

Mini-Public Community Councils? Lessons from Vancouver

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OUTLINE

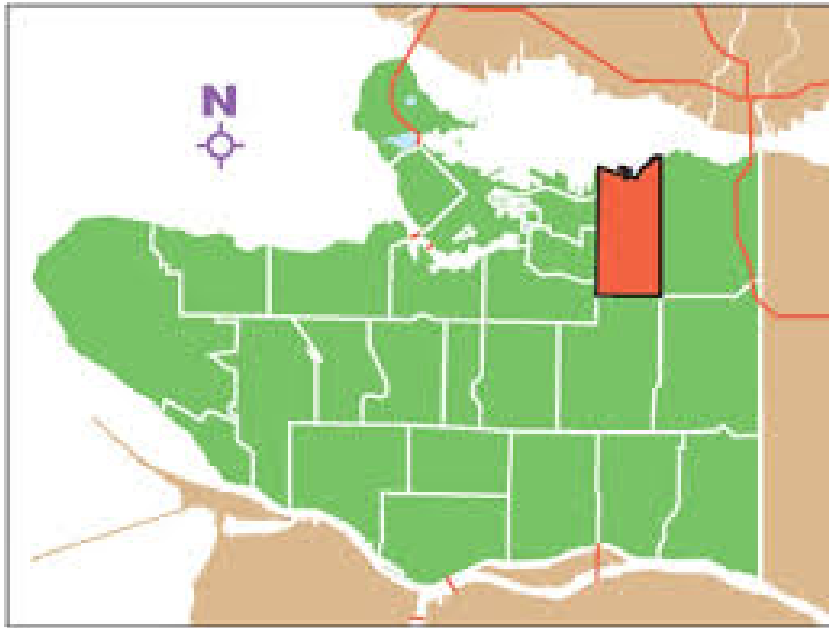
1. Democratic deficits & gridlock

2. The Grandview-Woodland Citizens' Assembly (GWCA)

3. Lessons from the GWCA

4. Mini-public community councils?

INCLUSION DEFICIT: REPRESENTATION



1. Democratic deficits
& gridlock

2. The GWCA

3. Lessons from the GWCA

4. Mini-public community councils?





INCLUSION DEFICIT: PARTICIPATION

SELF-SELECTION

Over-representation of
empowered social
groups

Danger of falling
capture to special
interests (NIMBYism)



POLITICAL GRIDLOCK – HOW TO MOVE FORWARD?



