GUIDE

TO CITIZENS ASSEMBLIES
FOR CITIZENS ASSEMBLIES

This guide is prepared based on the experience of Transeuropa Assemblies (link to webpage)

CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Citizens assemblies are becoming more and more common. Often commissioned by public authorities to bring greater citizen involvement into the policy making process, civil society actors such as Extinction Rebellion have also issued calls for citizens assemblies to be organised from the bottom-up to bring together people from diverse backgrounds into a common initiative.

This guide serves civil society organisations and movements in using assemblies to build power amongst disempowered communities, to build solidarity and to have influence in the policy process at European scales. It suggests ways to organise assemblies with minimal budgets, and with maximum inclusion.

Contemporary citizens assemblies have emerged from two dynamics:

Focus groups: Citizens assemblies organised by public authorities can be thought to have developed from the use of focus groups for consultation and polling. The citizen assembly is like an enlarged focus group with more facilitated deliberation and a greater diversity of participants. Often random selection is used to ensure a representative sample of the populations. This is a top-down dynamic, initiated by a government or public authority.

Protest and spontaneous assemblies: The form of general assemblies is common both in associations and in protests organised from the bottom up, initiated by citizens themselves. Any time that many people gather together to decide what to do, or what to do next, a form of assembly is happening. Over centuries of history, and in diverse ways in different cultural contexts, the ways such assemblies are managed, who gets to speak when and for how long, and how decisions are arrived at, have been developed and refined, such that many people will have some basic expectations about what an assembly is and looks like.

This guide aims to provide civil society organisations with a mixed approach to organising assemblies which ensures credibility and legitimacy with public institutions, whilst maintaining the creative, radicality and energy of self-organised assemblies.

Transnational
European
Assemblies

CHAPTER 2: WHY ORGANISE A CITIZENS ASSEMBLY?

Citizens assemblies are often organised on topics where the regular decision-making processes of politics are not functioning or are unable to take a decision. Famous examples include the Irish citizens assembly established in 2016 to address constitutional reform and the legalisation of abortion, the Citizens Assembly on electoral reform in British Columbia in 2004, or the Citizens Convention on Climate in France in 2019. Each of these assemblies was initiated by governments.

Civil society organisations may want to organise a citizens assembly for reasons addressing political decisions, or for building power and solidarity inside of their organisations or movements.

Citizens' assemblies represent a pivotal tool in the arsenal of civil society organisations striving to uphold democratic values and empower communities. Unlike traditional forms of decision-making that often exclude broad public participation, citizens' assemblies provide a structured platform where everyday citizens can deliberate on complex issues, deliberate, and formulate recommendations. This process not only enhances the legitimacy of decisions but also ensures that diverse voices and perspectives are heard and valued.

For civil society organisations, citizens' assemblies offer several distinct advantages:

- Inclusivity: They enable the inclusion of marginalised or underrepresented groups whose voices may not typically be heard in formal decision-making processes.
- Deliberative Democracy: They promote deliberation over mere voting, encouraging participants to engage in informed discussions, consider diverse viewpoints, and arrive at nuanced conclusions.
- Public Trust: By involving citizens directly in decision-making, assemblies can enhance trust in civil society as well as in institutions and increase public confidence in the outcomes.
- Policy Impact: The recommendations and insights generated by citizens' assemblies often carry significant weight in policy discussions, influencing legislative priorities and societal norms.

Examples of reasons for civil society organisations to organise an assembly could include:

→ Housing prices in a city are becoming too expensive for people on a regular salary to afford, and neither the city government nor the national government are taking action to address this problem, so a group of associations decide to organise an assembly of people from throughout the city to come up with recommendations for what the different levels of government should do.

→ An association defending human rights for decades realises that its membership has become older and discussions are dominated by white men. In order to diversify its membership and establish a more inclusive dynamic of discussions, it organises its general assembly as a citizens assembly, inviting randomly selected people from different communities in the country it works in to take part.

→ A climate justice movement has been organising protests for governments to take action against climate change for several years, but is frequently criticised in the media as only representing the middle class and not the working class, and not sufficiently taking into account the interests of people who work. In order to broaden the movement and address this critique, the climate justice protestors reach out the trade unions and involve them in a process of selecting a representative group of workers from three big cities, working in different industries, to take part in a citizens assembly along with the protestors on formulating recommendations for both climate justice and social justice.

Transnational European Assemblies

CHAPTER 3: 10 PRINCIPLES FOR AN INCLUSIVE CITIZENS ASSEMBLY IN EUROPE

The Citizens Takeover Europe coalition of over 70 civil society organisations developed 10 principles by which transnational citizens assemblies in Europe can be evaluated:

- Participatory

EU citizens and residents, including notably young people, should have the opportunity to shape the Assembly at every step of its development, starting with the decisions on the design, scope and objectives of the Assembly, as well as the status of its public input into political decision-making.

- Inclusive

Participation in the Assembly should be inclusive. All participatory channels must be open to both EU citizens and EU residents. The citizens' assemblies should be composed by means of stratified random selection where possible, ensuring a balanced representation of people from different ages, genders, countries of residence, socio-economic backgrounds..

- Open

The Assembly should have the freedom to set its own agenda and to put forward every possible proposal, with all options on the table, and without pre-emption of any of the outcomes of the discussion. The Conference should have the power to decide its own rules and proceedings and possible additional participatory instruments.

- Deliberative

The Assembly should maximise opportunities for dialogue, deliberation and contestation among citizens, between citizens and politicians, and with other stakeholders including relevant experts.

- Transnational

The Assembly should maximise opportunities for interaction, deliberation and collaboration among people from different countries. All participatory instruments should be transnational.

