
DEMOCRACY

THE WRONG NAME

Why We Call Democracy What It Is Not

Short version of *"Autopsy of Representative Democracy"*

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Editorial Note: Why **This Book Has No ISBN**

This book does not carry an ISBN code. This is not an oversight, nor a lack of means—it is a deliberate choice. Today, the ISBN is not a neutral tool; it is a brand of recognition for the global publishing system, a passport to enter a commercial circuit controlled by a few multinationals and agencies that define what deserves to be seen, sold, or cataloged. If representative democracy is a fiction, why should we ask permission from a bureaucratic apparatus—national or private—to circulate an idea capable of dismantling it?

This book is not merchandise, nor is it an object of cultural consumption. It is a tool for cognitive subversion. Its strength does not lie in its placement on a bookstore shelf, but in its ability to generate assemblies, debates, and constituent movements.

We reject the ISBN not out of isolation, but for liberation:

- Liberation from the logic of "permission" to exist;
- Liberation from the invisible hierarchy that decides what is "legitimate";
- Liberation from the illusion that real change enters through the front door of a system designed specifically to exclude it.

Distribute this text freely. Photocopy it. Translate it. Upload it online. Read it aloud in public squares. (...*or buy it on digital platforms as a donation*.)

A book that serves to build democracy does not need a barcode—it needs hands to hold it, minds to debate it, and bodies to transform it into action.

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INTRODUCTION

This text was conceived as a reduction, not a simplification.

Reduction means: stripping away everything that is unnecessary in order to make a structure visible. Leaving only what allows us to see.

The theme is simple: the word "democracy," as we use it today, does not correctly describe the political systems in which we live. Not because they are authoritarian, or unjust, or wicked—but because they lack an essential characteristic: the existence of an institution that embodies the sovereign power of citizens.

This is not a moral thesis. It is a descriptive thesis.

The booklet you are reading proposes no alternatives, presents no models, suggests no reforms. It limits itself to showing a discrepancy: that between what a word means and what it designates today.

If this discrepancy did not exist, this text would be useless. If it does exist, then it at least deserves to be seen.

Everything that follows has this single purpose: to render visible what language tends to render invisible.

CHAPTER 1 — The Wrong Name

1. The Word We Use

We call "democracy" the political system in which we live. We do so almost everywhere: in Europe, in the Americas, in many parts of the world that define themselves as "free." The term has become not only a description, but a legitimation. If something is "democratic," it automatically appears right, or at least justifiable.

But words are not innocent. A word can describe, or it can cover up. It can clarify, or it can prevent us from seeing.

This book starts from a simple suspicion: that the word "democracy," as we use it today, does not correctly describe what exists. That it has become a ritual label applied to systems that operate in ways structurally different from what the term originally indicated.

If this suspicion is well-founded, the consequences are significant. Because if the name is wrong, the judgment is wrong as well. And if the judgment is wrong, the criticisms, reforms, and expectations we build upon it risk moving entirely within a false framework.

2. What "Democracy" Truly Means

The word "democracy" derives from two Greek terms: *demos* (people) and *kratos* (power). Literally: power of the people.

It does not mean "government for the people," nor "government acting in their interest," nor "government chosen by the people." It means that ultimate decision-making power remains, structurally, in the hands of the citizens.

This point is often misunderstood. It is not a matter of determining whether rulers are good or bad, competent or incompetent, honest or corrupt. It is a more elementary question: who ultimately holds the power to decide?

In a democracy, the people are not merely the symbolic source of power, but its active agent. An institution exists that embodies this power, exercises it, controls it, and can withdraw it.

Without such an institution, speaking of "power of the people" is a metaphor, not a reality.

3. What "Representation" Means

Representation is a mechanism. It serves to delegate tasks, to make manageable what cannot be done directly by everyone. It is a useful and often necessary tool.

But a tool is not a source. Representation can transmit power that exists, but it cannot create power that is missing.

To say that a system is democratic because we elect representatives is equivalent to saying that a corporation belongs to its employees because they elect the board of directors. That may be true in special cases, but it is not true by definition. Everything depends on what those representatives can and cannot do, and what the represented can and cannot revoke.