GRANDVIEW-WOODLAND CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY



DELIBERATIVE MINI-PUBLICS

DESIGN FEATURES

Random (random stratified) selection

Learn & listen, deliberate, draft proposals

Advisory role

DELIBERATIVE MINI-PUBLICS

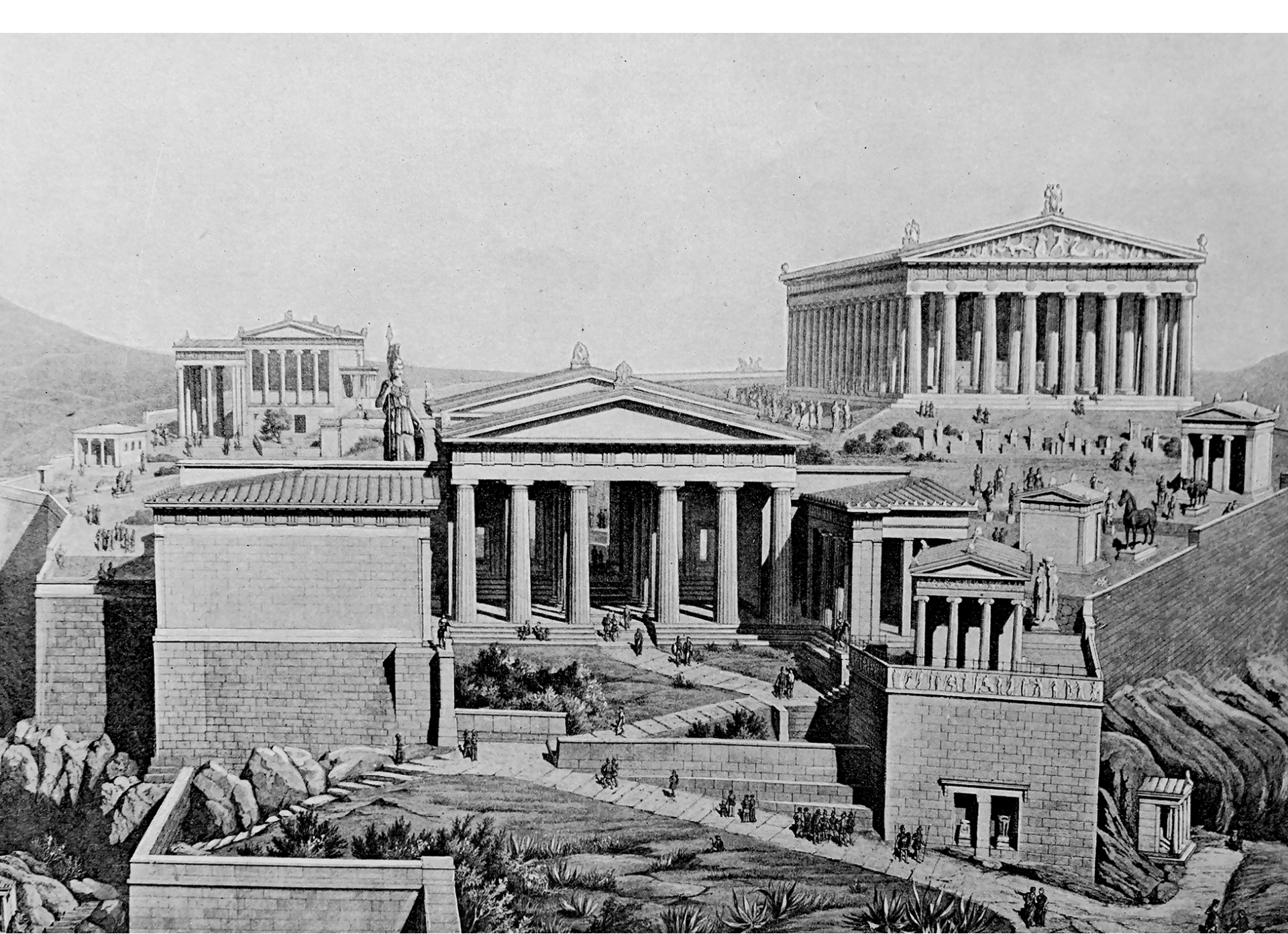
EXAMPLES

BC & Ontario Citizens' Assemblies on Electoral Reform

Oregon Citizens' Initiative Review Panels (CIRs)

Danish Consensus Conferences

Grandview-Woodland Citizens' Assembly



WHY RANDOM SELECTION

Prevent powerful from dominating

Inclusion/ diversity

Less extreme views/ less polarized

More learning & opinion change



MINIPUBLICS FOR MUNICIPAL PLANNING: LESSONS FROM GWCA

What worked?

Lessons for future practitioners and policy-makers?



WHAT WORKED?

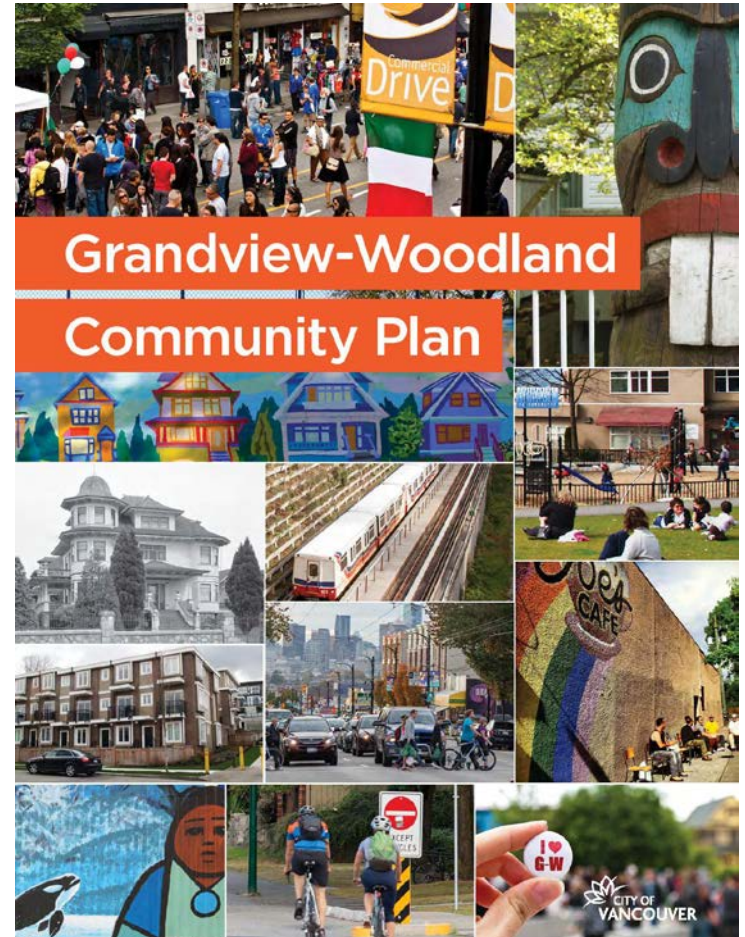
Moved policy-making past gridlock

Produced actionable plan

Policy: Compromise on density

Repaired communication channels,
renewed neighbourhood faith

Vision Vancouver (governing party) re-
elected



WHAT WORKED?

Benefits of random selection

More inclusive, diverse group

Less extreme views, less polarized

Did not fall capture to special interests

Learning and opinion change, compromise

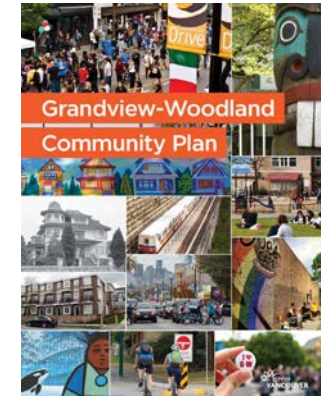
A CAUTIONARY TALE?

