

A Call For Humble Governments

How to overcome political gridlock
in liberal democracies

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In times of crisis, the world turns to governments for solutions. In this paper, Demos Helsinki presents an approach to democratic governance that enables ambitious societal reforms in the face of collective challenges. With the climate crisis, rapid technological advancements, ageing populations, and more wicked problems at our doorstep, liberal democracies must find new ways of building new solutions. The humble governance approach proposes a process for building consensus despite polarization, and for finding workable solutions, despite complexity. This paper would not be possible without the support of and the academic foundation set by Prof. Charles Sabel, Columbia Law School.

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ABOUT DEMOS HELSINKI

Demos Helsinki is a globally operating, independent think tank. We conduct research, offer consultancy services, and reimagine 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.

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Dear Head of State,

The pandemic has shown that, when it comes to collective problems, citizens turn to governments for solutions. Simultaneously, the pandemic has strained your administration, challenged your budget, 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 drifting towards gridlock, our decision-makers need to learn how to collaborate.

In this paper we propose an approach to democratic governance that aims to restore governments' capacity to solve collective problems in times of uncertainty. We call this approach **Humble Governance**. The approach starts with a simple assumption with many implications: to overcome today's political stalemate, governments need to learn how to be humble.

Several governments have already employed a humble approach to create sustainable solutions to substantial problems. Based on the principles presented in this paper;

- **Finland** built its renowned education system;
- **The State of California** accelerated the development of innovations in the car industry, while tightening standards for vehicle emissions; and
- **The Montreal Protocol** protects the ozone layer.

In the pages that follow, we outline four recommendations for your consideration;

1 Together with your cabinet, identify a set of prioritized societal challenges that urgently need to be tackled. Build broad parliamentary commitment to **broad framework goals** for how to address these challenges.

2 **Devolve problem-solving to local-level actors** with first-hand knowledge of the challenge at hand, and establish points of knowledge-accumulation within government.

3 Instead of conventional bottom-up reporting, **establish peer-learning processes** that secure continuous learning and feedback loops between the local-level actors and the government.

4 **Commit to continuous revision** of the framework goals based on learnings from the local level.

Through these steps, your government will be better equipped to deal with present and future societal challenges. These steps are described in further detail in this paper.

Leveraging humility to cultivate political and societal trust will be key to navigating the tumultuous century ahead of us. We at Demos Helsinki are more than happy to support you in advancing this cause.

Sincerely,
The Governance Innovation team, Demos Helsinki

1. Liberal Democracy in the 21st Century

Liberal democracies are facing unprecedented societal challenges. A global pandemic, ecological crises, technological disruption, and tectonic shifts in the world economy pose threats to the stability of democracies. To retain legitimacy, liberal democracies need to transform 20th century practices to address the problems of today and beyond.

As the case of the pandemic showed, the more urgent and demanding the challenge, the more liberal democracies struggle to deliver solutions that are sustainable in the long-term. Outside their borders, liberal democracies are being confronted by the rise of authoritarian geopolitical superpowers. Domestically, democracies are struggling with political hyper-polarization that is making political systems incapable of agreeing on sustainable paths forward.

Liberal democracy thrives through diverse perspectives. At its core, democracy is constantly renewing itself to meet the needs of an ever-changing social and political context. Yet, today's democratic governments find themselves at a critical juncture. They have to decide how to resolve the political gridlocks caused by polarization, while adjusting to an ever-evolving, complex, and uncertain operating environment. This paper provides a practical guide on how to do so.

Humble Governance is a tested approach that creates incentives for democratic collaboration, thus giving policymakers the space to learn. It offers a concrete process that enables governments to rebuild political and societal trust despite political disagreement. It is a method to enact and realize ambitious reforms under current conditions.



2. Towards Humble Government

A major problem caused by political hyper-polarization is political stalemate.

The governments most exposed to the dangers of gridlock are the ones that claim to be all knowing and always right. In gridlock, governments are unable to successfully implement reforms as they are loudly contested, and their policies are highly disputed. This leads to a vicious cycle of:

1 The inability to pursue successful reforms. Governments that claim to always be right cannot build solutions in collaboration with an opposition with which they disagree; neither can they ensure their support.

2 Disincentives to collaboration. With political pressures soaring, governments that claim to be all knowing work alone. This exposes them to higher risks of criticism and incentivizes the opposition to bet against the Government instead of working with it.

3 Short-lived solutions to long-term problems. As these governments are seldom able to pass reforms that last longer than their term of office, impact ends with each term, and so do solutions to collective, long-term problems.