Representation is compatible with many forms of power: democratic, oligarchic, technocratic, even authoritarian. It is a means, not a criterion.

4. The Difference We Do Not See

In the system in which we live, citizens elect representatives who then make decisions in their name. But citizens do not possess a permanent institution that directly exercises sovereign power.

They do not deliberate laws. They do not systematically control the agenda. They cannot revoke fundamental decisions. They lack a body that represents the people as such rather than a faction, a party, or an ideology.

The people appear as the symbolic origin of power (through elections), but not as the institutional subject of power.

This is the crucial difference: between being the rhetorical source of power and being its actual holder.

Confusing the two produces a powerful effect: it makes what is missing invisible. And what is missing, being unnamable, cannot even be claimed.

5. A First Consequence

If democracy is the power of the people, and if in our system the people do not possess institutionalized power, then our system is not democratic in the proper sense of the term.

It may be liberal. It may be constitutional. It may be pluralist. It may be relatively just, relatively unjust, relatively efficient or inefficient.

But it is not a democracy.

Calling it such does not make it so. It only makes it less visible for what it is.

And this is the first obstacle to any real change: not bad faith, not corruption, not ignorance, but the use of a word that closes thought instead of opening it.

CHAPTER 2 — The Sovereignty That Does Not Exist

1. What Sovereignty Is

Sovereignty is not an abstract idea. It is a concrete function: the ultimate capacity to make binding decisions for everyone else.

The sovereign is not simply the one who governs, but the one who cannot be overridden by any other power. It is the authority that answers to no higher authority.

In every political system, sovereignty always exists, even when it is unnamable. It may be embodied by a king, a constitution, a parliament, a market, a party, or a combination of actors. But there is always a point where decisions become definitive.

The question is not whether sovereignty exists. The question is: where does it reside?

2. Where It Resides Today

In contemporary representative democracies, sovereignty is formally attributed to the people, but operationally exercised by a complex of institutions: parliaments, governments, constitutional courts, central banks, supranational bodies.

These institutions have the power to:

- establish rules,
- interpret them,
- apply them,
- modify them,
- suspend them in exceptional cases.

Citizens, by contrast, intervene episodically: they vote periodically, they can protest, they can exert indirect influence, but they do not exercise the sovereign function continuously.

Sovereignty, therefore, is not absent. It is simply located elsewhere.

3. Who Controls Whom

A simple way to locate sovereignty is to observe chains of control.

- Who can revoke whom?
- Who can annul whose decisions?
- Who can modify the rules of the game?

Citizens can elect representatives, but they cannot directly revoke laws. They can replace a government, but they cannot redefine the architecture of power. They can express dissent, but they cannot impose deliberation.

Institutions, on the other hand, can impose binding decisions on citizens on a permanent basis.

This clearly indicates where effective sovereignty resides.

4. The Absence of the Sovereign Organ

If the people were truly sovereign, an institution would have to exist that represents them as a sovereign subject—not as an electorate, not as public opinion, not as a sum of isolated individuals.

An organ that:

- deliberates,
- controls,
- can intervene in fundamental decisions,
- has a permanent existence.

No such organ exists in representative democracies.

The people appear only in ritual moments: elections, occasional referendums, non-binding consultations.

They never appear as an institution.

This is the central absence.

5. The Structural Consequence

The absence of a popular sovereign organ produces an inevitable consequence: power organizes itself without it.

Not out of malice, not out of conspiracy, not out of bad faith—but out of systemic necessity. Where one function is missing, another replaces it.

This is the heart of the problem. It is not that someone "stole" sovereignty. It is that it was never instituted.

And what is not instituted cannot be exercised.

This explains why citizens often feel powerless despite living in formally free systems. It is not a psychological contradiction. It is a structural reality.

CHAPTER 3 — The Double Bind

1. What a Double Bind Is

A double bind is a situation in which a subject receives two contradictory demands, both binding, such that any response violates one of them. Furthermore, the subject is not permitted to exit the system that generates the conflict.

Under these conditions, no correct solution exists. Every action is wrong. Every non-action is wrong. The only thing not permitted is questioning the very structure of the bind.

