



# SPECTRA

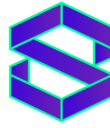
## GOVERNANCE



FOUNDATIONS OF GOVERNANCE IN THE PRACTICES OF URBANIZATION, COMMUNITY, AND DEMOCRACY

Version 0.1





# SPECTRA

## SPECTRAN GOVERNANCE

Foundations of governance in the practices of urbanization, community, and democracy

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**Legal Disclaimer** *This paper was originally published in 2023 with the knowledge that Spectra would continue to evolve as a community-driven, open-source project. The aim for this paper is to lay out Spectra's primary motivations, proposals, and mechanisms at inception, and provide the foundation for further public discourse, feedback, and development. Nothing in this paper is an offer to sell, or the solicitation of an offer to buy, any tokens and/or physical or digital real estate. If and when Spectra offers for sale any assets, it will do so through definitive offering documents, including a disclosure document and risk factors. Those definitive documents may include an updated version of this paper, which may differ significantly from the current version. Nothing in this paper should be treated or read as a guarantee or promise of how Spectra's business or assets will develop or of the utility or value of the assets. This paper outlines Spectra's plans at initial inception, which could change at its discretion, and the success of which will depend on factors outside Spectra's control, not limited to market-based factors and factors within the data and cryptocurrency industries.*

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## 0 Executive Summary

Spectra is a multidisciplinary project to solve existing problems in cities and define a new model of sustainable, human-centered, and technologically progressive urbanization. The [Spectra Whitepaper](#) identifies the primary mission of the project as building a sustainable, livable, and affordable city for at least one million people. To complete this mission, we propose a collection of guiding economic and governance practices. The [Spectran Economics](#) paper outlines ten practices centered around healthy growth, cooperativism, and housing abundance.

This paper covers ten additional practices to lay the foundation for the forms of **Spectran governance** that we will co-design over the coming years of community-led experimentation. The broader goal of Spectra's governance practices is to center cities as the primary location of fair and participatory democratic practices. To revive the role of community and local decision-making in a way which is neither cliché, retrospective, nor defined by traditional nation-state institutions.

The first chapter argues why urban governance must be renewed and introduces concepts that are key to this renewal. The middle chapters (two through four) identify the practical foundations of Spectran governance, highlighting their importance to growing Spectra and setting the project up for long-term success. The fifth chapter concludes and looks toward next steps in experimenting with governance practices.

What's central to designing a new city isn't just the buildings we will construct, the parks we will landscape, or the technology we will use. Rather, it is that our city is forged by the ideas, needs, and everyday practices of those who call it 'home.' To borrow a popular civic tech phrase that encapsulates the standard to which Spectra aspires: "Build with, not for."<sup>1</sup>

By renewing the foundations of governance in the twenty-first century, Spectra aims to build a sustainable, livable, and affordable city *for* the future.

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<sup>1</sup> Laurenellen McCann, *Experimental Modes of Civic Engagement in Civic Tech: Meeting People Where They Are* (Chicago: Smart Chicago Collaborative, 2015).

## 0.1 Our practices tldr

This is a long paper. Recognizing this, we provide summaries for the ten ‘practices’ introduced in chapters two through four. If you are looking to just get the gist of Spectran governance, then this is the section for you. See the Table of Contents to jump to any sections that pique your curiosity, or read on for the full proposals, details, and citations.

### **1. Redefined ‘citizenship’**

Governance grows from the people. Spectra proposes an inclusive democracy accessed by an urban citizenry. Tokens could be used to denote membership in Spectra’s multilayered cooperatives and the right to engage in governance processes. A culture of inclusivity encourages members to claim and practice citizenship via further democratizing the urban.

### **2. ‘City modding’ and political acts**

Existing means of political action are insufficient. As a result, many people feel excluded from governance processes and institutional trust is down. Diversifying how people act politically to include ‘city modding’, such as the community-led creation of housing abundance, opens new avenues for urban democracy. Where voting is relevant, blockchain innovations and participatory budgeting can deepen Spectran’s ability to shape the places they inhabit.

### **3. Local and social capital**

Social infrastructure supports democratic governance from the bottom-up by strengthening the social capital of a community. Affordable housing, mixed-use development, and active transportation ensure that these urban spaces are available to all Spectrans and promote vibrant cities.

### **4. Clear boundaries**

Spectra’s community is multinational, multidimensional, and multilayered. Community members are those who participate in shaping Spectra. Establishing clear boundaries for who is and is not a Spectran is crucial to self-governance of the city as a commons.

### **5. Decentralization and empowerment**

Decentralization is the expansion of the politique, places, and practices of democracy. It emphasizes that governance grows from the people. Decentralization by design centers the needs and practices of everyday people.

### **6. Common causes**

Spectra promotes ‘urbanism of common causes’ in which members cooperate toward solutions to shared problems. Housing abundance exemplifies this urbanism and its

relevance to governance. More broadly, Spectra is a 'movement of movements' that coalesces and incubates diverse communities to accomplish common causes.

#### **7. Multilayered democracy**

Spectra's multilayered cooperative structure enables addressing governance, urban planning, and other policy issues at the appropriate scale. 'Cooperative federalism' distributes the powers and possibilities of self-governance across more Spectrans. Participatory budgeting via the Community Fund enables self-governance of revenue and expenditure.

#### **8. Pluralism and consensus**

Blocks and clusters form for many reasons. Blocks enable members to join together based on commonalities. Clustering requires Spectrans from different blocks to cooperate to maximize their collective capacity. A reverence for pluralism encourages diversity of background and ideology, and dialogue between them.

#### **9. City-wide coordination**

City-layer organizations unite the city around common needs and coordinate practices which cannot be performed by blocks or clusters. For example, developing and maintaining large public infrastructure. Committees take on the role of public servants. Occasionally, city cooperatives may rein in individuals, blocks, or clusters that violate community values.

#### **10. Diverse, differentiated networks**

Cities are constantly in flux. Diverse networks outside of Spectra's multilayer structure are essential to a thriving city and to strengthening the project's collective capacity.

# 1 Introduction

This chapter details how the effectiveness of governance and the spirit of democracy are in need of renewal. It starts by summarizing the challenges facing contemporary democratic practice, particularly at the nation-state level. We then begin to posit how governance could flourish from a transition to practicing urbanization, community, and democracy together.

## 1.1 Why renew governance in the city?

*"Our lack of political capacity to take control of the places we live in, to act collectively on the processes which shape our daily lives, is a democratic scandal."*<sup>2</sup>

Over the past several decades, the role of local community and government in building prosperity and resilience has withered. Citizens are less able to participate in and shape the spaces in which they live and interact. Instead, single-issue voting topics, identity politics, and polarization have taken center stage at all levels of politics.<sup>3</sup> Democratic practice is often simplified to voting for politicians who make the decisions for us, or joining the occasional protest or demonstration. Yet it is difficult to hold politicians accountable, particularly for economic policies, and declining electoral participation is the "most visible symptom of a broader disengagement from community life."<sup>4</sup> Even the credibility of civil protests as signals to our political leaders is questionable.<sup>5</sup>

Democratic disenchantment has on the one hand conceded political apathy and, on the other, fueled the rise of extremist populism.<sup>6</sup> In the words of Beveridge and Koch, "Democracy has been hollowed out by the depoliticized decision-making of bureaucratic bodies, interrupted by [elections] and populist movements, which provide the appearance of political contest... but ultimately offer little choice or prospect of change."<sup>7</sup> According to Wendy Brown, the *demos* has been "undone."<sup>8</sup> Politics is regrettably no longer a "stage for contests about future worlds."<sup>9</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Ross Beveridge and Philippe Koch, *How Cities Can Transform Democracy* (United Kingdom: Polity Press, 2023), 148.

<sup>3</sup> John Kay and Paul Collier, *Greed is Dead: Politics After Individualism* (Great Britain: Penguin Books, 2021); Beveridge and Koch, *How Cities Can Transform Democracy*, 75; Thomas Piketty, "Surpassing Identity Conflict via Economic Justice," November 12, 2019, in *Time for Socialism: Dispatches From a World On Fire, 2016-2021* (Great Britain: Yale University Press, 2021), 262-266.

