

A CALL FOR HUMBLE GOVERNMENTS – how to overcome political gridlock in liberal democracies

The pandemic has shown that **for collective problems, citizens turn to governments for solutions**. Simultaneously, the pandemic has strained administrations, challenged budgets, and created a fertile ground for political polarization. With an economic recession looming, rising unemployment, and an urgent environmental crisis, governments are in dire need of new approaches to problem-solving. **Instead of being polarized, governments need to learn how to collaborate.**

Demos Helsinki proposes an approach to democratic governance that aims to restore governments' capacity to solve collective problems in times of political polarization. We call this approach **Humble Governance**.

Humble Governance is a tested model that:

- 1 creates incentives for democratic collaboration
- 2 enables governments to rebuild political and societal trust
- 3 makes it possible to realize ambitious reforms despite uncertainty and polarization.

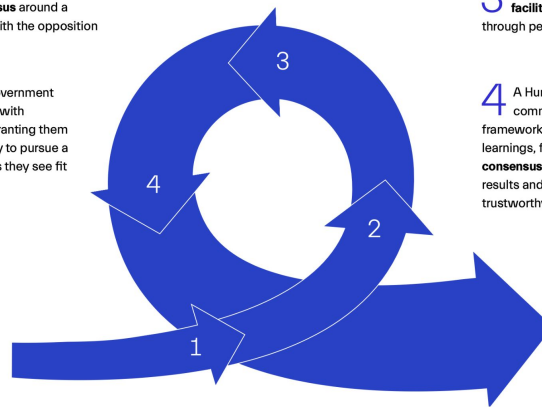
How does it work?

1 A Humble Government strikes a **thin consensus** around a framework goal with the opposition

2 A Humble Government **collaborates** with stakeholders by granting them with the autonomy to pursue a framework goal as they see fit

3 A Humble Government **facilitates collective learning** through peer-learning activities

4 A Humble Government commits to revising its framework goals based on the learnings, fostering a **thicker consensus** as the process provides results and actors prove to be trustworthy



Humble Governance builds upon Prof. Charles Sabel's Experimentalist Governance theory, which looks at experimentalism not only as the use of policy experiments but also as a wider governance model. **Several governments have already employed a humble approach to create sustainable solutions to collective problems.** Based on the principles of Humble Governance;

FINLAND built its renowned educational system

CALIFORNIA accelerated innovations in the car industry while tightening emissions standards

MONTREAL created the Montreal Protocol that protects the ozone layer

[Fore more information, please contact:](#)

João Sigora

Senior Consultant, Demos Helsinki

joao.sigora@demoshelsinki.fi

Mikko Annala

Governance Innovation Lead, Demos Helsinki

mikko.annala@demoshelsinki.fi

[For media inquiries, please contact:](#)

Angeliki Vourdaki

Communications, Demos Helsinki

angeliki.vourdaki@demoshelsinki.fi

Matt Mitchell

Communications, Demos Helsinki

matthew.mitchell@demoshelsinki.fi

[May 2021](#)

[About Demos Helsinki](#)

Demos Helsinki is a globally operating, independent think tank. We conduct research, offer consultancy services, and re-imagine and experiment futures with a global alliance, Untitled. Demos Helsinki has been built on the idea that change can only happen together. That is why we carry out consultancy and research projects with hundreds of partners around the world. Unlike many think tanks, we are independent and 100% project-funded, without any political affiliations or external baseline funding.