Section 4: **Conclusion**

Stephen Elstub and Oliver Escobar

Chapter 10
The future of climate assemblies

Abstract: Given the increase and spread of climate assemblies in recent times, and the related hyperbole that has followed, this chapter seeks to provide a critical examination of what they can contribute to democratising environmental and climate governance in practice. We assess the extent climate assemblies are, and can be, important new civic institutions for a climate-changed world. The chapter draws together the key lessons from practice to date and offers insights to inform research, policy, and practice on climate assemblies and environmental governance. In doing so we address two important questions for climate assemblies. Firstly, we consider to what extent the citizens' assembly model of public engagement 'works' on the climate change issue. We outline what constitutes 'working' in this context and who climate assemblies 'work' for. Secondly, we make the case that five normative developments around the use of climate assemblies need to happen in practice if their potential to help democratise climate governance is to materialise. Whilst we do not claim that these will be the future developments of climate assemblies, we do identify emerging examples that relate to our normative proposals and consider the implications for the next generation of climate assemblies and research in this area.

Keywords: climate assemblies, climate and ecological crisis, democratic innovation, citizen participation, deliberative democracy, democracy

1 Introduction

Given the increase and spread of climate assemblies in recent times, and the related hyperbole that has followed, this book has sought to provide an in-depth and critical examination of what they can contribute to democratising climate and environmental governance in practice. In doing so, the book has made three important contributions (see Chapter 1 for a more detailed overview of the book's themes). First, it examined the *internal dimensions* of climate assemblies, such as the framing of climate and ecological issues, the inclusion and exclusion of evidence and expertise, the involvement of participants, the design and facilitation of the process, and the relationship between these factors and the effects on assembly members and their recommendations for environmental action. Second, it examined the *external dimensions* of climate assemblies, such as the relationships climate assemblies have to other parts of the political system such as government, parliament, civil society, industry, scientific communities, the media, and various forms of public engagement in environmental governance. Thirdly, it examined the relationships between these internal and external dimensions of climate assemblies including which, and how, design choices affect an assembly's impact

 https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111328393-016

on environmental governance and how features of current governance systems impact on assembly processes. A key intention of addressing these three aspects of climate assemblies was to advance the evidence base so that climate assembly stakeholders, including participants, commissioners, designers, practitioners, experts, advocates, and the public, make informed choices about the role of climate assemblies in environmental and climate governance.

In this chapter, we assess the extent climate assemblies are, and can be, important new civic institutions for a climate-changed world. The chapter puts the book's findings in conversation with the wider body of research on climate democracy, thus providing normative and practical reflection about the frontlines and frontiers of this emerging field. We draw together key lessons around the three themes developed in this collection and offer insights to inform research, policy, and practice on climate assemblies and environmental governance. In doing so, we address two important questions for climate assemblies. Firstly, we consider to what extent the citizens' assembly model of public engagement 'works' on the climate change issue. We outline what constitutes 'working' in this context and who climate assemblies 'work' for. Secondly, we make the case that five normative developments around the use of climate assemblies need to translate into practice if their potential to help democratise climate and environmental governance is to materialise. Whilst we do not claim that these will be the future developments of climate assemblies, we do identify emerging examples that relate to our normative proposals. In addressing these questions, we pay particular attention to how internal and external dimensions of climate assemblies are dynamically intertwined and consider the implications for the next generation of climate assemblies and research in this area.

2 Does the citizens' assembly model 'work' on climate?

Prior to the recent surge of climate assemblies, citizens' assemblies had been used to address quite a diverse range of complex policy issues (Harris 2019). Yet, in Chapter 1 we argued that findings from research on these cases do not necessarily apply to climate assemblies as the complexity, urgency, importance, and emotional resonance of the issue is unique (see also Elstub and Escobar forthcoming). In this section we examine what the climate assembly cases considered in this book tell us about whether the citizens' assembly model of public engagement 'works' for the climate change issue. Addressing this overarching question entails a range of empirical and normative considerations: What work do climate assemblies do? What work can they do? What work should they do? And for whom do they work?

