

Designing Questions for People's Assemblies

What to discuss ?

This will depend entirely on the setting and framing of the Assembly. Assembly organisers will often choose the subjects for assemblies which are most relevant to furthering the aims of the group.

An assembly agenda could be:

- **a proposal**
 - e.g. we should support the local anti-fracking camp with a day of non-violent civil disobedience at the drilling site next Saturday
- **organising**
 - e.g. feedback and updates from the working groups
- **decision making**
 - e.g. shall we join with a larger group or create our own actions here in our town or do both?
- **or include a discussion point**
 - e.g. what will the effects of climate breakdown be on our community over the next three years?
 - Get more guidance on this type of question on the [Community Assembly pages](#)

Proposals

If the assembly is focusing on a proposal, the facilitators go for a 'temperature check' where the proposal is read out again (after being discussed in the breakout groups) and the assembly use their hands to show agreement or not.

If only a few people are showing agreement then the proposal is taken back and can either be adjusted to fit the ideas that have emerged from the points made in the assembly or is dropped altogether if it has no support or no way of being adjusted to meet the collective vision of the assembly. For instance, a proposal for putting all the group's time and resources into a local anti-fracking campaign may not be approved, but a popular point made from a breakout group that some of the time and resources be put into the local campaign could see the proposal returning

with that adjustment.

Facilitators check with the assembly note taker that the exact wording of the proposal is noted.

Decision Making

When a temperature check is used to decide between two or more options and there is no clear decision, then the Assembly will need to decide how to proceed. It may be a case of taking an actual counted vote, or returning the options to the breakout groups to find a solution that can accommodate the points raised or the differing wishes.

Assemblies during direct action or occupations

Depending on the size, duration and police presence, these assemblies could potentially be:

- A quick decision making People's Assembly ('the police have given us these options, what should we do?').

In a situation where an extremely rapid decision was required, such assemblies could even dispense with breakout groups, relying instead on facilitation towards the whole assembly, taking in immediate hand signal based reactions.

Alternatively, if the action or occupation were going on for a long period of time, they could be longer assemblies where people were able to discuss the key issues related to the action ('we are occupying the offices of a major extraction corporation, in what other ways can we disrupt the fossil fuel industry?').

- A **Community Assembly** as part of the outreach during an action or occupation, and can be designed to include members of the public, or include invitations to people from organisations or institutions that are being targeted or affected to come and participate. The subjects for discussion can relate directly to the target of the action, or can be more broad and inclusive such as 'how can we support each other in our communities in the face of climate breakdown?' or 'how can we help each other to face the grief that awareness brings?'

Assemblies provide us with a process by which to move and act with immense flexibility as a large group during times of action or occupation. They allow for immediate changes and decisions to be made on the spot that enable us to act and react with speed and flexibility, whilst still being able to make those decisions collectively, and in large numbers.



Photo by Ruth Davey