- Transparent

All official Assembly-related meetings and events should be livestreamed, recorded and made publicly available. All official Assembly-related documents should be made publicly available.

- Accountable

The Assembly secretariat or presidency should be accountable to the public at large by providing citizens with clear written feedback on the input developed by means of the participatory instruments of the Assembly.

- Effective

Prior to the start of the Assembly, the organisers should commit themselves to following up on the resolutions to be adopted by the Assembly. If possible and appropriate, political authorities at European, national, regional and local authorities should be invited to make a similar commitment. Visible The organisers should seek to draw public attention to the assembly happening. In addition to analogue communication, digital technologies should be used to multiply outreach.

- Attractive

The Assembly should demonstrate that politics is intrinsically connected to other spheres of life, such as arts and culture. In order to showcase this, festivals or other cultural activities can be joined with the assembly, and creative and cultural techniques of facilitation used.

Transnational
European
Assemblies

CHAPTER 4: BUDGETS FOR A CITIZENS ASSEMBLY

Randomly selected citizens assemblies organised by public authorities can be expensive: in some cases costing tens of millions of euros. This is usually an impossible amount of money for civil society organisations to raise. But effective citizens assemblies can be organised for a lot less money by focussing on a few elements of the assembly that are really needed for the purpose it is supposed to play.

For example, if the most important aspect of the assembly is to ensure the participation of people racialised as Roma, then whatever resources are available should be targeted towards ensuring their effective participation, and other elements of an ideal citizens assembly, including translation into additional languages, the input of experts, or people flying in from other countries, could be cut.

One of the advantages that civil society organisations have over public authorities is that they can often rely on the enthusiasm and good will of people and partners. So many of the necessary elements to run an assembly can often be found for little or no cost, including:

- A venue Is there a community centre, church, artistic gallery or cafe that could be interested in offering their space for the assembly. Perhaps in return for being able to introduce their space to the participants, or for being publicly associated with the event. Or could it be possible to organise the assembly in a public space like a square or park?
- Translation and interpretation Are there motivated volunteers who could be ready to do this? Students studying translation? People who care about the issue you will be discussing, or about reinforcing democracy? Even if the interpretation is not perfect or at a professional level, the energy created by having volunteers do it will add a new dynamic to the assembly
- Food and drinks could a local restaurant be interested in providing this? Or a supermarket that cannot stock food that is expiring?
- Recruitment for the assembly instead of using expensive companies that do polling or random selection, is it possible to use student associations to help recruit through phone calls? Or ask other associations to nominate potential participants and then randomly select amongst them according to criteria to ensure a diverse mix? (see more details about these methodologies in chapter 6)
- How many people are really needed to have a legitimate and high quality deliberation about the topic at hand? Instead of talking about the national scale of the problem, could a local scale be more manageable? Is it possible to organise one local assembly, and then based on the success of it fundraise for another, and build a process?

Chapter 5: Process, timeline and formats

Organising a citizens assembly goes through 6 stages:

- Identifying a topic and a target

This is the crucial starting point. What will be the topic or question the assembly will address? Will it make recommendations to a public authority? Or for other civil society organisations? Or will it develop a workplan or set of future joint activities?
The topic needs to be of real interest to people, and pertinent as to why it should be discussed now. It should be clear and not so strongly oriented towards one solution that it does not permit deliberation and different opinions to be shared.
The target of the assembly should be realistic: is it realistic to give recommendations to the government, or would it be better to give recommendations to civil society organisations or businesses?

- Assessing resources available and finding more resources

What resources do you have for organising an assembly? These will include monetary resources, but also other kinds of resources such as volunteers, contacts and a network that can be mobilised. Making a realistic assessment of resources you already have, what they can be used for - and more resources you will need to find - is essential to designing an assembly process that is ambitious but realistic, and focussing on those elements you can do well that will have most impact.

- Designing the assembly

Based on the topic, target and the resources available, you should set about designing how the assembly will look. Will it be online only (using software like zoom for example?) Will it be in person (and where?) Could it be mixed, with some people or sessions online, and others offline? How long will it meet for? How many times?
Making good choices for all of these design questions is difficult, comes with experience and depends on group dynamics when the assembly actually meets, as well as many other conditions that might be out of your control. For this reason, whilst planning is important, it is just as important to be flexible and adaptable once the assembly actually starts, to adapt the design to get the best outcome possible.

- Engaging participants

Once you have a draft design of the assembly, you will need to design a process to engage participants, based on how many you are seeking and of what profiles.

In chapter 6 of this guide are strategies for recruiting participants. When choosing a strategy it is important to think about how long you have before the assembly should happen. Maybe there is an urgency to have the assembly as quickly as possible, and the participants selection process will have to be quick and potentially imperfect as a result. Or maybe the assembly can happen in several months, leaving more time. Maybe it is important to have participants from several countries - which ones? In any case, it would be important to be mindful that probably in any locality in Europe there are people coming from many different places - how will they be engaged and not excluded?

- Running the assembly

Even if you engage facilitators to run the assembly itself, a steering committee will need to oversee the assembly and ensure it is oriented towards useful and strategic outcomes, making adjustments with the facilitators as the assembly develops.
Crucial roles to ensure are covered in addition to facilitation in the assembly include:

- Interpreters
- Care and safeguarding responsible
- Logistics officer
- Communications and press officers
- Welcome and participant (and invited speakers or experts) accompaniment officers

Transnational European Assemblies

- Follow up and ensuring impact

The whole point of organising an assembly is to have some impact: whether on the world, the local situation, or even just on the participants themselves. Participants taking part in an assembly will want to know their efforts and time lead to some outcome that makes a change. But follow up is often the forgotten part of citizens assemblies!