<sup>4</sup> Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Renewal of American Community* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000).

<sup>5</sup> Zeynep Tufekci, *Twitter and Tear Gas* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017).

<sup>6</sup> Beveridge and Koch, *How Cities Can Transform Democracy*; William Davies and Nicholas Gane. "Post-Neoliberalism? An Introduction." *Theory, Culture & Society* 38, no.6 (2021): 3-28; Cornel West, "Goodbye, American Neoliberalism. A New Era is Here," *The Guardian*, 17 November 2016.

<sup>7</sup> Beveridge and Koch, *How Cities Can Transform Democracy*, 54.

<sup>8</sup> The *demos* are the people of a democracy. Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution* (New York: Zone Books, 2017); Peter Mair, *Ruling the Void: The Hollowing of Western Democracy* (London: Verso, 2013).

<sup>9</sup> Beveridge and Koch, *How Cities Can Transform Democracy*, 45; C. Crouch, *Post-Democracy* (Cambridge: Polity, 2004); C. Hay, *Why We Hate Politics* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007).

We are stuck with national and global leadership which consistently fail to solve the most important contemporary problems, such as climate change, intersectional inequality, and the digital divide. Mazzucato describes many national governments as “tinkering, not leading”—fixing problems after they arise but not achieving bold outcomes to begin with.<sup>10</sup> The ability of other societal actors—community centers, local political parties, unions, small businesses, public libraries, places of worship, and other “third places”—to bear the burden has also diminished as more public resources are privatized and market ideology is applied to institutions which do not fit its mold (See 2.3).<sup>11</sup> Klinenberg’s titular “palaces for the people” are in disrepair.<sup>12</sup>

An unhealthy dynamic has thus formed between the individual, the state, and all the actors in between. According to Kay and Collier, “the state cannot and should not be the repository of all obligations.”<sup>13</sup> Though, casting the burden onto individuals is also problematic. Likewise, the private sector has few trustworthy, formal obligations to weigh ‘people and planet’ equally with ‘profits.’

We need a solution with more nuance than ‘big’ versus ‘small’ government debates. Some scholars suggest basing more decision-making, resources, and support in local community organizations. Kay and Collier characterize society as “a myriad of small organizations, within each of which people find common purpose and collaborate.”<sup>14</sup> Others go further to suggest moving away from the nation-state as the center of democratic discourse altogether. Beveridge and Koch critique that confining democracy to specific institutional forms is an injustice. “The state-centered framework is only one version of what politics and democracy are and can be.”<sup>15</sup>

In an urbanizing world, it is time for self-governance to exceed the nation-state lens on politics. It is time to question whether there may be a more democratic way of doing politics and addressing social problems. To see politics as embedded in the urban spaces around us and the everyday things we do, rather than primarily in state institutions.<sup>16</sup> How can urbanism give rise to alternative modes of collective organization and self-rule?<sup>17</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Mariana Mazzucato, *Mission Economy: A Moonshot Guide to Changing Capitalism* (Great Britain: Penguin Books, 2021), 20.

<sup>11</sup> Kay and Collier, *Greed is Dead*; Alison Gilchrist and Marilyn Taylor, *The Short Guide to Community Development*, 3rd edition (Great Britain: Polity Press, 2022); Eric Klinenberg, *Palaces for the People: How to Build a More Equal and United Society* (London: Vintage Penguin Books Random House, 2020); Putnam, *Bowling Alone*; Ray Oldenburg, *The Great Good Place: Cafes, Coffee Shops, Bookstores, Bars, Hair Salons, and Other Hangouts at the Heart of a Community* (New York, 1989).

<sup>12</sup> Klinenberg, *Palaces for the People*.

<sup>13</sup> Kay and Collier, *Greed is Dead*, 155-156.

<sup>14</sup> Kay and Collier, *Greed is Dead*, 155-156.

<sup>15</sup> Beveridge and Koch, *How Cities Can Transform Democracy*, 30.

<sup>16</sup> Warren Magnusson, “The Symbiosis of the Urban and the Political,” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 38, no. 5 (2014): 1571.

<sup>17</sup> For more on applying an urban lens to planning and policy, see A. Amin and N. Thrift, *Seeing Like a City* (Cambridge: Polity, 2017); Warren Magnusson, *Politics of Urbanism: Seeing Like a City* (London: Routledge, 2011); M. Acuto et al., “Seeing COVID-19 through an Urban Lens,” *Nature Sustainability* 3 (2020): 977-978; Sheldon Wolin, *Fugitive Democracy: and Other Essays*, ed. Nicholas Xenos (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016).



## 1.2 Governance innovation is key to the sustainable, livable, and affordable city

*"Now is the time to reimagine the city as a democratic idea... as a horizon for collective experience and imagination connecting political aspirations to material places in which people live and act."<sup>18</sup>*

The proposals outlined in the [Whitepaper](#) and [Economics paper](#) will not implement themselves. To build a sustainable, livable, and affordable city through an open-source, community-led process requires centering the body politic. As such, Spectra goes beyond economic principles to deliberately tie in politics and governance. It is impossible to achieve sustainable development outcomes without the coordination of economic and political actors at all layers of society. As Benner and Pastor put it, "For solidarity economics, we need solidarity politics."<sup>19</sup>

Urbanization is a worldmaking process. It reshapes political conditions and provides the basic resources of democracy by creating the places where people come together to access and govern their environment.<sup>20</sup> Henri Lefebvre's claim for a "right to the city" is a claim to take part in and co-produce the city.<sup>21</sup> Urban spaces are not just the settings of democracy, but rather the medium through which we identify, understand, and practice self-governance. In short, how we build our city(ies) is how we shape our democracy. Our democratic processes determine how we can build our city(ies). The two are intertwined.

The following chapters set out to frame the foundational practices which will support Spectran governance, with the goal of empowering people to build cities that they actually want to live in.

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<sup>18</sup> A. Cinar and T. Bender, eds., *Urban Imaginaries: Locating the Modern City* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 2007); Beveridge and Koch, *How Cities Can Transform Democracy*, 4.

<sup>19</sup> Chris Benner and Manuel Pastor, *Solidarity Economics: Why Mutuality and Movements Matter* (Great Britain: Polity Press, 2021), 187.

<sup>20</sup> Beveridge and Koch, *How Cities Can Transform Democracy*, 6, 21; F. Tonkiss, *Cities by Design: The Social Life of Urban Form* (Cambridge: Polity, 2014).

<sup>21</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *Le Droit à la Ville* (1968).

## 2 Urbanization

In Spectra, governance is a fluid, continuous process of defining and pursuing our collective goals for the city. Democratic governance can look different based on place and time, making it impractical to define any one urban model.<sup>22</sup> So, in this chapter we emphasize the core urbanist practices to shape the foundations of Spectran governance, recognizing that as a global open-source, community-led project these practices will evolve over time.

### 2.1 Redefined 'citizenship' (#1)

**Governance grows from the people. Spectra proposes an inclusive democracy accessed by an urban citizenry. Tokens could be used to denote membership in Spectra's multilayered cooperatives and the right to engage in governance processes. A culture of inclusivity encourages members to claim and practice citizenship via further democratizing the urban.**

*"As citizens, we are townspeople. We're not just individuals inhabiting discrete and disconnected roles like consumer, employee, owner, or voter. Our whole community is embedded in the very word. Citizen comes from Latin civitas, meaning city. Thus, in the citizen, we find the city. In the city, we find citizens."*<sup>23</sup>

*"Urban democracy is the recurrent struggle to democratize urbanization."*<sup>24</sup>

*"The margins must become the center."*<sup>25</sup>

Democracy is a hollow shell if it does not protect and enhance the rights of individuals regardless of their gender, ethnicity, sexuality, or religious identity. Governance is an empty process if it does not support this principle from a foundational level. As an open-source project which aspires to solve many urban social problems—such as those linked to healthy growth, the future of mobility, or ameliorating the digital divide—it is essential that different voices participate in Spectra from the beginning to ensure that outcomes involve and benefit the people as much as possible. A commitment to broader universal and international principles of social and economic rights is vital.

