

Sydney Democracy Network

How We Work

Background

The Sydney Democracy Network (SDN) aims to be a vibrant network of researchers, activists, policy-makers and citizens concerned with the future of democracy. Based at the University of Sydney, with a strong focus on the Asia and Pacific region, SDN is non-partisan. It aims to foster a broad rethinking of democracy, not only as a form of government but as a way of life committed to greater equality and the public accountability of power.

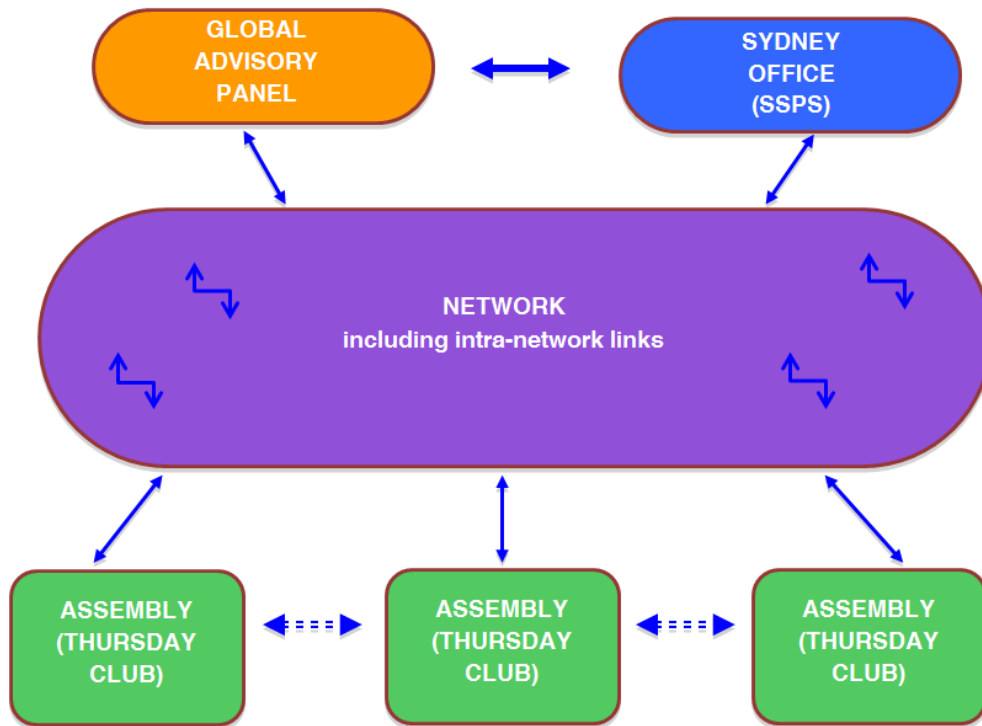
SDN is a networked and bottom-up initiative, aiming to build new partnerships both within the Sydney region and beyond, to host regular innovative public events, and to produce a continuous flow of outputs in a variety of forms, including scholarly publications, online essays, photography and videos.

Among SDN's key long-term aims is the formation of a new global network of researchers, activists and policy makers concerned with the fate of democracy in our times. SDN aims to become a point of reference for path-breaking research on democracy. We are strongly committed to our Asia and Pacific region, a globally significant testing ground of new political trends that may be preparing us for a world beyond democracy as we know it today.

Our Networked Architecture

Following a negotiated funding and operations agreement in late 2013 with the University Provost and the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, SDN began to take shape by means of a series of assemblies of associates and partners. The main purpose of the assemblies (convened in November 2013, and March and May 2014) was to establish the broad aims, working structures and possible projects of SDN. A Strategic Plan was tabled (see Appendix 1 below) in preparation for further consideration of how SDN should best be organised.

Soundings with partners and associates, advice given by our University managers and the practical requirements of effectively running our office have led us to adopt a hybrid model represented in the following diagram. Our architecture is a functionally mixed arrangement: it is designed to satisfy the multiple and potentially conflicting criteria for getting things done, within a University-based network that operates in ways very different than conventional centres and institutes.



SDN's Networked Governing Framework

Our operating arrangements are light-touch, flexible, open, dynamic and as democratically accountable as possible. We provide space for *intra-network links*, that is, the openly 'lateral' flows of contacts among partners and associates that are so essential for the future success of SDN. Through *quarterly assemblies* that 'double' as Thursday Club meetings, sometimes featuring invited inside or outside speakers, we also provide space for the whole network to gather, to give consideration to matters of common concern.

Our working arrangements recognise the importance of *embedding SDN* within the School of Social and Political Sciences, upon whose administrative structures and resources we rather heavily draw, as agreed with the Provost and Dean and Head of School. Day-to-day matters are handled through the *SDN office* managed by our full-time Coordinator. Our digital portal <http://sydneydemocracynetwork.org/> is the principal platform through which we publicise the manifold activities of our active network partners and associates. The strengthening of SDN's regional and global identity is the remit of our *global advisory panel*.



STRATEGIC PLAN 2014

WHO/ WHAT/ WHERE IS THE SDN? In the face of new, exciting and dangerous political trends, the SDN is a vibrant and active network of researchers, activists, policy-makers and citizens concerned with the future of democracy.

Based at the University of Sydney with a strong focus on the Asia Pacific region, the SDN is a non-partisan group. It aims to foster a broad rethinking of democracy, not only as a form of government but as a way of life committed to greater equality and the accountability of power.

MISSION (WHY?) To rethink, strengthen and transform the ideals and practices of democracy.

STRATEGY (HOW?):

1. **INFLUENTIAL NETWORK: CONNECT DEMOCRACY RESEARCHERS WITH POLICY MAKERS, ACTIVISTS, INSTITUTIONS & CITIZENS**
 - a. INFLUENTIAL
 - b. NETWORK

2. **DIGITAL PORTAL**
 - a. **EXCHANGE & EXPLORE** CUTTING EDGE (CROSS-DISCIPLINARY) ACADEMIC THINKING ON DEMOCRACY
 - b. **MAKE ACCESSIBLE** CUTTING EDGE ACADEMIC THINKING ON DEMOCRACY

3. **PUBLIC FORUM**
 - a. **MONITOR & PROVIDE EXPERT COMMENTARY** ON LOCAL & GLOBAL POLITICAL TRENDS AS THEY DEVELOP
 - b. **FOSTER SCHOLARLY & PUBLIC DISCUSSION & DEBATE** ON CURRENT POLITICAL ISSUES

4. **RESEARCH HUB**
 - a. **FACILITATE** RESEARCH PROJECTS & COLLABORATIONS WITH LEADING SCHOLARLY CENTRES WORLDWIDE
 - b. **OVERSEE** DOCTORAL, POSTDOCTORAL & VISITING FELLOWSHIP SCHEMES.