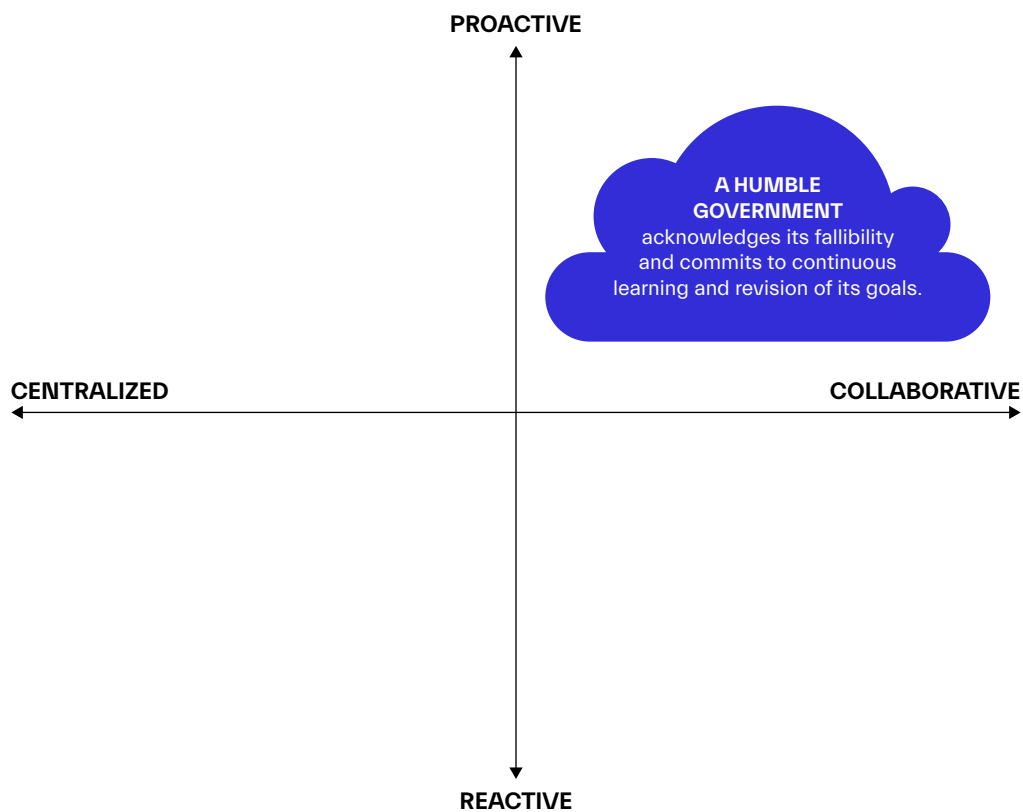
While entrenched in our political cultures, a Government's pretense of infallibility hinders its capacity to engage in effective long-term problem-solving. This incapacity not only makes our societies vulnerable to external threats, but also fuels public distrust in democratic institutions. This does not have to be the case. Governments can step out of a political gridlock by striving towards broad collaboration despite divergent views, and thus building alignment by **learning to become humble**.

Humility entails both a willingness to listen to different opinions, and a capacity to review one's own action in light of new insights. Yet, the Humble Government is not a weak one. Rather, it is a Government that legitimizes its leadership by cultivating relationships and trust amongst political and societal stakeholders, particularly with those with different perspectives. In doing so, it also enables long-term action, making its policies more resilient.

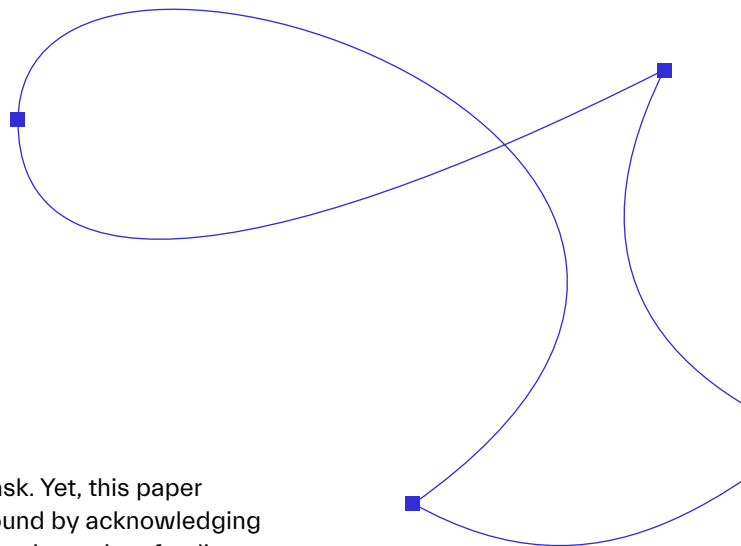
FALLACIES OF THE CONVENTIONAL FORMS OF GOVERNANCE	PROMISES OF THE HUMBLE GOVERNMENT
1 Claiming to always be right	Acknowledgement of the government's fallibility
2 Claiming to be all knowing	Commitment to collaboration and continuous learning
3 Short-termism in policy-making	Building policies that outlive mandate periods

The Humble Governance approach arose from the need to find a way out of political gridlock. Instead of asking for consensus, humility provides new means to continuously nurture consensus through policy-making processes. The approach described in the following chapter shows in detail how to move from the fallacies of the conventional forms of governance to the promises of the Humble Government.