In order to ensure good follow up, you could:

- Set targets for impact in advance of the assembly, and then monitor them afterwards
- Conduct evaluations with participants and stakeholders about how the assembly has affected their lives, opinions or work
- Monitor the media coverage of the assembly, and follow up with media contacts
- Engage stakeholders, including politicians if relevant, early in the assembly, and then organise follow up activities with them
- Provide ways for the participants to keep in contact with each other, and with you as organisers so they can hold you accountable
- Engage other civil society organisations in the process to build coalitions that can carry forward outcomes of the assembly
- Connect with other citizen assembly processes

Transnational European Assemblies

Chapter 6: Selecting participants

Citizens assemblies are a methodology to have a more diverse and inclusive deliberation than might normally arise in a public debate, or in political institutions. There are various ways to try to achieve this, including:

→ Advertising the assembly to targeted audiences

The language and images that are used to promote the event are very important for attracting a diverse audience. Do pictures used show a diverse group of people? Is language written in an accessible way? Ensuring that the advertisement to participate is circulated by organisations in direct contact with the kind of people you want to involve in the assembly is crucial - how can they be brought onboard? By becoming partners? By having the chance to speak at the event?

→ Stratified random selection, or 'sortition'

In order to ensure a 'representative' group of people taking part in the citizens assembly, frequently various forms of random selection are used. This practice dates from assemblies in Ancient Athens where random selection was used to ensure that no group of people developed too much power by remaining in one position of authority or another for too long. Today, random selection is used to get a mix of participants that is in some sense representative of the population.

When public authorities or governments run citizens assemblies, they often want an assembly which is like a miniature general public: if the assembly is national, they might try to have roughly the same percentage of employed people, the same percentage of highly educated people, the same percentage of LGBTQI people etc. as in the general national population. In order to achieve this, sociological questions are asked of people randomly approached by telephone or by letter, and then amongst those that accept in principle to participate, people are randomly chosen to fill in the quotas for each category.

Civil society organisations that want to use random selection may want to think carefully about what mix of people is most relevant to the purpose of the assembly they organise. If the assembly is about topics which affect some people directly, such as migration or minority rights, it could be important to ensure a strong representation from those groups. If the strategic reason to organise the assembly is to amplify some voices that are not often present in the public debate around a topic, such as the voice of young people in discussions about workers rights for example, then it could be important to ensure a strong participation of this group. In each of these examples, however, it is worth asking if the participation of people not from the group most affected by a topic might add legitimacy to the assembly, and if it might promote greater understanding and solidarity between groups.

→ innovative techniques for random selection

Commissioning a professional company to do random selection of participants can be beyond the means of civil society organisation. Other ways of ensuring a mixed random participation can include:

- Advertising the assembly, asking people to register (eg on a website) and then choosing randomly amongst them
- Choosing randomly from a newsletter mailing list or similar
- Inviting associations and clubs to nominate several candidates to attend the assembly and then randomly choosing between them
- Hosting a public event with high profile speakers that attracts a wide audience, then randomly selecting participants from the audience to participate in an assembly.

→ Ensuring gender inclusivity

It is essential that citizens assemblies are gender inclusive, ensuring the equal participation of women, trans and LGBTQIIA+. In addition to ensuring inclusive language and imagery and highlighting the gender dimension of any topic that is under deliberation, scheduling the assembly at times that might be easier for people with care responsibilities to attend, arranging childcare, and signalling that clear guidelines to ensure respect, equal participation and a safe environment will be established can all empower these groups to participate.

→ Using creative strategies to ensure participation of hard to reach groups

Some groups of potential participants may be particularly difficult to reach for different reasons. They might live in hard to reach places, have a strong level of distrust towards majority members of the public, or towards civil society organisations... or many other reasons.

In addition to ensuring the general accessibility of the assembly, specific techniques can be used to engage these hard to reach groups. These might include:

- Giving something back to a community: in return for the participation of people from a disadvantaged group in an assembly, can you organise something which gives something back to the community? This could be something simple like a party or activities for children, providing training for members of the community in useful skills such as facilitation, interpretation or video making, or asking all participants to bring a book to donate to a library for the community, or giving technical material such as recording equipment used for the assembly to the community afterwards.

- Build trust with a community by spending time with them in advance of trying to engage them in an assembly or another initiative. This could be achieved by organising smaller discussions with the community, by joining up with a local partner that has been working with the community for a long time, engaging in one-on-one conversations with members of the community.

Chapter 7: Trust building in the assembly

Citizen's assemblies are not only a place of practising deliberative democracy and generating policy impact, they are also an effective method of building trust among citizens and civil society actors as well as confidence in public institutions and their ambition to represent the people. Building trust across the process of an assembly cannot only strengthen participants' sense of political self-efficacy but also empower collective agency and eventually influence the policy impact of the assembly. This chapter gives an overview of our learnings and recommendations to enhance trust building within citizens assemblies.