We appreciate that the answer to these questions is very dependent on the theoretical lens employed to review the cases. We start our analysis from the premise that a key purpose of citizens' assemblies is to promote the norms of deliberative democ-

racy in political systems (Harris 2019). In making our assessment of climate assemblies, we also consider the existing literature, and the claims made about what they can achieve. Here we find an aspiration that climate assemblies cannot just deepen democracy in climate governance, but also advance climate action (Willis et al. 2022; Smith 2024; Elstub and Escobar forthcoming). We consider the internal dimensions of learning, deliberation, and promotion of the common good, and the external dimensions of influence of opinions and deliberations on the public as well as on environmental governance stakeholders and policy. The chapter finishes with a list of networks and resources related to climate assemblies (Box 10.1).

2.1 Internal Dimensions

2.1.1 Learning on climate change and action

A pivotal normative claim made by deliberative democrats is that through deliberation people can learn more about the issue at hand and understand the different positions on it. An understanding of the threats of climate change is also seen as important to promoting climate action (Willis et al. 2022). Citizens' assemblies routinely have evidence sessions where experts and advocates outline an array of insights and positions on the issue being considered and answer the assembly members' questions. The intention is that this will help achieve the learning goal underpinning the theory of deliberative democracy (Elstub 2014) and there is ample evidence to suggest that this type of learning does occur in mini-publics (Thompson et al. 2021). As a result, it is hoped that climate assemblies can reduce the silo-thinking (Howarth 2020) and counter the misinformation and disinformation (Boykoff & Farrell 2019) that often targets public opinion on climate change. There is emerging evidence that indicates that these findings extend to climate assemblies (Elstub et al. 2021a; Andrews et al. 2022). Whether this is a demonstration that climate assemblies 'work' on this criterion is dependent on what information and discourses have been fed into the process –and by whom– and whether this is skewed, even unintentionally.

Salamon *et al.*'s contribution (Chapter 4) advances this debate by highlighting the importance of the selection of expert and advocate witnesses to ensure equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI). From their study of various UK climate assemblies, they find that these issues are not being given sufficient consideration by climate assembly designers and are rarely, if ever, reported in a transparent manner in the assembly outputs. The danger is that the power inequalities prevalent in the public sphere are recreated within the climate assembly. They advocate for an EDI framework to be employed in all future assemblies to help address skews in selection and to enhance transparency of the witness selection process. These measures to improve a key internal dimension of climate assemblies can elevate their legitimacy, capacity and credibility, which may in turn enhance their potential to have influence on the external dimensions.

Chapter 5 also offers a novel contribution that highlights the consequentiality of how assembly learning is conceived and supported. Through her analysis of four climate assembly cases in very different contexts, Tilikete develops a new typology based on contrasting types of climate expertise that can be included. The type of expertise shapes the different forms a climate assembly can take, which in turn affects the role given to assembly members in climate governance and the way climate change is framed as a problem. Crucially, Tilikete demonstrates that the type of evidence provided in a climate assembly contributes to shape the function of that assembly within the political system. The chapter thus adds further evidence of the intertwinement between the internal and external dimensions of climate assemblies.

2.1.2 Deliberation on climate change and action

Instilling more, and better-quality, deliberation into climate governance is seen as a crucial step in meeting climate change challenges (Willis et al. 2022). Whilst achieving meaningful and inclusive deliberation across political systems remains the normative goal of many deliberative democrats (Mansbridge *et al.* 2012), it is extremely challenging due to the scale, complexity, and inequalities that characterise these systems. Mini-publics have emerged as an attempt to create favourable conditions to promote deliberation amongst a small, but diverse, subsection of the population (Elstub 2014; Harris 2019). Relevant norms of deliberation here are inclusive discussions where all get an opportunity to express their views; respectful discussions where those views are listened to and taken seriously; and reasoned discussions where all views must be justified so that arguments are open to reciprocal scrutiny.

Assembly sessions are designed to promote deliberation and assembly members' discussions are often facilitated with this aim in mind too (Escobar 2019). Research on mini-publics to date indicates that deliberation does occur although it is variable in quality, with the participants finding reason-giving more challenging than other deliberative norms (Gerber et al. 2016; Himmelroos 2017; Farrell et al. 2022). Research on deliberation in climate assemblies finds similar patterns (Elstub et al. 2021a; Andrews et al. 2022), indicating that assembly members can deliberate on climate action as well as they can on other issues. This is important as it is suggested that deliberation on climate change raises the salience of the issue and makes the response to it more constructive (Niemeyer 2013). While further research is certainly required in this area, it does indicate that the citizens' assembly model 'works' as well on the climate change issue as others on this criterion.