The result is not a decision, but paralysis. Or, more often, a series of adaptations that allow the system to continue functioning without solving the problem.

2. The Double Bind in Relationships

The concept originates in the study of pathological family relationships, but is not limited to them.

A simple example:

- "Be spontaneous."
- "Do exactly what I tell you."

Whatever you do, you are wrong. If you obey, you are not spontaneous. If you are spontaneous, you disobey.

The function of the double bind is not to confuse by mistake, but to stabilize a power relationship. It keeps the subject within a structure that cannot be corrected from within.

3. The Double Bind in Institutions

In representative democracies, citizens receive two simultaneous messages:

- "Power is yours."
- "You cannot exercise it directly."

They are invited to be sovereign, but only in symbolic form. They are responsible for decisions, but they do not make them. They are called upon to control power, but only by choosing who will exercise it in their stead.

Whatever they do, the result is the same: power remains elsewhere.

If they participate, they legitimize a system they do not control. If they abstain, they leave a clear field to those who control it.

No action exists that allows them to actually exercise the promised sovereignty.

4. Why Reforms Fail

This explains why internal reforms rarely produce structural changes.

Reforms are possible only within existing rules. But existing rules are precisely what exclude popular sovereignty as a function.

Procedures can be improved, transparency increased, abuses limited, and the system made fairer or more efficient. All of this is useful. But it does not touch the central point: who decides ultimately.

The double bind guarantees that every attempt at change remains confined within a perimeter that cannot be transcended.

5. The Invisible Trap

The strength of the double bind is not repressive, but seductive. It does not prohibit; it invites. It does not threaten; it legitimizes.

It makes citizens believe they are already what they are not: sovereigns. And precisely for that reason, it prevents them from becoming so.

The trap is invisible because it coincides with what is called "normality."

And what appears normal is rarely called into question.

CHAPTER 4 — The Empirical Evidence We Ignore

1. The Standard Objection

Every radical critique of existing political systems sooner or later encounters the same objection: "It’s fine in theory, but it doesn't work in reality."

This objection has a precise function: shifting the discussion from legitimacy to feasibility, without having first established whether what exists is justifiable.

Yet in the case of democracy, the objection is empirically unfounded as well. Concrete experiments in citizen deliberation have existed for decades, showing that ordinary citizens, placed under the right conditions, are capable of making complex decisions in an informed, responsible, and cooperative manner.

They are not utopias. They are facts.

2. What Civic Assemblies Are

Civic assemblies are groups of citizens selected by sortition, in a manner statistically representative of the population, tasked with deliberating on specific public issues.

Participants receive:

- plural and verified information,
- time to discuss it,
- access to experts,
- facilitation of the deliberative process.

They do not represent parties, interests, or ideologies. They represent the civic body in its real diversity.

3. How They Work in Practice

Typical functioning is simple:

1. Random selection of participants, corrected for demographic criteria.
2. Learning phase, featuring presentations of data, scenarios, and diverse positions.
3. Structured deliberation phase, in small groups and plenary sessions.
4. Production of reasoned recommendations or decisions.

This process has been applied to complex issues such as:

- constitutional reforms,
- climate policies,
- bioethics,
- urban planning,
- electoral systems.

This is not improvisation. It is a procedure now well-studied and refined.

4. What the Experiments Show

Studies and applications show recurring results:

- Citizens, when placed in conditions to understand, understand.
- Positions tend to converge toward more informed and less polarized solutions.
- Argumentative quality improves.
- Extremism decreases.
- Mutual trust increases.

In other words: what is often attributed to "human nature" is actually an effect of the institutional context.

5. Why They Do Not Become Central

If they work, why do they remain marginal?

Because they are conceived as consultative tools, not sovereign institutions. They are used to legitimize decisions already made, not to make them.

They are tolerated as long as they do not truly matter.

This is not a conspiracy. It is a structural dynamic: a system tends to preserve its core functions and confine innovations to peripheral spaces.

As long as civic assemblies do not become a constitutive part of the decision-making process, they remain interesting experiments but politically harmless.

CHAPTER 5 — Why We Call Democracy What It Is Not

1. The Function of Political Words

Political words do not merely describe reality. They organize it.

