



What does the next democratic paradigm look like for cities?

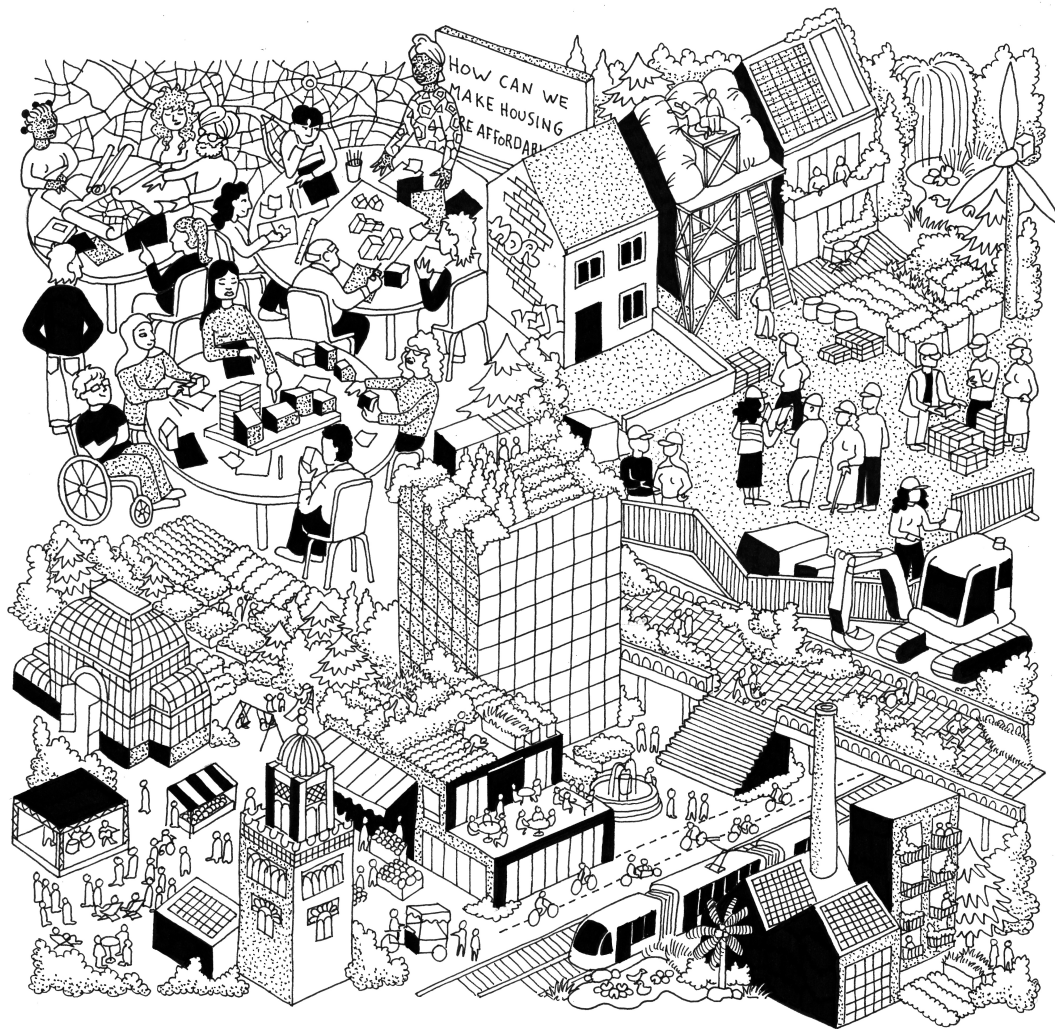
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How can we
begin to imagine
a different
system?




