



THIN DEMOCRACY: A Structure of Government + a Market Economy

LIVING DEMOCRACY: A Values-driven Way of Living

What is it?

Democracy means elected government plus a market economy.

Living Democracy is a dynamic culture grounded in the values of inclusion, fairness, and mutual accountability. As voters, workers, students, employers, parents, community members and clients, we all shape its norms and expectations. Living Democracy is never finished.

How does it work?

We are lucky to be born into an already established democracy. It's complete -- the culmination of human history.

The free market, along with better-qualified government and corporate officials and experts, determines what happens.

The market can remain open and fair only in a democracy where wealth is kept widely dispersed. To establish such democratic governance, the power of money cannot influence political decisions.

The only job of citizens is to vote, work, and shop.

The market is driven by a single-rule -- highest return to existing wealth -- which concentrates wealth and power to the point that it infects and twists the political process. Sixty-one lobbyists operate in Washington for every elected official. This economic concentration also destroys an open, fair market.

In Living Democracies, citizens work to remove the influence of wealth from public decision making. They view the market as a tool, not an automatic device beyond human reach. They use their polities to decide what should be a market commodity (and what is too precious to be allocated by the market) and to create "values boundaries" (from environmental protections to anti-trust laws) around the market's functioning.

Who gets involved?

Only officials and celebrities have public lives.

All citizens have public lives. As consumers, savers, investors, voters, advocates, clients, students, employers, workers, and members of social-benefit organizations, our actions (*conscious or not*) shape our communities and nation.

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What's required for effectiveness?

Public life is ugly and alienating. No special learning is needed, just thick skins and big egos!

Citizens enjoy the rewards of getting involved as we learn the "arts of democracy" -- active listening, the creative use of conflict, negotiation, mediation, mentoring, and other relational skills.

What motivates human beings to engage?

Self-defense. Getting involved in public affairs is a necessary evil to protect our private lives -- a way for people to get what they want. For others, it is the burden that must be borne in order to earn civil liberties and other protections.

Human beings are social by nature, so our individual well-being depends on creating healthy communities. Getting involved develops distinctly human capacities and meets deep needs: to connect with others in common purpose, to make a difference, to express our values, and to fully respect ourselves. It is the essence of the good life!