This starts with defining who is a member or 'citizen' in Spectra, and how someone becomes a citizen. Citizen is a loaded term. In a traditional democracy rooted in state frameworks at the national level, those who belong to the political community of the nation are its citizens. However,

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<sup>22</sup> Beveridge and Koch, *How Cities Can Transform Democracy*, 57; A. Reckwitz, "Toward a Theory of Social Practices: A Development in Cultural Theorizing," *European Journal of Social Theory* 5, no. 2 (2002): 255-256.

<sup>23</sup> Per Espen Stoknes, *Tomorrow's Economy: A Guide to Creating Healthy Green Growth* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2021), 247.

<sup>24</sup> Beveridge and Koch, *How Cities Can Transform Democracy*, 51.

<sup>25</sup> Leslie Kern, *Feminist City* (London: Verso, 2021), 54.

this model of citizenship is deeply restrictive and explicitly excludes all ‘non-citizens’. Permanent residents, immigrants, undocumented migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and others who are labeled as ‘foreign’ or ‘alien’ to the state are dehumanized and excluded from the most official forms of the community and its governance. Regardless of their daily contributions to the city, they might be seen as political ‘Others’ and be excluded from access to job markets, safe housing, education, healthcare, and other public goods.<sup>26</sup> In the worst cases, these urbanites are forced to seek employment, housing, and other goods and services in the informal sector, slums, and gray market.

This is not the foundation on which we should build Spectra—especially as a community with members around the world from many national backgrounds. Instead, centering democratic governance in urbanization and community practices can create a more inclusive form of Spectran ‘citizenship’. In an urban democracy, citizenship can be claimed and practiced by individuals rather than legally granted by institutions.<sup>27</sup> Spectrans should be able, in the words of Keil, “to access, enjoy, and profit from the resources and values of urbanity they co-produce through their labor, their engagement in everyday life, and their contribution to urban spaces.”<sup>28</sup> Spectrans are not delineated and confined by legal statuses nor the idea of a spatio-culturally bounded community.<sup>29</sup>

Urban self-government means that those who engage in and co-produce urban spaces should also govern those places.<sup>30</sup> Urban collective life thus becomes a horizon of worldmaking and rights claiming, even for those without traditional state citizenship.<sup>31</sup> In Spectra, city modding (See 2.2) is a political act—a practice of shaping community, urbanization, and democratic self-governance. One is a Spectran because they are present in the multidimensional spaces of Spectra, they belong to Spectra’s community (See 3.1), and they participate in the shaping of Spectra.

These alternative democratic practices are an essential component since Spectra’s city(ies) and urban projects will exist within a host country(ies) of which not all Spectrans will be citizens in the traditional sense. Instead, Spectra’s **multilayer cooperative structure** will be the most local delineation of political organization (See 4.1). A token(s) earned by participating in Spectra could be used to denote membership and the right to engage in decision-making and other governance processes. For instance, Spectrans could receive a token(s) when they help design their block’s architecture; attend meetings to discuss their block’s policies; are employed at a business in the

<sup>26</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism* (Pantheon Books, 1978); Douglas Epps and Rich Furman, “The ‘alien other’: A culture of dehumanizing immigrants in the United States,” *Social Work & Society* 14, no. 2 (2016): 1-14; Rita Himmel and Maria Manuel Baptista, “Migrants, refugees and othering: constructing europeanness. An exploration of Portuguese and German media,” *Comunicação e Sociedade* 38 (2020): 179-200; Erika Lee, *At America’s Gates: Chinese Immigration during the Exclusion Era, 1882-1943* (USA: UNC Press, 2003); Gary Okihiro, *Margins and Mainstreams: Asians in American History and Culture* (Washington: University of Washington Press, 2014).

<sup>27</sup> Beveridge and Koch, *How Cities Can Transform Democracy*, 99; James Holston, “Metropolitan Rebellions and the Politics of Commoning the City,” *Anthropological Theory* 19, no. 1 (2019).

<sup>28</sup> Roger Keil, “The Empty Shell of the Planetary: Re-rooting the Urban in the Experience of the Urbanites,” *Urban Geography* 39, no. 10 (2018).

<sup>29</sup> Beveridge and Koch, *How Cities Can Transform Democracy*, 71.

<sup>30</sup> Beveridge and Koch, *How Cities Can Transform Democracy*, 74.

<sup>31</sup> Holston, “Metropolitan Rebellions and the Politics of Commoning the City.”



block; volunteer regularly in the block's rooftop gardens; and so on. This token(s) could then be used for votes within the block or possibly at other layers of Spectra. Tokens could be designed to be one-per-person or to be used quadratically; one-time use or auto-replenished after each vote.

As Spectra promotes a more inclusive governance, then the ways that Spectrans participate in and contribute to the project must also be inclusive. Spectrans should strive to design systems, tools, practices, and spaces through processes which are community-based, participatory, and accessible.<sup>32</sup> We should seek to democratize these processes through public education and workshops so that more people are able to participate in Spectra. We should also strive to reduce any power asymmetries which inevitably form. Historically, participation falls along privileged lines and technical innovation spreads along digital divides which can entrench existing intersectional inequalities.<sup>33</sup> Disparities in voter participation by income group illustrate this point.<sup>34</sup> In Spectra, the native software engineer, the immigrant chef, and the asylum-seeking single mother should all be respected in the eyes of the law and be able to shape the city they live in.

## 2.2 'City modding' and political acts (#2)

**Existing means of political action are insufficient. As a result, many people feel excluded from governance processes and institutional trust is down. Diversifying how people act politically to include 'city modding', such as the community-led creation of housing abundance, opens new avenues for urban democracy. Where voting is relevant, blockchain innovations and participatory budgeting can deepen Spectran's ability to shape the places they inhabit.**

*"Democracy is something other than a form of government. It is a 'mode of being', a way to experience and shape the common world."*<sup>35</sup>

*"Political and democratic action should be 'expressed not in one or two modes of activity—voting or protesting—but in many.'"*<sup>36</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Sasha Costanza-Chock, *Design Justice: Community-Led Practices to Build the Worlds We Need* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2020); Carolyn Whitzman, "What Do You Want to Do? Pave Parks? Urban Planning and the Prevention of Violence," in Margit Eichler, ed., *Change of Plans: Towards a Non-Sexist Sustainable City* (Toronto: Garamond Press, 1995), 89-109.

<sup>33</sup> Luciano Floridi, "Informational Ethics - An Environmental Approach to the Digital Divide," *Philosophy in the Contemporary World* 9, no. 1 (2002): 39-45; Kira Allmann, "Human-centered solutions to the digital divide: lessons from a global pandemic," in John R. Bryson et al., eds., *Living with Pandemics: Places, People and Policy* (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2021), 36-46; Ben Green, *The Smart Enough City: Putting Technology in Its Place to Reclaim Our Urban Future* (The MIT Press, 2020); Kate Crawford, *Atlas of AI: Power, Politics, and the Planetary Costs of Artificial Intelligence* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2021).

<sup>34</sup> Tetsuya Matsubayashi and Shiro Sakaiya, "Income inequality and income bias in voter turnout," *European Journal of Political Economy* 66 (2021); Jeremy Adam Smith and Teja Pattabhiraman, "How Inequality Keeps People from Voting," *UC Berkeley Greater Good Magazine*, 2020, [https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how\\_inequality\\_keeps\\_people\\_from\\_voting](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how_inequality_keeps_people_from_voting).

<sup>35</sup> Sheldon Wolin, "Norm and Form," in J. Euben, J. Wallach, and J. Ober, eds., *Athenian Political Thought and the Reconstruction of American Democracy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 54-55; Beveridge and Koch, *How Cities Can Transform Democracy*, 55-56.

