

Civic Assemblies: Public Engagement to 'Solve' Tough Problems

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Goals & Agenda

- **Civic Assemblies 101**
- **Questions & Discussion**

- 1. Need**
- 2. What Assemblies are & How they work**
- 3. APT + HD + CPD Roles**
- 4. Questions & Discussion**

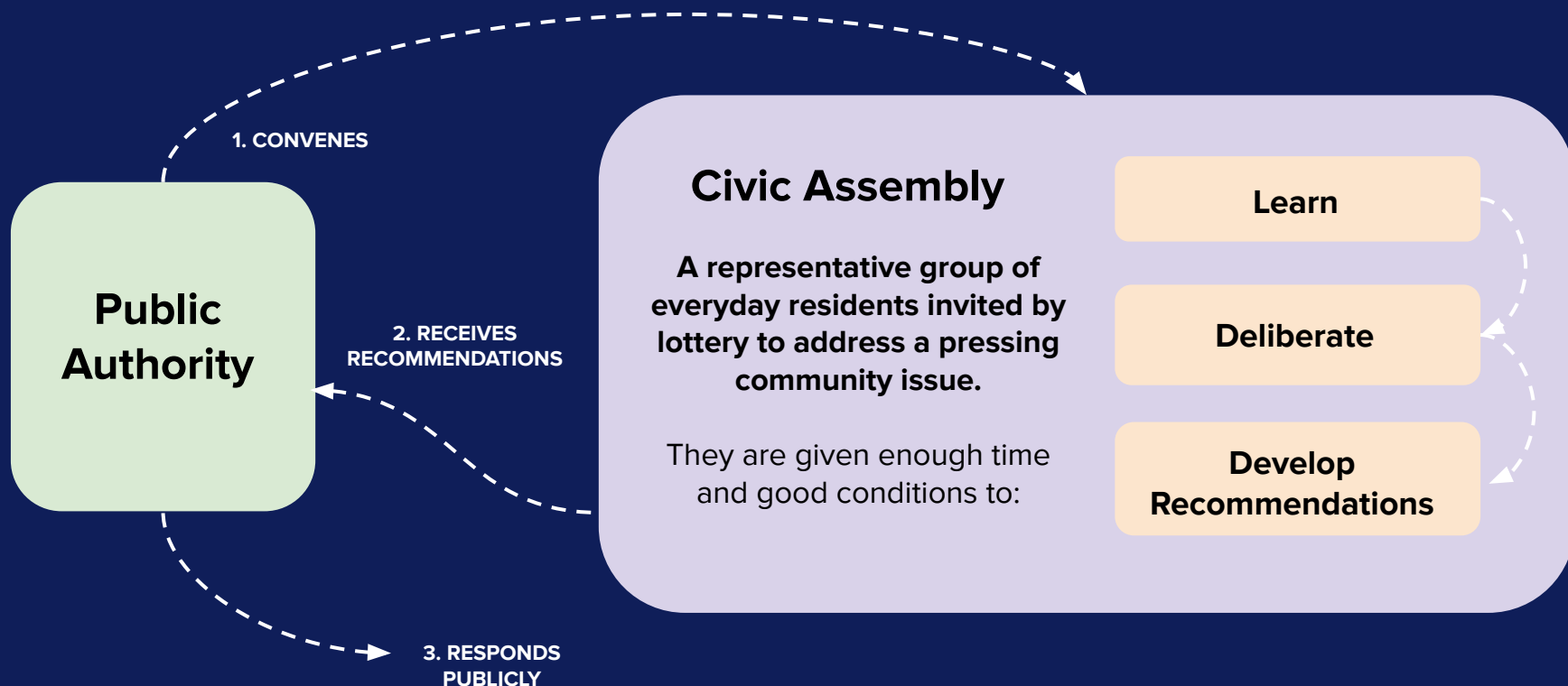




Civic Assemblies
empower the wisdom
of “we the people” to
solve tough public
problems and bridge
divides.



What is a Civic Assembly?



How is it Different?

WHO

1

Participants are
selected by
Civic Lottery



WHAT

2

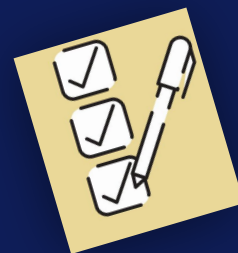
They're provided with enough
time and supports for
**Learning and In-depth
Deliberation**



HOW

3

*Recommendations
are generated with*
**Super Majority
Agreement**



Selection by Civic Lottery

Two-stage process for selecting a representative assembly of community members

STAGE 1



Invitations sent
by random to
households
(5,000-30,000)



Recipients opt in
to participate

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STAGE 2



Lottery is run to
select Members
stratified on: Age,
Income, Gender,
Geography, Political
Views...



