Democratic Policy Making

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Different Models of Policy Making
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- Democratic, with formal party consultation processes
- Hierarchical, with party leadership imposing policy
- Different levels of external consultation
- All parties have some mixture of these in practice
Liberal Democrat Process
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- Party Conference of 2,000 elected reps votes on policy twice a year
- Motions can be submitted by local parties and other groups (Youth, Women etc)
- If passed by conference, motions become official party policy
Policy Papers
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- Federal Policy Committee appoints working group and sets remit
- Working group writes consultation paper which is circulated to party members and discussed at conference
- Final report approved by FPC and submitted to next conference for amendment and approval
Sources of Ideas
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- Working group members/Parliamentarians
- Wider party membership
- Think tanks
- Pressure groups, NGOs
- Academia/Independent reports
Drawbacks of Internal Democracy
Drawbacks of Internal Democracy

- Time consuming
- Focuses on views of party members not electorate as a whole
- Risk of listening to narrow range of party opinions rather than drawing ideas widely
Case for a Democratic Process
Case for a Democratic Process

- Practice what you preach
- Maintains party cohesion and avoid splits
- Motivates activist base for campaigning
- Coherent package that tells a story
- Can still include outside expertise
General Election Manifesto
General Election Manifesto

- Presents a coherent programme for government
- Draws on official policies but has to make priority choices
- Must be credible in policy and resource terms
- Should tell a story
Manifesto Process
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- Manifesto is signed off by FPC
- Preceded by Pre-manifesto Debate at Party Conference
- Manifesto Co-ordinator is key post – must be close to party leader
Political Direction of Manifesto
Political Direction of Manifesto

- What voters groups?
- What key themes?
- What other parties are you targeting?
- Can the leader tell this story?