<sup>36</sup> Wolin, *Fugitive Democracy*, 377; Beveridge and Koch, *How Cities Can Transform Democracy*, 57.

*"Tools are never neutral and power is reproduced in designed objects, processes, and systems."<sup>37</sup>*

Existing methods of political action are lacking. In many representative democracies, citizens are dissatisfied with few options for political candidates, and often find themselves voting for the least worst option. When they take to the streets for civil protest, it does not always create a sufficient signal for government officials to change course.<sup>38</sup> Today, only 20% of Americans believe that politicians care about their opinions; less than 15% do in France, Germany, and the UK.<sup>39</sup>

In the US, Lessig documents how Congress members increasingly rely on fundraising, lobbyists essentially write laws, and legislation is shaped with fundraising in mind.<sup>40</sup> Similarly, from analyzing nearly 1,800 policy issues over two decades, Gilens and Page find that in the US the preferences of the average voter often have little impact on whether a policy passes after controlling for the preferences of the 35 most powerful interest groups and the top 10% of income earners.<sup>41</sup>

When people feel that they can't make a difference, participation in democratic practices decreases, apathy festers, and anxiety about world events can become debilitating. In Western Europe, electoral abstention has doubled since the 1970s, mainly among younger demographics, and close to one-quarter of those who do vote cast their ballots for far-right and far-left parties.<sup>42</sup> Mazzucato describes many people as feeling "disenfranchised from the process of creation, having only to react to its consequences."<sup>43</sup> Although people have turned to new practices—political consumerism, deliberative action, contentious activities, and online participation have all increased—these are still relatively weak methods of ensuring accountability from elected officials.<sup>44</sup>

We need creative new ways of making a difference in the world which can be participated in experimentally, imaginatively, and playfully. Spectra expands the practices of democratic governance by including physical and virtual placemaking, or **city modding**. As Kern notes, "Because the built environment is durable over time, we're stuck with spaces that reflect outdated, inaccurate

<sup>37</sup> Costanza-Chock, *Design Justice*, 46.

<sup>38</sup> Tufekci, *Twitter and Tear Gas*.

<sup>39</sup> Carles Boix, *Democratic Capitalism at the Crossroads: Technological Change and the Future of Politics* (New Jersey, USA: Princeton University Press, 2021), 1, 143; Russell Dalton, *Democratic Challenges, Democratic Choices: The Erosion of Political Support in Advanced Industrial Democracies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

<sup>40</sup> Lawrence Lessig, *Republic, Lost: How Money Corrupts Congress—and a Plan to Stop It* (New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2011); Benner and Pastor, *Solidarity Economics*, 163.

<sup>41</sup> When the rich and middle-class disagree, each gets their way about half of the time, but they agreed on almost 90% of the policies in the sample data. Martin Gilens and Benjamin Page, "Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest Groups, and Average Citizens," *Perspectives on Politics* 12, no. 3 (2014): 564-581; Benner and Pastor, *Solidarity Economics*, 163; Peter Enns, "Relative Policy Support and Coincidental Representation," *Perspectives on Politics* 13, no. 4 (2015): 1053-1064; Omar Bashir, "Testing Inferences about American Politics: A Review of the 'Oligarchy' Result," *Research & Politics* 2, no. 4 (2015).

<sup>42</sup> Boix, *Democratic Capitalism at the Crossroads*, 1.

<sup>43</sup> Mazzucato, *Mission Economy*, 202.

<sup>44</sup> Ronald Inglehart, *Modernization and Post-Modernization* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997); Russell Dalton, *The Good Citizen: How a Younger Generation is Reshaping American Politics*, 2nd edition (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2015); Mazzucato, *Mission Economy*, 201.

social realities,” which in turn shape how people live and their opportunities.<sup>45</sup> Spectra sees the ability to relate to, use, and maintain one’s urban environment as a genuine matter of democracy.<sup>46</sup>

For example, the ability of Spectrans to design, propose, fund, access, and revise housing development projects is central to many other aspects of urban life. Where someone lives influences their job options, family relationships, friends, peer groups, access to public spaces (See 2.3), and more. This influence is often intensified along intersectional lines of race, gender, and other identities.<sup>47</sup> Therefore, the ability to shape accessible spaces via city modding is the liberatory ability to shape the architecture of democracy, and ultimately, to improve Spectra’s capacity to solve social problems. Designing creative solutions, first in VR, for housing abundance could be an empowering, low-stakes gateway for Spectrans to participate in city modding and urban self-governance.

Of course, voting will still play an important role in Spectra once it has been revamped to better facilitate decision-making at the multiple layers of Spectra’s community. While placemaking, online participation, and public discourse are practices tied into people’s everyday lifestyles, voting is an effective final step for making collective decisions. Depending on the issue at hand, these votes can take place at different layers (i.e., block, cluster, city, world) with the use of smart contracts. For example, the members of a block cooperative could cast a vote to decide how to theme their block courtyard. This vote would only be open to the members of that block. Alternatively, a vote to choose a landing site for a physical city could include all members of the Spectra cooperative.

Votes could need a minimum threshold to pass, and require a revote or run-off vote if this minimum is not met. As blockchain voting continues to evolve, votes could also be weighted by different equations and conducted using tokens. Blocks and clusters could also vote in participatory budgeting processes related to the Community Fund (See 4.1). Ultimately, Spectra’s many cooperatives will determine their own voting processes. Though, intervention may be necessary in cases of unjust governing behavior, such as the creation of discriminatory voting equations.

Democratic practice should not be confined to parliaments and offices, but rather be linked to the urban community. It should manifest in physical streets, virtual worlds, online spaces, and all the places that are built in Spectra. Members and stakeholders should co-create places and processes which are based on shared visions, needs, and demands. In the words of Mazzucato, “For value to be created collectively, we must foster new forms of participation in that creation process.”<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Kern, *Feminist City*, 33.

<sup>46</sup> Beveridge and Koch, *How Cities Can Transform Democracy*, 157-158; David Smith, *Geography and Social Justice* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994).

<sup>47</sup> Kern, *Feminist City*; Zenzele Isoke, *Urban Black Women and the Politics of Resistance* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan), 78-80.

<sup>48</sup> Mazzucato, *Mission Economy*, 168.



## 2.3 Local and social capital (#3)

**Social infrastructure supports democratic governance from the bottom-up by strengthening the social capital of a community. Affordable housing, mixed-use development, and active transportation ensure that these urban spaces are available to all Spectrans and promote vibrant cities.**

*"Democracy must begin at home, and its home is the neighborly community."<sup>49</sup>*

*"A feminist city must be one where barriers—physical and social—are dismantled, where all bodies are welcome and accommodated... [It must] build support into the very fabric of the urban world."<sup>50</sup>*

What has caused the growing dissatisfaction with democratic politics—particularly in high-income, developed democracies? Gilchrist and Taylor suggest multiple reasons, including growing distrust in politicians, the decline of traditional working-class organizations (e.g., trade unions and social clubs), and the destabilization of community life.<sup>51</sup> A combination of public spending cuts, privatization and other market forces, and the digital revolution—exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic—has also caused the decline of public (and online) spaces where people meet and interact with others of similar or different backgrounds.<sup>52</sup>

Inaccessible housing markets and changing patterns of housing tenure have been especially damaging to the social fabric. For example, when affordable social housing is replaced by less secure private renting, people move more often and are less able to put down roots.<sup>53</sup> As already disadvantaged areas struggle to absorb new populations—such as families who were displaced from gentrified neighborhoods—prior residents may blame these newcomers for further constricting the supply of public services and investments, creating tensions which can develop along ethnic lines.

Meanwhile, gated communities and private security protect those who can afford them, but also create "cities of walls" which weaken democracy, deepen social divisions, and endanger and infuriate the people whom they exclude.<sup>54</sup> This applies not only to affluent neighborhoods, but even to universities which separate themselves, their resources, and their opportunities for mutual learning from their surrounding communities. To remix Lincoln, "a [city] divided against itself cannot stand."<sup>55</sup>

<sup>49</sup> Attributed to John Dewey. Klinenberg, *Palaces for the People*, 12.