Figure 1: A humble government's ability to acknowledge its fallibility allows it to be collaborative and proactive, instead of working in a centralized and reactive manner



3. Consensus Building through Humility



Bringing humility to the core of government is no easy task. Yet, this paper suggests that one way out of political gridlock can be found by acknowledging the prevailing uncertainty. If uncertainty is seen as the starting point of policy-making, a government's processes for setting and revising political goals must be redesigned.

The Humble Governance approach stems from the Steering 2020-project, which was commissioned by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) of Finland. The government of Finland has been a frontrunner in re-thinking policy-making to improve public governance. Through the Steering 2020 project¹, the PMO sought to evaluate current practices in its steering system, and to create novel approaches to public governance.

For this project, Demos Helsinki collaborated with Professor Charles F. Sabel, leveraging his Experimentalist Governance theory², which looks at experimentalism not only as the use of policy experiments, but more broadly as a form of governance that is based on continuous iteration and learning. Based on insights drawn from professor Sabel's analysis of real-life case studies ranging from the Finnish education system to international climate governance, a concrete 4-step operational approach was developed.

First, Humble Governance allows for problem-solving to be initiated as soon as decision-makers have reached a thin consensus around a framework goal. A framework goal is an agreement on a problem formulation, a shared direction for change, and a vision of success – but it leaves the means for achieving the goal open for further inquiry, allowing for the exploration of different approaches and the discovery of vital new information.

Second, Humble Governance gives societal stakeholders the autonomy to pursue these goals based on their proximity and knowledge of the topic. Through this devolved and accountable autonomy for problem-solving, Humble Governance aims to engage the stakeholders with first-hand experience of the issue at stake by providing them with the mandate and—crucially—the incentives to develop solutions autonomously.

¹ You can read more about the project and Demos Helsinki's publication here: <https://tietokayttoon.fi/en/-/review-addressing-the-most-complex-problems-of-the-21st-century-demands-a-humble-approach-to-policy-making>

² The notion of humble policy-making is defined and operationalised based on Professor Charles Sabel's experimentalist governance theory. See for example Sabel et al. (2011) & Sabel, C., O'Donnell, R. & O'Connell, L. (2015)

Third, Humble Governance transforms traditional reporting by utilizing peer learning as a way to facilitate collective problem-solving processes.

In exchange for autonomy, the stakeholders commit to participation in peer-learning activities, in which comparable approaches are contrasted to showcase their respective strengths and weaknesses, and to ensure knowledge accumulation.

Fourth, Humble Governance centers iterative revision of framework goals.

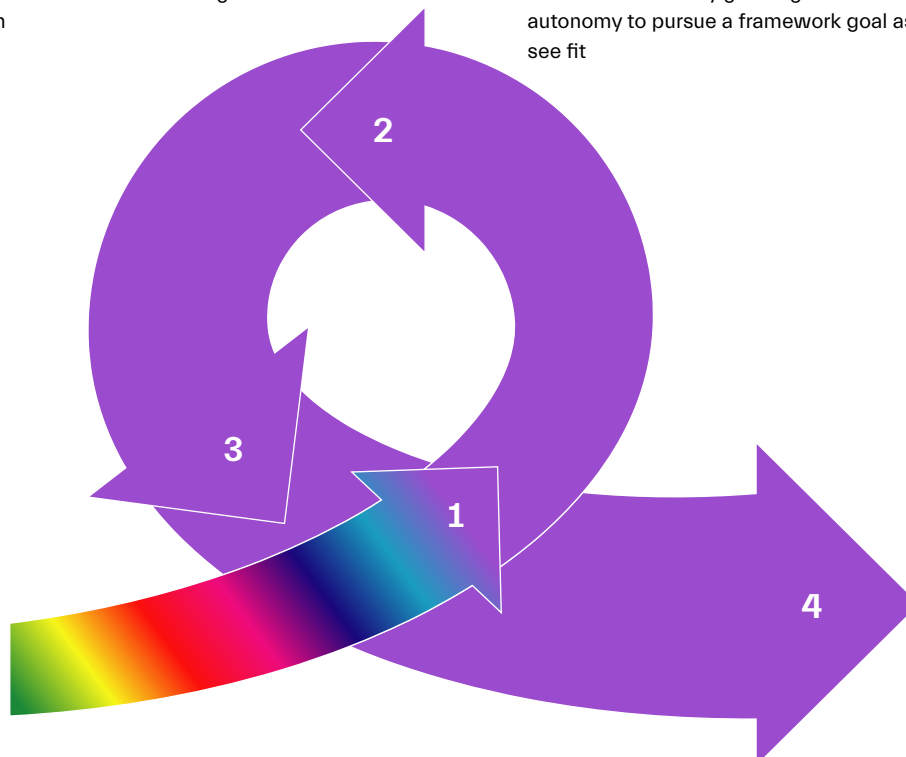
As policy-making processes yield results and a shared understanding of a challenge is achieved, consensus around the framework goal will be secured through re-adjustment and specification.