Terms such as "freedom," "security," "people," "nation," "democracy" are not neutral. They are containers of expectations, values, emotions, fears. They function as symbolic anchors: they render complex and often opaquely structured realities familiar.

A politically powerful word is not the one that explains best, but the one that stabilizes most.

2. The Word as Legitimation

Calling a system "democratic" does not mean merely describing it. It means implicitly declaring it legitimate.

The word acts as a moral shortcut. If it is "democracy," then it is right. If it is right, then it is defensible. If it is defensible, then it can be imposed.

This mechanism allows us to bypass a fundamental question: who decided?

The word replaces the process.

3. Symbolic Stability

Every complex system requires not only institutions, but narratives that render them acceptable.

The democratic narrative performs this function. It allows citizens to perceive themselves as free even when they are not fully so. It allows them to experience delegation as participation, surrender as choice, and powerlessness as responsibility.

This is not a deliberate lie. It is a shared cultural construction that renders the system psychologically habitable.

4. The Fear of the Void

Calling the word "democracy" into question does not merely mean criticizing a system. It means opening a void.

If what we live in is not democracy, then what is it? And what should it be? And who should decide?

These questions are destabilizing. They produce uncertainty, conflict, risk.

It is easier to defend an imperfect word than to cross a conceptual void.

5. The Cost of Truth

Every politically relevant truth has a cost. Not because it is dangerous, but because it upsets balances.

Saying that we do not live in a democracy does not mean proposing a revolution. It simply means stopping the confusion between words and things.

Yet even this minimal gesture has consequences: it makes visible what was previously invisible, and therefore debatable.

And that is why the word "democracy," as we use it today, is so difficult to abandon: not because it is true, but because it is comfortable.

CONCLUSION — What Changes When You Stop Believing It

Stopping the habit of calling "democracy" what is not a democracy is not a revolutionary act. It is a descriptive act. It does not immediately change institutions, it does not overturn governments, it does not solve problems.

Yet it changes something more profound: it changes the field of what is thinkable.

As long as a system is called by a name that suggests its legitimacy, every critique appears as an attack. Every doubt as a threat. Every alternative as a danger.

When the name falls, this symbolic protection falls with it.

It is not a matter of destroying one illusion to replace it with another. It is a matter of suspending a word that has ceased to describe, in order to finally look at what it described poorly.

Initially, this produces unease. Because it deprives the system of its self-evidence. But it is precisely this loss that makes thought possible.

It is not an invitation to immediate action. It is an invitation to attention.

- To observe where power truly resides.
- To distinguish between participation and delegation.
- To ask ourselves, without rhetoric, who decides for whom, and why.

It is not much. But it is already something that was not possible before.

Every real change begins this way: not with an answer, but with a question that can no longer be avoided.

And this is, perhaps, the sole function of this text: to make that question visible.

Publications & Documents Available on www.democraticus.org

The following works, theoretical frameworks, operational manuals, and institutional blueprints are published open-source under Creative Commons licenses and are accessible at **democraticus.org/books**.

Major Treatises & Books

The Metacognitive Species *(165 pages)*

A philosophical and systemic treatise examining the civilizational transition from information pollution and epistemic capture to metacognitive sovereignty. By establishing a rigorous 5-axis diagnostic matrix of social maturity and integrating thermodynamic accounting, distributed sortition, and the jurisprudence of truth, this foundational work provides the ultimate architectural roadmap for a society capable of clearing the Great Filter and sustaining a Kardashev Type I civilization.

Autopsia della democrazia rappresentativa *(584 pages)*

A comprehensive forensic investigation into modern political power that systematically dismantles the myth of representative democracy. By tracing the historical transition from feudal monarchies to elective aristocracies and financial oligarchies, this core treatise exposes how modern electoral systems withhold true citizen sovereignty through systemic double binds. Beyond its critical diagnosis, the work establishes an empirical blueprint for institutional systems engineering, detailing the global transition toward authentic civic power.

