





DEMOCRATIC FUTURES  
RESEARCH CENTRE

- Formerly known as VUB POLI
- 50 brilliant heads
  - study contemporary democratic challenges
  - explore innovative solutions to improve democratic processes, making plans for a new kind of thing



***“How to institutionalize permanent  
citizens’ assemblies?”***

***Lecture 2***

Francqui Chair 2024-2025

VUB

14 March 2025

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## *Permanent citizens' assembly*

“A permanent assembly is a participatory mechanism that involves one or more citizens' assemblies in political decision-making on a continuous or repeated basis. The aim of these assemblies is to formulate recommendations on one or more public issues following an informed and reasoned exchange between citizens”

Niessen, C. & Reuchamps, M. (2022). Assemblée permanente. In G. Petit, L. Blondiaux, I. Casillo, J.-M. Fourniau, G. Gourgues, S. Hayat, R. Lefebvre, S. Rui, S. Wojcik, & J. Zetlaoui-Léger (Éds.), Dictionnaire critique et interdisciplinaire de la Participation, DicoPart (2ème édition). GIS Démocratie et Participation.

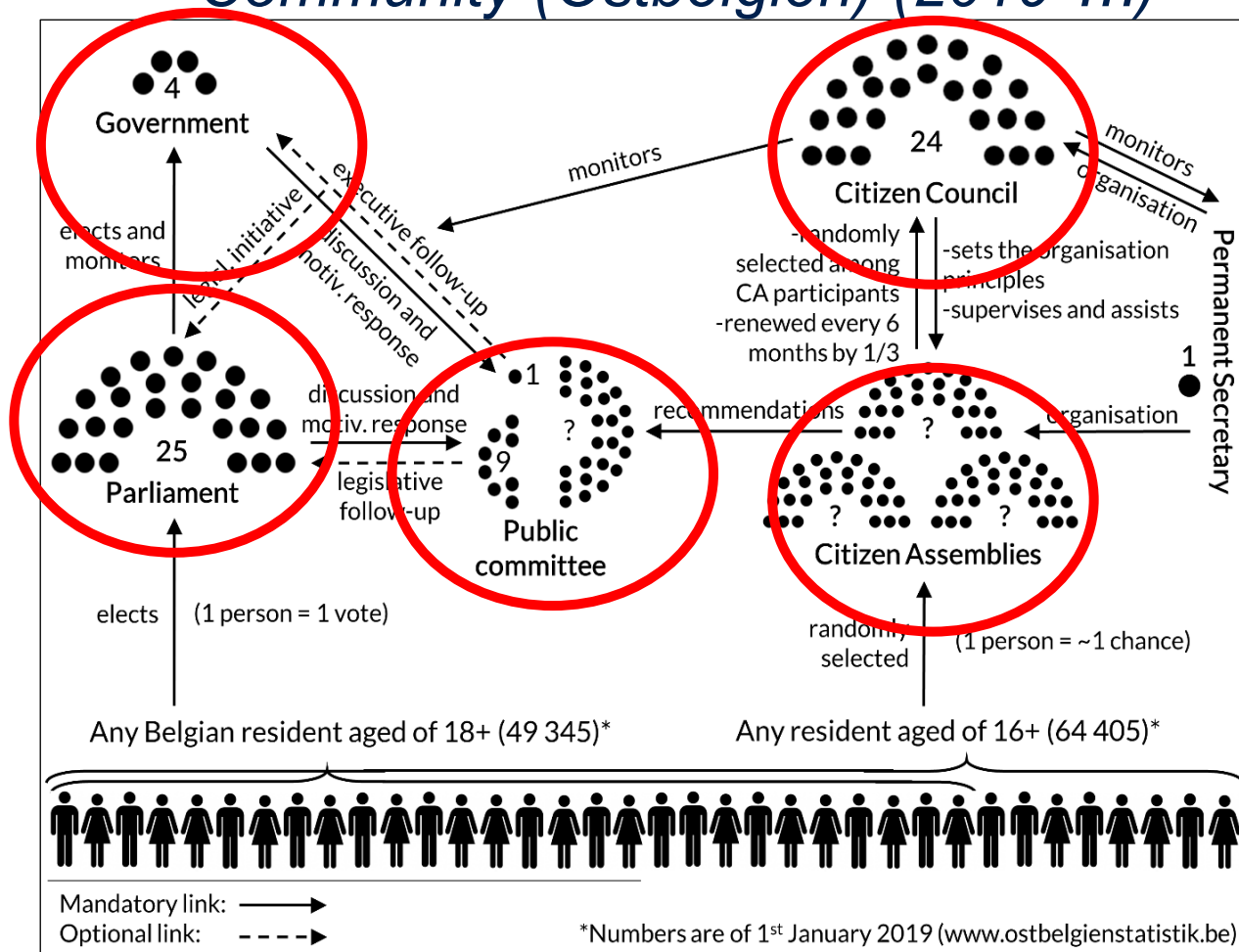
<https://www.dicopart.fr/assemblee-permanente-2022>

## *Case 1*

- Phone call from the Minister-President of the Government and the President of the Parliament of the German-speaking community
  - a Second Chamber ('a Senate')
  - made of randomly selected citizens
  - willing to set an annual budget
  - 'Before it is too late'
- What do you tell them?