As a result, instead of requiring high levels of trust and thick consensus, the Humble Governance approach actively builds trust and consensus as byproducts of the policy-making process. This is what makes it so applicable to contexts that are characterized by uncertainty and gridlock.

Figure 2: Humble Governance as a process for nurturing consensus

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

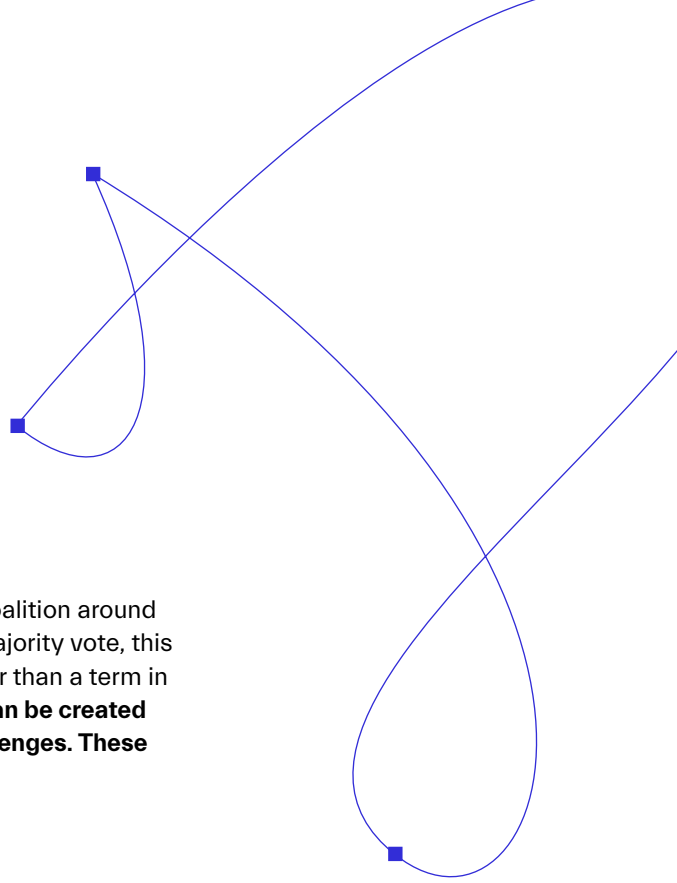
2 A Humble Government **collaborates** with stakeholders by granting them with the autonomy to pursue a framework goal as they see fit



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

Step 1: Thin Consensus Around Broad Framework Goals



In a polarized political climate, it is not easy to build a wide coalition around a shared goal. While it is tempting to try to secure a simple majority vote, this majority is often too narrow to create solutions that last longer than a term in office. **However, institutional and procedural arrangements can be created to foster societal and political consensus around pivotal challenges. These include:**

- 1** a commitment to strategic, rather than detail-oriented, political steering,
- 2** new forms of collaboration between the opposition and the government, and
- 3** experimentation with new forms of deliberative processes.

First, when addressing complex societal problems, governments should commit to strategic political steering by agreeing upon broad framework goals, rather than striving for detailed agreements of how to reach these goals.

Strategic steering means that decision-makers fix broad framework goals that consist of 1) a shared problem statement, 2) a shared direction for change, and 3) a shared understanding of what success looks like. The Humble approach to Governance departs from the assumption that, when decision-makers work on complex issues, they cannot and should not provide definite answers on how to solve them. Rather, they should commit to setting the overarching direction and leave the definition of the best means for pursuing it open for collaborative problem-solving. To do so, governments must secure thin consensus at the start of a mandate both at the political and the societal level.

At the political level, securing a thin consensus requires pathways to government-opposition collaboration. We acknowledge that the feasibility of such collaboration will vary across countries according to the ideological distance between the parties involved. Yet, humble governments can develop institutional and procedural arrangements that incentivize cross-political dialogue and lead to joint efforts to solve shared problems. Examples range from issue-based parliamentary committees that serve as fora for open discussion, to ad hoc hearings of the Government to foster cross-party information exchange. Political strangers can build the capacity to collaborate if there is some substantial overlap in their broad goals and a willingness to respond forthrightly to the outcome of joint investigations of different solutions.