<sup>50</sup> Kern, *Feminist City*, 54.

<sup>51</sup> Gilchrist and Taylor, *The Short Guide to Community Development*, 44-47.

<sup>52</sup> Klinenberg, *Palaces for the People*; Gilchrist and Taylor, *The Short Guide to Community Development*, 47-48; Cass R. Sunstein, *#Republic: Divided Democracy in the Age of Social Media* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017).

<sup>53</sup> Gilchrist and Taylor, *The Short Guide to Community Development*, 47; Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961; reis., New York: Vintage Books, 1992).

<sup>54</sup> Teresa Caldeira, *City of Walls: Crime, Segregation, and Citizenship in São Paulo* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); Karina Landman, "Gated Communities in South Africa: The Challenge for Spatial Planning and Land Use Management," *Town Planning Review* 75, no. 2 (2004): 158-159; Klinenberg, *Palaces for the People*, 73.

<sup>55</sup> Abraham Lincoln, "House Divided Speech" (Springfield, Illinois, June 16, 1858).

These problems deteriorate the social capital that bonds a community, limiting the constructive potential of democratic governance and undermining our ability to address global challenges, such as climate change.<sup>56</sup> Putnam defines social capital as “the features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit.”<sup>57</sup> For Spectra, seeking to revive democratic governance through building social capital is not just a shift to the local, but rather a purposeful engagement with the relevant, context-specific knowledge needed for learning by experiment.<sup>58</sup>

In the physical, Spectra should uplift community centers, social clubs, public libraries, parks, gardens, playgrounds, athletic fields, swimming pools, places of worship, corner stores, barbershops, pubs, cafes, and other places which have historically fostered social capital.<sup>59</sup> Klinenberg calls these physical conditions the “social infrastructure” that serves as the building blocks of all public life.<sup>60</sup> Spectra should also prioritize affordable housing, mixed-use development, and active transportation so that these resources are accessible to all Spectrans. These aims apply to Spectra’s physical city(s) and one-off projects in existing cities. Meanwhile, online and in VR, Spectra should imagine new places for people to gather, social bonds to be made, and community capacity to grow in ways which may not yet exist today.

As Spectrans city mod, we should consider if our streets accommodate many forms of safe locomotion; our public courtyards have ample elevators and ramped entrances; our block housing supports multi-generation families, singles, empty nesters, blended families, and relationships and non-nuclear families; our block cooperatives facilitate collaborative care, childcare, and housework which support women’s entry into the workforce and engagement in governance processes; and, of course, our mixed-use development provides easy access to our daily needs. We must reimagine who is the “ideal imagined user” of the urban spaces and amenities that we design.<sup>61</sup>

The most healthy, resilient communities are those with robust networks and social infrastructure. Not every place needs to be designed to cater to everyone. For example, barbershops have a historic importance to community building among African American men in the United

<sup>56</sup> Gordon LaForge, Ann Florini, and Hollie Russon Gilman, “How the green transition can revitalize American democracy,” *The Hill*, January 12, 2023, <https://thehill.com/opinion/energy-environment/3811224-how-the-green-transition-can-revitalize-american-democracy/>.

<sup>57</sup> Robert Putnam, “The Prosperous Community,” *The American Prospect* 4, no.13 (1993): 35.

<sup>58</sup> Beveridge and Koch, *How Cities Can Transform Democracy*, 28; D. Kaufmann and M. Sidney, “Toward an Urban Policy Analysis: Incorporating Participation, Multilevel Governance, and ‘Seeing Like a City’,” *PS: Political Science & Politics* 53, no. 1 (2020): 1-5; Seymour Papert and Idit Harel, “Situating Constructionism,” *Constructionism* 36, no.2 (1991): 1-11; Costanza-Chock, *Design Justice*.

<sup>59</sup> Hollie Russon Gilman and Bridget Marquis, “Why public spaces are our best hope for community and democracy,” *Reimagining the Civic Commons*, November 29, 2022, <https://medium.com/reimagining-the-civic-commons/why-public-spaces-are-our-best-hope-for-community-and-democracy-21d6388f82f4>; Oldenburg, *The Great Good Place*; Sonia Bookman, “Brands and Urban Life: Specialty Coffee, Consumers, and the Co-creation of Urban Cafe Sociality,” *Space and Culture* 17, no.1 (2014): 85-99; Kay and Collier, *Greed is Dead*.

<sup>60</sup> Klinenberg, *Palaces for the People*, 5.

<sup>61</sup> Kern, *Feminist City*, 37.

States.<sup>62</sup> Department stores and cafes are popular safe public spaces for women and girls in many cities.<sup>63</sup> Pubs and sports bars are a traditional destination for working-class men. Public libraries are vital resources to young, low-income, and unhoused people for their free wifi, bathrooms, safety, and other amenities.<sup>64</sup> Catering to everyone is impossible because people have different needs and wants. What is important is that everyone has places that they can go to and safely interact with others. Urbanization and democracy are deeply intertwined. When we invest in our places and people, we plant the seeds of good governance and fill the gap between the individual and the state.

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<sup>62</sup> David L. Shabazz, "Barbershops as Cultural Forums for African American Males," *Journal of Black Studies* 47, no. 4 (2016): 295–312.

<sup>63</sup> Kern, *Feminist City*.

<sup>64</sup> Klinenberg, *Palaces for the People*.



## 3 Community

In this chapter, we define more key concepts—including community, decentralization, and movements—which build on Spectra’s core urbanist practices and provide the inspiration for the organizations involved in Spectran governance.

### 3.1 Clear boundaries (#4)

**Spectra’s community is multinational, multidimensional, and multilayered. Community members are those who participate in shaping Spectra. Establishing clear boundaries for who is and is not a Spectran is crucial to self-governance of the city as a commons.**

We have yet to define Spectra’s ‘community’ despite all of our uses of the term so far. To start, a community is different from a neighborhood, town, or city. It is also not a strictly geographic unit, given the vast globalization and digitalization of our world and social networks. There is not a one-to-one fit of a community with a place, as communities can overlap large cities, consist of many sub-groups, or be a location on the internet.<sup>65</sup> While place matters psychologically and politically, communities can also be socially defined, such as sports clubs, alumni groups, and religious denominations.<sup>66</sup> Anderson goes as far as to say that all communities are “imagined” and to be distinguished by the style in which they are imagined.<sup>67</sup> Blokland clarifies that these imaginaries, or senses of belonging, are collective and cultural figurations that result from social practices.<sup>68</sup>

A community is often a large network of communication, yet we can only personally know a limited number of people. As Spectra grows—and its blocks, clusters, guilds, and other organizations multiply—it will become a multilayered community connecting countless smaller networks, memberships, and movements (each of which are communities in their own ways) (See 3.3, 4.1, 4.4). While each of these smaller groups is unique, they together also establish the city as a type of commons—a shared resource which is produced, used, and governed collectively.<sup>69</sup> Therefore, as Spectra’s community will be one that continues to grow inclusively, it is important that our plans for self-governance establish clear boundaries for how someone comes to be included.

Here, we draw inspiration from Ostrom’s study of how communities were able to overcome the free-rider problem of the tragedy of the commons.<sup>70</sup> In short, how group ownership and dedicated

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<sup>65</sup> Talja Blokland, *Community as Urban Practice* (Great Britain: Polity Press, 2017), 3.

<sup>66</sup> Kay and Collier, *Greed is Dead*, 93, 138.

<sup>67</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1983).

<sup>68</sup> Blokland, *Community as Urban Practice*, 2, 11.

<sup>69</sup> Holston, “Metropolitan Rebellions and the Politics of Commoning the City.”