Final Group
formed that is
representative of the
demographics of the
city, town, state...

- **Creates a representative “microcosm”** of the larger public
- **Reduces practical barriers** to participation (e.g. money*, technology, child/eldercare)
- **Engages parts of the public** who typically would not participate

* Participants are paid a stipend for their time



Expert Testimony

from all sides



Enough Time

4-10 days



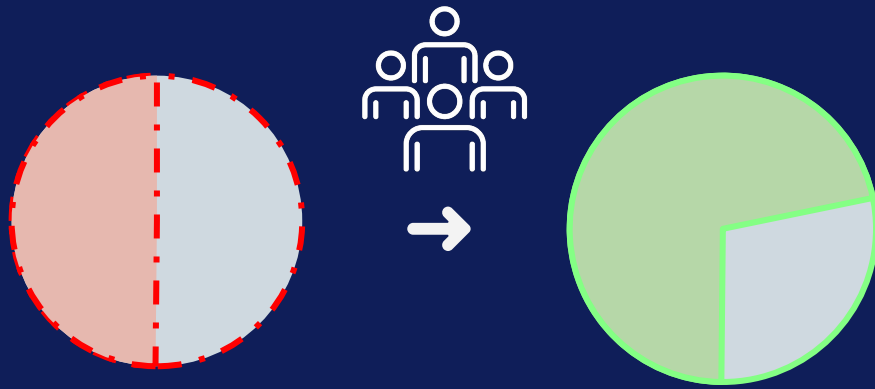
Professional Facilitation

for respectful dialogue

- **Equips assembly members to grapple with the complex tradeoffs** of an issue
- **Engages the full breadth** of viewpoints and evidence, fostering trust from stakeholders and the public
- **Supports creative problem solving** for the broadest benefit of the community

Learning & High Quality Deliberation

*Good conditions to make sense of an issue
with all voices considered*



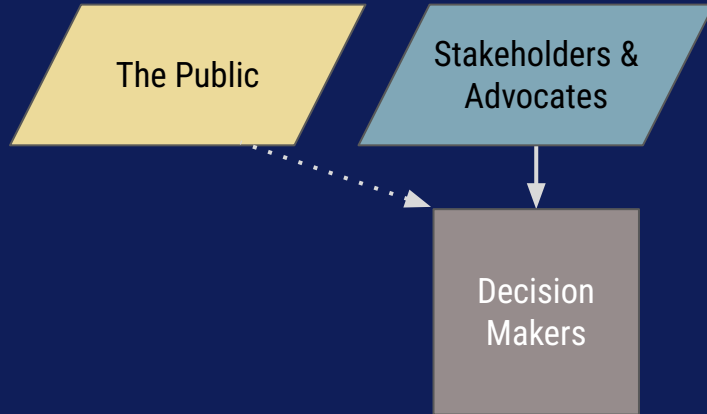
Decisions by Super Majority

70% agreement or greater

- **Results in novel, practical, and more durable policy solutions**
- **Solutions are more inclusive, often integrating across the political divides**
- **Increases legitimacy and acceptance** from the Public

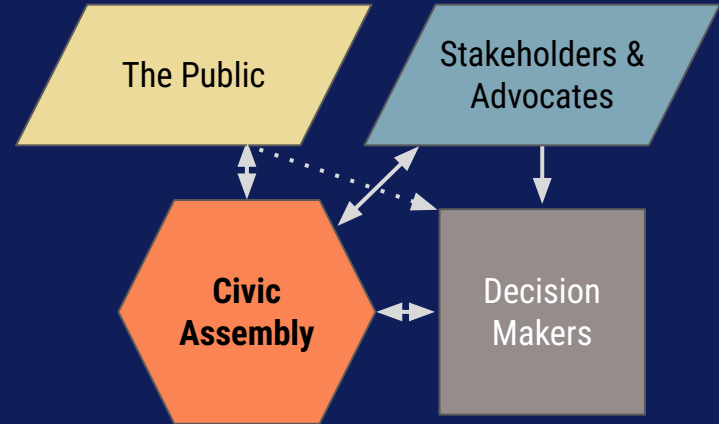
Role of Stakeholders

Traditional Approach



- Stakeholders advocate with the public & decision makers, largely from outside the political system
- Hand-picked stakeholders serve on City-directed advisory committees

Adding a Civic Assembly



Everything to the left, plus . . .