At the societal level, securing a thin consensus requires public spaces for deliberation. Citizens' direct involvement in deliberative processes holds

the potential to enrich representative bodies with diversity of perspectives; increased legitimacy; accountability; and shared ownership of political decisions. At the national scale, participation can be accomplished by for example complementing parliamentary hearings with citizens' assemblies. At the local levels of government, citizens can be invited to deliberate in fora like town hall meetings or through digital platforms. Care should be taken to connect these deliberative assemblies with citizen participation in the problem-solving efforts to be described next.

Box 1: Policy recommendations for moving towards Humble Governance

WAYS FORWARD	EXAMPLE: CARBON NEUTRALITY TARGETS
<p>1 Committing to strategic political steering rather than detailed agreements.</p> <p>This can be done by creating a thin consensus around</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) a problem statement, 2) a shared direction, and 3) a vision of what success looks like. 	<p>Throughout the negotiations for the government formation, a narrow number of strategic issues are agreed upon with the broadest coalition possible.</p> <p>Parties outside of the government coalition are given the opportunity to showcase their commitment to one or more of these selected issues.</p> <p>As a result of the negotiations, carbon neutrality is reported as one of the strategic goals of this mandate period. The coalition supporting this agrees upon three things:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) A problem statement, stating that climate change is a severe challenge that must be addressed through the process of humble governance 2) That curbing carbon emissions is a shared direction 3) A decrease in CO2 emissions as a way of measuring success
<p>2 Gathering political collaboration across the government and the opposition.</p> <p>This can be done for example by establishing issue-based, cross-party parliamentary committees being appointed to oversee the humble policy-making processes related to each framework goal.</p>	<p>A Carbon Neutrality Parliamentary Committee is established. The committee provides a forum for cross-party discussion and deliberation.</p> <p>Further, the committee has the responsibility to guarantee oversight of the humble problem-solving processes related to carbon neutrality.</p>
<p>3 Developing societal consensus by providing citizens with new fora for public deliberation.</p> <p>This can be done for example by experimenting with citizens' assemblies.</p>	<p>Citizens' engagement in setting and revising the framework goals is realized through two processes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) A Carbon Neutrality Citizens' Assembly where experts share knowledge on the carbon neutrality targets and citizens have the chance to deliberate on the government's framework goal; and 2) Hearings of representatives from the Climate Citizens' Assembly organized by the Carbon Neutrality parliamentary committee.

Step 2: Devolved Problem-Solving

Once broad framework goals have been agreed upon, accountable autonomy for problem-solving should be devolved to actors with first-hand knowledge of the problem addressed. Depending on the policy issue, these actors can be, for example, street-level bureaucrats who with their respective managers are responsible for public service delivery, or companies whose behavior the Government wishes to regulate. **To successfully devolve problem-solving autonomy to key stakeholders, the Government should, in continuing consultation with line agencies:**

- 1 establish a robust process for decision-making when tensions or disputes arise
- 2 make the framework goal actionable by issuing a launch plan that divides the goal into tangible sub-issues that are linked to an initial set of key stakeholders, and
- 3 design intelligent incentives to prompt stakeholder collaboration.

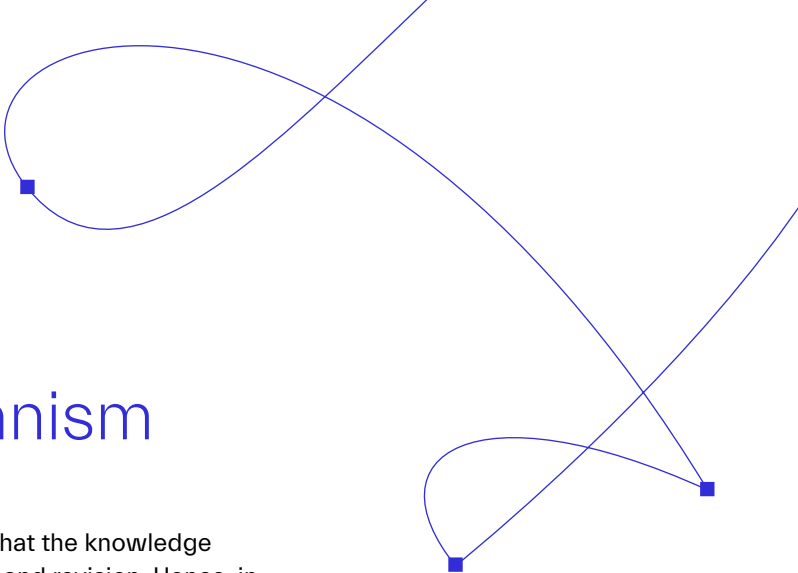
First, a process for making decisions and resolving tensions needs to be established. While the organization of a humble problem-solving process will vary greatly depending on the context and the policy-issue at hand, there must be clear guidelines for how decision-making is to be conducted. While Humble Governance aims to resolve possible tensions at the lowest possible level, there needs to be mechanisms for elevating issues up to higher levels in the administration when needed. If a tension cannot be resolved at the local level, there needs to be a process for elevating it up to the central government, and all the way to the political level if necessary. The existence of such a process will in itself create an incentive for problems to be solved as locally as possible (because escapism could mean loss of control), while simultaneously making it possible to lift issues higher up when solving them requires political attention.