The Troy Syndrome *(49 pages)*

A trenchant examination of internal institutional decay and cognitive capture within modern social architectures. This volume analyzes how totalizing systems rarely collapse solely from external force; instead, they are

hollowed out from within through the covert infiltration of bureaucratic networks, manufactured consensus, and Trojan-horse subversion. It provides a cybernetic analysis of how centralized hierarchies paralyze human agency by turning institutional software against its own constituency.

Institutional System Engineering *(257 pages)*

An applied systems-engineering approach to constitutional public law, civic sovereignty, and institutional design. Treating political architecture as a complex information network, this work applies cybernetic feedback loops and stress-testing methodologies to public administration, demonstrating how to engineer anti-fragile public institutions that resist elite capture and administrative corruption.

Architetture della Democrazia (175 pages)

A historical and theoretical volume analyzing institutional models of direct citizen power across human civilization. From the lottocratic assemblies of classical Athens to modern Swiss direct legislation and digital governance, this text evaluates why legacy political systems decay and demonstrates how modern network topologies can institutionalize direct, unmediated citizen oversight.

The Irreducible Minority Hypothesis *(76 pages)*

An evolutionary, cybernetic, and network-theory examination of human conformity, dissent, and social phase transitions. This treatise demonstrates why top-down authoritarian architectures and technocratic control grids are structurally fragile, proving that adaptive human survival depends on a non-power-seeking, unco-optable minority that preserves empirical truth, breaks preference falsification, and anchors decentralization.

Democrazia a misura di bambino (e di adulto) *(38 pages)*

An open-source, vertical operational manual for civic and democratic education spanning pre-school through university levels. Designed to cultivate critical thinking, epistemic autonomy, and democratic literacy from an early age, this pedagogical framework provides practical tools to immunize future generations against propaganda, cognitive manipulation, and authoritarian compliance.

Operational Models & Summaries

The Democraticus 2.1 Model *(325 pages)*

A technical presentation of the **Democraticus 2.1** hybrid institutional architecture. This document outlines a dual-layer system that bridges traditional representative delegation with permanent, algorithmically selected (lottocratic) citizen assemblies, creating an enforceable structural mechanism to guarantee continuous public oversight and institutional accountability.

A Modest Proposal to Humanity *(82 pages)*

A concise executive summary and global manifesto designed as a direct entry point into the Democraticus framework. It articulates the fundamental contradictions of modern technocratic governance and delivers an urgent, actionable roadmap for assembling decentralized, citizen-led institutional alternatives worldwide.

The wrong name *(27 pages)*

A sharp, foundational essay dissecting the linguistic and conceptual fraud of modern governance. By demonstrating why we continue to apply the label "democracy" to systems that lack every structural property of popular power, this work strips away administrative euphemism and restores literal vocabulary to political discourse.

Handbooks, Charters & Guides

Manuale dell'Elettore *(109 pages)*

An essential guide—regularly updated since 2017—analyzing electoral mechanics, voting procedures, and structural obstacles to voter sovereignty. This handbook provides citizens with the critical tools required to evaluate election laws, identify systemic double binds in modern electoral systems, and understand the practical mechanisms of democratic participation versus passive compliance.

Charter of the Rights of Life on Earth *(20 pages)*

A foundational global framework establishing an integrated paradigm for planetary rights, ecological equilibrium, and intergenerational sustainability. It reframes human civic architecture within the broader biophysical boundaries of earth systems engineering.

