

# The Legacy – VMB-EGS and the Table Model

An operational governance system for everyone who will eventually introduce, test, or modify it. Two levels, one direction of thought.

JACOBUS VAN MERKSTEIJN

MALTA · JUNE 2026

CONCEPT DOCUMENT – FREE TO SHARE



# What this document is

This is not a scholarly treatise, a political manifesto, or a consulting report. It is a **concept document** intended as an operational description of a governance system – useful for anyone who may one day introduce, test, or change it.

The origin is personal. A few years ago, Jacobus van Merksteijn wrote *Nova Democratia*, a fully developed proposal for democratic renewal. The more it was developed, the heavier it became – a meeting structure that reproduced the paralysis it sought to heal. What lies here is what came after: a radically simpler and more operationally robust system, born of an honest self-critique of the earlier work.

This document was left behind because the author will not be the one to implement it. His role is that of a thinker and documentarian – to ensure the idea is **complete, clear, and operationally ready** for those who need it, whenever that may be. Crisis forces change. If Europe enters a deeper crisis, there will be people looking for a practical alternative. This document is meant to be ready to be picked up then, without needing to rethink everything from scratch.

## For whom

- The **entrepreneur** who wants something fundamentally different from matrix structures and KPI stacks
- The **city council member or mayor** who is prepared to let a single neighborhood or field of expertise experiment
- The **young thinker** who will face the same problems in twenty years
- The **civil servant** who sees that the current system does not hold up

# The Shared Core – Six Fundamental Elements

Both models – VMB-EGS for large-scale governance and VMB-DGM for human-scale governance – share a connected foundation. It is precisely this foundation that distinguishes them from existing governance systems. The models themselves are merely two expressions of it for different scales.



## The Record

A publicly readable, append-only, indelible decision archive. What, when, by whom, with what motivation. Nothing happens invisibly, nothing is deleted after the fact. The record is the shared reality on which the system rests.



## The Growth Rule

Each block is evaluated on two axes at once: quality of outcome and economic sustainability. Only those who combine both grow. High quality achieved through depletion counts for less; working sustainably without quality also brings no additional mandate.



## The Direction Mandate

At the start of the period, each block receives two to four measurable goals. Not a budget, not a rulebook, but a concrete direction with baseline, target value, and deadline. The top sets the goal; the bottom chooses the path.



## The Quality Score

The higher-level block assigns two numbers for each evaluated decision: a problem score and a solution score. Not the decision-maker themselves – self-assessment is not evaluation. Sampled, using the median to soften extreme ratings. All numbers appear on the record.



## The Envelope

A sum for the entire period, allocated once, with exactly three limits: a maximum per individual decision, a maximum per category, and a minimum reserve. The rest is free. Unspent money does not automatically flow back – the system rewards efficiency.



## The Population Rating

The population assigns two numbers per decision: problem recognition and solution satisfaction. Together with the quality score, this creates three ratings per decision – diagnostic, not punitive. Questions are neutrally phrased, limited in scope, and provided with verified contextualization.

# The Growth Rule – Nine Possible Outcomes

Two axes, three values per axis. That creates nine possible outcomes. The four diagonals are clear; the five others are the area where the Growth Rule does its work. The scenario in the upper right – quality achieved, but economically unsustainable – is the **slow poison of almost every organization**. A block that reaches its goals by burning people out looks great on paper. Conventional systems do not recognize this until the failures begin; the Growth Rule makes it visible as an alarm.


	Economically good	Economically tight	Economically unsustainable
Quality achieved	✅ Growth possible – expand, replicate	⚠️ Keep stable, eliminate the cause of unsustainability	🚨 Alarm – success turns into exhaustion
Quality partially achieved	🔍 Continue, improve	🔍 Diagnose: Where is the misalignment	🛑 Stop – revise the domain
Quality not achieved	🔍 Diagnose: Why does it not work despite resources	🚨 Deepest alarm – neither quality nor viability	❌ Immediate dissolution of the block

⚠️ The scenario **quality achieved + economically unsustainable** is the most dangerous blind spot in conventional governance. The Growth Rule makes this visible as an alarm before the damage occurs.

# Two Models – One Line of Thought

VMB-EGS and VMB-DGM (The Table Model) are not two alternatives, but two elaborations of the same core idea for different scales. If people know and trust each other personally, they need VMB-DGM. If they do not know each other, they need VMB-EGS. Both create a public trail – this archive is what connects the two.

Aspect	VMB-EGS	VMB-DGM (The Table Model)
Scale	Hundreds to millions of actors	3 to about 12 people
Control in advance	Three simultaneous voices for every decision	One vote for 98%, majority decision for 2%
Anonymity	Sortition Engine with anonymous selection by lot	Everyone knows everyone, identity always visible
Responsibility	Structural – through anonymous overseers	Personal – through the domain owner themselves
Correction	Real time through L8 abuse detection	Afterward through open exchange and markings
Philosophy	Structure <i>replaces</i> trust	Structure <i>supports</i> trust
Best for	Governments, large institutions, supply chains	Family businesses, small teams, small committees

 A **hybrid solution** is also possible: VMB-DGM for internal operational governance, VMB-EGS for the relationship with external stakeholders. The common denominator is always the trail.