Today, cities face a myriad of challenges and opportunities related to urban planning

- Affordable housing crisis
 - Population growth straining resources
 - Environmental sustainability
 - Public health and well-being
 - Inequality and inclusion
 - Accessible mobility is not available to everyone
 - People are beginning to imagine new ways to govern our cities
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The current system is not equipped to tackle these challenges in a dynamic, effective, or inclusive way


- Decisions are stuck
 - Engagement does not always have impact
 - People lack agency
 - There is a mistrust in the system
 - Mismatch between people's desires and what planning rules allow
 - Historical inequalities are being perpetuated
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What are Citizens' Assemblies and why are they central to these models?


A group of people selected by lottery who are broadly representative of a community spend significant time learning and collaborating through facilitated deliberation to find common ground and form collective recommendations for policy makers, decision makers, or the community.

Source: OECD (2022), Citizen Participation Guidelines






What are the benefits of Citizens' Assemblies?

- Agency: people will have more opportunities to invest in a better future for their communities.
 - Complexity: They provide the democratic spaces for everyday people to grapple with the complexity of these challenging, complex urban issues.
 - Cohesion: They create the conditions to overcome polarisation and strengthen societal cohesion.
 - Collective intelligence: They bring out the collective intelligence of society – the principle that many diverse people will come to better decisions than more homogenous groups.
 - Trust: Tapping into this collective intelligence builds a greater level of trust between citizens, decision-makers, and political leaders.
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What are the benefits of Citizens' Assemblies for cities?


Benefits for public authorities:

- Citizens' Assemblies help to build greater legitimacy and accountability which can enable action, particularly on decisions that are hard to take or where authorities are 'stuck', leading to inaction.
 - Citizen's Assemblies lead to better quality visions, plans, and projects that are more aligned with community wants and needs, enabling cities to make bold or difficult changes with citizens rather than making changes to citizens.
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What are the benefits of Citizens' Assemblies for cities?


Benefits for developers and investors:

- Citizens' Assembly early on in development projects helps to reduce risk, especially in the timeline of zoning approvals, where there is often resistance by community members when they are consulted on plans that are already almost finalised and have had no say in shaping early on.
 - Engaging with people in this way can help create better conditions for investment and generate more value by creating higher quality places, more resilience, and greater social cohesion.
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What are the benefits of Citizens' Assemblies for cities?

Benefits for everyone:

- Citizens are part of creating better neighbourhoods and cities, and the places they live will be better as a result.
 - Citizens feel genuinely represented when their city is making big decisions.
 - Citizens' individual and collective agency is strengthened, leading a city with strong civic muscles.
 - Strengthened social cohesion is possible because deliberative spaces bring a diversity of people together as equals working together.
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More than a one-off process: A way of decision-making

- The growing need to find better, bolder, consensus-driven solutions to some of the most complex challenges facing society demands a departure from the status quo.
 - Simply consulting with people about the future of their cities is not enough, we must create the conditions for a systemic shift.
 - Standing, rotating Citizens' Assemblies that are connected to decision-making cycles, development projects, the long-term planning of our cities, and other participation strategies are a fundamental part of creating a new system of urban planning.
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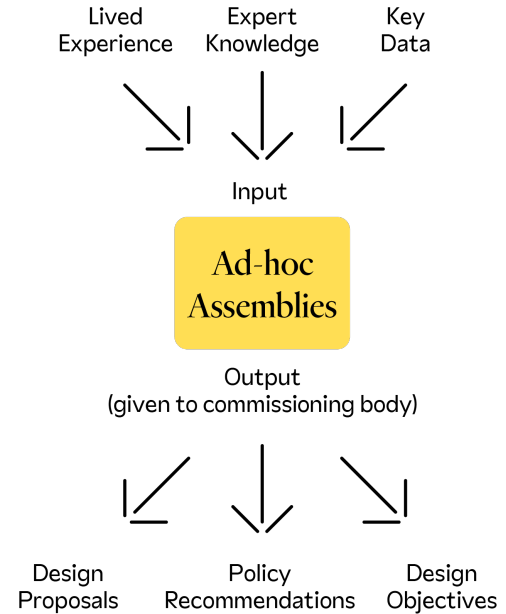