Trust building is crucial not only within the methodology of the assembly but also in the framing, set up and follow up to the process. These methods can be combined and work best when adjusted to the respective context and topic of the assembly. Here are some things to keep in mind when to implement trust across your citizen's assembly:

10 key learnings when embedding trust in the set-up and framing of your assembly:

1. Taking your participants seriously as citizens and political agents. This will allow your interaction to be more driven, participatory and for people to meet eye to eye.
2. Understanding the context in which the assembly is organised and specifically the culture of trust within that context. We live in a political climate of generalised mistrust and it is important to acknowledge that in the way we hold space.
3. Trust is not bound to borders, passports or ethnicities. While understanding the context is key, also frame the assembly based on the lived experience of the participants and elicit the sense of engagement, initiative and scepticism in the room.
4. Trust is relational in nature. Ensure you build in informal moments, social time and plenty of space for relationship building between participants.
5. It is easier to build trust and solidarity with a common purpose. Be clear and transparent in how you frame the event and centre it around a common purpose that serves as a connecting point between participants.
6. Trust is built best when on the road, when working together. Ensure that you have moments of co-working, creativity and collective agency as part of your setting up the event. Observing another in action or a setting of collective action enhances trust within the process.
7. Trust needs to be prefigured. People are more likely to trust your process if you and your organisation embody relationships of trust.
8. Trust happens between the lines. Bold statements about trust and accountability can create distance or false expectations among the participants. Stay humble and truthful to the process and allow things to infold with time.
9. Centre care in the way you frame your assembly. Structures of care support people to feel seen, held and to step into relations of trust.
10. Cultivate a culture of shared responsibilities. Avoid having the same people 'hoard' specific responsibilities for long periods of time. People are more likely to build trust when positions that potentially carry more power are shared and rotated.

10 methodologies to enhance trust building within your Citizens Assembly

1. Make it participatory throughout the different steps so participants are given a voice and can express themselves, their needs and expectations at different times. Participatory formats need to be embedded in respective cultural contexts but they can support people to step into agency and strengthen group-culture.
2. Use context specific examples and case studies to allow people to concretely relate to their lived experience.
3. Create space for envisioning "alternatives" because new collective imaginaries, narratives and fictions are essential to building trust and shared futures when bringing together people in one space.
4. Establish practices of care within the assembly (working with breaks, food, childcare) and ensuring your place is accessible to different needs.

Transnational European Assemblies

5. Work with storytelling and narrative to embed the people's personal experience in the set up of the assembly.

6. Don't shy away from emotions. Including exercises that awaken emotions can strongly enhance group cohesion and allow people to express vulnerability that eventually fosters trust in the space (especially relevant on assemblies with very heterogeneous groups.)

7. Programme in an emergent and flexible way so you can accommodate emerging needs and allow for people's relationships to define some of the methodological directions.

8. Build safer or brave spaces against oppression within your assembly to ensure accessibility for a diversity of participants.

9. Factor in/acknowledge diverse lived experiences and approach topics through a lens of 'translation': of language, concepts, experiences. Avoid assuming that a specific message is perceived uniformly, and dedicate the time to arrive to a point of common understanding.

10. Acknowledge representation and privilege. Especially in a diverse assembly set-up, ensure that people have affinity with other actors and support a climate of trust through representation in the facilitation and staff team.

By actively incorporating trust building methods and values in Citizen's assemblies, Civil Society Organisations and community organisers can strengthen communities in developing context aware processes of trust-driven, deliberative, participatory democracy. Meanwhile, parallel gains of a trust building approach include instilling a stronger sense of belonging of citizens in the commons, a greater trust in existing community structures, and pave the way for long lasting citizen involvement in democratic processes.

Transnational
European
Assemblies

Chapter 8: Feminist Techniques of Trust Building and Facilitation

In recent years, feminist approaches to facilitation have gained recognition for their emphasis on inclusivity, empathy, and trust building. This chapter explores how civil society organisations (CSOs) can integrate feminist techniques into the facilitation of citizens' assemblies to create more equitable and empowering environments for dialogue and decision-making.

Understanding Feminist Facilitation

Feminist facilitation is rooted in principles of equality, empathy, and non-hierarchical collaboration. It challenges traditional power dynamics and seeks to amplify marginalised voices while fostering a sense of belonging and mutual respect among participants. Key elements of feminist facilitation include:

- Inclusivity: Prioritising diverse perspectives and lived experiences, particularly those of women, non-binary individuals, and marginalised communities.
- Trust Building: Creating a safe space where participants feel heard, valued, and respected. This involves establishing ground rules, active listening techniques, and empathy-building exercises.
- Intersectionality: Recognizing and addressing the interconnected nature of systems of oppression (e.g., race, gender, class) to ensure discussions are inclusive and intersectional.
- Collaborative Decision-Making: Emphasising consensus-building and collective decision-making processes over top-down or majority-rule approaches.

Techniques for Trust Building and Inclusive Facilitation

1. Building Rapport: Begin sessions with icebreakers and introductions that encourage personal sharing and build connections among participants.
2. Active Listening: Encourage participants to listen actively and reflectively, without interrupting or judging, to foster a deeper understanding of diverse perspectives.
3. Empathy Exercises: Incorporate exercises that encourage participants to empathise with different viewpoints and lived experiences, promoting mutual understanding and solidarity.
4. Non-hierarchical Communication: Create a facilitation style that values all contributions equally, regardless of hierarchy or status, to ensure everyone feels empowered to participate.
5. Consensus Building: Use techniques such as small-group discussions, consensus circles, or modified consensus models to reach agreements that reflect shared values and priorities.

Case Studies and Examples

- Women's Rights Advocacy: Organisations advocating for women's rights often employ feminist facilitation techniques in assemblies focused on reproductive rights, gender-based violence, and economic empowerment.
- LGBTQ+ Inclusion: Assemblies addressing LGBTQ+ rights utilise inclusive facilitation to ensure the voices of transgender and non-binary individuals are heard and respected.
- Environmental Justice: Environmental justice assemblies apply feminist principles to address the disproportionate impact of environmental degradation on marginalised communities, emphasising inclusivity and solidarity.

