

# Innovating local democracy

## *Ways to improve decision making & engagement*



### Start with the basics

Listening is vital for a council to understand value from a resident's perspective and build trust and relationships. Co-designing a Listening Forum with citizens is one way to shift to more meaningful engagement that can then be adapted regularly.

### Get a wider range of views

Commissions to explore how decision-making can encourage participation. Inquiries might include participatory democracy, transparency, solving tensions between participatory and representative democracy, and the role of councillors.



### Go from the ground up

Working from the ground up, as we did in Messina, Sicily, can promote strong community links. Using local staff, and working with a residents' steering group, we held activities to help residents learn ways of pursuing change and consider their city's future.

### Prototype first

Public Square – led by Demsoc and mySociety, and funded by Luminare – is an action-research programme developing co-designed prototypes and interventions to support participation in local democracy. Visit [www.thepublicsquare.org.uk](http://www.thepublicsquare.org.uk).



### Use tested methods

Citizens Assemblies and other forms of deliberative democracy can unlock decisions on difficult issues. The Democratic Society is experienced in these processes and in making them part of a wider democratic engagement.

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