Second, the framework goal must be made actionable by issuing a launch plan, rather than a detailed blueprint. Blueprints aim to decide in advance the best means to achieve goals. Launch plans assume that given uncertainty and complexity best methods are typically unknowable in advance. Hence, launch plans are designed as living documents. A launch plan 1) divides the broad framework goal into tangible sub-issues, 2) identifies a preliminary set of key stakeholders to be grouped in subdivisions and 3) creates a procedure for reviewing progress towards and, as necessary, revising interim goals or triggering more comprehensive reassessment of the framework goal. In this way, launch plans allow for action to be taken quicker than with blueprints, as they are action-oriented and iterative, rather than aiming to design detailed plans a priori.

Third, once the key sets of stakeholders are identified, intelligent incentives must be designed to prompt their collaboration. Intelligent incentives are mechanisms that reward participation in problem-solving and discourage opting out of a collaboration, or persistent delay in adopting proven solutions that have been incorporated into regulation or the operating routines of the public administration. Humble governance uses peer-learning mechanisms to identify non-compliance or failure to adopt successful solutions early on in a process, and provides these actors with the support that they need to succeed. The presence of a so-called penalty default creates a strong incentive for cooperation. Penalty defaults can be for example the exclusion of persistently or incorrigibly non-compliant stakeholders from the policy process and—especially where dangerous behavior is concerned—the market. The remote presence of such a penalty default, which is applied only in extremis, tips the balance in favor of compliance and makes collaboration more attractive than clinging to the status quo.

Box 2: Policy recommendations for moving towards Humble Governance

WAYS FORWARD	EXAMPLE: CARBON NEUTRALITY TARGETS
<p>1 Establishing a robust process for decision-making</p> <p>By ensuring that there are incentives for resolving tensions as locally as possible, and possibilities to elevate these issues to higher levels when needed.</p>	<p>The problem-solving process is designed to identify potential tensions or jurisdictional disputes, and so that these can be brought up to the appropriate level of decision-making. As there is broad political commitment to the framework goal, there is also leverage for solving these disputes when needed. Further, the potential of having tensions bumped up in the system will create incentives for solving them as locally as possible.</p>
<p>2 Making the framework goal actionable by issuing a launch plan, instead of a detailed blueprint.</p> <p>Launch plans are living documents that</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) divides the broad framework goal into tangible sub-issues, 2) identifies a preliminary set of key stakeholders to be grouped in subdivisions and 3) creates a procedure for reviewing progress towards and, as necessary, revising interim goals or triggering more comprehensive reassessment. 	<p>A launch plan with three objectives is developed:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) dividing the carbon neutrality goal across sectors of the economy - e.g. transport, energy, housing, etc. 2) identifying an initial set of key stakeholders to be involved in problem-solving within each sector - e.g. public transport service managers, energy providers, housing companies, etc. 3) creating a procedure for reviewing progress towards the carbon neutrality target within each sector, and for revising the goals that guide the process when necessary.
<p>3 Designing intelligent incentives to prompt stakeholder collaboration.</p> <p>This can be done through the enforcement of mechanisms that</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) reward participation in problem-solving and 2) discourage opting out of a collaboration by applying penalty defaults. 	<p>Incentive mechanisms suitable for each set of stakeholders are designed. The incentive can be for example the access to learning processes and possibility to influence the development of regulation with one's knowledge. In extreme cases opting out or refusing to cooperate can trigger penalties, such as being excluded from the process - or even the market.</p>



Step 3: Peer-learning as a Feedback Mechanism

Systematic information exchange is key to ensure that the knowledge developed through the process is used for learning and revision. Hence, in exchange for their autonomy, stakeholders must commit to peer-learning processes, through which comparable approaches to problem-solving are contrasted to expose their relative strengths and weaknesses. **Peer-learning mechanisms can be used to:**

- 1 transform traditional bottom-up reporting from a focus on performance evaluation to one on knowledge exchange and joint evaluation of local experiences,
- 2 identify evidence to be used for improvement of policies and revision of framework goals.

First, peer-learning can be used as an alternative to traditional reporting.

