

Designing questions

What to discuss ?

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

An assembly agenda could be:

Organise - Set out the space for small group discussions or get people to sit in small groups

The Question - Present the question to be discussed, with a minimum of framing and expression of the purpose

Decision Making - Give time to the small groups to discuss the question and come up with an answer / solution / idea

Feedback and Act - Collate the results, define the general outcome with a seal of approval (wavy hands) and act on the results as appropriate

Questions

The wording or framing of a question in a People's Assembly, or any assembly process, is incredibly important.

If the assembly is focusing on a proposal presented to a group for discussion, i.e. do we support the local independent MP, the question could be open, enabling discussion on ideas of how to facilitate support, or closed, with a simple yes / no answer. In most instances, the primary factor regarding the breadth and depth of the discussion is time.

In a group meeting, using a People's Assembly process to make a decision can take as long as is needed and may go through one or two rounds of discussion to bring out a group decision. Therefore the question can be one that encourages discussion, such as; are we able to assist in campaigning for the local independent MP or what capacity do we have to support the local independent MP.

These types of questions should encourage a broader range of discussion in the small groups. The results from those discussions can then be presented back to the whole group and the results that are most often repeated can then be used to formulate actions that fit those results. If appropriate, a second round of discussion can be used to pick one of the main points, to determine what to do

to move the result forward or make suggestions on people, equipment or other facilities that may be necessary in carrying out the chosen decision.
