

LIVING AND BOLSTERING DEMOCRACY

In many countries, democracy is experiencing a crisis of confidence. New forms of participation are moving people and politics closer together again.



Falling voter turnouts, increasing dissatisfaction with national governments, and growing fears about the future – these developments can be observed in many democratic countries around the world. The Edelman Trust Barometer 2020 shows that only 49 percent of respondents have confidence in government institutions. How can we counteract this loss of trust and create a vibrant democracy for all citizens? In some countries, new forms of participation are being developed and tested. One such is citizens’




assemblies, which act as a mouthpiece for the population vis-à-vis politicians to strengthen democratic culture. A nationwide citizens’ assembly took place virtually in Germany under the patronage of Bundestag President Wolfgang Schäuble. Some 152 randomly

In 2019, under the theme “Democracy for Future,” artist John Quigley created an installation in front of the Reichstag in Berlin (above). Bundestag President **Wolfgang Schäuble** (left, center) is handed the report of the Citizens’ Assembly at the Robert Bosch Stiftung.

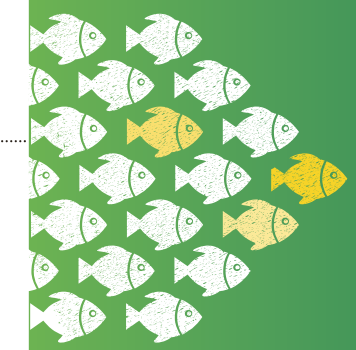
The Robert Bosch Stiftung supports the Citizens’ Assembly “Germany’s Role in the World” as part of its commitment to democracy. It promotes the acquisition of democratic skills and strengthens innovative forms of participation to supplement representative democracy, enabling more people to perceive themselves as shapers of political processes. www.bosch-stiftung.de/democracy

selected people from all over the country discussed Germany’s role in the world and drew up recommendations for politicians. “The Citizens’ Assembly is a good example of how to liven up democracy, how to involve citizens in finding answers to political questions, and how to foster trust between citizens and politicians,” says Sandra Breka from the Robert Bosch Stiftung.

CLOSER TO POLITICS
The participants discussed five issues in which Germany should play an important role worldwide: sustainable development, economy and trade, peace and security, democracy and the rule of law, and the European Union. Lisa Narendorf, a 17-year-old high school student, participated in the group on sustainable development – a topic that is particularly close to her heart. She plans to remain involved, even after the Citizens’ Assembly. Lisa wants to see “the Citizens’ Assembly become firmly rooted in politics, and for citizens and politicians to move closer together.” She has gained self-confidence through working in the Citizens’ Assembly “because I can tell that my voice is being heard.”

Schäuble accepted the recommendations of the Citizens’ Assembly in Berlin, and now sees parliament as having a duty: “I will ask and urge parliamentary groups that we deal with the recommendations of the Citizens’ Assembly in this legislative period, so that the people who took part in it see a response.”  Magnus Petz

PHOTOS: CLEMENS WRONSKI, ROBERT BODEN, OLIVER AJKOVIC



Inspired

Digital togetherness

Julia Kloiber is working on a digital world that is oriented toward people’s needs and social values.

For about ten years, I have been dealing with the question of how we can make the digital world a place that puts people and their needs first and foremost. I became aware back then of how strongly the Internet is shaped by economic interests. I explored the topic of free access to knowledge, as practised by Wikipedia, and did not understand what the cons of such a concept could be. That was until I realized that many constructs, such as copyrights, do not sufficiently keep the common good in mind. We need a digitization that is also guided by social values in order to harness the potential of new technologies so we can address global challenges such as climate change.



translating feminist values such as justice, inclusion, and diversity into the world of bits and bytes, creating a guide for a feminist tech policy. When I was a child, I wanted a Barbie dollhouse for Christmas and instead I was given a computer. I was disappointed at the time, but when I look back at this now, it was a milestone. And today, I’m working to change the digital world and its power structures. I see myself as part of a civil society movement and am pleased that it is becoming more and more visible. We have already received some 300 applications from all over Europe for our fellowship program.

That we are perceived so positively by the public is a great validation of our work.

Julia Kloiber is the Robert Bosch Stiftung’s partner for the topic of inequality. The Stiftung aims to improve awareness of the causes and negative effects of inequality in research and the real world in order to enable all people to live in dignity and equality.

www.bosch-stiftung.de/inequality