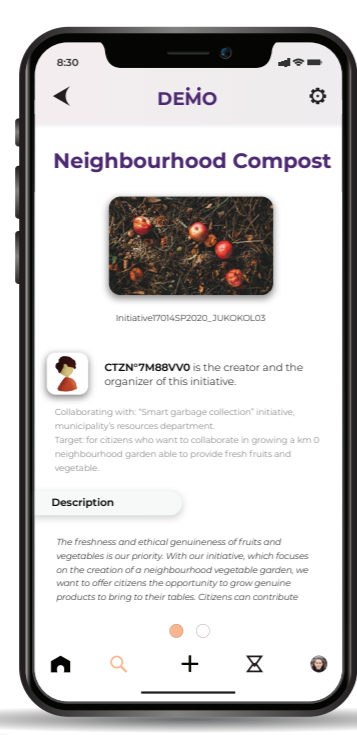


Figure 94

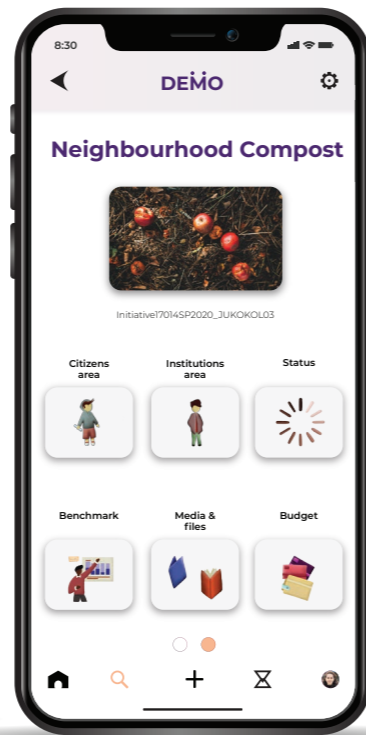


Figure 95

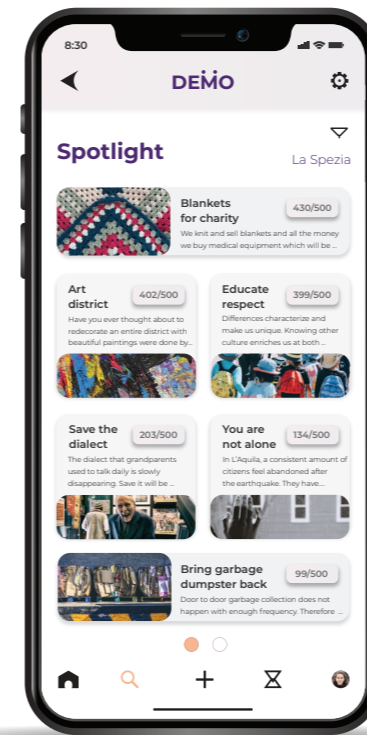


Figure 99

III Spotlight

Through the spotlight function, citizens can browse all the pending initiatives that are at the petition stage [Figure 99]. Initiatives to become operative have to reach 500 signature within 30 days and have been approved by the competent institutional level.

By opening the page dedicated to a petition, it is possible to visualize [Figure 100]:

- how many people have already signed it;
- who is the organizer of the petition and his/her contact;
- who will be the responsible institution to control the operation undertaken if it will be turned into an initiative
- the description and main goal;
- what would be relevant to sign it.

In case of question or desire to directly support the initiative, citizens can directly contact the organizer through DEMO messages and start a conversation with him/her if s/he would agree.

II Initiatives

In the page dedicated to an initiative, citizens can find description, mission and people involved. [Figure 94] Through dedicated widgets [Figure 95], different aspects can be monitored, such as:

- **Status.** [Figure 97] It reports the developments of the initiative in relationship with the horizons stated in the roadmap. For every horizon are established milestones. When a milestone is reached, it is notified to all the individuals involved, and it is possible to exchange feedbacks. The number of horizons and milestones depends on the initiative. It is important

to keep into account that new horizons can be established with the development of the initiative. In case the initiatives it is stopped, paused or completed it will be visualized at the center of the dedicated "progress clock".

- **Benchmark.** [Figure 96] It displays the level of satisfaction, engagement and the results obtained at every step of the initiatives. While satisfaction and engagement are measured on a scale from 1 to 10, the results obtained are reported in percentage (%). Through the Benchmark function, both citizens and institutions can understand when positive feelings and good results are obtained.

- **Budget.** [Figure 98] It displays the budget available, and expenditure realized over the months.

- **Media & files.** Contains all the media and files exchanged about the topic. All the supporters of the initiatives as well as the experts from institutions involved can upload and sign them.

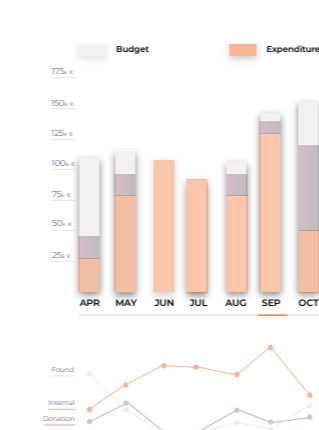
Figure 96



Figure 97



Figure 98



If citizens find the petition interesting and share its mission and ideas, they can sign it. To make sure that citizens are not signing the petition to favour the interest of third parties, but because they recognize its societal potential, they are asked to reply to a few questions [Figure 101]. Lastly, before completing the signing action, it is asked citizens to specify their preferred level of involvement (follow or support the initiatives in case it will be approved and become operative) and indicate if they would like to see the own name displayed in the list of whom has signed it. Once signed, it is possible to track its development from the Home. (See section 8.2.7)

IV Practical suggestions

This function enables citizens to receive practical and authoritative suggestions from the competent institutions directly. Suggestions are clustered per topics. The provided suggestions are decided by institutions on the base of societal trend topics (e.g. COVID), feedback submissions received from citizens, citizen's interest manifested about aspects of the everyday life; petition and initiatives developed about a topic. [Figure 102]

Figure 100

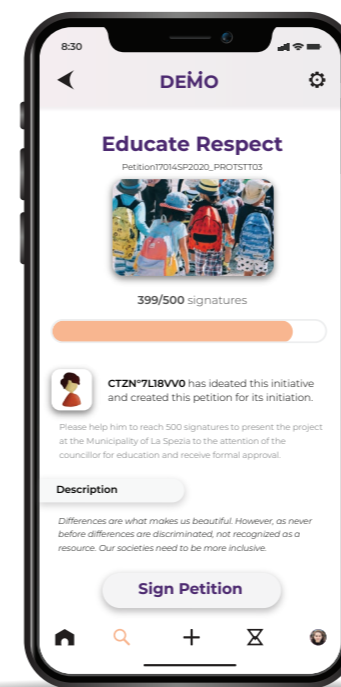
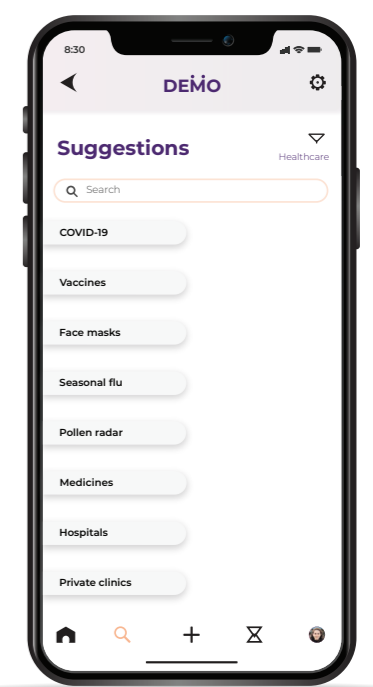


Figure 101



Figure 102



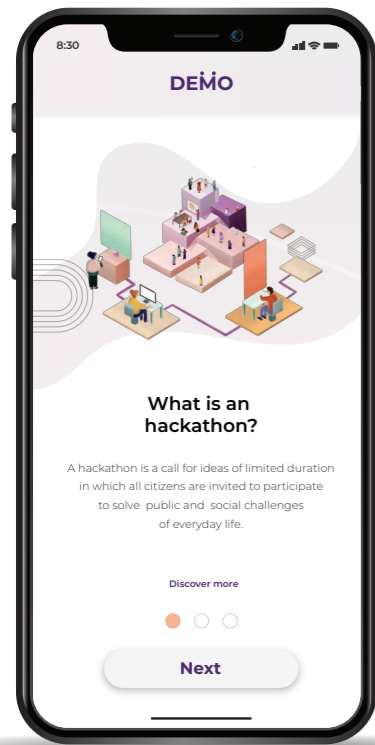


Figure 103

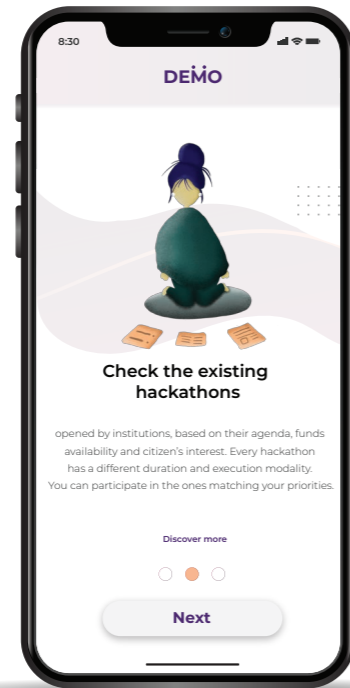


Figure 104

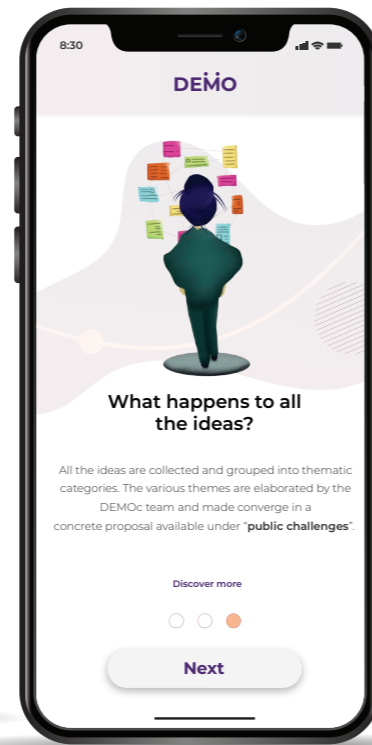


Figure 105

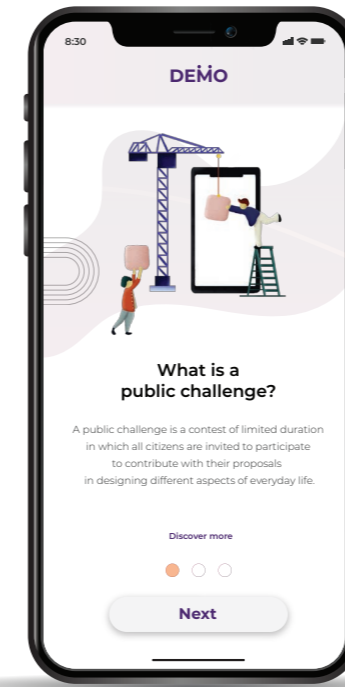


Figure 109

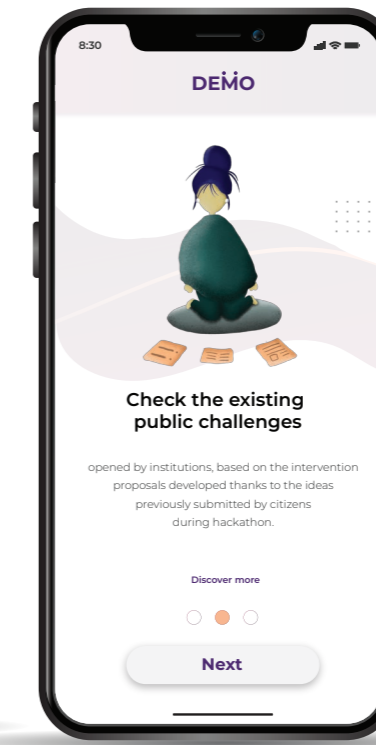


Figure 110

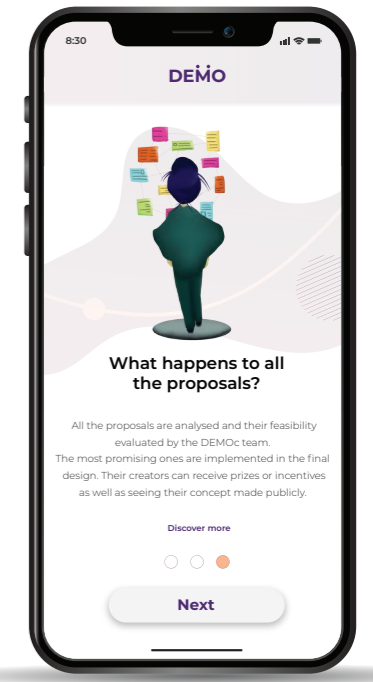


Figure 111

V Ideas hackathon

The ideas hackathon's function offers citizens the opportunity to participate in open calls for ideas created by institutions.

