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CONSULCON

DAY 3 - 14:00 - Main Stage

Democracy Fitness

JULIA THOMASCHKI & ACHIM WÖLFL - Mehr Demokratie

Session recap

At a glance

Julia Thomaschki and Achim Wölfl returned after lunch on the final day for a second 'democracy gym' session. They explained that the democracy fitness concept comes from Denmark, where ten 'democracy muscles' were identified (including disagreement, active listening, empathy and mobilisation), based on the idea that democracy is not something you simply have, but something you practise. After a physical warm-up, participants moved through four exercises: finding their own cause, sharing it with a partner, asking for ideas, and merging causes into one shared cause, first in pairs and then in groups of four.

Key messages

- Democracy is a practice: like muscles, democratic skills grow through training.
- Mobilisation means getting others on board for a cause, not as followers doing you a favour, but as co-creators.
- Many brains working on an idea are more likely to succeed than one, and humans seek fellowship in shared action. 'If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.'
- Building a movement requires compromise: choosing one shared cause out of several is hard, but that difficulty is what makes the muscle grow.
- Ideas improve step by step as more people contribute and as groups merge.

Facts, figures and references

- Democracy fitness is a Danish concept identifying ten 'democracy muscles'.
- Causes raised: reducing big tech dependence, neighbourhood community building, wealth inequality, and giving citizens a voice.

Takeaways for the community

- The format demonstrates in 30 minutes how compromise and co-creation scale an idea from one person to a group, and could be used to kick off community or participation projects.
- Several causes raised by participants echoed conference themes, notably digital sovereignty and giving citizens a voice.