This book advances our understanding of this internal dimension by showing how process design in climate assemblies relates to deliberative quality. In Chapter 3, Morán *et al.* highlight the importance of the role of facilitators to ensure deliberative quality in climate assemblies. They argue that facilitators should not be used to provide a facilitation service merely at the point of delivery (the *frontstage*). Rather, they should also be included more meaningfully in the continuous reflexive design of the process

itself (the *backstage*). This can enhance deliberation, as it enables facilitators to be more adaptable to group dynamics and assembly member needs. In making this case they draw on analysis of the Global Assembly, but these arguments can be applied to climate assemblies more generally. The authors thus expand our understanding of the connection between the backstage and frontstage of complex deliberative processes –an internal dimension that is underexplored (Escobar 2015).

In their analysis of the French Citizens' Climate Convention, Rozencwajg *et al.* (Chapter 7) demonstrate how the external dimensions of climate assemblies can have a significant effect on deliberation within the assembly. In order to be perceived as legitimate by the public and climate governance stakeholders the assembly needs to give them some access, but this can unduly influence the deliberation between the assembly members. The main take away is that to understand deliberation in a climate assembly we must look beyond the assembly itself and to its relationships with other actors. If assemblies are fully open, they may be affected by the distortions that afflict other political arenas (e. g. lobbying by powerful interests). But if they are fully closed, they risk public, political and policy irrelevance. The tension between autonomy and interdependence is thus thrown into relief, with both normative and practical implications. Normatively, we must reflect on the balance between permeability to external influence –insofar it can contribute to discursive diversity, or to fairness and effectiveness in advancing climate action– and autonomy to deliberate without the potentially distorting effects of direct pressure from organised interests. Practically, this means that organisers must not only adapt assembly designs to address this tension but also support assembly members in recognising and navigating it.

2.1.3 Policy recommendations to advance climate mitigation and adaptation in a way that promotes the common good

A key justification of deliberative democracy is that the public reasoning it aims to generate can result in decisions that promote the common good, because selfish and partisan proposals are hard to justify in public (Elstub 2006). This is also an aim of minipublics and there is some evidence to indicate they can achieve this goal (Elstub 2014). However, this is something that is hard to assess, as it is not always apparent what the 'common good' would be independent of the process of deciding it. This is the case even with a topic like climate change. While we all may share an interest in mitigating it and adapting to it, this can be achieved in different ways which will be in the interests of different social groups (Boeckmann and Zeeb 2014; McKinnon 2022).

There is, nonetheless, hope that climate assemblies can promote a just transition. For example, assembly members do not have to comply with electoral incentives, and they are able to include the voices of natural worlds and future generations (Harris 2021; Dryzek and Pickering 2019; Kulha et al. 2021), which can help them promote long-term common goods (Fischer 2017; Smith 2021). These claims are contested though. For example, Machin (2023) argues that because climate assemblies aim to reach con-

sensus on the common good the agonism and rupture required to promote sufficient climate action is stifled. While it seems clear that the recommendations from climate assemblies would help address climate change more than current governments' policies (Smith 2024), there has been little research on whether they are sufficient to mitigate and adapt to it.

This book has contributed to this research agenda. With respect to the internal dimensions, Chapter 8 indicates that climate assemblies will not always result in recommendations that would advance climate action beyond the status quo. Chapters 2, 3, 4, and 5 highlight a number of challenges climate assemblies face in promoting just transitions. Their ability to achieve this is dependent on the remit, governance, inclusive selection of witnesses, reflexive facilitation attentive to power inequalities throughout the process, and the way that climate change is framed. There are also important findings here for the external dimensions of assemblies: Chapter 6 shows how the media ecosystem is crucial in the shaping of discourses that influence, and may be influenced, by assemblies in terms of orientation to the common good and just transitions. Chapter 7 illustrates how external influence (in this case by activists) can shape conceptions of the common good and specific policies generated by the assembly.