When the dedicated widget is opened for the first time, citizens receive a brief introduction regarding what is a hackathon, its goals and implications. [Figure 103-105]

Citizens can browse the existing hackathons which

institutions have created on the bases of their agenda, funds and budget availability as well as citizen's interest measured through their activity on DEMO and their behaviours in the external world. Every hackathon has a different duration, a limited number of accepted submissions and execution modality (e.g. in some case every citizen can make more than a submission). The number of submissions is decided upfront by the institutions based on its processing capacity.

Citizens who decide to participate in the hackathons need to fill in a form in which they explain their ideas and indicate why it would be relevant to implement it. [Figure 106-108]

Once the due date is passed the feasibility of every proposal is analyzed, by DEMOc and made converge into a concrete proposal which will be made available under "public challenges". Under that function, citizens can further submit proposals and constructively dialogue about the topic with their peers and institutions.

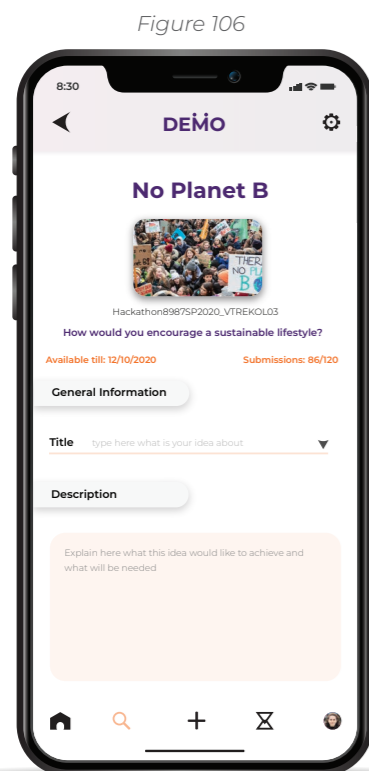


Figure 106

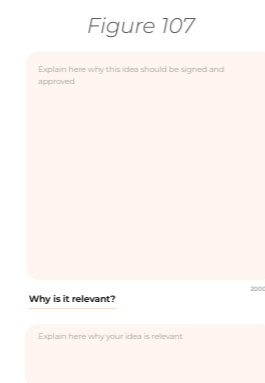


Figure 107

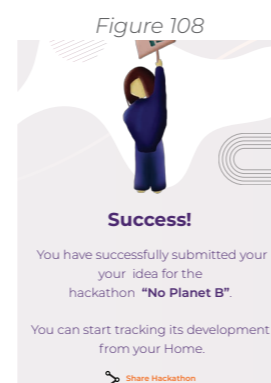


Figure 108

VI Public challenges

The public challenge's function offers citizens the opportunity to participate in open contests for proposals.

When the dedicated widget is opened for the first time, citizens receive a brief introduction regarding what is a public challenge, its goals and implications. [Figure 109-111]

Citizens can browse the existing hackathons which

institutions have created based on the intervention proposals developed thanks to the ideas previously submitted by citizens during hackathons. Every public challenge has a different duration limited number of acceptable submissions and execution modality (e.g. in some case citizens can make more than a submission). The number of submissions is decided upfront by the institutions based on its processing capacity.

Citizens who decide to take part in a public challenge close to their interest need to fill in a form in which they explain their ideas and indicate why it would be relevant to implement it. [Figure 112-1144]

Once the due date is passed, all the proposals are analyzed by DEMOc, and the most promising ones are implemented in the final design. Their creators can receive prizes or incentives as well as seeing their concept made publicly. The prize of every public challenge is communicated upfront.



Figure 112

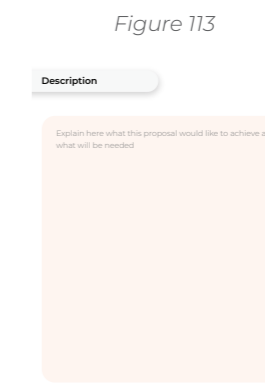


Figure 113

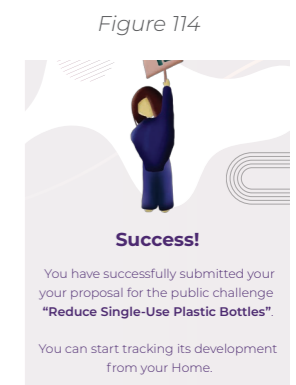


Figure 114



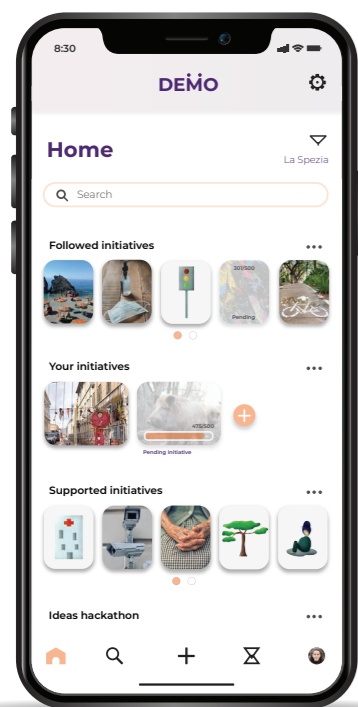


Figure 115

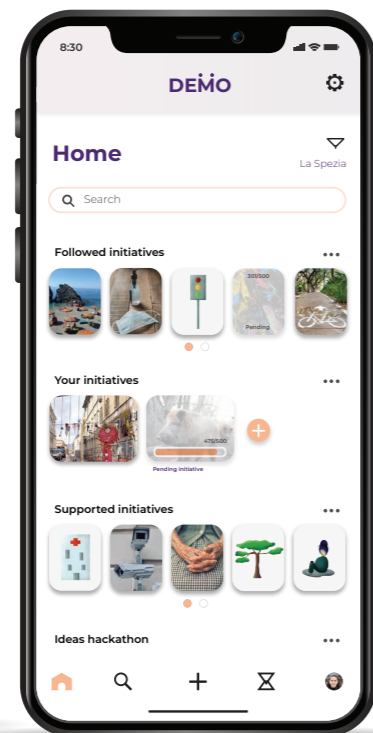


Figure 116

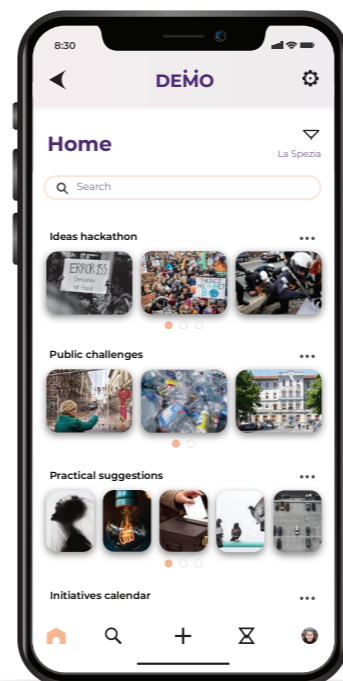


Figure 117

8.2.8 Home

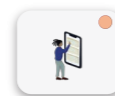
The Home of DEMO plays the function of the main menu through which it is possible to control and have access to the main functionalities of the App through the dedicated widgets. [Figure 115-117]

Widgets settings can be customized, added or removed according to the user needs. The main ones are:

- **Followed initiatives.** Those are the initiatives that are followed, but not supported.
- **Your initiatives.** Those are the initiatives directly created by the user on which s/he is involved. In case the user wants to change its level of involvement can make a request to DEMOc.
- **Supported initiatives.** Those are the initiatives that are both followed and supported.
- **Ideas hackathon.** Those are calls for ideas created by institutions based on public and societal topic to which the user is participating.
- **Public challenges.** Those are proposals contests created by institutions to improve the everyday life to which the user is participating.



- **Practical suggestions.** Those are suggestions directly provided by institutions on topics relevant to both the individual citizen and the community.



- **Initiatives calendar.** It displays the events to which the user participates



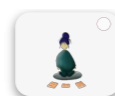
- **Upcoming events.** Reports the events that will take place soon and displays their main details.



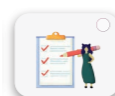
- **Trend topics.** Indicates which topics are relevant for citizens based on their interactions, actions created, feedbacks submission and ideas generated.



- **Conversations.** Reports the profile of the citizens with which the user talks and collaborates more frequently.



- **Feedback history.** Reports the history and tracking of all the feedback exchanged between citizens and institutions regarding various topics of interest. It is also possible to check the status of the feedback submissions.



- **Signed petitions.** Reports all the signed petitions over time. Both the operative and the canceled ones.



- **Completed initiatives.** Reports accomplishments and their details.

8.3 DEMOs Software

8.3.1 Introduction

DEMOs Software is a digital platform for tablets and laptops [Figure 118] whose database and analytical capacity are empowered by Artificial Intelligence (AI). DEMOs allow governmental institutions at the local, regional and national level, to bridge public opinion by managing the feedbacks and proposal submitted through DEMO App. DEMOs enable in this way to channel citizens wishes and co-design proposal with them to turn societal concerns into actionable public implementations.

What do DEMOs do for the institutions?

DEMOs plays the role of the personal manager for shared governance and civic education through which institutions are:

- **Supported in educating citizens in becoming aware of their political power** showing them how their voice, together with ones of their peers, can contribute to implementing the decision-making process political administration takes at the various levels. [Figure 119]
- **Empowered to retrieve and compare information** exchanged over time thanks to the database smart archiving and management operated by Artificial Intelligence. It combines *“data warehousing, advanced analytics and visualizations in an in-memory database enabling to simultaneously ingest,*

explore, analyze” move and allocate *“complex data within milliseconds”* (van Rees, 2020). The machine learning mechanism empowers institutions with advanced timing and resources estimations improving their processing capacity and enhancing their efficiency.

- **Ensured that their data and the ones of citizens are protected and safe** following the GDPR complied by the EU. Institutions can execute login through an Institutional License numbers uniquely assigned by DEMOc. Only registered devices can run DEMOs. [Figure 118]

- **Helped in managing initiatives, feedbacks and requests** from citizens and civil society. Thanks to the AI system submissions can reach the responsible authorities in forms of thematic clusters making more agile their analysis, processing and implementation following the institutional roadmap.

- **Empowered to discover what meets public interests** and which are the desirable interventions demanded by citizens and compare their feasibility against institutional agenda. Through DEMOs institutions can directly collaborate with citizens to collectively turn societal abstract wishes into concrete public interventions. [Figure 121]

- **Enabled to maintain ongoing communication** with citizens, civil society and their peer, weighting

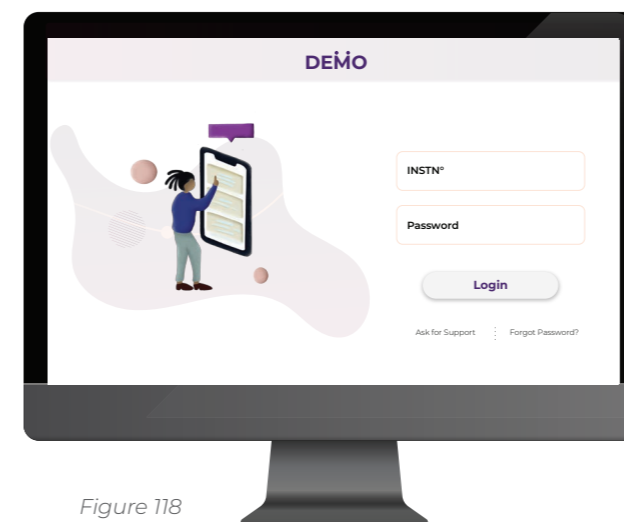
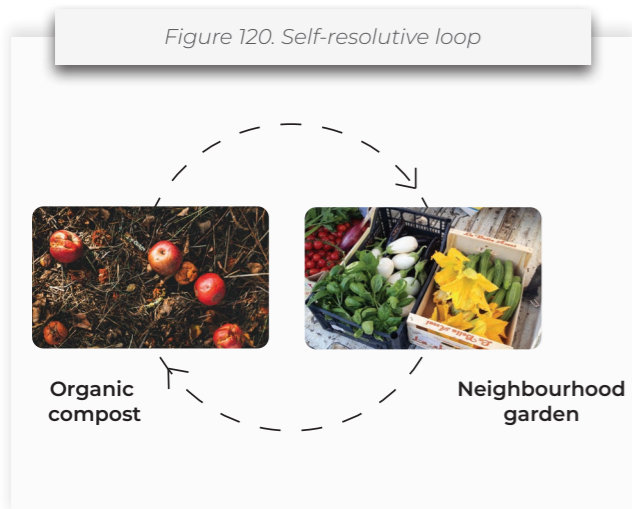


Figure 118



Figure 119



their level of satisfaction, interest and engagement. DEMOs offer the opportunity to plot those data on a visual graphical Benchmark. [Figure 121]

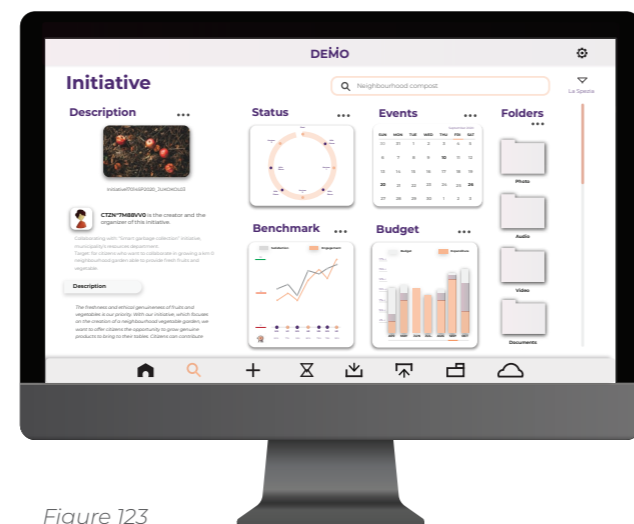
II What can institutions do with DEMOs?

