

What is a Citizens' Assembly, and the Principle of Self- Governance

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What is this thing you walked
into?

Technical definition of a citizens' assembly

- a large group of citizens ✓
- selected by lot ✓
- so as to generate a “mini-portrait” of the larger population ✓
- convened to *deliberate* ✓
- over a sustained period of time ✓
- on an important political issue ✓
- with the goal of shaping policy and law ✓

Jury Duty for Politics



A Human Adventure

You'll learn.

You'll disagree (respectfully if passionately).

You'll make friends.

You'll laugh.

You'll get very frustrated.

You'll grow.

You'll matter.

What's good about a citizens' assembly like yours?

- Greater diversity of thinking about an issue
- Freedom to deliberate without electoral pre-commitments and a partisan agenda

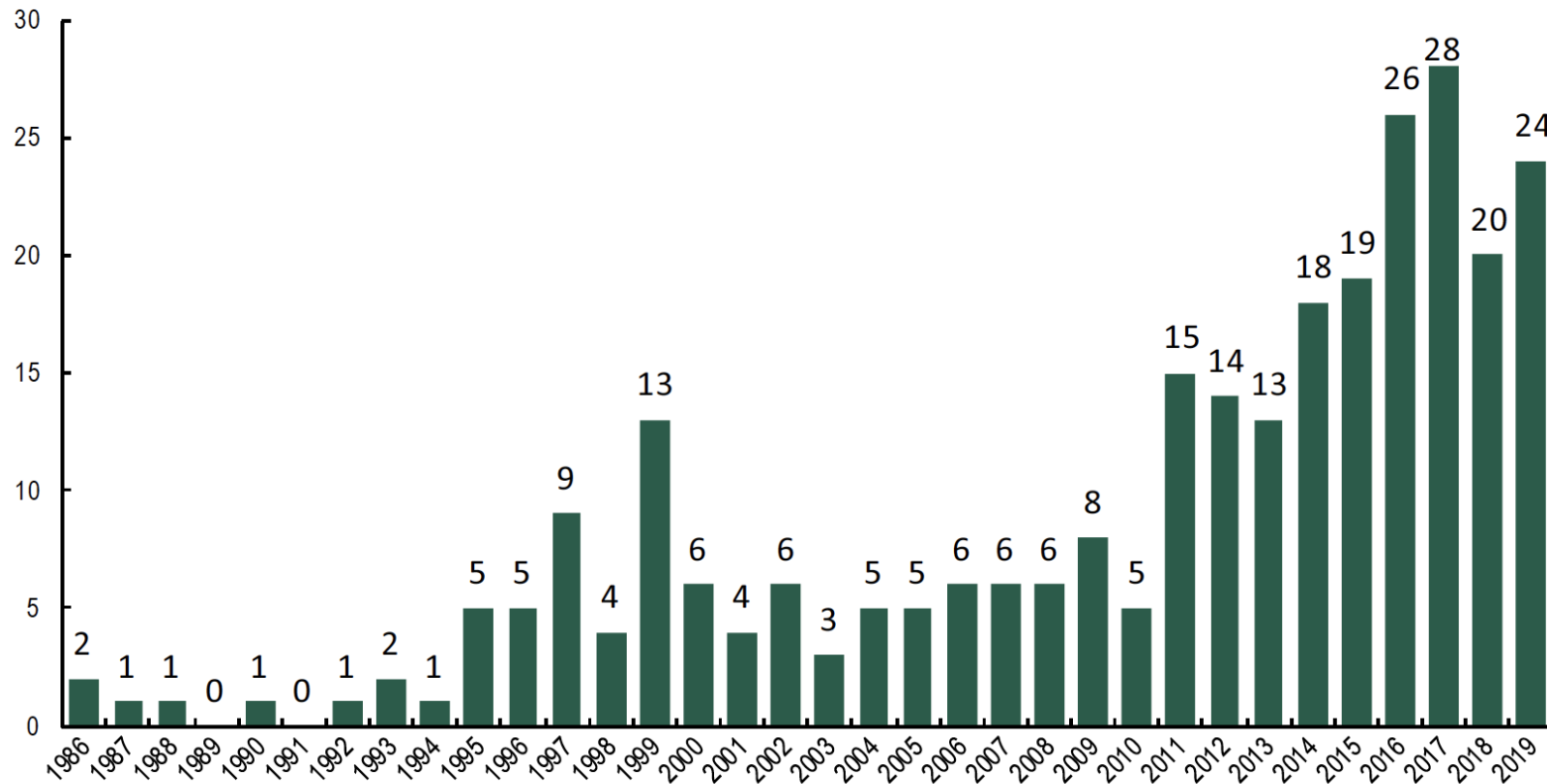
=> Solution to electoral blindspots and partisan gridlock



Over 800 cases of deliberative mini-publics world-wide

Figure 3.3. The deliberative wave has been building over time

Number of representative deliberative processes over time (total annually and on average per year), 1986-2019



Precedents

- British Columbia on electoral reform (2004)
- Ireland on marriage equality (2012) and abortion (2016)
- France on climate (2019) end of life (2022), school reform (2025)
- **USA:** Washington State on climate (2021), Bend, Oregon on youth homelessness (2024)

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What makes your assembly special?



Quote by a member of the French Citizen's Convention on Climate

“I think we lost a lot of time with this type of functioning. . . . A governance committee is necessary, certainly, for general stewardship purposes, but here it was also piloting our intentions. . . . In a real citizens’ convention, I think that governance must be done by the convention itself. . . . I’m convinced we’d move forward, perhaps differently, but faster too.”

So this time, for the first time...

Experts on tap, citizens on top

We trust you to self-govern



Within a pre-existing “constitutional framework”

Because of budget, time and feasibility constraints, you cannot change:

- The topic
- The number of sessions
- The agenda and expert roster for this first session and the majority of the next one on July 25 (too close in time)
- The organization in two thematic subgroups, at least for now

But remaining procedural decisions are yours

- Key elements of agenda-setting for each upcoming session
- Choice of experts to bring back to session 3, 4 and 5
- If and how you engage with the media, the larger public, or use AI tools
- Other procedural questions will emerge

Proposed self-governance design

1) Representation by 7 assembly members chosen by lottery each week and rotated every session [total of 35]

- the 7 meet with the organizers after each session to give them feedback and directions for the following weekend
- The 7 later approve, reject or suggest amendments to the agenda drafted by the organizers

2) Accountability mechanisms:

- anyone can bring a proposal to the 7
- 10 of you can put a question/proposal to the group directly

Why not let the organizers stay in charge of the procedural aspects? Wouldn't that be more efficient?

- Not clear the model “experts on top” is more efficient!
- Efficiency it not the only value, empowerment matters too.
- You cannot fully own the outcome if you don't fully own the process
- Prior assemblies already implemented partial forms of “citizen leadership” and “co-responsibility”

Why not let you design your own governance model?

We thought of it but there was not enough time

Elements of this particular model are backed up by theory and were tested in prior assemblies

Think of this arrangement as an **amendable draft constitution**, not a finished one. If it doesn't work, you can change it later

Any other questions about the self-governance model?

So now comes the decisive moment...

Do you want the keys or not?

Both answers are respectable and will be honored.

This will be your first vote as an assembly.

The vote is by simple majority and anonymous.

The Vote

Do you accept self-governance through seven of your members, drawn by lottery and rotating weekly?

Yes means you take the keys.

No means you hand them back to the organization team.

PLEASE VOTE.