DIFFERENT ASSEMBLY MODELS FOR DIFFERENT SITUATIONS

In this summary table, we define *governing-power assemblies*, four forms of *movement assemblies* and three forms of *policy assemblies*, and delineate which kinds of situations each form of assembly is best suited to. We also indicate which phase of the policy process each assembly is best adapted to: *agenda-setting*, *policy formation*, *policy decisions*, *policy implementation*, or *monitoring and oversight*. (We discuss these five phases further in the "Institutionalization throughout the policy process" section of our "Assemblies as a Tool for Just Democracy" report.)

The table provides examples of each type of assembly. Our intention in offering definitions and examples is to provide an illustrative framework that helps people look at the wonderfully diverse range of assemblies that exist. In practice, many real-world assemblies do not fit neatly into the definitions we offer here, and many assemblies evolve, hybridize and move between categories over time. Our aim is not to define other people's work for them or shoehorn anyone's efforts into rigid categories. Rather, by offering these ideal types, we hope to offer a typology that draws out similarities and differences between various assemblies.

Type of assembly	Definition	Examples	Best suited to	Stages of intervention in the policy process and movement-building
Governing-power assembly	Connected through formal structures and/or informal working relationships to government and the policy process, and simultaneously hold space for member-based social-movement organizations to shape the assemblies and build independent power.	Jackson People's Assembly, Washington State Community Assemblies, recent Bronxwide Plan assemblies, Barcelona En Comú assemblies, Porto Alegre participatory budgeting assemblies	(1) Governance in specific sectors where there is a stark power imbalance in which a private power dominates a class of people, such as employers wielding power over workers, landlords over tenants or health care companies over patients and health care workers. (2) One or more identifiable communities in the political jurisdiction—such as people of color, poor and working class people, young people or rural residents—face pernicious disparities and injustices as a result of governance across multiple sectors. (3) Issues like climate action, Medicaid (public health insurance) expansion, abortion rights, gun control and paid sick leave where there's broad but passive public support, but powerful opponents block policy solutions and government action.	Best suited to the agenda-setting, decision-making and monitoring and enforcement phases of the policy process. Usually most successful after the community organization has built a baseline of trust, relationships and mobilization in their community as well as the capacity and know-how to be able to both engage with government on their own terms and to implement assemblies effectively.

Type of assembly	Definition	Examples	Best suited to	Stages of intervention in the policy process and movement-building
MOVEMENT ASSEMBLIES				
People's movement assembly	Organizing vehicles that are designed as a process and space through which one or more organizations' membership bases come together for political education, leadership development and community building toward collective action. This can influence government and policy from the outside, but movement assemblies do not have formal ties to government.	Many Southern Movement Assemblies	Movement and grassroots organizations working to grow their membership bases and deepen skills, knowledge, political education and leadership development towards independently shaping political agendas.	Work well to help community organizations build capacity, power and political clarity in order to be able to engage in any stage of the policy process through inside or outside strategies. Can be one-time or annual events.
Policy-platform assembly	Movement assemblies convened by one or more organizations for attendees to develop and ratify a joint policy platform.	ʻĀina Aloha Economic Futures, initial Bronxwide Plan assemblies, South Los Angeles Health and Human Rights Conferences	Multiple movement organizations want to build deeper strategic alignment and member-to-member relationships with each other and develop a joint policy vision and set of demands.	Best during the agenda-setting phase of policy-making, and when coalitions want to forge deeper strategic alignment.
Member-governance assembly	Ongoing, institutionalized part of some member-based organizations' and coalitions' internal governance process in which members are asked to elect leaders and vote on resolutions, policy platforms, and other internal questions.	Labor union conferences, political party conventions	Movement organizations want to democratize their governance decisions and hold staff and leaders accountable to the full member base.	Can be institutionalized as an annual event to ratify key decisions and exercise oversight and accountability over the yearly work of leadership and committees.
Shadow assemblies	Assemblies run by movement organizations to parallel and contrast with official closed-door, hierarchical government policy processes.	Global Assembly	When government officials refuse to commission an assembly and there is a need to delegitimize the official governance process and build public support behind more participatory modes of governance.	Shadow assemblies parallel any stages of the policy process that organizers wish to draw contrasts with.

Type of assembly	Definition	Examples	Best suited to	Stages of intervention in the policy process and movement-building
POLICY ASSEMBLIES				
One-time civic assembly	One-time civic assemblies are lottery-selected assemblies convened to provide input on a single policy question, and then disbanded. They almost always hold advisory power, with final decisions made by elected officials or voters.	Petaluma Fairgrounds Advisory Panel, Deschutes Civic Assembly on Youth Homelessness, Fort Collins' Hughes Civic Assembly, Irish Citizens' Assembly, most climate assemblies	Policy issues that are deadlocked by competing values, for which there is no simple binary choice and there is a need to build public legitimacy behind the ultimate policy decision.	Typically most useful during the agenda-setting and policy formation phases of the policy-making process, and on issues where power imbalances aren't a major problem.
Standing civic assembly	Standing civic assemblies are institutionalized annual lottery-selected assemblies that are officially recognized by the government as playing an ongoing role in public governance, usually to identify priority issues for legislators or public agencies, to put proposed policies in front of legislators or voters or to conduct oversight and monitoring of government.	Brussels Deliberative Committee, East Belgium Citizens' Council and Citizens' Assembly, Paris Citizens' Assembly	Introducing regular broad-based public priorities, input and oversight into the annual legislative cycle.	Useful across all five stages of the policy process, particularly to help set the public agenda, formulate policies and monitor implementation, in policy areas in which most things are already working pretty well.
Constituent assembly	An assembly that is open to all residents or stakeholders of a defined geographic area, and at which attendees are authorized to make one or more policy or procedural decisions.	Participatory budgeting assemblies, New England town meetings, Wisconsin Conservation Congress county assemblies	Small jurisdictions like towns or neighborhoods, but only if participation is not dominated by any identity or interest group.	One of the few forms of assemblies authorized to make direct policy decisions, but can also be employed in agenda-setting, policy formation and monitoring and design.