Challenges and Considerations

- Power Dynamics: Addressing power imbalances and ensuring marginalised voices are not overshadowed by dominant group dynamics.
- Cultural Sensitivity: Recognizing and respecting diverse cultural norms and communication styles within participant groups.
- Self-care and Emotional Labour: Supporting facilitators and participants in managing emotional intensity and burnout resulting from engaging deeply with sensitive topics.
-.

- Women, as well as under-represented communities, experience bias in argument scrutiny. They are often not taken seriously and frequently have to "prove" their arguments. As a facilitator and for the audience, it's important to consider whether the scrutiny of their arguments stems from the content itself or from biases against their identity as women or LGBTQ+ individuals for example. Are we questioning their statements because of their argument's merit or because of who they are?

Acknowledge that as a woman, a BIPOC or an LGBTQ+ individual, it is already an act of courage just to take the stand and speak up. Women and under-represented individuals often apologise for speaking up and taking up space. Ensure that they, along with the rest of the audience, recognize that their voices hold the same importance and relevance as anyone else's. This needs to be clearly stated to be kept in mind by all.

By integrating feminist techniques of trust building and facilitation into citizens' assemblies, CSOs can create more inclusive, empowering, and effective spaces for dialogue and decision-making. These approaches not only enhance the quality and legitimacy of outcomes but also contribute to broader social justice goals by challenging inequitable power structures and amplifying marginalised voices. As CSOs embrace feminist principles in their facilitation practices, they contribute to a more equitable and participatory democratic process, fostering solidarity and collective action within their communities.

Practical Examples of Facilitation Techniques to Deal with Disagreement

In citizens' assemblies, disagreements are inevitable and desirable as participants bring diverse perspectives and interests to the table. Effective facilitation techniques are crucial for navigating these disagreements constructively, ensuring that discussions remain productive and respectful. Here are practical examples of facilitation techniques tailored to manage disagreements:

1. Active Listening and Reflective Summaries:
   - Technique: Encourage participants to actively listen to each other without interrupting. After a speaker finishes, another participant summarises their viewpoint to ensure understanding.
   - Purpose: Promotes empathy and mutual understanding, clarifies perspectives, and reduces misunderstandings that can escalate disagreements.
2. Framing and Reframing:
   - Technique: Facilitators reframe statements or arguments in neutral language to emphasise common ground rather than differences.
   - Purpose: Shifts focus from divisive rhetoric to shared values or goals, encouraging collaborative problem-solving rather than adversarial debate.
3. Small Group Discussions:
   - Technique: Divide participants into smaller groups to discuss specific issues or proposals. Each group reports back to the larger assembly.
   - Purpose: Allows participants to explore disagreements in a less intimidating setting, encourages deeper dialogue, and promotes consensus-building through focused discussions.
4. Consensus Circles:
   - Technique: Participants sit in a circle and take turns speaking without interruption. Each person expresses their perspective and listens actively to others.
   - Purpose: Creates a respectful space for sharing diverse viewpoints, encourages active listening, and fosters a sense of equality among participants.
5. Multi-perspective Panels:
   - Technique: Invite a panel of experts or stakeholders with diverse viewpoints to present their perspectives on a contentious issue.
   - Purpose: Provides participants with comprehensive information and different viewpoints, facilitating informed decision-making and reducing polarisation.
6. Timeouts and Reflection Periods:
   - Technique: Introduce breaks or reflection periods during intense discussions to allow participants to collect their thoughts and emotions.
   - Purpose: Prevents discussions from becoming overly heated, promotes self-reflection, and encourages participants to approach disagreements with renewed focus and composure.

Transnational European Assemblies

<u>Example Scenario</u>

During a citizens' assembly discussing environmental policies, participants disagree sharply on the balance between economic growth and environmental protection. Facilitators could employ a combination of techniques:

- Active Listening: Encourage participants to paraphrase each other's arguments to ensure understanding.

- Small Group Discussions: Divide participants into groups based on their priorities (e.g., economic concerns vs. environmental sustainability) to explore potential compromises.

- Reframing: Reframe the discussion from a dichotomy (growth vs. protection) to explore synergies (e.g., green jobs, sustainable development).

By employing these facilitation techniques, CSOs can effectively manage disagreements, foster constructive dialogue, and guide participants towards collaborative solutions that reflect the diverse interests and values within the assembly.

Chapter 9: Creative Techniques

Using cultural and artistic techniques can promote a more creative and exploratory assembly, as well as give agency and voice to people who may not express themselves so well in verbal forms.

Such techniques include:

1. Storytelling Circles:
   - Participants share personal stories related to a theme.
   - Encourages active listening and empathy.
   - Can be accompanied by music or visual aids to enhance the experience.
2. Art-Based Reflection:
   - Participants create visual art (painting, drawing, collage) to reflect on a particular topic or experience.
   - After creating, they share and discuss their artworks with the group.
   - Helps in expressing emotions and ideas non-verbally.
3. Theater Games:
   - Use improvisation and role-playing to explore issues and scenarios.
   - Techniques such as "Forum Theatre" from Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed allow participants to act out situations and then re-enact them with alternative approaches.
4. Cultural Exchange Workshops:
   - Participants bring in artefacts, music, food, or other cultural items from their backgrounds.
   - Facilitate sharing sessions where each participant explains the significance of their items.
   - Promotes cultural understanding and diversity.
5. Creative Writing Sessions:
   - Guided writing prompts that encourage participants to explore themes or issues creatively.
   - Sharing written pieces with the group fosters connection and insight.
   - Can include poetry, short stories, or even collaborative writing exercises.
6. Music and Rhythm Circles:
   - Use musical instruments or body percussion to create rhythms and sounds as a group.
   - Facilitates collaboration and synchronisation.
   - Music can be used to express collective emotions or tell a story.
7. Dance and Movement Workshops:
   - Incorporate dance and movement to explore themes or emotions.
   - Techniques such as "Dance/Movement Therapy" can be used to facilitate group connection and expression.
   - Movement exercises can help break down barriers and build trust.
8. Visual Storyboarding:
   - Create visual storyboards to map out ideas, processes, or future visions.
   - Participants use drawings, cut-outs, and other art supplies to build a visual narrative.
   - Helps in visualising and organising thoughts collectively.
9. Photovoice:
   - Participants take photographs related to a specific topic or question.
   - They then present their photos to the group and discuss the stories behind them.
   - Can be used to highlight community issues or personal experiences.
10. Cultural Performances:
    - Invite participants to perform a cultural dance, song, or drama.
    - Discussions follow, focusing on the cultural context and personal significance.
    - Encourages appreciation and understanding of different cultural expressions.
11. Mandala Creation:
    - Group members collaboratively create a mandala using coloured sands, papers, or other materials.
    - The process is meditative and promotes mindfulness and cooperation.
    - The final mandala can symbolise the group's journey or a collective goal.

12. Shadow Puppetry:
- Use shadow puppets to tell stories or act out scenarios.
- Facilitates creative expression and teamwork.
- Can be used to address complex issues in an engaging and non-threatening way.
- Cultural Artefact Analysis:
- Bring in various cultural artefacts for participants to analyse and discuss.
- Encourages exploration of cultural histories and values.
- Can be combined with storytelling for a richer experience.
- Ethnographic Role Play:
- Participants take on roles from different cultural perspectives and act out scenarios.
- Helps in understanding and appreciating different cultural viewpoints.
- Promotes empathy and diversity.
- Graffiti Wall:
- Set up a large canvas or wall where participants can freely draw or write their thoughts and feelings.
- Can be theme-based, focusing on specific group goals or issues.
- Encourages open expression and collective creativity.

These techniques leverage the power of arts and culture to foster engagement, creativity, and deeper understanding within groups.

Transnational
European
Assemblies

Chapter 10: Interpretation

In assemblies where not everyone speaks the same language with the same degree of ease, some form of interpretation is likely to be essential to ensure everyone can express themselves. This could range from hiring professional interpreters and providing headphones and other equipment needed for simultaneous interpretation to having volunteers who help with whispering interpretations, or even relying on participants in the assembly who can understand various languages to help others understand. If the assembly is taking place online using software like zoom, artificial intelligence subtitles can be a cost effective if imperfect solution.

Organising volunteer interpretation for group meetings involves additional considerations compared to professional interpretation due to the varying skill levels and availability of volunteers. Here are some key elements to bear in mind:

1. Volunteer Selection
- Language Proficiency: Ensure volunteers have a high level of proficiency in both the source and target languages.
- Interpreting Skills: Prefer volunteers with some experience or training in interpretation.
- Cultural Awareness: Select volunteers who understand the cultural contexts of both languages involved.

2. Training and Preparation
- Basic Training: Provide basic training in interpretation techniques and ethics.
- Topic Familiarization: Brief volunteers on the meeting's agenda, key points, and relevant terminology.
- Materials: Supply glossaries and background materials in advance.

3. Technical Arrangements
- Equipment: Ensure necessary equipment is available, even if simplified (e.g., microphones, headsets for larger groups).
- Room Setup: Arrange seating to facilitate easy communication and ensure interpreters can hear and be heard clearly.

4. Meeting Dynamics
- Pacing: Advise speakers to talk slowly and clearly, allowing time for accurate interpretation.
- Pauses: Incorporate regular pauses in the meeting for consecutive interpretation.
- Engagement: Encourage direct interaction among participants to promote a natural conversation flow.

5. Support and Resources
- Reference Materials: Provide volunteers with access to reference materials, glossaries, and any necessary documentation.
- Mentorship: Pair less experienced volunteers with more experienced interpreters for support and guidance.
- Technical Support: Ensure technical support is available for any equipment used during the meeting.

6. Feedback Mechanisms
- Immediate Feedback: Create a system for participants to provide immediate feedback if they encounter difficulties understanding the interpretation.
- Post-Meeting Evaluation: Collect feedback from participants and volunteers to improve future sessions.

7. Ethical Considerations
- Confidentiality: Emphasise the importance of confidentiality and neutrality in interpretation.
- Accuracy: Stress the need for volunteers to provide accurate and unbiased interpretations.

8. Recognition and Support
- Acknowledgment: Recognize and appreciate the contributions of volunteer interpreters.
- Support: Provide necessary support to ensure volunteers feel valued and motivated.

9. Contingency Planning
- Backup Volunteers: Have backup interpreters available in case a volunteer cannot attend.
- Flexibility: Be prepared to adjust the meeting format if interpretation challenges arise.

10. Legal and Ethical Framework
- Guidelines: Develop clear guidelines and protocols for volunteer interpreters to follow.

By addressing these key elements, you can enhance the effectiveness of volunteer interpretation and ensure that all participants can engage fully in the meeting.
- ○

Transnational European Assemblies

Chapter 11: The Role of Experts

Experts can play a crucial role in Citizens' Assemblies by providing participants with the necessary information to make informed decisions. Their involvement should be carefully managed to ensure that the information is balanced, comprehensive, and accessible. In particular the power relations between experts and participants should be carefully thought about. Ideally the experts should be at the service of participants, not directing them. Could participants themselves play the role of experts?