Do not ignore local concerns!



A CAUTIONARY TALE?

The problem of complexity



“Citizens assemblies work best with a **specific mandate**. It [The GWCA] was only successful because we had **something to start from**. ”

–Rachel Magnusson, Chair of the GWCA

WHY CONSIDER A MINI-PUBLIC MODEL?



WHY CONSIDER A MINI-PUBLIC MODEL?

Random selection:

Benefits over **SELF-SELECTING** residents

Benefits over **ELECTING** residents

WHAT SHOULD MINI-PUBLIC COMMUNITY COUNCILS LOOK LIKE?

DESIGN FEATURES

Random (random stratified)
selection

Basic supports for
participating, learning,
listening, being heard

Advisory role

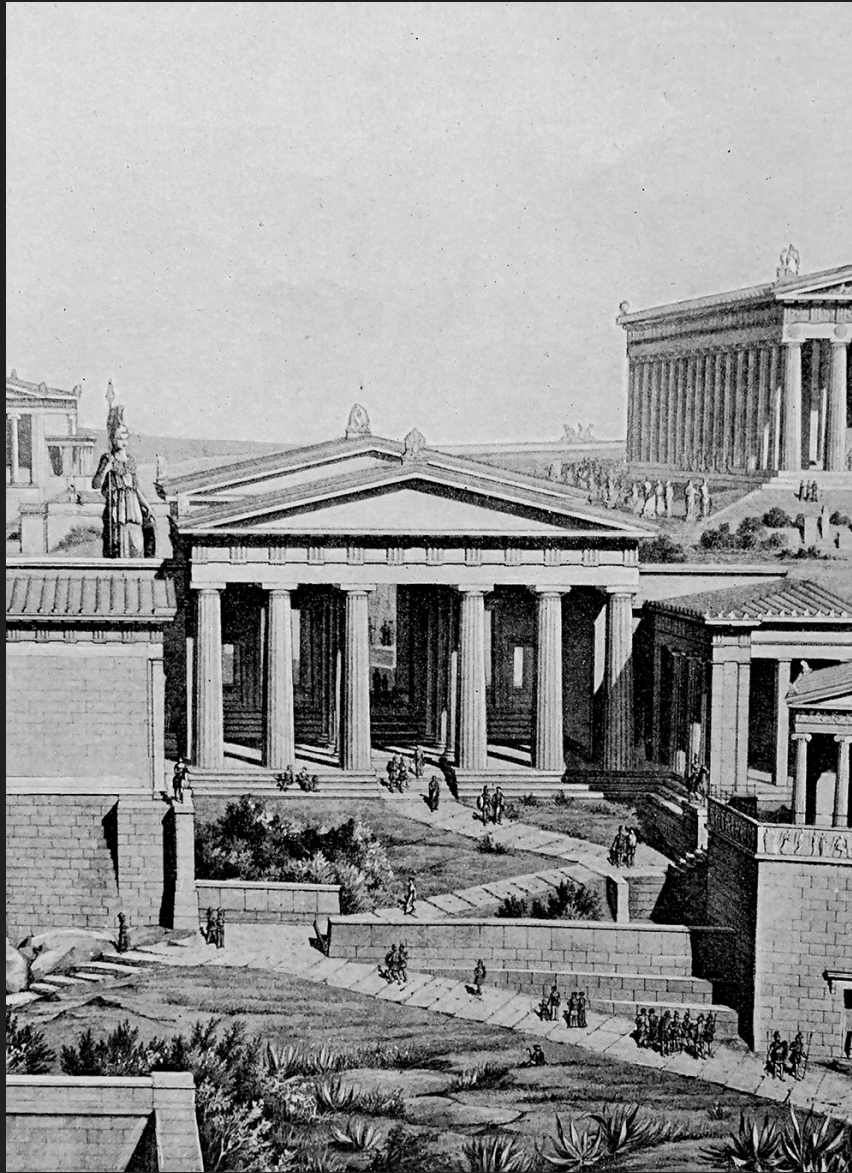
City-wide mini-publics to set agenda for contentious issues?

DETAILS

- Lifetime limits on participation
- Gender, age, cultural (?),
homeowner/ rental representation

- Transport & childcare, access to
experts
- Local media coverage

- Primarily review council proposals
- Can make recommendations



EXTRA SLIDES

A CAUTIONARY TALE?

The problem of patchwork policies

“If, as a city we had this discussion [about density], some of these problems could have been avoided. There were assumptions built into the 30-year plan that were out of line with the public.”

—Andrea Reimer, City Councillor (Vision Vancouver)

WHY CONSIDER A MINI-PUBLIC MODEL?

Random selection: Benefits over **self-selecting** residents

More inclusive, diverse group

Less extreme views, less polarized

Did not fall capture to special interests

Learning and opinion change, compromise

WHY CONSIDER A MINI-PUBLIC MODEL?

Random selection: Benefits over **electing** residents

Advisory role

Does not challenge authority of elected city council