Different cities -
different starting
points



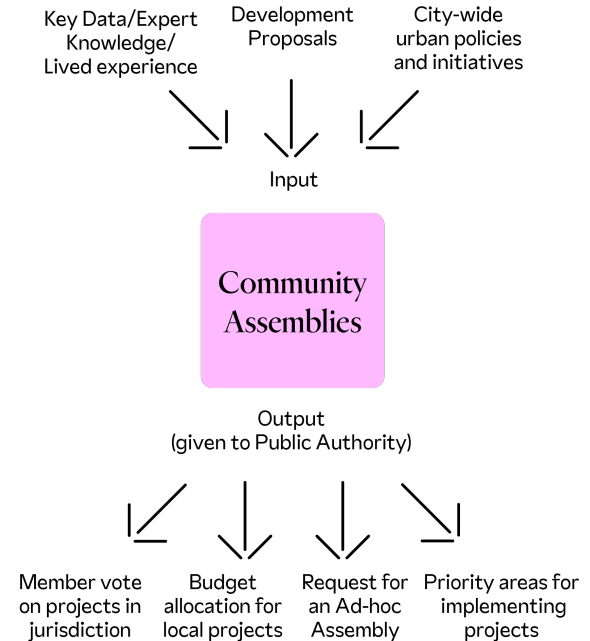
Ad-hoc Assembly

- For a specific one-off urban planning related problem, development project or policy issue
- Example: Belém Citizens Panel



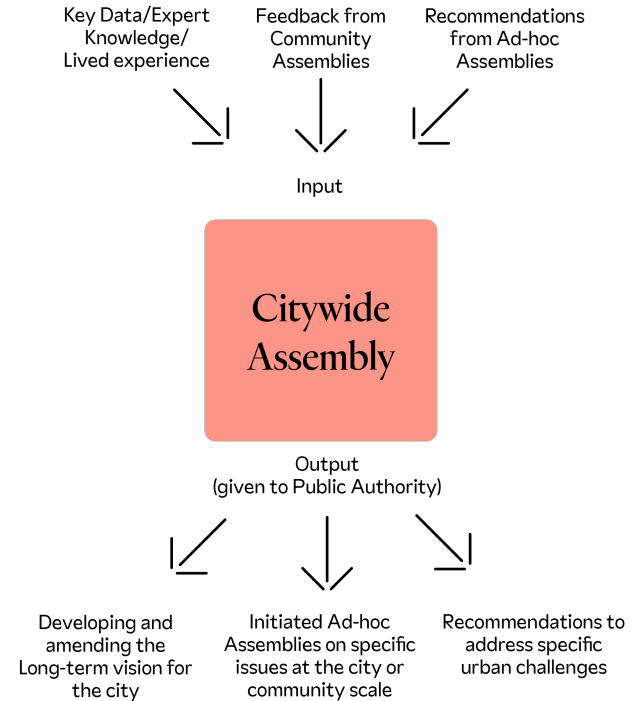
Ongoing Community Assembly

- Reforming existing community/neighbourhood boards to better represent needs of residents on an ongoing basis
- Function at the scale of a borough, district, ward, or neighbourhood



Ongoing city-wide Assembly

- Systematically involving citizens in long-term planning decisions
- Gives regular input on wider impact decision-making processes
- Example: Bogotá's Itinerant Citizens' Assembly