# VMB-EGS – Architecture in Ten Layers

VMB-EGS stands for Van Merksteijn-Bern Economic Governance System. It is neither an IT product nor a legal text, but a design framework for decision systems at large scale. The architecture separates structure from content: the same ten layers work for any kind of decision, provided they are filled parametrically for each domain.

01

---

## L0 – Presentation

Portals, API gateway. The only contact point to the outside world. Incoming requests are received here.

02

---

## L1 – Input

Adapters and identity binding. What is it, and who is sending it? Produces an InputEvent.

03

---

## L2 – Validation

Syntax, semantics, duplicates. Hard contract: no processing without passing. Produces ValidatedInput.

04

---

## L3 – Actors & Authorization

**Sortition Engine.** Is this actor allowed to make this decision? A random process of anonymously selected control persons. This is the first revolutionary addition.

05

---

## L4 – Decision & Orchestration

**Three-Vote Gate.** This is where the decision is actually made. Three independent instances, simultaneous, within a time window T.

01

---

## L5 – Execution

Actuator gateway, notification. The decision is implemented. Produces an ActuationCommand.

02

---

## L6 – Execution Control

Quality, compliance, audit. Afterwards: was it executable? Produces ComplianceFinding.

03

---

## L7 – Data Layer (the trace image)

**Public trace image.** OLTP, append-only audit log, DWH. Everything that happened, fully traceable, publicly readable. The third revolutionary addition.

04

---

## L8 – Abuse Detection

Anomaly and fraud detection. Can immediately override L3 and L4 in the event of a suspicious pattern. RiskAssessment as output.

05

---

## L9 – Governance & Standardization

Policy and standards register. Distributes rules to L2, L4, L6, and L8. PolicyDocument as output.

### Addition 1 – Sortition Engine (L3)

For each decision, the system draws three control persons from a fixed pool. Anonymous to one another, and not selectable again for the same case. Corruption becomes structurally impossible.

### Addition 2 – Three-Vote Gate (L4)

Three independent instances give their approval simultaneously within a time window T. Not sequentially, but at the same time. One missing vote = the decision fails, no second attempt.

### Addition 3 – Public Trace Image (L7)

The append-only audit log receives a publicly readable view. Auditor IDs are anonymous, but the decisions are fully traceable. Replaces external auditors and parliamentary inquiries.

# VMB-DGM – The Table Model

VMB-DGM stands for Van Merksteijn-Bern Domain Governance Model. The working name – *The Table Model* – honors its origin: a family business in which most decisions were made by one of the parents alone, and the difficult topics went to the kitchen table, where everyone had a say.

The key insight: **most decisions in an organization do not need heavy control**. Around 98% can be made quickly by one person with domain expertise. Only the difficult 2% deserve shared attention. A system that does not acknowledge this is more expensive than the errors it tries to prevent.

1

## The Group

N people form N domains. With three people, three domains; with seven, seven. The group distributes the domains itself at the start. The structure breathes with the composition – there is no org chart that exists independently of the people.

2

## Path 1 – The Solo Decision

The domain owner decides directly within their area, without voting, without a form. One voice, done. The decision is final, but it is filed on the path. Around 98% of all decisions happen this way. Speed is the advantage.

3

## Path 2 – The Table

When in doubt, or when a topic affects multiple domains, the domain owner calls the table together. Everyone present may contribute, on equal footing in the discussion, regardless of role or seniority. The decision is made by majority vote of the attending domain owners. Around 2% of decisions.

4

## The Path

All decisions – Path 1 and Path 2 – go onto the path. Append-only, publicly readable by all group members. For Path 2 as well: who contributed what, and how the majority came together. The path serves insight, not revision.

5

## The Hearth

Periodically, the group comes together to discuss Path 1 decisions afterward. The question is not "was it good?", but "how else could it have been?" No finger-pointing, no sanctions. Collective memory, shared wisdom, better intuition for next time.

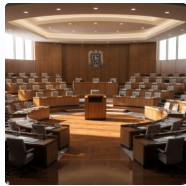
# The Stacking – Three Levels for a Municipality

Both models can be stacked on top of each other to form larger systems. Developed for a municipality with 80,000 residents – the same principle also works for corporate structures with subsidiaries, education systems with schools and federations, and utility networks.



