The Three Pillars of Community Assemblies

The three pillars of Community Assemblies which support supportive and empathetic interactions are radical inclusivity, active listening and trust.

A Community Assembly differs from a debate where one person is 'right' and the other is 'wrong', or from a typical discussion or conversation where people have a tendency to dominate with questions and interjections. Community Assemblies create an inclusive space in which each participant is respected and listened to without judgement, whilst sharing from the heart. Facilitated by a trained person, each participant listens to the ideas of others.

Radical Inclusivity

Effective assemblies achieve radical inclusivity, where the emphasis on all being heard and valued equally means no voices dominate and the collective wisdom of the assembly is harnessed. People can participate safely and openly without fear of judgement or ridicule. Radical inclusivity, therefore, also means being aware of potential barriers to engagement and working with those affected to enable their participation.

> *"Diversity in opinion will pay you back in the long run socially... if we don't fix this problem to start with we are simply going to replicate existing power structures."*
> - Eleanor Saitta, hacker and designer

Active Listening

Active listening is focusing on hearing someone all the way through before responding and overcoming the urge to start figuring out your response in your mind whilst someone is still talking. Assemblies recognise that no one person or group holds all the answers. It is through the collective wisdom of the crowd that we gain powerful intelligence about the issues being discussed. Active listening is also vital to enhance our capacity to empathise.

> *"It is the mark of an educated mind to be able to entertain a thought without accepting it."*

> - Aristotle

Trust

Once the system and process for assemblies has been agreed on, it is essential that all participants trust the process, trust the facilitators and trust the various working groups involved. Facilitators and assembly team enable this trust through sticking to the agreed process and ensuring that everyone follows the facilitators.

> *"I see the 15M assemblies and neighbourhood organising in retrospective and I'm amazed how it could work and most importantly all the trust that it meant."*
>
> - Carolina, a founder of 15M and takethesquare.net