- Stakeholders interact with Assembly by:
 - Curating initial information & presenters for the Assembly
 - Presenting directly to the Assembly
 - Providing feedback as the Assembly conducts its analysis

In summary

Citizens' Assemblies help decision makers act on tough issues more effectively and with greater public support.

Through expressing an informed voice of the public, Assemblies help depolarize and resolve tough issues, turning down the heat from the most polarized voices in a community, while re-engaging the “silent majority” and fostering practical collaborative problem-solving.



Civic Assembly design and delivery; local capacity building for future assemblies



Fundraising support; program management; local and national strategic comms



Broad public and stakeholder engagement (tied into the assembly process)

Questions & Discussion

APPENDIX

How is it Different?

	Traditional Public Engagement	Lottery-Selected Panels
Who Participates	<p>Self-selected volunteers and stakeholders with a vested interest in the topic.</p> <p>Frequent overrepresentation of those with the most time and resources. Participants often skew whiter, older, and more highly educated than the general public.</p>	<p>Everyday community members, most of whom don't engage in other public processes.</p> <p>Guarantees demographic representation. Reduces practical barriers to participation (e.g., time, money, childcare, and information).</p>
Information	<p>Participants expected to do their own research or rely on pre-packaged information from a government agency.</p> <p>Debates over "the facts" prevent collaborative critical thinking and overshadow substantive conversation about solutions.</p>	<p>Access to a wide range of viewpoints and evidence, selected in part by an independent stakeholder body.</p> <p>Collecting and analyzing information is a collaborative undertaking – with the goal of understanding diverse viewpoints and identifying creative solutions.</p>
Process Design	<p>Fundamentally designed to encourage adversarial debate about specific policy positions, creating a zero-sum political environment.</p> <p>Time-constrained – e.g., a 3-minute public comment or afternoon workshop – lending itself to superficial input.</p> <p>Designed by staff or consultants, without input from participants, external advisors, or independent evaluators.</p>	<p>Fundamentally designed to encourage thoughtful and respectful deliberation about what solutions serve a variety of community interests.</p> <p>Plenty of time and freedom to dig deeply into a topic and produce comprehensive policy recommendations from scratch.</p> <p>Panelists oversee process staff and have power to direct their own process; third-party evaluation and advice is standard.</p>
Policy Impact	<p>Emphasizes one-directional community input. Staff and electeds receive comments from many opinion groups and mediate a policy solution themselves.</p> <p>Effect of public feedback is often unknown.</p>	<p>Emphasizes community-driven problem solving, in which everyday residents and stakeholders <i>work among themselves</i> to identify creative solutions.</p> <p>Decision makers commit to, at minimum, thoroughly considering and substantively responding to Panel reports.</p>



Vision: **Civic Assemblies** as regular features of governance – helping restore faith, activate engaged citizens, and upgrade our capacity to address our many ‘wicked’ problems.

“The added value of [the citizen] contribution lies in the fact that they remain **the best experts on what changes are acceptable and when they should be implemented.**”