Peer-learning secures horizontal learning between the local-level stakeholders as well as vertical learning, by allowing knowledge to travel from local-level stakeholders to the central government. The humble process combines both vertical and horizontal information exchange into a single process of review and elaboration – one in which the central unit provides a forum for formal and informal knowledge distribution and joint evaluation. This allows a humble government to transform traditional (vertical) reporting mechanisms from a narrow focus performance evaluation to a problem-solving approach where drivers and barriers for success can be identified and good practices disseminated across the whole of the system. This can be done for example through regular roundtable discussions between the representatives of the central unit and those of stakeholders involved.

Second, the results of peer-learning should be employed to improve policies and adjust operational goals. Peer-learning provides a forum for identifying and deliberating on the policies, rules, and framework goals that enable or hinder positive outcomes. In this way the feedback loops provided by peer-learning mechanisms not only mark progress and signal problems in the chosen policy strategies but also bear potential to trigger broader reconsideration of the framework of policy – that is, its goals and the process by which they are to be reached.

Box 3: Policy recommendations for moving towards Humble Governance

WAYS FORWARD	EXAMPLE: CARBON NEUTRALITY TARGETS
<p>1 Ensuring peer-learning.</p> <p>This can be done for example through regular roundtable discussions between the representatives of the central government and those of stakeholders involved.</p>	<p>The participating stakeholders need to commit to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) regular reporting on progress and problems in relation to the goal that they are advancing; 2) regular peer-learning meetings to share new developments and challenges with the other participants. <p>The peer-learning meetings that are facilitated by the central Government provide the foundation to gather the data necessary to monitor the developments at the local level.</p>
<p>2 Employing the results of peer-learning to improve policies and adjust operational goals.</p> <p>This can be done by entrusting the central unit to facilitate the discussion and deliberation around policy reform between stakeholders and the Government</p>	<p>The information arising from the peer-review process is gathered and synthesized in a way, that enables a discussion on how to deal with new developments and unforeseen issues affecting the humble problem-solving process.</p> <p>On a regular basis, these key learnings are reported back to the Government, followed by a deliberation on how to potentially revise the framework goals, rules and policies that steer the process.</p>

Step 4: Revision of Framework Goals

Humble Governance begins with the acknowledgment of the Government’s fallibility. Regular revision of framework goals is key to steering the problem-solving process as prescribed by the knowledge emerging from peer-learning mechanisms. Further, a credible commitment to the revision of framework goals motivates participants to join the deliberation, as it allows them to have an impact on the way regulation and goals within their sector develop. To enable regular revision of framework goals;

1 steering documents need to be drafted and presented as living documents, and

2 communications of revisions need to be careful and transparent.

First, steering documents must be drafted and presented as living documents.

Rigid goals and metrics will be unworkable under uncertainty and politically costly to revise. Instead, steering documents—such as the documentation of framework goals, the relevant launch plan and following policy actions—should be fit for continuous adjustment and revision.

Second, communication of revisions must be carefully handled. Abrupt and poorly motivated changes in the government’s goals can cause societal unease and distrust, the fallibility (and thus iterative nature) of political decisions must be clear from the very beginning of a policy process, as must the government’s obligation to give good reasons for its decisions in public discussion. The focus should be on transparent communication of the actions that have been taken, and the advances that the process is creating. Revisions of the framework goals should be made openly and the evidence-base of each revision should be open for scrutiny.

Box 4: Policy recommendations for moving towards Humble Governance

WAYS FORWARD	EXAMPLE: CARBON NEUTRALITY TARGETS
<p>1 Drafting and presenting steering documents as living documents, rather than as definitive blueprints.</p>	<p>Through regular consultations the humble process’ findings are reported to the parliamentary committee and the government. Based on the discussion around the original problem statement, direction, and definition of success, the Parliament can mandate the government to reopen a debate with the opposition about how to revise the current goals.</p>
<p>2 Handling the communication of framework goals revision carefully.</p>	<p>When the framework goals are revised, they are communicated openly and the reasons behind the revisions are made explicit in key arenas.</p>

4. Reflections: Humility in Practice



The Humble approach stems from the need to find a way out of political gridlock. To do so, it proposes a policy-making process that aims to renew how governments steer and regulate societies through collaboration and iteration. While no government has yet institutionalized a formal setup for systematically deploying this approach, Humble and Experimentalist Governance is not simply a theory. Quite the opposite; there are compelling cases of governments and organizations who have, in their own struggles for improvement, organically arrived at this approach to problem-solving. **Humility is not new: it is just hidden in plain sight.**