<sup>70</sup> Elinor Ostrom, *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Elinor Ostrom, “Revisiting the Commons: Local Lessons, Global Challenges,” *Science* 284, no. 5413 (1999): 287-282.

institutions can handle conflicting interests and access to shared resources in a community. There must be a boundedness of who belongs to the community and who does not; to whom members owe obligations and from whom they can expect them.<sup>71</sup> Of course, new people can join Spectra, but existing members recognize obligations to fellow members above any obligations to non-members. Similarly, members have greater rights to common resources than non-members do.

As a global and multidimensional project, Spectra will include members from many countries and inhabit both physical and virtual spaces. Membership in Spectra will not exist along traditional nation-state lines (See 2.1), but rather will be accessed through participating in the project (See 2.2), such as city modding, attending virtual events, proposing projects, and sharing ideas in communication channels. Successful communities have a sense of shared belonging and values which guide people. Over time, the shared values, diverse identities, and unique contributions of members will shape Spectra and what it means to be a Spectran. Once we establish a clear understanding of who is a Spectran, self-governance is possible.

### 3.2 Decentralization and empowerment (#5)

**Decentralization is the expansion of the politique, places, and practices of democracy. It emphasizes that governance grows from the people. Decentralization by design centers the needs and practices of everyday people.**

*"If we keep looking for politics in the places where it used to be, we may soon discover that the world has passed us by."<sup>72</sup>*

Decentralization, like community, is a term used by many yet defined by few. In Spectra, our goals related to decentralization are easily summarized: to ensure that rules governing the city match the needs of Spectrans, and that those who are affected by rules can participate in modifying them. To democratize democracy itself such that all political institutions and norms are open to scrutiny. In the words of Beveridge and Koch, "Democracy is contingent and open because no single agency nor any single group can claim divine or natural authority."<sup>73</sup> Similarly, Hay states that politics is "the capacity for agency and deliberation in situations of genuine collective or social voice."<sup>74</sup>

Spectra also champions a "democracy of lived places rather than of abstract rights and rules."<sup>75</sup> Spectra decentralizes the spatial conditions of democratic practice by enabling the creation of virtual and physical spaces by everyday urbanites via city modding (See 2.2). This decentralization of

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<sup>71</sup> Kay and Collier, *Greed is Dead*, 103.

<sup>72</sup> Warren Magnusson, "The Puzzle of the Political," in Warren Magnusson and K. Shaw, eds., *A Political Space: Reading the Global Through Clayoquot Sound* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 2.

<sup>73</sup> Beveridge and Koch, *How Cities Can Transform Democracy*, 52-53.

<sup>74</sup> C. Hay, *Why We Hate Politics* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007), 77.

<sup>75</sup> Beveridge and Koch, *How Cities Can Transform Democracy*, 64.

multidimensional placemaking unlocks everyday urbanites' ability to intervene in the world immediately around us today. The ability to shape how our homes, streets, and neighborhoods are built reintegrates self-governance into our everyday lives.

What does the decentralization of democratic practice and the empowerment of individuals mean for Spectra's organizations of governance? It means that they grow from the individual and are shaped through collective action, rather than being created by a 'higher' level of state government. Whereas Spectra's global layer was founded as a shell to incubate, house, and coordinate the other layers of its multilayer structure (See 4.1), blocks in Spectra are the result of individuals coming together to create shared—and sometimes specialized—communities. Clusters are the result of blocks coming together to coordinate resources and achieve common goals. Cities are an extension of this, with many clusters coming together to build sustainably, livably, and affordably.

Decentralization does not mean the absence of 'formal' institutions, but rather that they are shaped by the needs and practices of everyday people instead of the other way around. Similarly, Spectrans should work together transparently so that the project continually reaffirms its commitments to systemic change and democratizing the urban, and is not captured by a few dominant interest groups.<sup>76</sup> As such, Spectra advocates for decentralization by design.

### 3.3 Common causes (#6)

**Spectra promotes 'urbanism of common causes' in which members cooperate toward solutions to shared problems. Housing abundance exemplifies this urbanism and its relevance to governance. More broadly, Spectra is a 'movement of movements' that coalesces and incubates diverse communities to accomplish common causes.**

*"The city as democratic imaginary helps to forge coalitions between struggles across different fields."<sup>77</sup>*

*"If you have come here to help me, you're wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together."<sup>78</sup>*

Spectra is a project to solve existing problems in cities and define a new urban model. This mission positions us not only as practitioners of urban planning and producers of a 'toolkit', but also as members of a global *movement* to improve the places where we live. Of course, this will hold different meanings for different Spectrans. Some members will focus on solving issues of active transportation to create livable, carless cities. Others will champion renewable energy grids to power

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<sup>76</sup> Mazzucato, *Mission Economy*, 135.

<sup>77</sup> Beveridge and Koch, *How Cities Can Transform Democracy*, 160.

<sup>78</sup> This quote is often attributed to Lilla Watson, a Murri (Indigenous Australian) visual artist, activist, and academic. Though, she has noted that it emerged from a collective process through the work of an Aboriginal rights group in the 1970s.

these cities. And others still will work toward creating abundant housing options, so that these cities are affordable for Spectrans from diverse financial backgrounds. By forging coalitions between many different urban struggles, we position Spectra as an **urbanism of common causes**.

Similar to Beveridge and Koch, we use the example of housing as a gateway to wider struggles for urban self-government.<sup>79</sup> Housing is a political issue. The tensions between the need for shelter, the desire for a proper home, and the inaccessibility of housing markets results in political struggles around the world. These struggles are not just about property values, but also assert different ways of interacting with the world. Single-family units in sprawling suburbs create vastly different political, economic, and sociocultural landscapes compared to dense, mixed use cities.<sup>80</sup> In Spectra, housing should be an arena in which self-government is expanded and the needs of Spectrans are foregrounded. Creating housing abundance will require engaging with property regimes, market actors, and policy discourse across Spectra's cooperatives and its host country. It will require diverse actors to come together to advance their common causes and compromise on their differences.

More broadly, embedding Spectra's movement into existing networks—such as those already working toward housing abundance—allows members to understand themselves in relation to each other and sustain a collective, action-oriented identity beyond Spectran membership.<sup>81</sup> To build a sustainable, livable, and affordable city requires a powerful political movement that takes into account class, race, gender, power, and other dimensions of intersectionality.<sup>82</sup> Adapting Matthaei's terminology, we frame this as a **"movement of movements"** that brings together different struggles against various forms of oppression in a pluralistic fashion.<sup>83</sup>

Spectra fosters this movement by creating systems of cooperative organization, self-governance, and action across its multilayer structure—particularly, its many blocks and clusters—as well as its various teams, guilds, and any other community groups and voluntary organizations which will form over time (See 4.1, 4.2, 4.4). Our aspiration is that this cooperativism can "keep movements alive during periods of repression or through ebbs and flows of interest; [and] allow people to stay in touch with one another, learn about new developments, and take action should the need arise."<sup>84</sup> Accomplishing Spectra's mission will require collaboration on a large scale between Spectra's organizations, as well as other public, private, and community-based entities. Spectrans—with all their differences—will be the ones to lead these decisions and pursue their common causes.

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<sup>79</sup> Beveridge and Koch, *How Cities Can Transform Democracy*, 78-81; M. Lancione, "Radical Housing: On the Politics of Dwelling as Difference," *International Journal of Housing Policy* 20, no. 2 (2019): 273-289.

<sup>80</sup> Kern, *Feminist City*, 29-33; Dolores Hayden, *Redesigning the American Dream: Gender, Housing, and Family Life* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2002).

<sup>81</sup> Gilchrist and Taylor, *The Short Guide to Community Development*, 76; Adrian Smith et al., *Grassroots Innovation Movements* (New York: Routledge, 2016).

<sup>82</sup> Benner and Pastor, *Solidarity Economics*, 157; Costanza-Chock, *Design Justice*, 215.

<sup>83</sup> Julie Matthaei, "From Inequality to Solidarity: Co-Creating a New Economics for the 21st Century," in Paul Cooney et al., eds., *Imperiled Economies 2018: An URPE Reader* (Boston: Dollars & Sense, 2018), 147-157; Benner and Pastor, *Solidarity Economics*, 30.