## The permanent citizens' dialogue in the German-speaking Community (Ostbelgien) (2019-...)

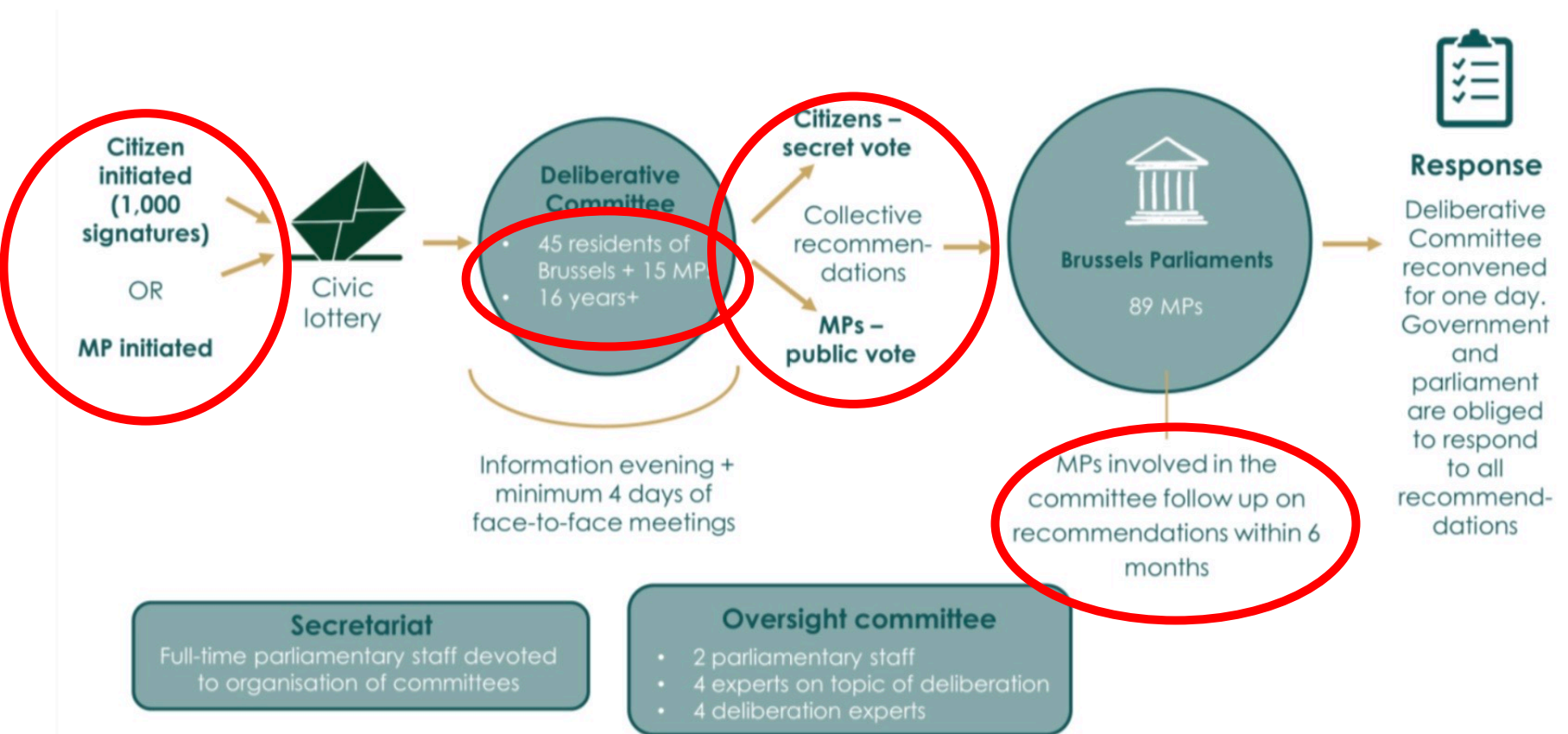


Niessen, C., & Reuchamps, M. (2020). Institutionalising Citizen Deliberation in Parliament: The Permanent Citizens' Dialogue in the German-speaking Community of Belgium. *Parliamentary affairs*.

## *Case 2*

- Meeting with a green federal MP during the 2014-2019 legislature
  - inspired by the Irish constitutional convention
  - made of both randomly selected citizens
  - and MPs
  - within parliament to ensure an institutional plug-in
  - given the Belgian constitutional framework
- What do you tell him?

Figure 6. Deliberative committees



Source: Author's own creation based on data available about how the model works.