For example, Finland's renowned education system is largely built around the core principles of the humble approach. Because of this approach, Finland nowadays is able to enjoy a thick political consensus around the importance of free and universal education. Broad framework goals for primary education are set in the national curriculum, but teachers and schools are trusted with a high level of autonomy to implement the curriculum as they see fit. The teachers' first-hand knowledge is then used to revise the national curriculum when needed. *What makes the Finnish education system successful is that it combines decentralization with highly individualized pedagogy for those students who are in need of extra support.*³

In California, the state's regulatory agencies have accelerated the development of innovations in the electric car industry, while indirectly affecting US-wide and international standards for vehicle emissions. This was originally initiated in the 1960's by a broad consensus around the need to fight the smog in Los Angeles. An institutionalized dialogue between the regulator and the industry made it possible to incentivize innovations that in turn made it feasible to set progressively high standards.⁴

On an international level, a well-known example of the humble and experimentalist approach can be found in the Montreal Protocol, which was established to curb gases damaging the ozone layer. The Montreal Protocol is arguably one of the most successful governance processes impacting environmental protection. Sectoral committees brought together users and regulators of ODS to look for and encourage development of alternatives. Only when a round of that search failed were delays permitted. Also in this example of global governance, participatory review mechanisms helped bring about the learning that was needed to move from a framework goal to tangible results.⁵

³ see Sabel et al, (2010): <https://www.sitra.fi/en/publications/individualized-service-provision-new-welfare-state/>

⁴ see Sabel & Victor, (2020): <http://bostonreview.net/forum/charles-sabel-david-g-victor-how-fix-climate>

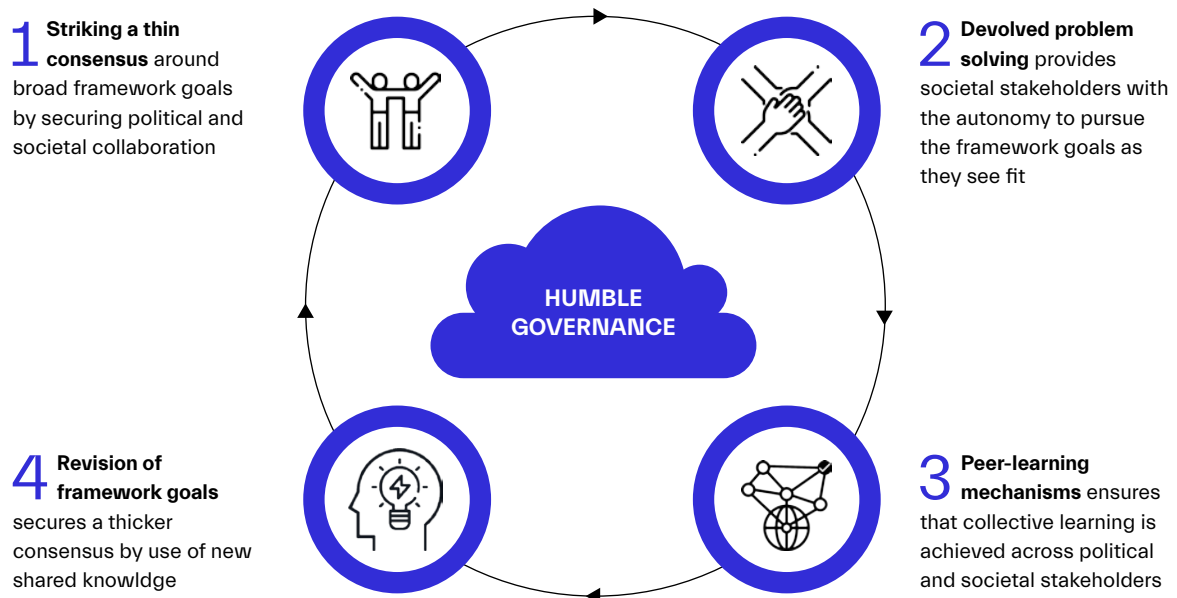
⁵ see Sabel & Victor, (2020): <http://bostonreview.net/forum/charles-sabel-david-g-victor-how-fix-climate>

These successful cases demonstrate that in order to successfully deal with pressing collective threats, our tool kits must be packed with **political and societal collaboration**, and a **commitment to continuous iteration and periodic revision**. Crucially, it is humility—not haughtiness—that enabled these governments and organizations to utilize both.

Drawing on these and many more success stories, the Humble Governance approach is our attempt to distill the key principles underscoring Experimentalism to provide **concrete steps out of our societies' current political gridlock**. By institutionalizing the Humble model's core principles throughout policy-making processes related to wicked problems, we believe that the real potential of liberal democracy can be tapped to enable governments to effectively lead societal transformation, and heal our fractured, conflict-ridden political culture.

Our collective future depends on the ability of governments to re-imagine problem-solving and facilitate its success through a humble approach and with the requisite urgency.

Figure 3: Summary of the steps of humble governance



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