These guidelines outline the responsibilities, selection, preparation, and engagement of experts in Citizens' Assemblies.

Objectives of Expert Involvement

- Educate Participants: Provide clear, accurate, and relevant information on the topics under discussion.
- Clarify Complex Issues: Break down complex topics into understandable components.
- Ensure more Balanced Perspectives: Present multiple viewpoints to facilitate discussion, take into account unheard perspectives

Preparation of Experts

Briefing on the Assembly Process
- Orientation Session: Provide experts with an overview of the assembly process and their role.
- Participant Demographics: Share information about the participant demographics and the level of prior knowledge.

Guidelines for Presentations

- Clarity: Emphasise the need for clear, jargon-free presentations.
- Balance: Encourage experts to present several points of view on a topic where these are relevant, without artificially pretending to be neutral or that all opinions have the same weight.
- Engagement: Advise on techniques to engage participants and encourage questions.

Preparation of Supporting Materials

- Accessible Language: Ensure all materials are written in accessible language.
- Visual Aids: Prepare visual aids that help illustrate key points.
- Supplementary Resources: Provide additional reading materials for participants who want to delve deeper.

Facilitating Expert-Participant Interaction

Ideally, experts and the topics where expertise is needed, are identified by the participants in the assembly themselves, ensuring that the power and initiative remains with participants themselves. This process will need some facilitation and guidance. Often there is not enough time available for this to happen, or the participants need some introductory expertise about a topic before feeling comfortable to decide on more experts to invite.

Some elements to keep in mind when developing the formats for experts to be present in the assembly include:

Expert Panels
- Diverse Experts: Assemble panels with experts from different fields and viewpoints.
- Moderation: Use a moderator to facilitate balanced and productive discussions.

Small Group Discussions
- Breakout Sessions: Organise small group discussions where experts can engage more directly with participants.
- Focused Topics: Each group can focus on specific aspects of the topic for deeper exploration.

One-on-One Engagements
- Office Hours: Schedule "office hours" where participants can meet with experts individually also between assembly meetings
- Informal Interactions: Encourage informal interactions during breaks and meals during the assembly meetings

Short introductory remarks, developed more fully on invitation
- Experts could have 5 or 10 minutes to provide introductory remarks on a topic, which is then extended on invitation by the assembly if it is of interest.
- In order to allow flexibility in the participation of experts in the assembly, it is ideal if they agree to be present for a longer period of time and can be flexible about how and when they participate

Evaluation

To facilitate the ownership of participants over the assembly, asking them to evaluate the usefulness of expert input can be a useful exercise, also to help them identify where more expert input is needed, and what knowledge they may have amongst themselves in the group that can be shared.

Compensation

Experts taking part in assembly processes are giving up their own free time to do so, and so would benefit from some compensation. This need not take the form of remuneration, but could be something as simple as a bouquet of flowers to thank them, an invite to dinner, or an extra night in a hotel if they have travelled to be at the event.

Transnational
European
Assemblies

Chapter 12: Outcomes and Influence

Citizens assemblies could aim at different kinds of outcomes and influence. They might aim at building solidarity and collaboration between the people or organisations involved, or even at showing to individuals and organisations how much fun citizens assemblies can be. But often they will aim at influencing politics and policy making, whether in the formal institutions of politics at European, national and local levels, or inside civil society organisations and movements.

It is vital to reflect on the kind of outcome and influence that is being sought at the design stage of the assembly and organise and communicate accordingly. Often, it will be highly uncertain what kind of outcomes are realistic, and so a strategy of multiplying the possibilities of different kinds of outcome and influence, from the easiest to achieve to the hardest and most ambitious is wise, to ensure that whatever happens something will be achieved, and in the best scenario everything is achieved!

Strategic Planning

When it comes to trying to influence politics, whether in formal institutions or the politics of social movements and civil society coalitions, here are key aspects to keep in mind:

Aligning with Policy Agendas

- Understand Current Policies: Ensure that the assembly's topics are aligned with current policy debates or priorities.
- Policy Integration: Design the assembly's scope to complement existing policy frameworks and gaps.

Clear and Actionable Recommendations

- Specificity: Ensure recommendations are clear, specific, and actionable.
- Feasibility: Consider the feasibility of recommendations, taking into account economic, social, and political contexts.
- Implementation Steps: Provide detailed steps for implementation, including timelines, responsible parties, and required resources.

Stakeholder Engagement

Involving Policymakers Early

- Initial Briefings: Brief policymakers and relevant stakeholders before the assembly begins to secure their buy-in and support.
- Observer Roles: Invite policymakers to observe the assembly proceedings to enhance their understanding and commitment.

Building Alliances

- Advocacy Groups: Collaborate with advocacy groups and NGOs that can champion the recommendations.
- Community Leaders: Engage community leaders and influential figures to build broader support.

Policy Briefings and Workshops

- Workshops: Organize workshops and briefings with policymakers to present and discuss the recommendations.
- Advisory Committees: Establish advisory committees involving policymakers, experts, and stakeholders to refine and advocate for the recommendations.

Effective Communication

Comprehensive Reporting

- Executive Summary: Provide a concise executive summary of the recommendations and their importance.
- Detailed Report: Ensure the final report is detailed, well-structured, and accessible, providing clear evidence and rationale for each recommendation.

Media Strategy

- Press Releases: Issue press releases highlighting the assembly's process and key recommendations.
- Media Briefings: Hold media briefings to ensure accurate and extensive coverage of the assembly's outcomes.
- Social Media Campaigns: Use social media platforms to disseminate information and engage the public.