With DEMOs as medium institutions can:

- **Form themselves about which are the main wishes and concerns citizens and the society as a whole have** thanks to the experiences and data they exchange through DEMO App. Following those, institutions can take actions to realize incremental interventions or provide practical suggestions. [Figure 120]
- **Directly provide official communication** (warning, notifications or reminders) **easy to understand to citizens** avoiding the informational noise typical of internet and social media on which understanding is harmed by the lack of mediation and poor verifiability. By bridging public opinion in that sense, it is made possible to enable relevant reactions to come across. [Figure 121]
- **Contact DEMOc**, which plays the role of “sub-partes” guarantor, to ask questions, reports functioning problems or doubting about the misconduct of any citizens or institutional members.



- **Manage initiatives, feedbacks and requests** from citizens and civil society. Institutions can decide, following their agenda to enable submission only regarding certain topics (e.g. sustainability) and establish a maximum number of receptions following their processing capacity. Since initiatives are presented in the form of thematic clusters institutions, thanks to DEMOs receive highlights about initiatives which can support each others initiating a self-resolutive loop (e.g. one initiative which aim to realize a neighbourhood garden can be put in communication with another one which produces compost from organic trash). This practice will also alleviate the administrative burden on institutions.
- **Channel citizens propoitive energy and employ-ee for ideas hackathons and public challenges** created about topics which have demonstrated societal relevance through the activity on DEMO App.
- **Provide citizens with the opportunity to request the Citizens Number** thanks to which it is possible to guarantee a seamless experience across the services offered by institutions at all levels. Through the mean of the CTZN^o institution are better supported in the implementation of smart digital services (e.g. smart city cards, document wallets, deadlines reminders).



8.4 DEMOc Community

8.4.1 Introduction

DEMOc is a **grassroots decentralize social-driven Community whose partner up with States, cross-level institutional authorities and civil society to bridge public opinion and share governance with citizens.**

DEMOc it is not owned or results to be controlled by any political and economic forces directly. It aims to guarantee the proper technical functioning as well as ethical usage of DEMO App and DEMOs on behalf of citizens and political institutions. DEMOc Community plays the role of “sub-partes” guarantor which objective is to ensure that the core democratic principles are respected. It means to avoid that DEMO, and all its parts are used:

- to brand ideas resulting in hyper-partisan echo-chamber;
- used for propaganda purpose;
- for pursuit third parties interests;
- to spread misinformation;
- for scam or criminal purposes.

DEMOc is equally responsible for:

- ensure ethical treatment of all sensitive data and information exchange through its components;

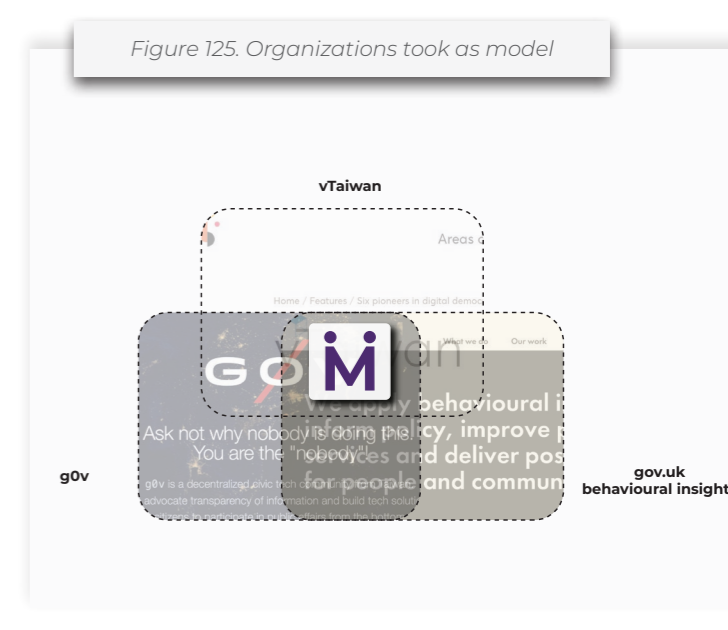
- check that the identification data uploaded by users correspond to the physical person that is using the service;
- make sure that all users respect the code of conduct at all levels;
- provide Institutional license to the governmental realities that are asking a request (municipalities, provinces, regions and nations);
- make sure that data are exchanged among realities only under their approval.

I The team

To ensure plurality, inclusivity and knowledge balance, DEMOc is composed by a multidisciplinary team where coders (40%), designers (10%), NGO (10%), civil society (10%) and govern institutional representative (local, regional and national), 30% of citizens from all walks of life.

The data and insights collected along the usage of App and Software will enable institutions to understand better:

- which other expertise necessary to include in the team;
- what user would like to receive and see in order to use and trust more the service.



8.5 DEMO roadmap

8.5.1 Roadmap

I Strategic Roadmap

To turn DEMO project and its three concepts (app, software and company) into a feasible, viable and desirable reality a roadmap has been realized. A roadmap is defined by Simonse et al. (2015), as an actionable strategic plan which visually "portrait of design innovation elements plotted on a timeline".

The one of DEMO has been developed on the bases of the future vision to achieve according to which "society is enabled to realize a democratic future in which governance is incrementally shared between institutions and citizens at the local, regional, national and international level".

In the strategic roadmap [Figure 126] is illustrated the mission for each horizon which are grounded on

three main pillars: **information, dialogue and collaboration.**

II Time pacing strategy

The time pacing is the backbone upon which the roadmap is articulated. The timing for the release of every level (from local to national) has been evaluated together with a computer science expert keeping into account current and future technological capabilities with particular attention to Artificial Intelligence and machine learning.

Another important aspect of the future vision kept into account, as formulated in the design statement (see Chapter 6), regards how citizens need to be "encouraged to responsibly manifest their concerns" and participate in the socio-political life. As emerged