2.1.4 The challenge of scope and time

We also show how witness selection, facilitation, and climate framing are dependent on how the agenda for a climate assembly is determined. In Chapter 2 Pfeffer develops a framework to articulate the agenda-setting options for climate assemblies, but also their trade-offs. He ably demonstrates that a climate assembly agenda is a crucial element that links the internal and external dimensions.

The agenda for climate assemblies sets them apart from other types of citizens' assembly due to the breadth and complexity of the issue. As a result, those involved in setting the agenda of a climate assembly have struggled to balance the scope of the agenda with the time available. There has been a tendency for climate assemblies to be given a broad agenda in a bid not to falsely partition the climate change issue. But this ambitious scope has proved extremely challenging for the assembly members to consider in any meaningful depth in the time that is made available to them, which in itself varies a great deal across climate assemblies.

One common solution has been to split climate assemblies into topic groups, to enable some assembly members to go into a particular climate change aspect into greater depth. However, this compromises breadth of learning, assembly member endorsement of the recommendations coming from a particular stream, and in turn policy impact (Elstub et al. 2021b). While Pfeffer (Chapter 2) provides valuable practical guidance on how to navigate these different aspects and options, the point remains that the scope and timeframe are more problematic for climate assemblies than citizens' assemblies, and one of the greatest barriers to enabling the citizens' assembly process

to 'work' on climate. This is one of the arguments to support the development of permanent assemblies, a point to which we return later.

2.2 External Dimensions

2.2.1 Influence on opinion amongst public and climate governance stakeholders

The extent mini-publics should influence the opinions of the public and policymakers is contested. Mackenzie and Warren (2012), for example, indicate that the public may see the mini-public as consisting of 'people like them' and mini-publics can therefore act as 'trusted information proxies' on policies that citizens themselves have not had the time, resources, opportunity or inclination to become informed about. Similarly, policymakers, who may be more informed on policy, could be guided by the mini-public as it gives insight into what citizens think on the issue under favourable conditions. Lafont (2019) rejects both claims. Public opinion being led by a mini-public on policy issues requires citizens to blindly trust mini-publics and defer their own judgement, which is undemocratic. Also, given the small numbers of participants in a mini-public, they are not a good guide to public opinion as a whole, so policymakers should not place too much credence in their recommendations.

Despite this critique there is hope among some scholars and practitioners that climate assemblies can fulfil this trusted proxy role in climate governance. For example, Niemeyer (2013) suggests climate assemblies are "reasoning arbitrators" on climate change, emphasising to the public what the good arguments and evidence around this issue are. Howarth *et al.* (2020) go further and argue that climate assemblies can restore trust in climate governance amongst the public, provide policymakers with a mandate for action and in turn build a social mandate for addressing the climate and ecological crisis. But perhaps the most obvious rebuttal to Lafont's (2019) challenge is that democratic governance in large political systems relies on the division of democratic labour. For example, legislatures and executives routinely delegate deliberative, and even decision-making work, to all kinds of public bodies (e.g. commissions, agencies, advisory committees, watchdogs, task groups). In this context, and given their participatory and deliberative qualities, climate assemblies should be able to contribute to opinion-formation and provide a new interface between institutions and their publics.

This volume advances the research on this theme. Public awareness of climate assemblies has been low in many instances. In Chapter 8, Oross and Boda find meagre media coverage of the Budapest climate assembly and suggest that the focus of climate change could be the reason why climate assemblies are deliberately ignored in the media, at least in contexts where illiberal politics and democratic backsliding are gaining ground. The French Citizens' Climate Convention is one of the exceptions and was widely publicised. Rozencwajg *et al.* (Chapter 7) discuss how this was, in part, due to the access to the process given to external stakeholders. Fleuss and Suiter (Chapter 6)

develop a *Communicative Flows Framework* to show where the bottle necks for climate assembly communication may occur in environmental governance systems, often driven by misinformation and disinformation by vested interests. Yet, the framework provides a basis to work out how climate assemblies may navigate the trappings of skewed media ecosystems to disseminate their recommendations and reasons to the public through networks of communication.

2.2.2 Influence on deliberation amongst public and climate governance stakeholders

If the desirability of climate assemblies influencing opinion is disputed, there seems to be agreement amongst deliberative democrats that it is valuable if they can stimulate public deliberation across political systems (Curato and Böker 2016; Lafont 2019), especially on climate change (Dryzek and Niemeyer 2019). However, the extreme challenges of achieving this are compounded by the barriers to wide scale deliberation that characterise contemporary political systems: "It simply is not possible to simulate the workings of a deliberative mini-public in ways that involve everyone affected by a decision deliberating together" (Niemeyer 2013: 444). These debates are also reflected in this collection.