Public Engagement

- Public Presentations: Organise public presentations and community meetings to share the findings and gather support.
- Educational Materials: Create educational materials, such as infographics and videos, to explain the recommendations and their benefits.

Follow-Up Actions

Monitoring and Evaluation

- Implementation Tracking: Set up a system to monitor the implementation of recommendations.
- Progress Reports: Publish regular progress reports to keep stakeholders informed and maintain momentum.
- Impact Assessment: Conduct impact assessments to evaluate the effectiveness of implemented recommendations.

Continuous Advocacy

- Ongoing Dialogue: Maintain an ongoing dialogue with policymakers and stakeholders to address challenges and support implementation.
- Public Pressure: Use public pressure and advocacy campaigns to keep the recommendations on the policy agenda.

Revisiting Recommendations

- Periodic Reviews: Periodically review the recommendations in light of new developments and feedback.
- Adjustments: Make necessary adjustments to the recommendations to ensure they remain relevant and actionable.

Building Long-Term Institutional Support

Institutionalising the Process

- Regular Assemblies: Advocate for regular Citizens' Assemblies as a permanent feature of the policy-making process. European Alternatives, Citizens Takeover Europe and the Democratic Odyssey are calling for the creation of a permanent people's assembly for Europe.
- Legislative Support: Seek legislative support to formalise the role of Citizens' Assemblies in policy development.

Capacity Building

- Training Programs: Develop training programs for policymakers and stakeholders on the value and implementation of deliberative democracy.
- Knowledge Sharing: Establish platforms for sharing knowledge and best practices from Citizens' Assemblies globally.

International Collaboration

- Global Networks: Join global networks and forums on deliberative democracy to share experiences and learn from other successful initiatives.
- Best Practices: Adopt best practices from international examples to enhance the impact of local assemblies.

By following these strategies, civil society organisations can significantly enhance the likelihood that the recommendations from a Citizens' Assembly will have a meaningful impact on policy. The key is to integrate strategic planning, stakeholder engagement, effective communication, and sustained follow-up actions into the entire process.

Annex: Resources

Sortition Foundation
https://www.sortitionfoundation.org/

Movement Learning Catalyst
https://movementlearning.org

School of Transnational Organisating
https://transnationalorganizing.eu

OECD report:
Innovative Citizen Participation and New Democratic Institutions - Catching the Deliberative Wave
https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/governance/innovative-citizen-participation-and-new-democratic-institutions_339306da-en

Citizens Takeover Europe
https://citizenstakeover.eu

How to run a civic lottery
https://static1.squarespace.com/static/6005ceb747a6a51d636af58d/t/6010cf8f038cf00c5a546bd7/1611714451073/civiclotteryguide.pdf

The Routledge Handbook of Collective Intelligence for Democracy and Governance
Edited By Stephen Boucher, Carina Antonia Hallin, Lex Paulson
https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/oa-edit/10.4324/9781003215929/routledge-handbook-collective-intelligence-democracy-governance-stephen-boucher-carina-antonia-hallin-lex-paulson

Knowledge Network on Climate Assemblies
https://www.knoca.eu

Democratic Odyssey
https://democraticodyssey.eui.eu/home

Online resources for group facilitation techniques:

1. **MindTools: Group Facilitation**
   [MindTools - Group Facilitation Techniques] (https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/RoleofFacilitator.htm)

2. **The Institute for Cultural Affairs: Technology of Participation (ToP)**
   [ICA - Technology of Participation] (https://www.ica-usa.org/page/ToP)

3. **Liberating Structures**
   [Liberating Structures] (http://www.liberatingstructures.com/)

4. **International Association of Facilitators (IAF)**
   [IAF Methods Library] (https://www.iaf-world.org/site/methods)

5. **University of Kansas Community Tool Box**
   [Community Tool Box - Facilitation] (https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/leadership/group-facilitation)

6. **FacilitatorU**
   [FacilitatorU] (https://www.facilitatoru.com/)

7. **Gamestorming**
   [Gamestorming] (https://gamestorming.com/)

8. **Hyper Island ToolBox**
   [Hyper Island ToolBox] (https://toolbox.hyperisland.com/)

9. **SessionLab Library of Facilitation Techniques**
   [SessionLab Library] (https://www.sessionlab.com/library)

10. **Training Course Material**
   [Training Course Material - Icebreakers, energizers, and group activities] (https://www.trainingcoursematerial.com/free-games-activities)

11. **Design Council: Facilitation Resources**
   [Design Council - Facilitation] (https://www.designcouncil.org.uk/resources/guide/facilitation-resources)

12. **IDEO Design Kit**
   [IDEO Design Kit - Facilitator Guide] (https://www.designkit.org/resources/1)

13. **The Thiagi Group**
   [The Thiagi Group - Interactive Strategies] (https://www.thiagi.com/)

14. **World Cafe Method**
   [The World Cafe] (http://www.theworldcafe.com/)

15. **Art of Hosting**
   [Art of Hosting] (http://www.artofhosting.org/)

16. **Facilitating Breakthrough by Adam Kahane**
   [Facilitating Breakthrough] (https://reospartners.com/facilitating-breakthrough/)

17. **Leadership Strategies: The Facilitation Company**
   [Leadership Strategies] (https://www.leadstrat.com/)

18. **BusinessBalls: Facilitation Skills**
    [BusinessBalls - Facilitation Skills](https://www.businessballs.com/communication-skills/facilitation-skills-and-techniques/)

19. **Miro Guide to Running Engaging Workshops**
   [Miro Guide](https://miro.com/guides/workshops/)

20. **ATD (Association for Talent Development)**
   [ATD Facilitation Skills](https://www.td.org/facilitation-skills)