Figure 126. DEMO strategic roadmap

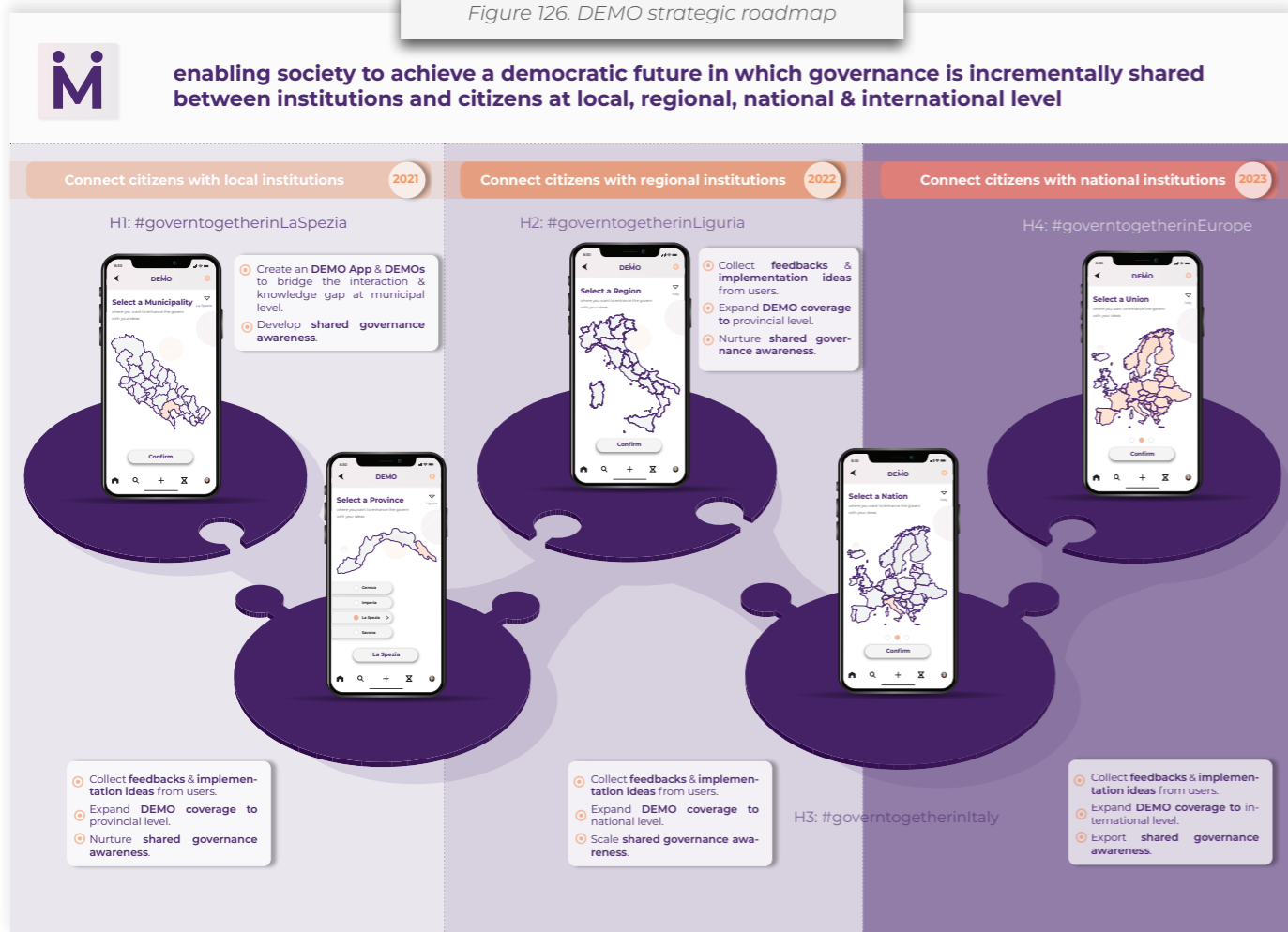


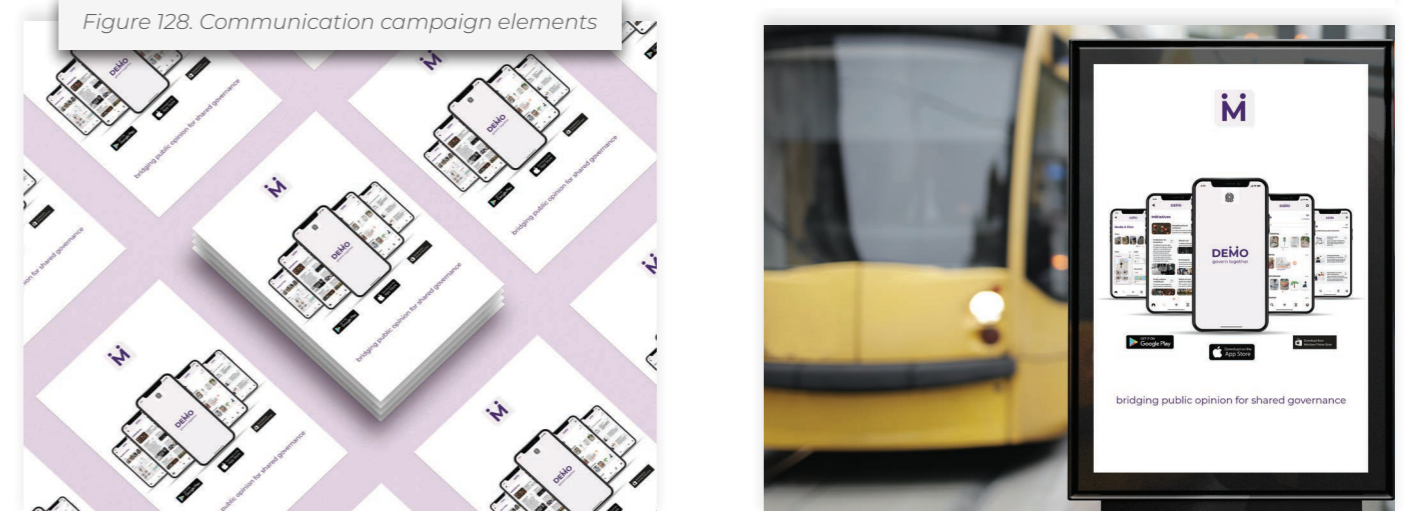
Figure 127. DEMO time pacing

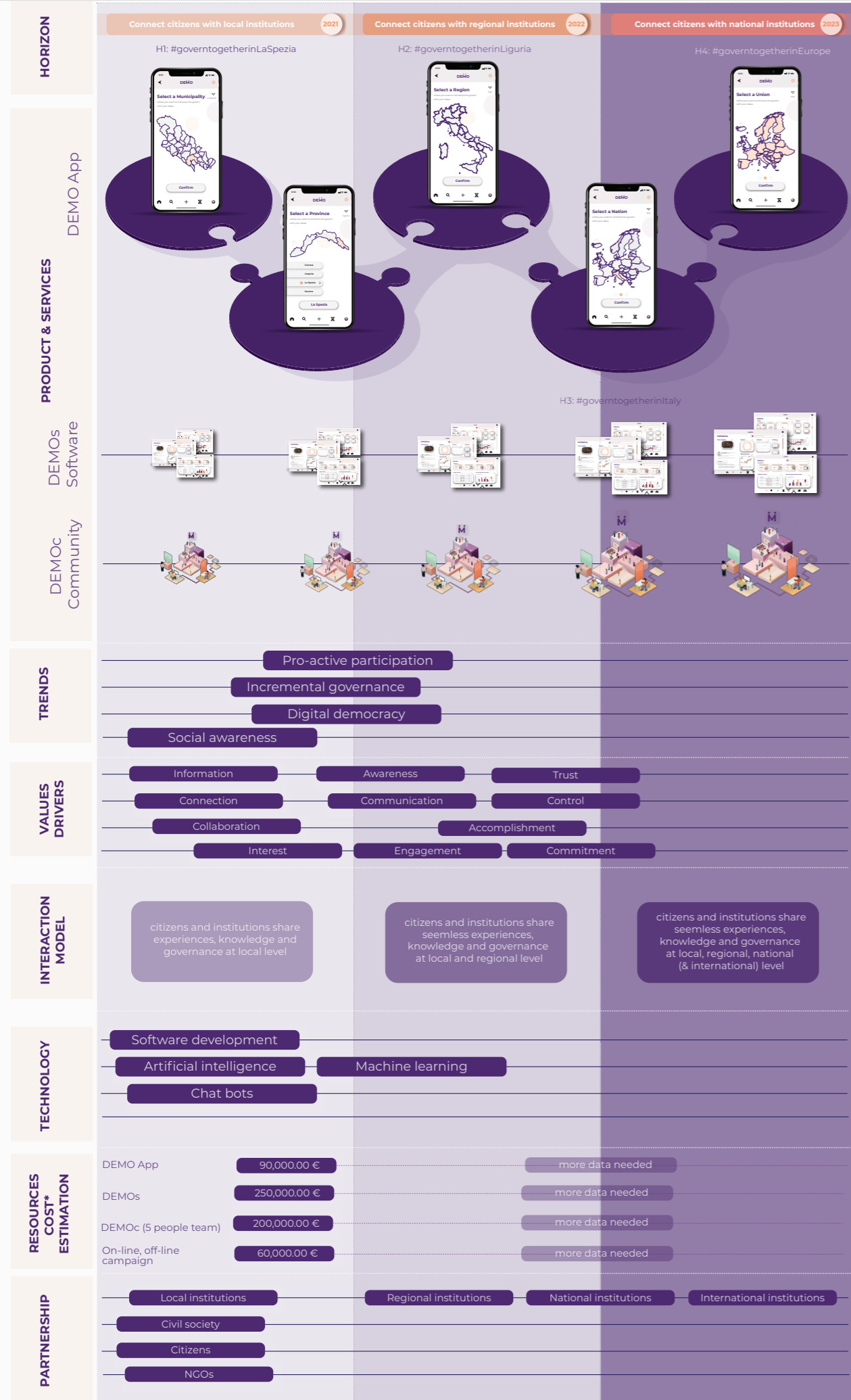


from the research, citizens behave following 4 main mindsets (see Chapter 5). Therefore, it is important to tailor the DEMO strategy along with its development, to target the different mindsets. At this purpose, the data which will be collected along with the usage will help in this purpose. [Figure 127]

The overall idea consists in focus on a specific mind-set at every step, **starting from pro-active individuals** at local level, which have been indicated as the main target group (see Section 8.1). Then, through the development of communicational campaign showcasing the beneficial impact DEMO has on socio-political wellbeing, the aim is to **reach, attract, engage and commit** the more sceptically mind-sets which have been generally indicated as sub-target. In order to reach the various targets based on mind-

Figure 128. Communication campaign elements





M enabling society to achieve a democratic future in which governance is incrementally shared between institutions and citizens at local, regional, national & international level

Figure 129. Tactic roadmap

sets and demographic segmentations both psychosocial (e.g. billboards at bus stops, flyers, info points) and digital means are used (e.g. Facebook, Spotify, News). [Figure 128].

III Tactical roadmap

The future is uncertain to the point that it is becoming increasingly hard, despite employee advanced forecast methods, to predict with 100% accuracy what will happen tomorrow. Especially after the Corona Virus, we have a few certain reference points. Nevertheless, for the future implementation of DEMO and its release in the outside world, in Figure 129, a tactic roadmap has been designed based on the data owned.

The tactic roadmap has been designed to be as flexible as possible in order to allow adjustments when

considered necessary. On average, it is advised to review and update it every 6-8 weeks.

Estimations regarding the initial cost for app and software development, the realization of the communication campaigns, resources needed and values to deliver have been reported concerning the Italian territory which has been used as "case". For more accuracy for what concerns pathways and time pacing, it would have been necessary to have more in-depth conversations with the competent governmental authorities and software developers. (This point will be touch upon in Chapter 10).

Nevertheless, thanks to the identified pathways have been possible to preliminary establish flows of activities necessary to enable a smooth project scaling across institutional levels and individual mindsets.

8.6 DEMO DNA & visual identity

In this section, it is briefly explained the relational behind the name DEMO, its logo and the color scheme used to convey its brand DNA.

8.6.1 Brand DNA

Based on the insights obtained from Chapter 5, 6 and 7 DEMO brand DNA has been formulated. [Figure 130].

It will better enable to communicate the value and the mission of DEMO during further implementation.

Based on the brand DNA, DEMO visual identity in terms of name, logo and colour scheme has been designed.

8.6.2 Name

The name DEMO has a triple valance. [Figure 132]

DEMO stays for Democracy as the domain where the design concept wants to generate an impact.

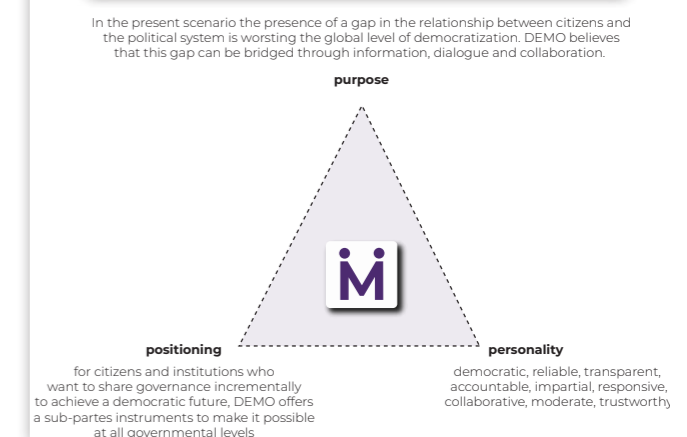
Démo is also a term used in informatic to generally indicate the first version of an App or programme which is released with illustrative purposes, in simplified and partial form (Treccani, 2020).

DEMO also wants to indicate a sense of working in progress which will be obtained through the various updates and level expansion. An environment in continuous evolution as the democratic one.

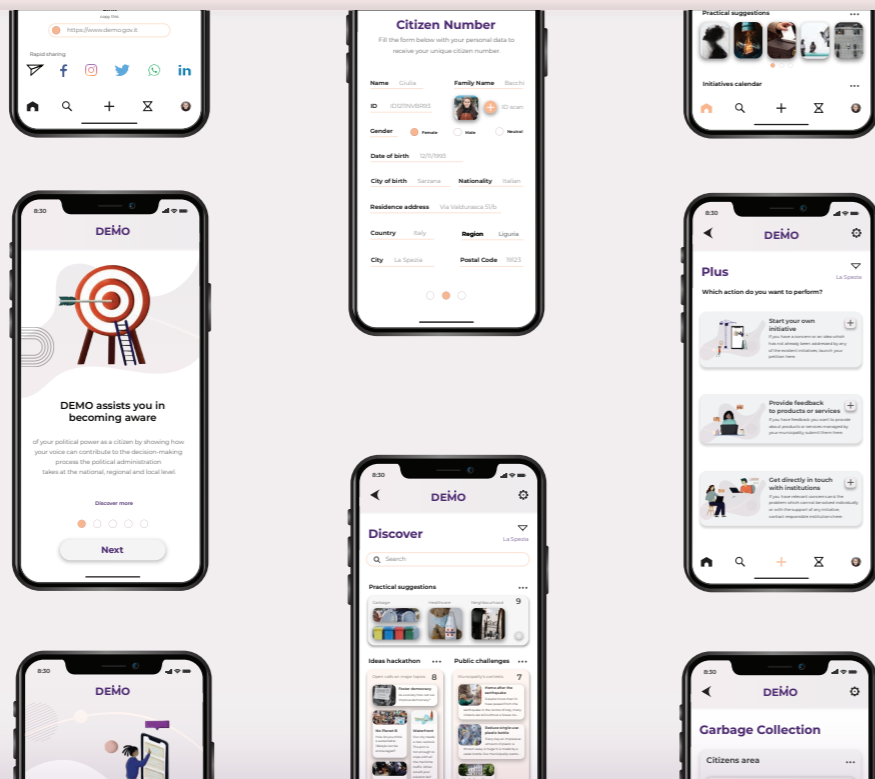
8.6.3 Logo

The research performed in this thesis made evident

Figure 130. DEMO name origins



*cost estimated together with experts and further validated during interviews



colours palette

the colour code is indicated in RGB



font

Montserrat: light (ordinary text), **semibold** (titles)

Aa, Bb, Cc, Dd, Ee, Ff, Gg, Hh, Ii, Ll, Mm, Nn, Oo, Pp, Qq, Rr, Ss, Tt, Uu, Vv, Zz, Xx, Yy, Jj, Ww, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 0, !?

logo

The letter "M" is realized thanks



app icon

Valid for Smartphone, Tablets and Desktop



Figure 131 DEMO visual identity

the presence of a gap in the relationship between citizens and the political system at all institutional levels. DEMO mission is to bridge this gap and convey it also through its logo.

The logo wants to represent the stylization of citizens and political institutions who find a meeting point, hold hands as an act of cooperation and decide to share governance to build together the future [Figure 131]. The logo is used to identify DEMO App, DEMOs and DEMOc alike.

I Slogan: govern together

A catchy slogan "govern together" accompanies the logo to support the visual identity storytelling better. It has also been designed with the purpose to be used during communication campaigns.

8.6.4 Color scheme

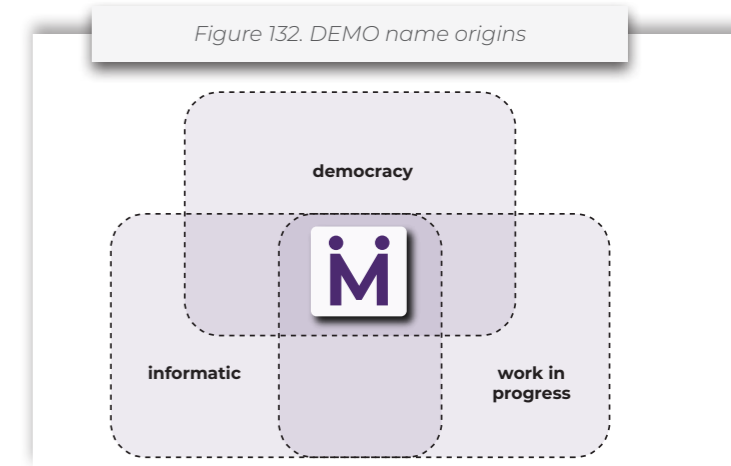
The colours palette has been chosen to reflect the personality of DEMO [Figure 30]

I Purple

It is the color of the stability, offered by a balanced moderation, and of the energy which characterizes innovation. It symbolizes power and ambition, wisdom and creativity.