Looking at the Global Assembly, where these challenges are most acute, De Pryck *et al.* (Chapter 9) find that it received minimum media coverage, attracted little political awareness as a result, and therefore did not generate deliberation in the global public sphere and did not have sufficient access to COP to have a bearing on the deliberations there either. However, there is also cause for optimism. Through an analysis of the French Citizens' Climate Convention, Chapter 7 shows how deliberation in climate governance in France was enhanced by this assembly as it brought in new actors to the deliberations and permeated the broader public imagination.

The book therefore draws important lessons for future climate assemblies from successful and unsuccessful cases. But it also shows that understanding and advancing this field is inextricable from systemic and structural considerations as part of a broader agenda of political renewal sustained through democratic reform and innovation. In isolation, it is unrealistic to expect climate assemblies to be catalysts for society-wide public deliberation in the context of unhealthy public spheres and unresponsive political systems. This is thus a key battleground for climate assemblies, as it is for other institutions and movements that seek to advance climate action in democratic public spheres increasingly undermined by capitalist "forces of social disintegration" (Habermas 2023, 27, 102).

2.2.3 Influence on policy and climate governance systems

The effect of citizens' assemblies on policy is highly variable (Dryzek and Goodin 2006; Böker and Elstub 2015). Existing research indicates the policy influence of climate assemblies is also uneven according to different contextual factors (Duvic-Paoli 2022; Boswell et al. 2023; Smith 2024; see also Chapter 1). This book adds to our understanding of which contexts are important to maximise the opportunities for climate assemblies to achieve policy impact. Chapters 6, 7, 8, and 9, which review climate assemblies in a variety of contexts, all demonstrate the importance of establishing links with multiple stakeholders in environmental and climate governance. An over-reliance on one route to policy impact makes them vulnerable to being marginalised with cherry-picking of the recommendations by policymakers. Moreover, forging links with multiple climate governance stakeholders enhances the chances for climate assemblies to achieve systemic influence in environmental and climate governance, public administration, and political culture, which can be a more important and durable impact than policy influence (Thorman and Capstick 2022). The climate assemblies from the most challenging contexts of illiberal politics (Chapter 8) and global governance (Chapter 9), covered in this book, suggest that the impact on climate governance culture and systems takes time to emerge but can be more long-lasting.

This also applies to contexts that are, in principle, more favourable, but not always hospitable to, or ready for, democratic innovations (Escobar 2017). Questions remain about the division of labour between sortition-based civic institutions and election-based political institutions, and how that should translate into constitutional and public administration reforms. There are key challenges to work through if, as we later argue, climate assemblies are to become a permanent feature of environmental and climate governance i. e.: the inter-institutional architecture that may cement their legitimacy and role in the political system; the types and levels of power-sharing with traditional institutions and associated checks and balances; the coupling with public administration and policymaking networks; their relationship to the broader governance of the environmental commons. If climate assemblies become established civic institutions, thus altering the status quo of environmental and climate governance, other challenges are likely to emerge. For instance, with increased power they will become the target of powerful organised interests, which can tap into a growing consultancy industry specialised in manipulating the field of public participation (e. g. Walker 2014).

The chapters in this book demonstrate that climate assemblies are operating in flawed climate governance systems. Flawed regarding their democratic credentials and ability to enable public participation to meaningfully influence policymaking, but also flawed in their capacity to invoke and enact action sufficient to address the climate and ecological emergency. Contemporary democratic systems are inhibited by vast inequalities in economic and political power, hierarchical and elitist cultures, and state imperatives which limit what climate assemblies, and other forms of democratic innovation, can ultimately achieve (Dryzek 1996; Fischer 2017). From the array of

climate assembly cases reviewed in this collection there are limitations to the extent climate assemblies 'work' regarding the external dimensions. While there are exceptions we need to learn from, these climate assemblies have not had the public support or institutional traction required to democratise climate governance and advance climate action substantially.