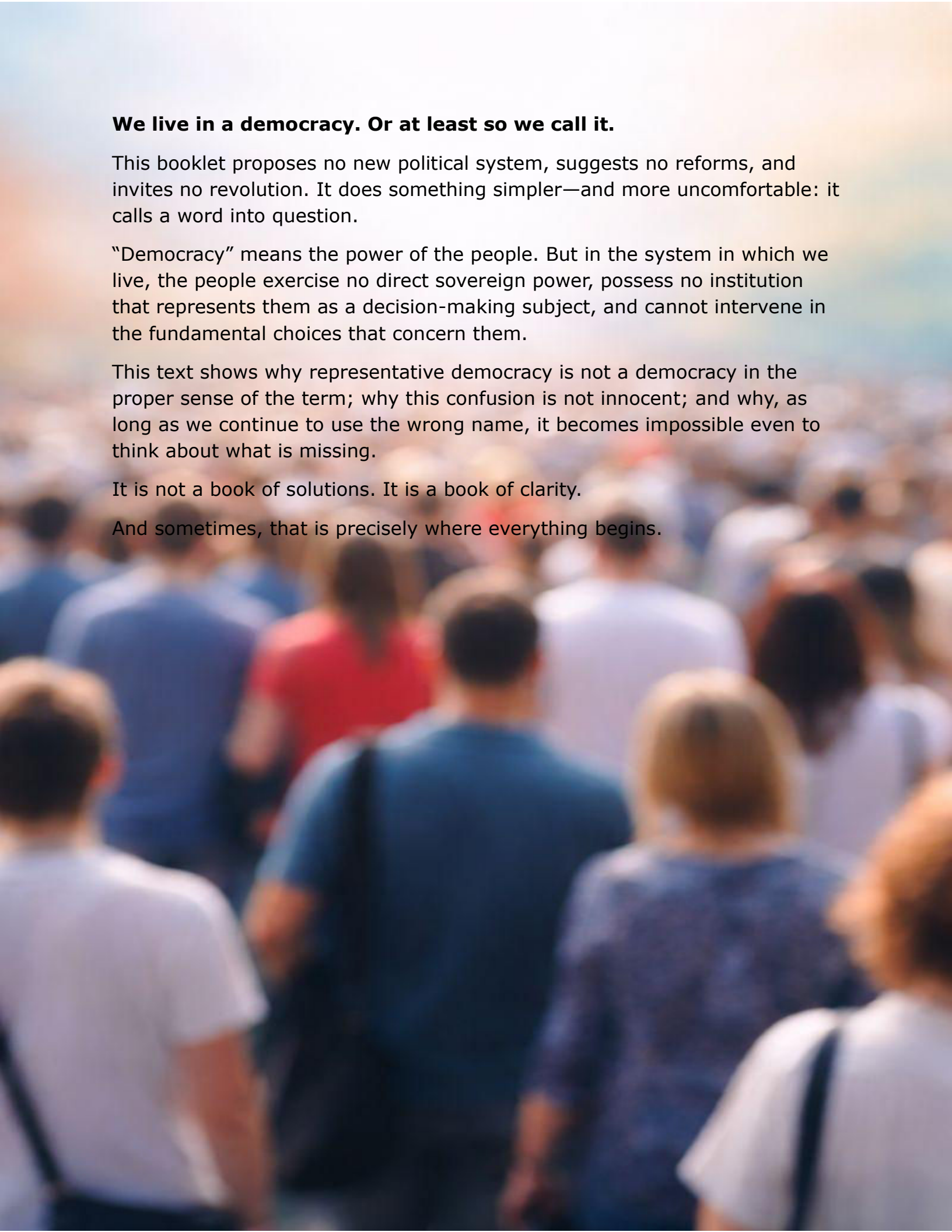
Implementation manual for the Charter of Rights of Life on Earth

(41 pages)

A step-by-step practical implementation guide for establishing participatory, lottocratic civic assemblies at local, regional, and national levels. It covers jury selection algorithms, assembly facilitation protocols, and legal strategies for embedding citizen decisions into binding public policy.

Abstract Principles for a Fair and Sustainable Society *(30 pages)*

A foundational set of philosophical and ethical principles designed to guide deliberations within citizen assemblies. It serves as an epistemic compass for non-partisan civic bodies evaluating long-term policy, economic equity, and systemic sustainability.



We live in a democracy. Or at least so we call it.

This booklet proposes no new political system, suggests no reforms, and invites no revolution. It does something simpler—and more uncomfortable: it calls a word into question.

"Democracy" means the power of the people. But in the system in which we live, the people exercise no direct sovereign power, possess no institution that represents them as a decision-making subject, and cannot intervene in the fundamental choices that concern them.

This text shows why representative democracy is not a democracy in the proper sense of the term; why this confusion is not innocent; and why, as long as we continue to use the wrong name, it becomes impossible even to think about what is missing.

It is not a book of solutions. It is a book of clarity.

And sometimes, that is precisely where everything begins.