II Pink-violet

It is the colour of hope, optimism to embody the wished for the achievement of a democratic future. At the same, if represent vulnerability and youth as



DEMO concept is (at least at the really beginning).

III Orange

It is the color which merges the happiness and joy with the yellow with the energy and passion of the red. It represents the enthusiasm and the determination to achieve goals, using a sparkle of creativity.

IV Grey

It is the color of balance, but mainly serves as a reminder that down moment will happen, but with determination, they can be overcome.

V White

It is associated with purity, transparency and genuineness. It is the colour of perfection as standard to which aim and faith toward the future. It represents a successful beginning, as the one that DEMO wish.

Chapter 08. KEY INSIGHTS & CONCLUSIONS

>> Conclusion

DEMO has been presented as a project composed of three concepts: DEMO App, DEMOs and DEMOc. The aim is to provide citizens and governmental institutions with the adequate instruments to establish an ongoing bi-directional interaction which will enable to bridge public opinion and share governance representing an extension in participation beyond the moment of voting.

I Research question 4 almost answered

This research question can be considered fully answered in the next Chapter after validation insights will be presented.



swered in the next Chapter after validation insights will be presented.

II Research question 5 partially answered

To fully answer this research question more insights are needed from the next Chapter.

Research questions friendly reminder

4. "Which kind of design can better support a bi-direction interaction between citizens and the political system?"
5. "Which are the implications in the near and far future?"



Chapter 09

Validating DEMO

In this Chapter DEMO as an overall concept has been validated in terms of desirability, feasibility and viability together with citizens and politicians. After a brief introduction regarding the set-up followed, the main insights are listed. Attention has been paid to compare the present scenario against the future one where DEMO is reality. At last, based on the collected evidence, it is reflected if the goals set in the design framework have been met.

Sections in this Chapter

9.1 "Validation set-up"

9.2 "Validation insights"



Note 1: *the final design concept validated in this Chapter has been extensively presented in Chapter 8 and iteratively ideate in Chapter 7.*

Note 2: *the final design, contains parts that have been implemented after the last validation round following the received feedbacks. Further validation rounds are suggested.*

Note 3: *the examples provided in this Chapter are used with illustrative purpose.*

Note 4: *La Spezia municipality and province (local level), Liguria region (regional level), Italian State (national level) are used as test desks for the concept. Based on that, respondents have been chosen accordingly both from citizens and political side.*

9.1 Validation set-up

The validation process, as well as the ideation one (See Chapter 7), has been done iteratively. It means that relevant insights obtained from one round have been implemented in the design concept to be tested in the subsequent round with new respondents. [Figure 133]

To assess the desirability, viability and feasibility of DEMO as overall concept 4 iterative rounds have been performed following the formula “presentation + interview” or “presentation + discussion” depending on the number of participants per round.

The total amount of participant was 12 distributed as follow.

- 8 Italian citizens from different walks of life [Cit-22 to Cit-29];
- 1 trade unionist; [TrUn-1]
- 1 politician involved at the regional level [Pol-1].
- 2 politicians involved at the municipal level [Pol-2 & Pol-3].

Note 1: the politicians, the trade unionists and 4/8 citizens have been already interviewed during the research phase. This element can be considered as part of the methodology's limitations and Discussed

in Chapter 10. To avoid confusion with the previous round of interview ,new identification numbers will be used to indicate participants.

Note 2: During citizens' recruitment attention has been paid to select individuals belonging to different min-sets (as identified from Chapter 5) to measure the impact of DEMO concept on their attitude toward politics. [Figure 134]

Note 3: Due to COVID-19 restrictions and geographical constraints, all the session happened on-line via Zoom.

9.1.1 Narrative transportation

Narrative transportation has been used as method to test DEMO concept. This practices, as indicated by van den Hende et al. (2012), is particularly suitable to measure the potential of “really new products” as DEMO is.

I Presentation part 1 (15 minutes)

For this purpose, three different scenarios representing prototypical socio-political and administrative cases DEMO would have helped to address, have been used as test desk. [See Figure 135 for the scenario]. Their narration has been supported by the usage of self-explanatory images to enable better transpor-

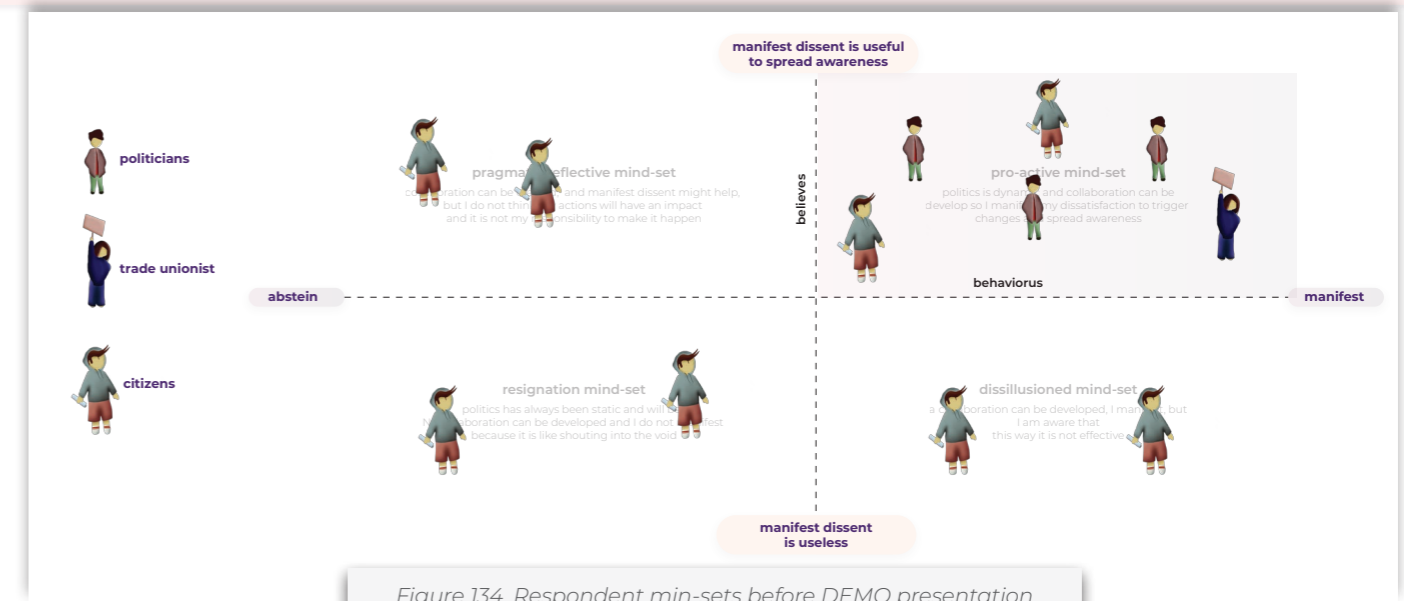


Figure 134. Respondent min-sets before DEMO presentation

tation. Respondents (both citizens and politicians) have been asked to imagine to currently experience them as a problem and, concerning them, to express their feelings and action line.

II Presentation part 2 (10 minutes)

In the second part of the session DEMO concept has been presented in terms of goals, functional benefits and capabilities. Attention has been paid to result as much neutral as possible in order to avoid personal interference. Mockups of DEMO have been shown to support a better understanding.

Note: The possibility to realize a functioning demo of DEMO has been discarded time and personal programming skills-wise.

III Presentation part 3 (15 minutes)

During the third part of the session, participants have been asked to imagine still to experience the problems related to the previously illustrated scenarios and to have DEMO available to be used. Again has been asked them to talk about their new emotional dimension and describe what they would have done thanks to DEMO.

IV Presentation part 4 (15 minutes)

In this last part of the validation, participants have been invited to freely express their opinion about DEMO in terms of desirability and feasibility. In the specific has been asked them to indicate what they liked, did not like, would like to see added and what they see as weaknesses.

9.2 Validation insights

The insights obtained highlighted a net difference in the emotional status that participants revealed about the three prototypical cases before and after the presentation of the DEMO concept. [Figure 135]

9.2.1 Cases without DEMO

On average, the insights obtained regarding this part of the validation further confirmed the evidence that emerged from previous research.

I Citizens

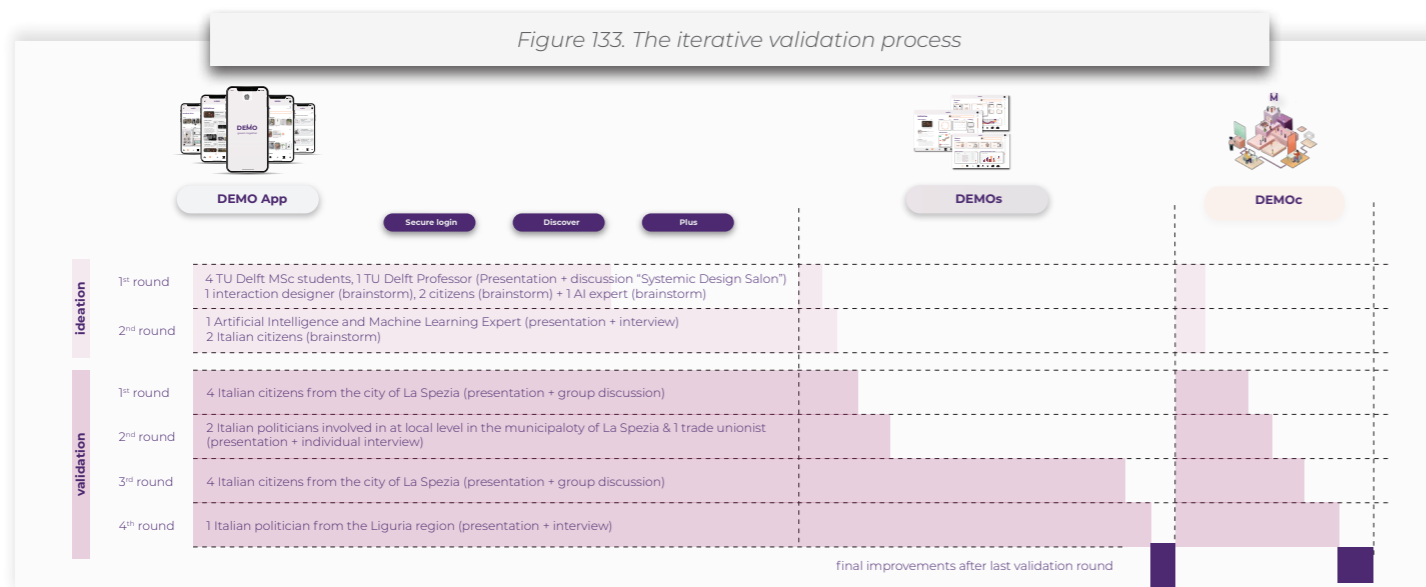
Citizens expressed negative feelings, especially

linked to the impossibility of receiving adequate support from institutions and to the tendency of being ignored.

II Politicians

Manifested the need for more adequate instruments to understand citizens concerns and desirable implementations. Currently, they feel to be ineffective, considering the different channels they have to keep into account to communicate and retrieve data. The present situation, especially for the “less experienced” politician result to be sometimes overwhelming and disorienting.