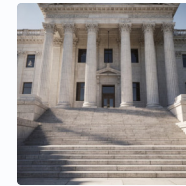
## Level 1 – Neighborhood (VMB-DGM)

5 to 9 district council members per neighborhood, close to the residents. Domains: public space, social cohesion, traffic, youth, seniors, green spaces, events. Path 1 is the default: routine decisions within the domain, fast and final. Neighborhood table monthly or more often. Open hearth monthly. Speed is everything here – 98% of what a neighborhood decides every day must never go beyond the neighborhood.



## Level 2 – Municipal Council (Transition)

A municipal council with 25-35 people is too large for a single table. Two practical options: **Option A** – the council operates as VMB-DGM with N people and N domains per committee session. **Option B** – hybrid: VMB-EGS with sortition for certain decision types, VMB-DGM for others. More practical is A: stay in the table model for as long as possible, because the council members know one another.



## Level 3 – Executive Board of B&W (VMB-EGS)

Decisions that connect the municipality outward: taxes, real estate, permits for large developers, cooperation with neighboring municipalities. Here trust cannot be the basis – external parties do not know the board personally. Three-vote threshold, public record, sorting machine for control. The procedure must be demonstrably consistent to the outside world.

**Crucial design decision:** A higher block never sees what a lower block decided – only that a decision was made, and what patterns emerged from it. The top level never receives raw decisions, only the signal layer above them. This is not a technical limitation, but a deliberate principle: the top level must not be able to micromanage.

# VMB-EGS – Six Practical Scenarios

Architecture on paper is one thing. How the system responds to concrete situations is something else. *The difference between a good governance system and a bad one is not how it works with ideal people – any system can do that – but how it works with people who have bad intentions.*

## Scenario 1 – Known Auditor

In conventional audits, a known auditor is a reportable conflict of interest. In VMB-EGS, the problem does not exist: auditors are anonymous to one another and to the person being audited. The official does not know who is watching. No forms, no eligibility check.

## Scenario 2 – Top official forces an exception

In conventional systems, this can happen with a phone call. In VMB-EGS, there is no such channel: every action runs through L0/L1. An exception can be requested, but it immediately appears on the Public Path with the applicant's name. The request itself becomes visible.

## Scenario 3 – Pool too small

With fewer than six potential auditors, the lottery drops out and the decision is automatically treated as VMB-DGM Spur 2. That is not a weakness, but a property: the scale determines the mechanism. The system adapts.

## Scenario 4 – Auditor refuses to decide

One missing vote = the decision fails. The applicant can resubmit, and the system draws a new lottery. Repeated timeouts by the same person appear on the path – empty auditor status becomes visible and diagnostically useful.

## Scenario 5 – Rule change during an ongoing process

The policy version timestamp is recorded at L2. A decision in motion at the time of the change is handled under the old rules. This prevents retroactive cover and backdoor politics.

## Scenario 6 – L8 suspects collusion in the panel

Abuse detection also analyzes mood patterns in the pool. Statistically unlikely coincidences – three auditors repeatedly appearing together – lead to temporary suspension and review. The auditor is not accused; the pattern is investigated.

# Legacy – What I Leave Behind and for Whom

This document is not a pamphlet. It is a workbook. It was written with the deliberate decision not to persuade or mobilize, but to **be operationally ready for whoever may one day pick it up**. The author does not believe that Europe will introduce this system within ten years. Four gravity layers stand in the way: existing systems have an interest in preserving themselves; populism offers no path to building; the attention span is too short for decades of work; and those who reach the highest level of government are rarely the ones who need the system.



## Path 1 – One Country as Proof

Not the entire EU. One country or a Dutch province that actually introduces the table model and the growth rule. A proof of effectiveness is a hundred times more convincing than a theoretical argument. Singapore, Estonia, and Ireland were built through the decision to try something fundamentally different from their larger neighbors.

Achievable within ten years, provided a level of government is willing to bear that risk.



## Path 2 – One Organization as Proof

A large family business, a cooperative, or a large civic organization that actually introduces the table model at a non-trivial scale: one thousand to ten thousand people. Private ownership can renew itself structurally in a way public ownership cannot. That is much easier than a municipality.



## Path 3 – Leave the Idea Well Documented

The third, and perhaps deepest, path. Ensure that the system is described so clearly, coherently, and operationally that it can be taken up by someone else in ten, twenty, or thirty years, when the time is right. A crisis forces change. A well-documented system that is already in place can then be introduced within years.

### To the Entrepreneur

The table model can transform a company without the outside world immediately understanding it. Start with one department, one area.

### To the City Councillor

A neighborhood pilot. One area. One year. A proof of effectiveness is a hundred times more convincing than any discussion in a council meeting.

### To the Young Thinker

What is written now does not have to be reinvented by him in twenty years. He can begin where this document ends.

### To the Civil Servant

Here lies a practical alternative, ready for the moment when the courage is there to take it up. Not as a revolution, but as operational readiness.

| *What I leave behind is not an army. It is a direction. For whoever wants to take up that direction, the system is ready.*