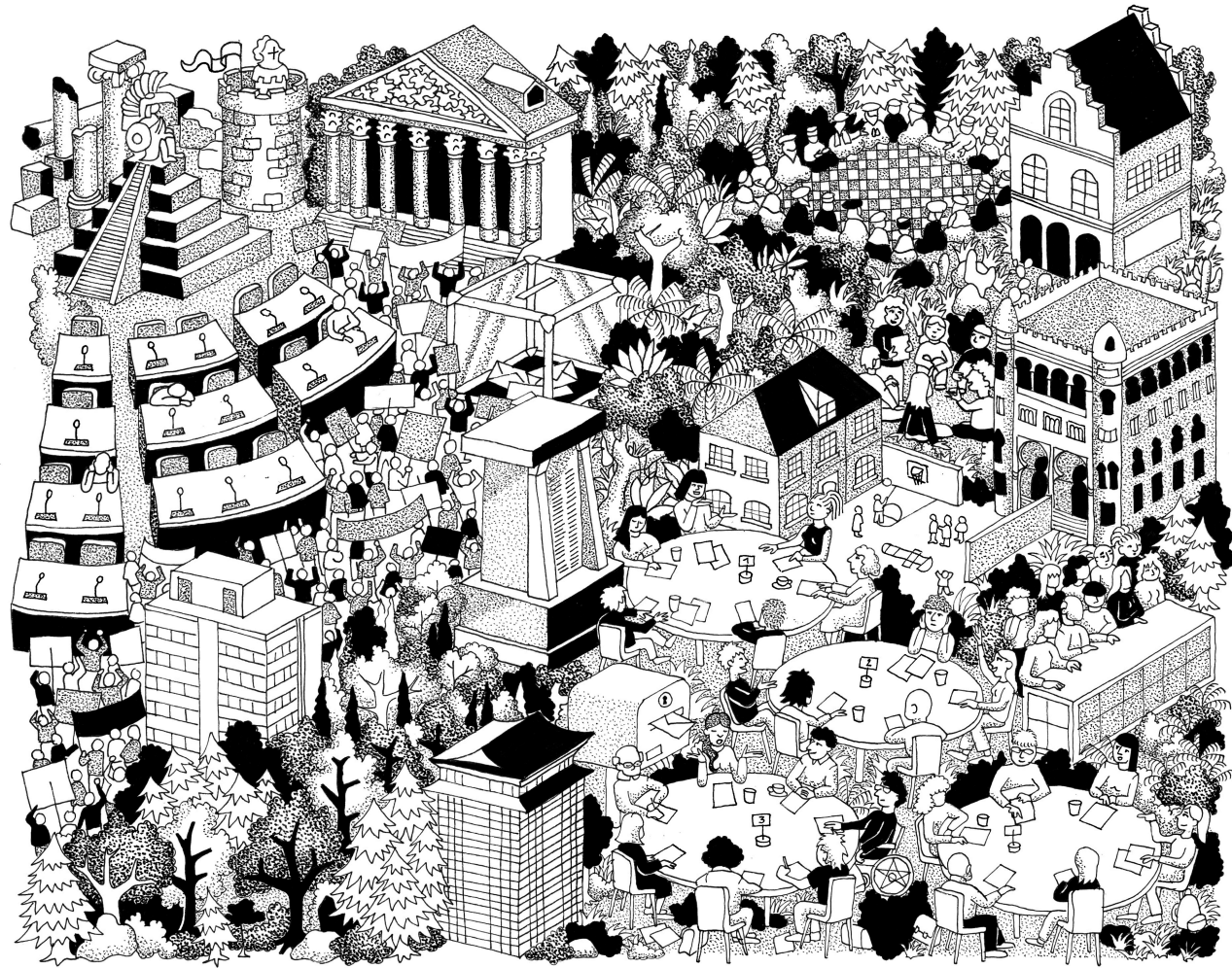
Are you an interested in learning more ?

Look out for our global Call for Proposals and join a cohort of cities and regions that will work with us and local practitioners to explore and pilot how these ideas could be implemented in your city.

Sign up for our newsletter to stay in the loop and be the first to know!



Only by tapping into the ideas, energy, and collective wisdom of everyone, we will be able to better address societal challenges, overcome polarisation, and strengthen trust.



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Assembling an Assembly Guide



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Democratic
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is Possible

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Questions

- What are some of the barriers that cities face in making this proposal a reality?
 - What is a pressing issue in your city that you could apply a Citizens' Assembly to tackle?
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