Figure 133. The iterative validation process



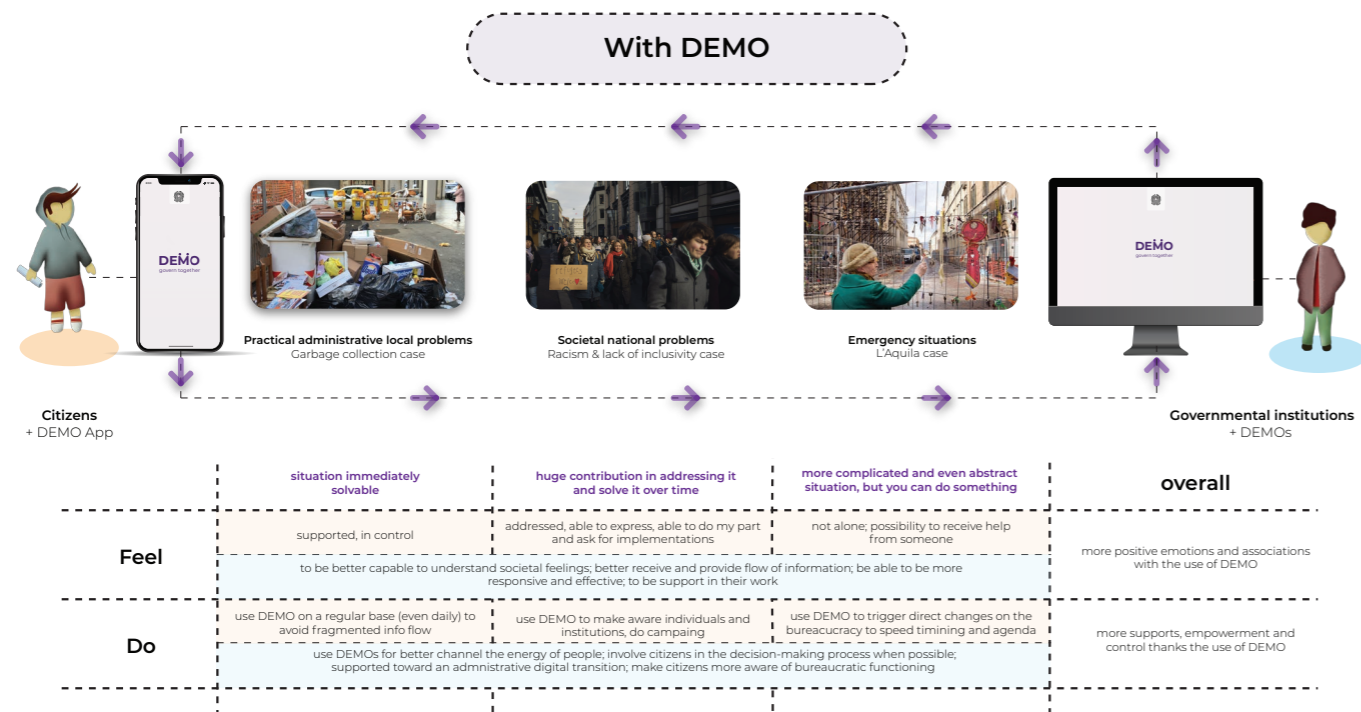
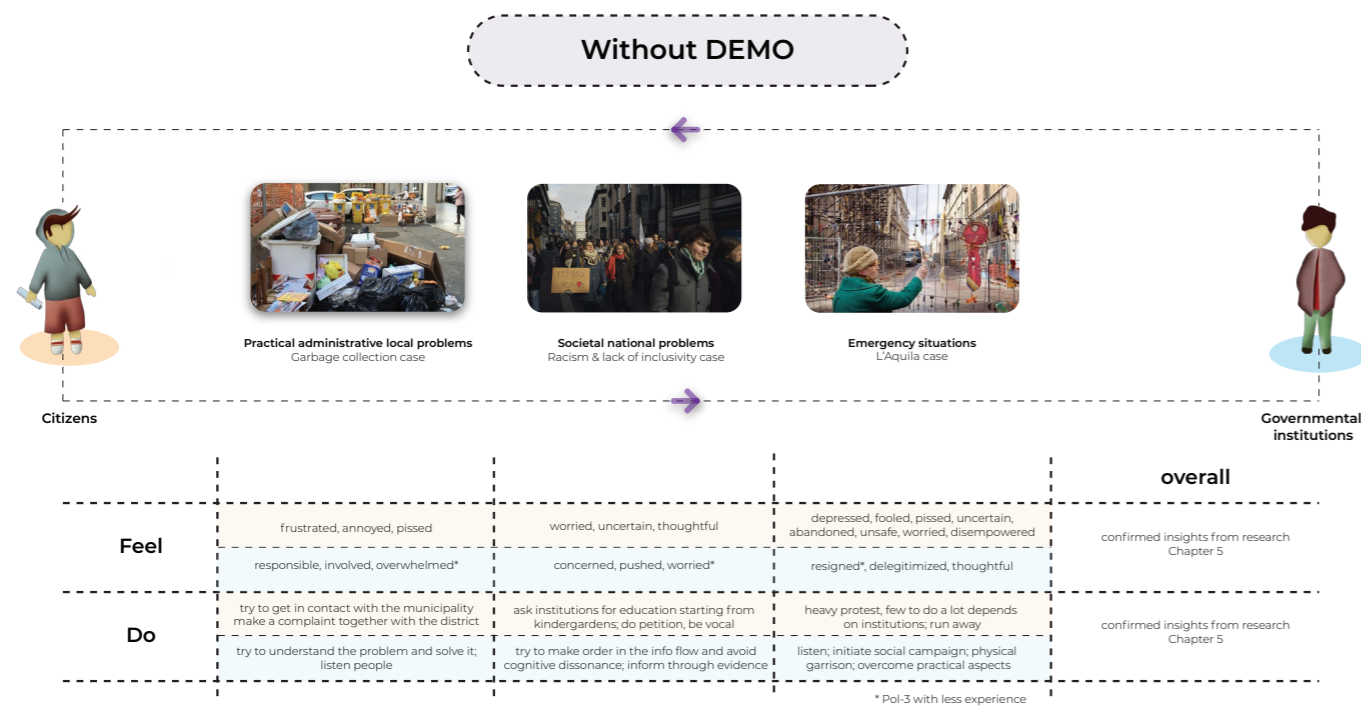


Figure 135. DEMO application to three different scenarios

9.2.2 Cases with DEMO

On average, the insights obtained regarding this part of the validation revealed a positive reception of DEMO as a concept.

I Citizens

Citizens manifested positive emotion liked to the sensation of being better supported, more in controlled and enabled to express themselves within the socio-political dimension compared to the previous scenario.

"I would use it for so many things that are close to my heart and now with this app I will feel more supported."

Cit-22 pro-active mind-set

"I will use it every day".

Cit-23 resignation mind-set

"You would be a little more free and confident in being able to express yourself"

Cit-29 disillusioned mind-set

II Politicians

On the average, positively welcome the idea of DEMO, recognizing how having it as an instrument will solve many of the problems they have now concerning interaction and information exchange with citizens.

"The app solves one of the main problems which I previously had. The one of making order. It provides an instrument both for citizens and politics because the citizens are better capable of directing their instances and politics is better capable of receiving them and better processing"

Pol-3

At the same time, they manifested a few concerns regarding bureaucracy and responsibility management. These elements will be discussed in section 9.2.6

9.2.3 Like

I DEMO overall concept

• **Visual identity and name** were indicated as appealing and as capable of conveying the overall message. Pol-3 suggested highlighting the idea of work in progress further *"I really like the name [...] It given an idea of working in progress. I think it is valuable to highlight this triple vision. I think it is really nice."* *"The graphic is really cool; the concept is stunning"* Pol-2

• **Multi-level strategy** resulted in being appreciated for the scalability of the concept and its interaction complexity. It was recognized as capable of providing

continuity across the institutional levels. Its pattern indicated as suitable to be potentially applied to all nations in the world.

• **CTZN^o** it has been indicated by citizens as able to speed up bureaucratic management and improve their experience across the services provided by institutions at different levels.

• **Not owned by a political party** has an element of satisfaction among citizens who made feel them equally represented;

"Nice that it does not depend on any political party and that every citizen can feel to be represented by it and do not be afraid their data can be used for propaganda but used as a responsive service on various levels"

Pol-2

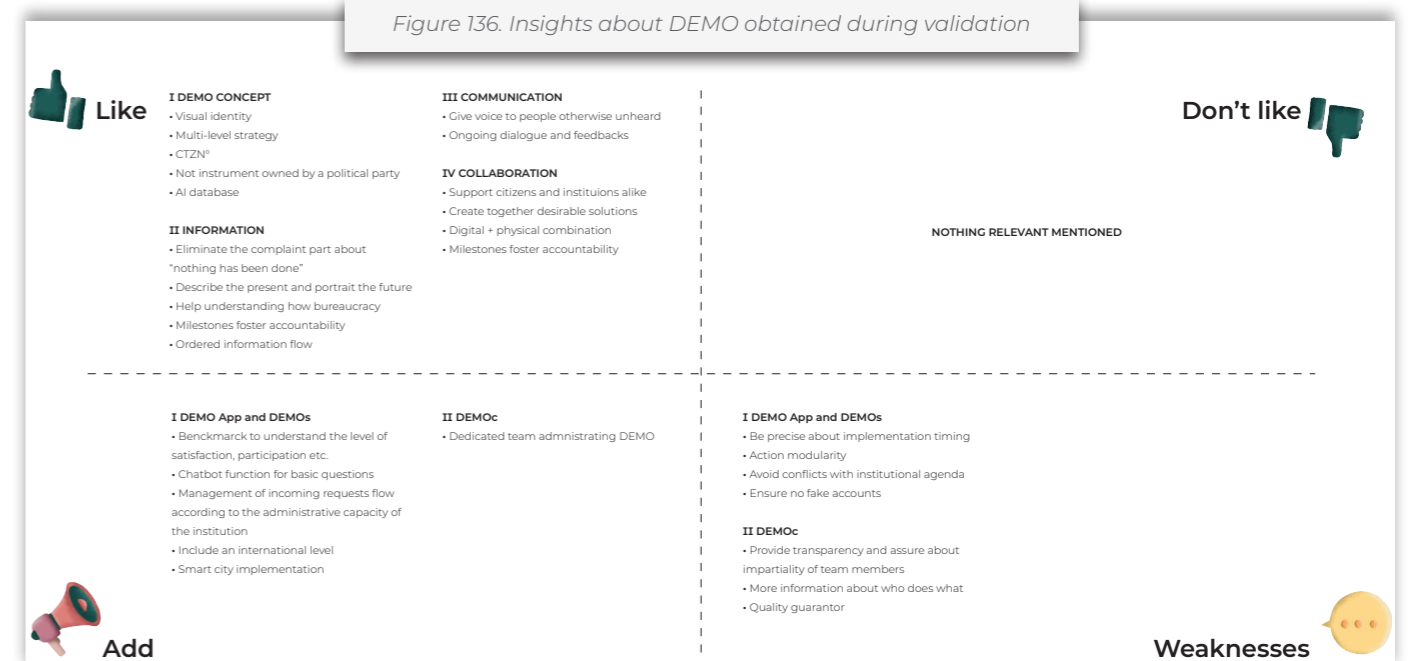
• **AI** indicated as an advanced and important element to be future proof.

II Information and communication support

"You will have a more adequate information flow. It is useful at the informational level and to make aware individuals and the community that they can have a say. You will still have bureaucracy it is not something you remove. You still have regulations at the different governmental level because it is not something that this App can avoid, but it allows me as a citizen to have a clearer vision of what is happening, to make me listen more"

Cit-29 disillusioned mind-set

Figure 136. Insights about DEMO obtained during validation



DEMO capability of ordering currently noisy information flow has been positively recognized by all respondents. By having quality information provided through a unified institutional channel, citizens feel to be better able to understand how bureaucracy works and therefore obtain a consistent understanding of both present and future. On the other hand politicians feel enable to be more effective in light of the possibility to provide tips and suggestions to citizens.

Better information dynamics, according to several citizens, are capable of fostering intellectual inclusivity and therefore improving communication dynamics. In that sense, DEMO is seen as able to

"Give voice to people that otherwise result not to be listened"

Cit-28 [resignation mind-set]

III Collaboration support

With the introduction of DEMO, citizens and institutions alike felt to be more supported in their reciprocal learning process and interaction.

"This app will better enable an exchange with institutions that now it is very marginal. With this app, you integrate a better interaction"

Cit-26 [pragmatic-reflective mindset]

The possibility to exchange reciprocal feedback along milestone has been indicated as an element capable of providing accountability and therefore help citizens to restore trust toward politics.

9.2.4 Do not like

None of the respondents mentioned an element they did not like.

9.2.5 Add

Respondents indicated several elements and feature they would have liked to see add as basic components of DEMO. For instance, Pol-1 indicated the importance of having:

- **benchmarks** *"to appreciate the effectiveness of the intervention and measure citizens' interest and satisfaction through popular voting";*
- **intermediate contact points as chatbots** *"to provide answers to questions regarding the meaning of some documents" or process;*
- **ingress filter for initiatives submission** *"in order to maximize the effectiveness as well. In fact, the risk of receiving more proposal and data to manage than the effective management capacity is that people*

will become more disappointed because they feel that their concern result twice unheard".

All of these aspects, together with the ones reported in the "add window" in Figure 136, have been implemented except "smart city implementation". This last point will be touched upon in the next Chapter.

For the implemented one further validation is recommended.

9.2.6 Weaknesses

The majority of the concerns manifested by respondents were about "who is behind DEMO".

Especially citizens express the need for being provided with evidence supporting the seriousness of the DEMO team, their commitment and administrative proficiency. Otherwise, the risk is that DEMO becomes another thing about which people get really enthusiastic about before "get disillusioned". As stated by Cit-22, it is necessary for seriousness and continuity.

This issue, according to Cit-23, can be addressed by having DEMO providing periodic highlights so to check whether all the parties involved do their job. In that case, even if representatives of political institutions will be involved in the DEMO team, citizens feel to have the instruments to monitor their conduct.