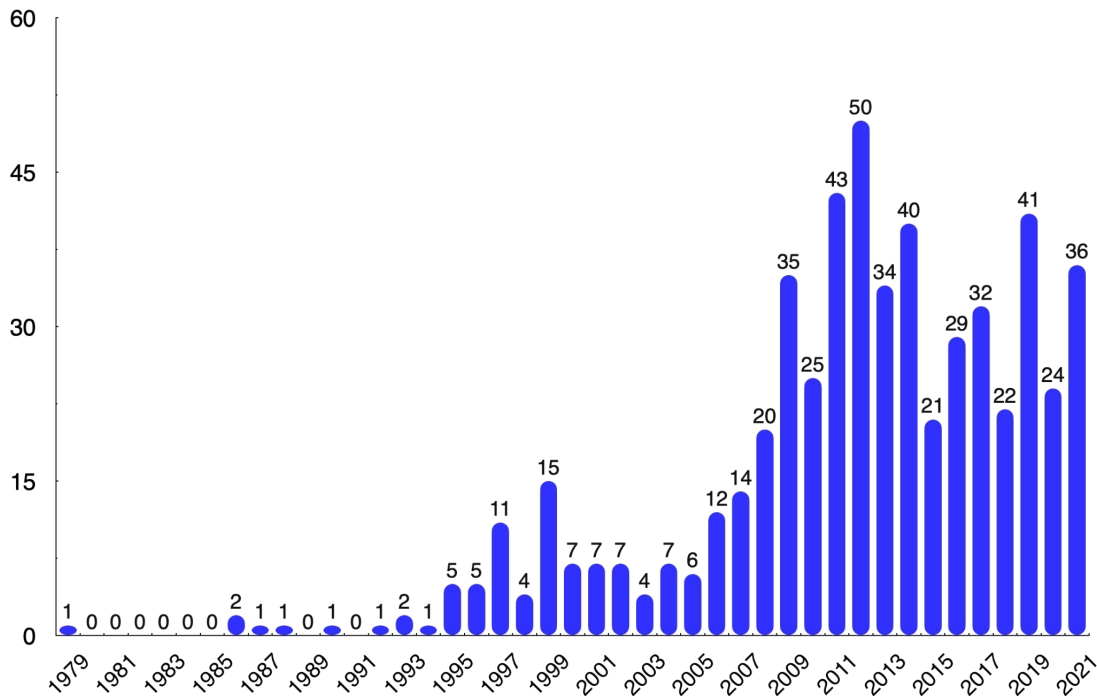


Alain Maron, Minister of the Brussels-Capital Region Government in charge of Climate Transition, Environment, Energy and Participatory Democracy.

The 'deliberative wave' has been building, notably since 2010

Note: n=566; Data for OECD countries is based on 24 OECD countries that were members in 2021 plus the European Union. Processes that spanned over multiple years are noted by the year of their completion (except for permanent ongoing processes).

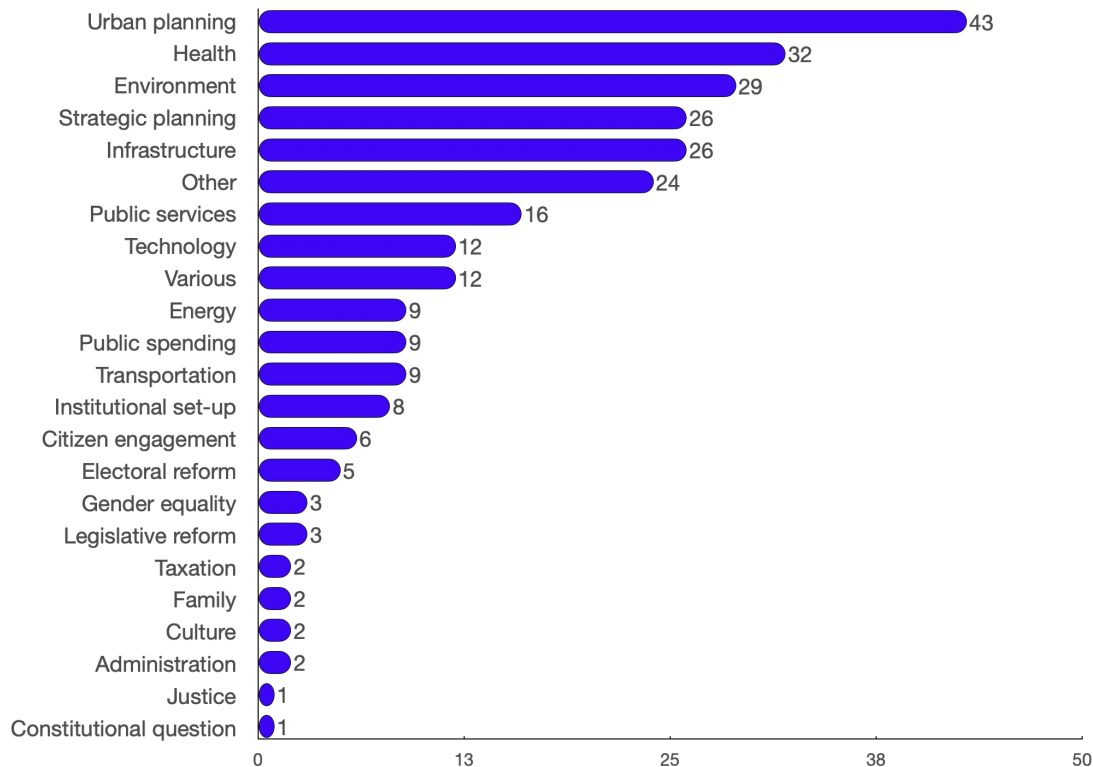
Source: OECD Database of Representative Deliberative Processes and Institutions (2021).



Assemblies have addressed *a wide range of policy issues*

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Source: OECD Database of Representative Deliberative Processes and Institutions (2021).



Assembly recommendations are *widely adopted* by commissioning authorities

How public authorities responded to citizens' recommendations

55 cases analysed by OECD, %



Implemented all
recommendations

Implemented over half
of the recommendations

Other

Source: OECD

- 1. Make Hard Decisions *Easier***
- 2. Find *Agreement* on Practical Solutions**
- 3. Build Government & Community *Trust***