<sup>84</sup> Gilchrist and Taylor, *The Short Guide to Community Development*, 76.



## 4 Organization

*"Our problem is not to rescale our political units, but rather to invent a politics appropriate to a deterritorialized existence."*<sup>85</sup>

Organizing Spectran governance is not about rescaling existing institutions to Spectra, but rather building from the bottom up a system which fulfills the needs of Spectra's self-governance ethos. Of course, while continuing to look to history for inspiration when appropriate. This chapter details the organizations of Spectran governance from the block to city layer, as well as the myriad organizations and agents in between and outside of the multilayer cooperative structure.

### 4.1 Multilayered democracy (#7)

**Spectra's multilayered cooperative structure enables addressing governance, urban planning, and other policy issues at the appropriate scale. 'Cooperative federalism' distributes the powers and possibilities of self-governance across more Spectrans. Participatory budgeting via the Community Fund enables self-governance of revenue and expenditure.**

*"The invention required is not a device for coordination at the generalized top, but rather an invention to make coordination possible where the need is most acute—in specific and unique localities."*<sup>86</sup>

*"Democracy exists in the forging of common causes and the organization of society according to principles of collective self-rule."*<sup>87</sup>

We have already described Spectra's **multilayer cooperative structure** in the [Whitepaper](#) and [Economics paper](#). To recap, Spectra builds on the precedents of traditional cooperatives and DAOs to create a multilayer structure of blockchain cooperatives organized at the block, cluster, city, and world layers to simultaneously address localized and global needs. Members self-organize into their own block cooperatives of up to 300 to 400 people with common goals: to bring together a dynamic community of people; to design their virtual block to match their collective interests and values; to fund the construction of their block in the physical city; and any other specialized goals (See 4.2).









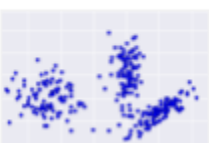

Blocks can join into cluster cooperatives (of up to nine blocks) to form more permanent connections as their communities grow and desire to coordinate their resources. Eventually, these clusters will be able to purchase land for building the physical city and join together as the corresponding city cooperative (See 4.3). The Spectra cooperative (aka Spectra-wide or world

<sup>85</sup> Warren Magnusson, *Local Self-Government and the Right to the City* (Ithaca: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015), 172.

<sup>86</sup> Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, 418.

<sup>87</sup> Beveridge and Koch, *How Cities Can Transform Democracy*, 72.

cooperative) includes all Spectrans and serves as an organizational shell and incubator to coordinate the virtual world as well as other systems in and beyond Spectra.

	<b>Spectran</b> A person who joins Spectra; a member. 1 
	<b>Block cooperative</b> A "first-layer" cooperative of Spectrans who have joined a shared community. ~400 
	<b>Cluster cooperative</b> A "second-layer" cooperative which includes all the members of its cluster (up to 9 blocks which have joined together). ~3,600 
	<b>City cooperative</b> A "third-layer" cooperative which includes all the members of a city's clusters, any ungrouped blocks, and any other Spectrans who are active in the city (physically or digitally) but not in blocks. +1,000,000 
	<b>Spectra cooperative</b> The "fourth-layer" cooperative which includes all Spectrans. N 

Spectra's multilayer structure enables a progressive decentralization of decision-making at the most local, relevant layer of governance before scaling to broader layers as necessary (e.g., when resources at local layers are insufficient to address larger issues). Localizing decision-making and development enables interventions to be adequately rooted and effectively planned.<sup>88</sup> In the words of Kay and Collier, "Common purpose should be built and delivered through the lowest level at which cooperation is necessary."<sup>89</sup>

Meanwhile, coordinating the largest tasks at the city layer will ensure that individuals and communities can build from the bottom-up rather than bottoming out under pressures too great for them to handle alone. By reviving the many layers of community in a city we gain access to the social and governance benefits that come with strong community practice.<sup>90</sup> Ostrom calls this type of structure 'governing the commons in nested levels.'<sup>91</sup> It distributes the powers, capacities, and possibilities for self-governance across a heterogeneous and multilayered urban society, where

<sup>88</sup> Gilchrist and Taylor, *The Short Guide to Community Development*.

<sup>89</sup> Kay and Collier, *Greed is Dead*, 104.

<sup>90</sup> Kay and Collier, *Greed is Dead*.

<sup>91</sup> Ostrom, *Governing the Commons*.

social and spatial boundaries have the potential to be more blurred.<sup>92</sup> In the case of Spectra, we can understand it as a sort of **federalist cooperativism**, in the sense that self-governing powers are delegated across different layers of cooperative sub-divisions.<sup>93</sup>

For example, decision-making regarding housing development and zoning issues could take place at the block and cluster layers by actual residents. In the UK, “street votes” are a new, non-partisan idea to empower the residents and renters of a street to jointly propose the rules for adding new housing extensions and developments to existing lots on their street.<sup>94</sup> Non-resident owners are not granted the right to vote. This policy aims to add housing stock to make rents affordable. It also whittles away the power of landowners who do not live in the community and seek to maintain an artificially low housing stock to increase their own profits.

Federalist cooperativism well-executed would mean more equitably and democratically addressing the needs of local communities while maintaining access to a broader source of funding. As described in the [Economics paper](#), the Community Fund is a pool of tokens organized across Spectra’s layers that allocates funding to cooperatives for development projects and social programs. It grows as capital enters Spectra through financial activity. Funding to the Spectra-wide wallet in the Community Fund may come from in-game transactions or a portion of any membership fees, whereas funding to a city cooperative’s wallet would start with physical land purchases and Land Value Recycling. A portion of funding to block and cluster cooperatives’ wallets would be allocated from the Spectra-wide wallet and the respective city cooperative’s wallet. Additional funding streams to block and cluster cooperatives’ wallets are up to their members to design.

Resources in Community Fund wallets will address common issues, such as server costs at the Spectra-wide layer, transportation infrastructure in cities (See 4.3), and local development projects in clusters and blocks (See 4.2). A meaningful portion of these resources, especially in clusters and blocks, should be determined through participatory budgeting and even be available via grants. By engaging local residents with firsthand knowledge of the challenges facing their communities, participatory budgeting can improve everything from water and sanitation services to children’s school enrollment to transportation infrastructure.<sup>95</sup> In support of community-based decision-making and participatory budgeting, Kay and Collier declare that “decentralization is a sham unless accompanied by a capacity to determine revenue and expenditure.”<sup>96</sup>

Organizations at the Spectra-wide layer should only handle tasks which cannot be addressed by local layers. Two such organizations are described in the [Whitepaper](#). The Representative Board will act on behalf of all Spectrans in situations that require strategic and time-sensitive decision-making.

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<sup>92</sup> Beveridge and Koch, *How Cities Can Transform Democracy*, 111.

<sup>93</sup> Our use of federalist cooperativism is unrelated to any potential historical uses of the term.

<sup>94</sup> YimbyAlliance, “Street Votes,” <https://yimbyalliance.org/street-votes/>.

<sup>95</sup> World Bank, “Participatory approaches in budgeting and public expenditure management,” *World Bank Social Development Notes* (2003), 71.

<sup>96</sup> Kay and Collier, *Greed is Dead*, 154.

At first, these representatives will be the founding members, though their selection will open up over time. Similarly, the Maintainers manage the version control of Spectra's virtual world. Eventually, these organizations may be decentralized to the city layer as Spectra's city(ies) grows.