"It is important to be clear about how much time the institutions have to implement things because it is not like that the society decides something and that you do not know about the timing from the municipality"

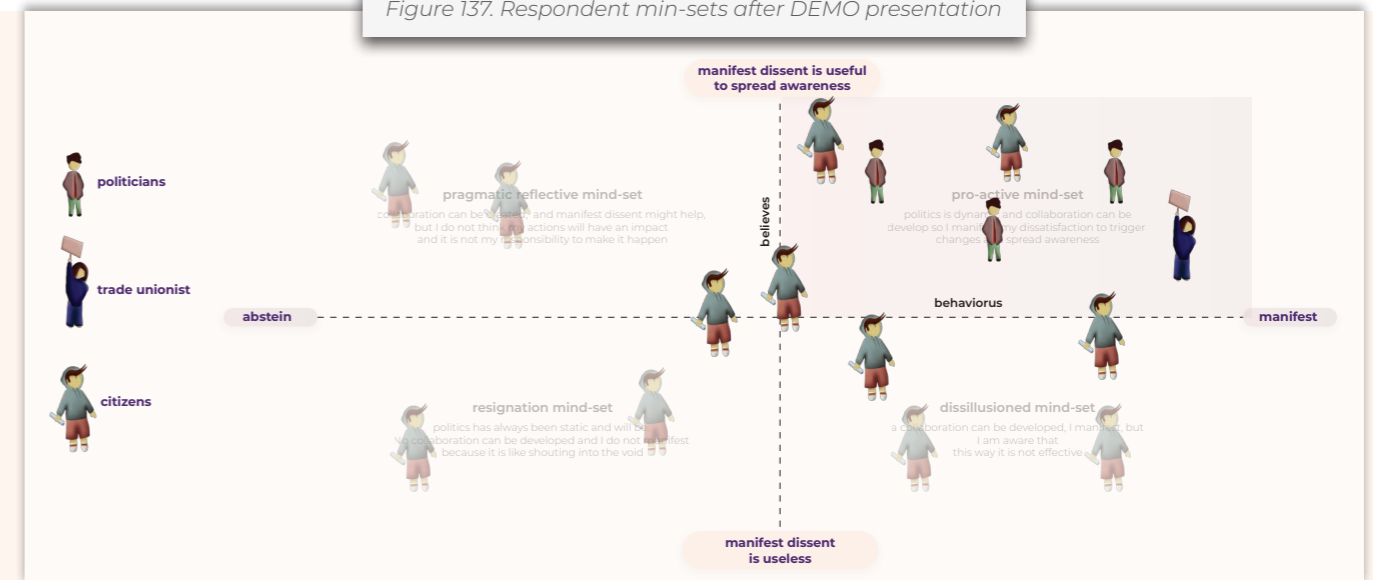
Cit-23 resignation mind-set

Furthermore, as highlighted by Pol-1, it is necessary to "Avoid that the platform will be politicized and used as a propagandistic instrument" as well as to ensure, through the employment of biometric parameter that no fake account or identity thieves are operating on DEMO.

From the need of having a kind of sub-partes guarantor behind DEMO responsible for maintaining continuity despite the changes in governments, collaborating with political institutions without being one of them, control the quality and accuracy of the information exchanged, DEMO as a concept has been developed.

Chapter 09. KEY INSIGHTS & CONCLUSIONS

Figure 137. Respondent min-sets after DEMO presentation



>> Conclusion

In this Chapter DEMO as overall concept has been tested to verify whether it is capable of delivering goals for which it has been designed for: **provide citizens and governmental institutions with the adequate instruments to establish an ongoing bi-directional interaction which will enable to bridge public opinion and share governance representing an extension in participation beyond the moment of voting.**

The insights obtained from the validation session shade light about the authentic potential that an instrument like DEMO would have in improving the dynamics (in terms of information, communication and collaboration) and so the overall relationship between citizens and the political system across societal segments and institutional levels. In fact, it emerged how with DEMO citizens who initially were not identified with a pro-active min-set ended up to manifest one, demonstrating the willingness to question their current negative perception of institutions and redeem their civic weight in socio-political decisions. [Figure 137]

I Desirability

The concept resulted in being highly desirable in terms of values, and dynamics triggered and so capable of awaking a participatory spirit even in citizens that use to abstain. As well politicians affirmatively recognized the potential of the entire concept despite more data and further implementation are needed.

>> *"I think it is desirable and I look at it in a positive way".* Pol-1

>> *"I would definitely use it"*
Cit-25 resignation mind-set

II Feasibility

DEMO has been indicated as feasible design in terms of functionalities, values, budget and technology. The initial estimated cost of 600.000 € for the concept development and lunch has been indicated as appropriate. However, as remarked by Pol-1, more detailed data are needed.

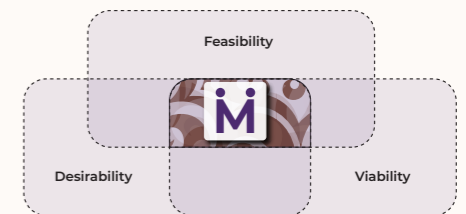
Technology has not been labeled an element of friction, but as an added value, despite what preliminary assumed.

III Viability

Following the collected insights to DEMO has been recognized with the potential to solve different prototypical situations as well as be open to future implementation thanks to digitalization and positive-civic engagement.

>> *"The wonderful thing about this app is that it is really open up to implementations. You have no ideas about all the things you can relate to it. All the multi utilities that a city has, the transport system, you have the potential to unify a lot of things".* Pol-3

>> *"I think that over time this app can be a good thing to trigger a change also on an important part of the bureaucracy."* Cit-29 disillusioned mind-set



4. "Which kind of design can better support a bi-direction interaction between citizens and the political system?" Answered
5. "Which are the design implications in the near and far future?" Partially answered, further reflection in the next chapter



Chapter 10

Final thoughts

This last Chapter is dedicated to some final thought concerning further developments, result discussion, contribution in practice and limitation of this thesis. Last but not least, it is presented a personal reflection on the entire project.

Sections in this Chapter

- 10.1 "Further validation and research "*
- 10.2 "Research discussion"*
- 10.3 "Research contribution"*
- 10.4 "Research limitations"*
- 10.5 "Personal reflection"*



10.1 Further validation & research

Despite many of the insights obtained from the validation sessions have been integrated into the final design, further validation, research and implementation are needed in order to make DEMO operative.

10.1.1 Further validation

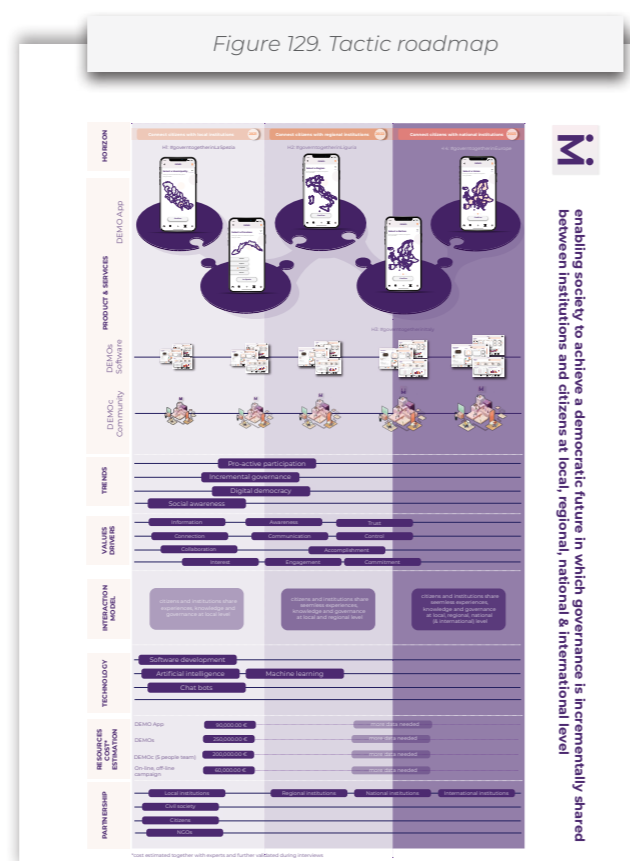
The validation session explained in Chapter 9 has shed light about the potential DEMO has in bridging the current gap in the relationship between people and the political system and support society in achieving a democratic future of shared governance. Respondents, both citizens and politicians, evaluated the concept positively in terms of desirability, feasibility and viability to the point of encouraging the development of DEMO. However, as emerged from the insights obtained, extensive research and implementation are needed.

Some of the feedback received during the last validation round (e.g. addition of benchmarks, chatbots, modularity and insights regarding the DEMO team) have been incorporated into the final design. However, considering respondents availability and graduation planning, no further testing has been possible. Therefore, a validation round of the DEMO final design as it presented in Chapter 8 it is strongly recommended.

10.1.2 Further research

Crucial for setting the future research will be the identification of possible partners and the finalization of the municipality to use as test desk to launch DEMO. Besides, to turn DEMO App, DEMOs and DEMOc an operative reality, it would be necessary to execute extensive multidisciplinary research. However, considering the complexity of the topic and the widespread level of expertise required, it is wise to prioritize the formation of DEMOc team following the requirements stated in section 8.4 and defined on the bases of existing realities (e.g. g0v, Taiwan and gov.uk behavioural insights team)

By analyzing the DEMO concept from different perspectives and through fresh approaches, it will be then possible to decide as a team, the next moves fol-



low. Those can be developed upon the tactical roadmap explained in section 8.5 [Figure 129].

10.1.3 Further implementations

One of the implementations to prioritize on DEMO's agenda is the realization of a "demo" intended as a digital prototype which enables to test the concept functionalities and capabilities more in-depth.

Thanks to a digital prototype, it will be possible to collect more accurate interaction insights which have not been possible to collect through the narrative transportation.

As democracy is a process in continuous evolution, the same will be the development of DEMO. Validation, research, implementation on repeat.

10.2 Research discussion

In this section is presented a brief recap of the research questions and the answers that have been provided to the following insights obtained along with the development of this thesis. Furthermore, a critical reflection is done upon the design goals and the framework used.

In this thesis practices of strategic and social design have been combined to address in a novel way a wicked problem which is the perception of a gap in the relationship between citizens and politics (Chapter 1). For this purpose, the present context has been explored through extensive research and different design tools to understand what is nurturing the gap between citizens and politics and how this can be bridged (Chapter 5). Upon the obtained findings through iterative ideation steps have been defined the design goal: provide citizens and governmental institutions with the adequate instruments to establish an ongoing bi-directional interaction which will enable to bridge public opinion and share governance representing an extension in participation beyond the moment of voting. (Section 8.1) From it, DEMO as a project composed of three concepts: DEMO App, DEMOs and DEMOc, come to life.

To better support the reader in understanding which piece of information led to the realization of DEMO, by following the logical structure provided by the research questions, the main milestones of this thesis are traced back.

1. "What is causing the gap in the relationship between citizens and the political system?"

As emerged from the current content portrait by using a cause-and-effect chain to make sense of the insights obtained, the gap in the relationship between citizens and the political system is provoked and kept alive by an explosive mix of practices which harm fundamental democratic principles:

- lack of regulations;
- manipulations strategies;
- misconduct fostered by an abusive usage of media channels;
- branding.

Those elements brought to the surface a series of a systemic problem in terms of mis-dset, education

and interaction both from the side of citizens and politicians. (See Chapter 5 conclusions).

In the specific evidence indicates how the current negative perception that citizens have about politics it is nurtured by the perception of:

- **Unbalanced communication dynamics.** Despite using the same channels, while the information exchange by politics succeeds to come across all societal segments, the ones produced by citizens fail to have the equivalent impact on the institutional levels.
- **A mismatch between the rigid and static building blocks of the political system in contrast with the fluidity and interactivity of social media.**
- **A mismatch between the openness and the participatory inclusivity promoted by institutions and the real possibility for citizens to have an impact on the governmental decision-making process.**

Consequently, the feeling that communication happens in a mono-directional way plays the role of a reagent that trigger different behaviors in citizens which, as in a vicious loop, reinforce their perception that politics is a distant entity.

1.1 "how do citizens and the political system perceive their relationship?"

From in-depth semi-structured interviews emerged how citizens and the political system negatively perceive their relationship and what would necessary to do in order to achieve an ideal collaborative scenario. (Conclusion Chapter 5).

Overall appeared clear how current problematics and sources of dissatisfaction can be overcome through:

- value alignment and resolution of value tensions regarding participatory and educational implications;
- implementation of information, communication and collaboration dynamics.

2. “What has been done so far to try to bridge the gap?”

Several initiatives to turn the tide are undertaken by governments, organizations, emerging parties and private citizens to improve individual's socio-political participation and contrast the decadent democratic trend. (Chapter 4)

2.1 “what was effective and what was not? Why?”