*How to institutionalize permanent citizens' assemblies?"*

**Building Deliberative Institutions:**

**The Institutionalization of Citizen Assemblies in two Belgian  
Cases**

Didier Caluwaerts (VUB), Christoph Niessen (UA) & Min Reuchamps (UCLouvain)

\*\*\* Draft – do not cite without permission \*\*\*

**Table 1.** Dimensions of institutionalization

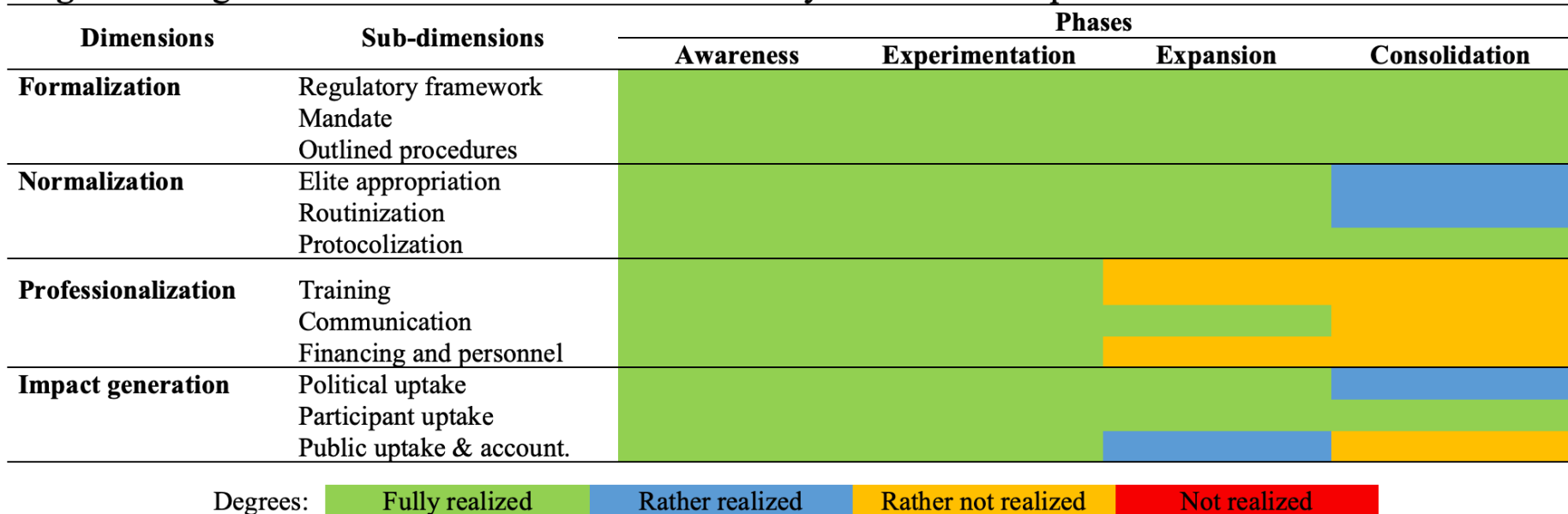
| <b>Dimension</b>    | <b>Operationalization</b>  |
|---------------------|--|
| Formalization       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Presence of legal/regulatory framework</li> <li>- Clear mandate for CAs (objectives, scope...)</li> <li>- Procedures outlined (selection, facilitation...)</li> </ul>   |
| Normalization       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- CAs are appropriated by policymakers</li> <li>- CAs are routinized in policymaking               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CAs are frequently or periodically used</li> <li>CAs procedures are archived</li> <li>CAs are systematically evaluated</li> </ul> </li> <li>- CAs are protocolized               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CAs procedures are regularly updated and increasingly standardized</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |
| Professionalization | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Policymakers are regularly trained about CAs</li> <li>- Participants are regularly trained about CAs</li> <li>- CAs establish linkage with the public and policymakers through formal communication channels</li> <li>- Sufficient resources (personnel, finances...) are allocated to support CAs</li> </ul>   |
| Impact generation   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- CAs have political uptake/generate impact.</li> <li>- CAs have established accountability mechanisms.</li> </ul>  |

**Figure 1.** Degrees of institutionalization of the BDC by dimension and phase

| Dimensions                 | Sub-dimensions              | Phases         |                     |           |                     |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------|---------------------|-----------|---------------------|
|                            |                             | Awareness      | Experimentation     | Expansion | Consolidation       |
| <b>Formalization</b>       | Regulatory framework        | Fully realized | Rather realized     |           | Fully realized      |
|                            | Mandate Outlined procedures |                | Rather not realized |           | Fully realized      |
| <b>Normalization</b>       | Elite appropriation         | Fully realized | Rather not realized |           | Fully realized      |
|                            | Routinization               |                | Rather not realized |           | Fully realized      |
|                            | Protocolization             |                | Rather not realized |           | Fully realized      |
| <b>Professionalization</b> | Training                    | Fully realized | Rather realized     |           | Fully realized      |
|                            | Communication               |                | Rather realized     |           | Fully realized      |
| <b>Impact generation</b>   | Financing and personnel     | Fully realized | Rather not realized |           | Rather realized     |
|                            | Political uptake            |                | Rather not realized |           | Rather not realized |
|                            | Participant uptake          |                | Rather not realized |           | Rather realized     |
|                            | Public uptake & account.    |                | Rather not realized |           | Rather realized     |

Degree: Fully realized Rather realized Rather not realized Not realized

**Figure 2.** Degrees of institutionalization of the PCD by dimension and phase



**What do you  
think?**