## 4.2 Pluralism and consensus (#8)

**Blocks and clusters form for many reasons. Blocks enable members to join together based on commonalities. Clustering requires Spectrans from different blocks to cooperate to maximize their collective capacity. A reverence for pluralism encourages diversity of background and ideology, and dialogue between them.**

*"Just as there is no single idealized urban form of the physical city, there is no single democratic vision of the city."<sup>97</sup>*

*"Pluralism is the lifeblood of a genuine democracy. Without pluralism, there is no democracy."<sup>98</sup>*

*"To be attached to the subdivision, to love the little platoon we belong to in society... is the first link in the series by which we proceed towards a love to our country, and to mankind."<sup>99</sup>*

The organization of Spectra into blocks allows members to join together based on common interests and values. Though, blocks and clusters don't need to be homogeneous to accomplish change. In fact, change is hardly ever harmonious, community is rarely about unity, and the best course of action is often not clear.<sup>100</sup> What we really need is to create spaces where people feel safe to disagree and to engage with a plurality of beliefs and ideas.<sup>101</sup> Disputes and clashes of personality are inherent to all communities and to democratic governance. Spectra should strive to develop the spaces and capacity to successfully navigate these differences rather than avoid or suppress them.

Clustering will require Spectrans from different blocks to compromise and work together. Even blocks that cluster together based on similarities will find differences in membership demographics, design practices, financial resources, ideology, and so on. Incentives for blocks to cluster together include no longer having their location be randomly shuffled in the virtual world as well as the ability to purchase land in the physical city. While blocks support the in-group connections that social scientists call "bonding social capital," clusters support the "bridging social capital" across groups (See 2.3).<sup>102</sup> Both types are necessary for democratic governance to thrive.

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<sup>97</sup> Beveridge and Koch, *How Cities Can Transform Democracy*, 15.

<sup>98</sup> Timothy Garton Ash, "Pluralism is the Lifeblood of a Genuine Democracy," George W. Bush Presidential Center, February 23, 2021, <https://www.bushcenter.org/publications/pluralism-is-the-lifeblood-of-a-genuine-democracy>.

<sup>99</sup> Attributed to Edmund Burke. Kay and Collier, *Greed is Dead*, 94.

<sup>100</sup> Gilchrist and Taylor, *The Short Guide to Community Development*, 148.

<sup>101</sup> Mazzucato, *Mission Economy*, 211.

<sup>102</sup> Klinenberg, *Palaces for the People*, 152.



Spectra aims to unite people around shared purpose and effective action rather than to cobble together loose agreements by offending no one. Spectrans can maintain strong personal belief systems *and* respect the right of others to maintain their own beliefs *and* respectfully engage each other to solve common problems. Reverence for pluralism is the social foundation of democracy. Without pluralism, cooperation is superficial, stagnant, and groupthink. Successful societies create organizations which both sustain pluralism and discipline it.<sup>103</sup> In Spectra, blocks and clusters are these organizations. Of course, each will advance its own ideas and practices, and here, it will be the healthy competition to succeed that filters for the most robust communities.

### 4.3 City-wide coordination (#9)

**City-layer organizations unite the city around common needs and coordinate practices which cannot be performed by blocks or clusters. For example, developing and maintaining large public infrastructure. Committees take on the role of public servants. Occasionally, city cooperatives may rein in individuals, blocks, or clusters that violate community values.**

*"Cities provide a way of locating collective organization and common cause in a fragmented world."<sup>104</sup>*

While self-governance in Spectra is prioritized locally, there are situations in which the most local layer is not the most relevant layer for addressing policy issues or meeting the needs of Spectrans. Public education, healthcare, transportation, utilities, emergency response, and security are examples which may be better addressed at the city layer where organizations and plans of action can be commonly designed, funded, and implemented. City committees can be created to address these issues, especially where authority, expertise, security clearance, or urgency is required.

The city layer must also possess institutions with the ability to rein in individuals, blocks, and clusters that violate community values. This power should, in most cases, remain at the city layer and be reserved for only the most serious situations at the Spectra-wide layer. To govern the urban commons, Spectrans need to maintain accountability among members, use graduated sanctions for those who violate community rules, and provide accessible means for dispute resolution.<sup>105</sup>

While Spectra aims to accelerate urban development, there is no one-size-fits-all solution to urbanization. Cities in Spectra will possess unique identities shaped by many factors, such as their host countries, spoken languages, demographics, and predominant cultures. So, city-layer organizations should form and operate with respect to these identities.

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<sup>103</sup> Kay and Collier, *Greed is Dead*, 99-100.

<sup>104</sup> Beveridge and Koch, *How Cities Can Transform Democracy*, 23.

<sup>105</sup> Ostrom, *Governing the Commons*.

## 4.4 Diverse, differentiated networks (#10)

**Cities are constantly in flux. Diverse networks outside of Spectra’s multilayer structure are essential to a thriving city and to strengthening the project’s collective capacity.**

This chapter has so far emphasized what could be called Spectra’s ‘official’ organization—the subunits of the cooperative multilayer structure. However, this is not to say that all practices of urbanization, community, and democracy should or even could take place through these organizations. It is a normal part of all cities to have social networks and organizations that make it impossible to draw clear boundaries. In cities where civil society and local social capital are thriving, there are strong overlapping networks that link individuals, collective action groups, public agencies, and private businesses.<sup>106</sup> For example, neighborhoods, financial districts, and cultural hubs rarely fit neatly into voting districts and school zones. Coordination across these organizational and sectoral boundaries is essential to the development of resilient urban communities.

Blokland describes urban life and communities as “always in the making [and] fluid, cultural figurations [that] are embedded in time and place but are not locally fixed.”<sup>107</sup> As political subjects, people constantly remake the urban spaces they use. Spaces that are usually understood as apolitical (e.g., roads) can become political through practice (e.g., a demonstration march through the city). Multidimensional placemaking will undoubtedly blur the meanings and boundaries of urban spaces even further. Beveridge and Koch recognize that “only through this kind of thinking can we make sense of the idea that democracy can happen everywhere.”<sup>108</sup>

Therefore, it would be a fundamental misunderstanding of the urban social fabric to think that organizing Spectra into blocks and clusters would make its cities rigid. They will help shape and manage Spectra, but they are not meant to be a container. A primary example of the diverse organizations in Spectra will be its guilds, which are introduced in the [Whitepaper](#). Similar to committees, guilds exist to address the specific issues which would be challenging for a decentralized, open-source community. Although guilds will not have official decision-making authority like committees, they will still contribute to shaping the city through their actions. For example, an architecture guild could design a courtyard with a small amphitheater that is conducive to public gatherings. Or, a governance guild could innovate in civic technology. An economics guild could formulate a new model for achieving development goals in Spectra sustainably.

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<sup>106</sup> Gilchrist and Taylor, *The Short Guide to Community Development*, 90-91.

<sup>107</sup> Blokland, *Community as Urban Practice*, 53.

<sup>108</sup> Beveridge and Koch, *How Cities Can Transform Democracy*, 106.

## 5 Conclusion

*"Designing is not a solitary activity. It is part of a larger social community of discourse."<sup>109</sup>*

In this paper, we have sought to define Spectran governance, tying together practices of urbanization, community, and democracy. Yet, this is only the starting point. A new culture of governance cannot simply be created through its declaration by a few innovators. It must be born by experimentation, discovered through trial and error, and led by the people. It must be desired by a community which truly values cooperation and empowerment. It is for these reasons that we limit the scope of this paper to discussing the most fundamental practices of Spectran governance that we can foresee, rather than attempting to detail every aspect of its form and function.

As with the [Whitepaper](#) and [Economics paper](#), this paper is a declaration of our desire for something different. A new culture of democratic governance that provides an alternative to today's governments which continually fail to represent their constituents and to achieve positive change on the most important issues globally and within their countries. Wherever our experimentation takes us, it is vital that Spectra city(ies) are located in host countries which respect the rule-making rights of our members. As Spectra respects international and national rules, these outside authorities will have to reciprocate by respecting the rules set by Spectra and its multilayered cooperatives.

What do you want the future to look like? Come join us in building it.

Website: [www.spectracities.com](http://www.spectracities.com)

Discord: <https://discord.gg/cGpPpcxhqR>

Twitter, Instagram, TikTok: [@spectracities](#)

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<sup>109</sup> Attributed to Drew Margolin. Costanza-Chock, *Design Justice*, 104.