Overall the combination of human touch and advanced technological capabilities results to be a winning formula for incremental governance. Therefore, certified digital platforms result to be a performing environment for transparent knowledge and feedback exchange, cross-generational and hierarchical communication, collaborative decision-making process and data tracking. However, two main weaknesses can lead to reinforce the gap between citizens and political institutions rather than bridge it: mandatory affiliation to the political party who manages the platform and lack of a clear action plan on behalf of the organization which then fail to activate a purposeful dialogue with political institutions. Last but not least, a remarkable role is played by pop-cultural expressions, especially in the form of activism which, through the usage of simple image succeed in making digestible complex messages. (Chapter 4)

3. “What needs to be done to close the gap effectively?”

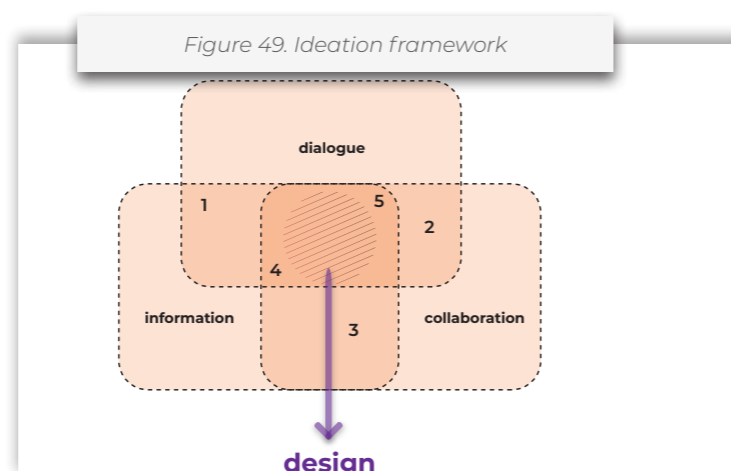
To bridge the gap it is necessary to realize an intervention at the mediation level, which would allow:

- more frequent and effective communication dynamics;
- to channel all the energy that it is currently spent by people through various means, from manifestations to social media;
- to encourage people in manifesting their opinion by showing them how follow-up activities capable of implementing societal wishes into concrete outcomes are possible.

As emerged from the respondent's vision alignment realized at the end of Chapter 5, a desirable solution would consist in the **realization of a common digital platform to enable information exchange, involvement and participation across institutional levels and societal segments.**

4. “Which kind of design can better support a bi-directional interaction between citizens and the political system?”

As emerged from the insights obtained combining literature research, interviews, surveys and observation, a design of that kind needs to:



1. change citizens and politicians relationship dynamics enabling a bi-directional interaction and reduction in the distance perceived;
2. establish a stable connection and ongoing dialogue between citizens and political institutions;
3. help citizens in developing socio-political awareness and responsibility regarding their rights and duties;
4. provide instruments which enable to channel citizens energy, bridge public opinion and share governance representing an extension in participation beyond the moment of voting;
5. include citizens perspective into the political decision-making process to develop sustainable governmental decisions.

These elements implemented following a three pillars framework (information, communication, collaboration) further enriched by the data collected during validation, lead to the realization of DEMO as final design articulated on three concepts: DEMO App for citizens, DEMOs Software for institutions and DEMOc Community, “sub-partes” guarantor for an adequate technical functioning and ethical usage of all the parts. **DEMO aim is to ensure information, dialogue and collaboration to bridge public opinion and share governance.**

Despite being simple yet essential, the framework revealed to be an effective guide.

5. “Which are the design implications in the near and far future?”

Despite the final design revealed the potential to generate positive impact shortly (by helping in solving practical administrative problems) and in the far future (by providing support for the realization of long term project) further research is needed to be able to realize more accurate predictions.

In the end the primary aim of this project was not to design a final solution, but to trigger discussion about a topic that should interest all.

10.3 Research contribution

Here below, it is briefly shared the contribution that this thesis, which can be intended as a strategic design for a socio-political innovation project, gives both in the design and the socio-political field.

This thesis helps in understanding what is causing the gap in the relationship between citizens and the political system and offers a strategy to bridge it based on information, dialogue and collaboration.

In light of the positive reactions harvested along with its development DEMO, as an overall concept, aspires to bring further the discussion about how to enable society to achieve a democratic future in which public opinion is bridged, and governance is incrementally shared between institutions and citizens at local, regional, national & international level.

In the specific DEMO aims to reduce the source of dissatisfaction which prevents many citizens from participating in the socio-political life and maximize inclusivity through knowledge and interaction democratization.

Considering the conjoint combination of strategic, interaction practices and design for democracy purposes this graduation project can be considered as positioned in the sweet-spot obtained by the intersect of these three disciplines. [Figure 138]

Considering the novelty of this discipline combination, this project aim to be a lighthouse in the seas of information for whom will come next.

10.3.1 Strategic design

As stated in Chapter 1, the application of strategic design to the socio-political field is a relatively new practice. Therefore this thesis result to be a stepping stone for what concerns methodology used (double-double diamond + SID), knowledge produced and new opportunities identified.

DEMO as project wants to demonstrate how:

- the power of design in resulting suitable to be applied to different disciplines and in generating impact in multiple domains;
- design in the socio-political context can be used for other purposes either than hyperpartisan branding.

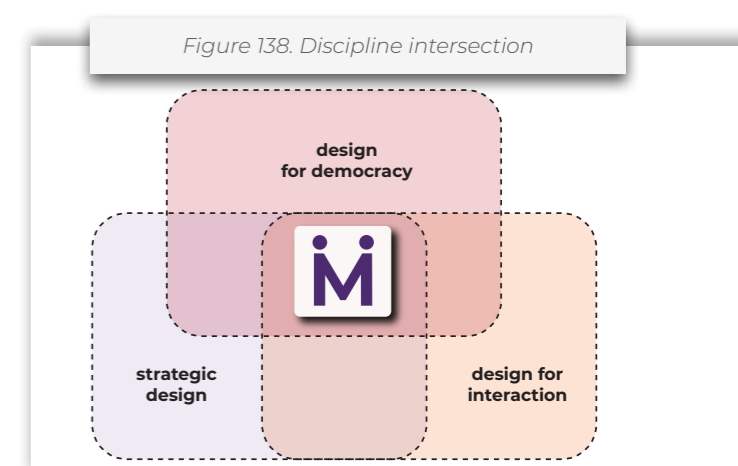
10.3.2 Design for democracy

Through the identification of what causes the gap in the relationship between citizens and the political system and what can be done to bridge it, this project aims to bring further the discussion about how the current democratic crisis can be reversed through information, dialogue and collaboration (education framework).

Furthermore, DEMO offers an interaction pattern (on three main levels: local regional and national) and education framework which can be potentially applied to the majority of States worldwide and employed to improve both informational and interaction dynamics between citizens and politics across governmental forms.

10.3.3 Design for interaction

DEMO contribution regarding this discipline consists of rich data and insights collected mainly through interviews and online observation regarding the interaction dynamics (both physical and digital) between citizens and the political system. In the specific, the correlation between perception and attitudes led to the identification of four different mind-sets to which corresponds four shades of manifestation or abstention and behaviours.



10.4 Research limitations

In this section are briefly described the main limitations which have characterized the development of this research project and by which the final result has been influenced. Many of the below reporter limitations have already been mentioned in the report.

10.4.1 Project brief

As stated in the stakeholder's section [1.2.6], no official client or external partner has been involved, unlike most graduation projects. Sometimes, this led to having too many degrees of freedom and too few reference points. Many of the collected data, especially for what concerned the final design have been retrieved through research and not directly provided by a client.

Having not a specific client also led to:

- the selection of hypothetical cases and territories to use as test desk for the concept design;
- having self defined target and goals along with the development of the project;
- not having access to sensitive governmental data which would have enabled a more accurate prediction.

10.4.2 Literature research

Political, societal and democratic literature is a tremendously vast topic which analysis and digestion require a balanced level of expertise. Therefore, some insights could have been missed, along with their implications.

10.4.3 Methodology

The methodology used was the aspects affected the most by the COVID-19 restriction started in March 2020. All the interviews, brainstorming sessions, observations and validation sessions have been conducted on-line through the use of Zoom. Therefore useful interaction components which would have come across in a face to face setting have been lost.

The COVID-19 measures had an impact, especially on politicians agenda and few respondents, mainly concerning the Italian territory, have been recruited. This led to not having a balanced variance in the nationality of the respondents. In the end, these aspects

have been overcome choosing to use Italy as a hypothetical context to launch the final design.

10.4.4 Final design

The final design concept has been grounded mainly on information which regards the Italian territory, which has been chosen as test desk.

Due to technological and time limitations have not been possible to develop a digital prototype of DEMO, which would have to enable richer data for what concern the interaction validation.

Due to time, the limitation has not been possible to overall test the final design as presented in Chapter 8. In fact, it contains implementation linked to the insights obtained from the last validation round performed.

10.4.5 Personal interference

Despite the aim to result as much neutral as possible for what concern information selection, interviews and validation conduction, it is fair to consider an involuntary interference on behalf of the researcher.

10.4.6 External interference

As multiple times mentioned, along with the development of this thesis, the overall project has been limited by the Corona emergency in terms of:

- resources;
- practices;
- knowledge exchange;
- emotional sphere;
- agenda variation.

10.5 Personal reflection

In this last official section of the graduation report has been taken some space to reflect upon this 7-month journey together with my graduation committee to whom I am grateful on top of all.

The first thing it comes into my mind is "what a ride". Maybe it is because, at page 131, I run out of words to explain what this graduation project meant to me, or simply because sometimes there are emotions and sensations hard to convey through concise sentences. Nevertheless, I will try to do my best.

This project, thanks to my graduation team, has been developed upon my personal desire of addressing a topic really close to my interest and concerns, both as a designer and young woman into the society. In particular, what pushed me to intervene in the socio-political scenario has been my direct experience of the frustrating condition in which L'Aquila citizens still live after 10 years from the earthquake that devastated the centre of Italy. There the population has tried over the years, through multiple channels, to awake public opinion and to trigger interventions. However, the political institutions systemically promised interventions without delivering them.

Unfortunately due to the COVID-19 restriction has not been possible for me to co-design an intervention with L'Aquila inhabitants directly. However, I have constantly thought about them and kept in mind their case as a personal design evaluation parameter. I would have been delighted if, in the end, the design I was going to deliver would have also helped L'Aquila and its conditions.

When the moment to test DEMO has come, I had the opportunity to include the L'Aquila case as one of the prototypical scenarios. When respondents revealed how, despite considering all the limitation of the case, DEMO has the potential to "do something" for the condition of L'Aquila citizens, it personally meant the world to me. As a designer, but first as human.

Overall, if I have to look back at the entire graduation journey, I see it as one of the main challenges and source of learning I have experience in my design

academic career. I was perfectly aware that the topic of politics is not a piece of cake, but nobody was expecting that after 5 days from my kick-off meeting we would have been forced to stay home, where we still are. I have to confess, it was not easy. It was not easy for me to work on this topic alone without a real life knowledge exchange anymore. At this point, we can all agree about it. Technology is cool, MIRO is fine, but the design discipline also needs physical performance, needs to shuffle post it and organize clusters physically.

The situation sometimes resulted in being really overwhelming and amplified by what was happening outside. People dying and to the beating of the incessant sound of the ambulance that could be heard from the window.

My professional gratitude goes to my graduation team, which provided me with warm suggestions and advised to positively reverse my emotional attitude. They helped me to have my focus back and regain the determination of creativity, which were typical of me.

In the end, I am enthusiastic about the topic selected, and I am really proud of all the hard work done. Furthermore, I feel blessed for all the people that by sharing their experience, gave their contribution.

I hope to have the opportunity in the future to further work on this topic and maybe implement DEMO. At the same time, I truly wish that this work can result helpful and inspiring for who is reading it.

And never forget, you can do it!

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To Cèsar, muchas gracias amigo para sonrisas y brainstorming. (Perdoname niño per mi español poco).

Alla mia famiglia italiana in Olanda che tra un "mannaggia, mannaggia" un "wow che caldo" anche se è grigio sembra che c'è proprio il sole "come a Rio de Janeiro". A Raffaella, Vittorio, Michela, Valerio, Tippet Maria, Marina e Brian, grazie per le risate migliori e scusate per i miei caelli in giro per casa.

Alla mia famiglia italiana in Italia. Ai miei genitori e ai miei nonni che mi hanno sempre spronato e permesso di essere ciò che sono. Il mio porto sicuro a cui non vedo l'ora di fare ritorno e poter festeggiare. In particolare un messaggio a mia mamma "e anche sta volta ti sei evitata di prendere un aereo"

Ai miei amici di sempre e spero per sempre (si è una minaccia). A Cecilia, Alice, Gino e Giulia che nonostante lontano dagli occhi siamo sempre vicini nel cuore. (Si Alessio, grazie anche a te che se no ti offendi:))

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Al futuro che verrà.

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