This book has thus illustrated the current possibilities and limitations of the field of climate assemblies. If the field seeks to increase influence at policy and systemic level, it will have to grapple with broader questions about socioecological, economic and political transformation. At policy level, it will have to better understand and navigate the idiosyncrasies and struggles of state-led policymaking and implementation, which is too often treated as a 'black box' in environmental work (Cairney *et al.* 2023). It should also look beyond the state to include other actors with capacity for environmental action and connect to the ongoing revival of the commons paradigm (Henderson and Escobar 2024). At systemic level, it will have to develop a theory of change for how climate assemblies might contribute to break the "glass ceiling" for climate action within the political economy of capitalist democracies (Hausknost 2020). Creativity and contestation must remain key drivers of the field so that climate assemblies can keep building new bridges between traditional institutions and citizens, communities and social movements. This liminal quality will be crucial to sustain the vibrancy that may protect the field from co-option within the boundaries of the status quo. We envision these as key endeavours over the next decade. Climate assemblies will have to develop stronger foundations across their internal and external dimensions. We make the normative case for five developments that can support this direction of travel.

3 Future directions of climate assemblies: Building civic institutions that can make a difference in a climate-changed world

This section makes the case that the following developments need to happen if climate assemblies are to become new civic institutions that can help to democratise environmental and climate governance and advance climate action. In making the case that the practice of climate assemblies needs to move in these five directions we seek to inform the agenda for practice and research in the field. These five developments are normative in the sense that we think that they need to happen, rather than being predictions of the future. Nevertheless, in these areas relevant cases are emerging that give cause for optimism that this could be the start of longer-term trends. The first two relate to the internal dimensions of climate assemblies and the others to the external dimensions. Yet, all five developments cut across the internal and external dimensions distinction.

3.1 More focus on adaptation and systems change

Mitigating climate change has dominated the agendas of climate assemblies to date, which reflects the primacy of the interests of the "global rich" over the adaptation imperatives already faced by the "global poor" (McKinnon 2022). A climate-changed world requires institutions with the capacity for ongoing reflexive governance to underpin adaptation (Dryzek and Pickering 2019). Whilst the importance of mitigating climate change cannot be underestimated, we also need to adapt to the changing climate and include a diversity of voices in deciding how to (Conway-Lamb 2024). Scotland's Climate Assembly's (SCA) organisers wanted to enable assembly members to address adaptation issues, but ultimately this did not happen: expert witnesses struggled to communicate this dimension effectively and assembly members were more focused on mitigation, which was reflected in the recommendations (Andrews et al. 2022). Further research and experimentation are required in climate assemblies to enable adaptation to be addressed whilst continuing to strive for improvements on mitigation.

A common critique of the cases of climate assemblies studied in this book is that they have not been radical enough. While they tend to produce recommendations that would advance us beyond current government policy (Smith 2024), this is not always the case (Chapter 8), and there is scepticism that their recommendations would mitigate climate change and advance new ecological trajectories as they often support rather than disrupt the system (Hammond 2020). There is a spectrum in the change-making orientation of democratic innovations (Wright 2010; Escobar and Bua 2025), and climate assemblies so far have tended towards the system-supportive side. This testifies to the goodwill that most citizens bring to these processes as they contribute to the work of existing climate governance institutions on the assumption that these have the intention and capacity to advance meaningful change[1]. Nevertheless, this also speaks to the importance of designing assemblies in ways that afford considering systemic issues rather than just piecemeal policies devoid of their political, bureaucratic or economic context (Mellier and Capstick 2024). More systemic input into climate assemblies would help address this, supporting assembly members to examine the climate crisis more holistically. This would provide the opportunity to deliberate on systemic questions about the economy and the state that some regard as the biggest impediments to mitigating and adapting to climate change in a just and democratic manner (Storm 2009; Fischer 2017; Trebeck and Williams 2019).

There was some ambition in Scotland to do this, but again the SCA failed here primarily because the assembly and its organisers were closely tied to the Scottish Government, which meant the more systemic elements of climate change were watered down to such an extent that they made little impact (Andrews et al. 2022). This is perhaps

1 That goodwill is often tested; see for example how members of the Scottish Climate Assembly criticised the insufficiencies of the Scottish Government's response to their 16 goals and 81 recommendations: https://webarchive.nrscotland.gov.uk/20220321134120/https:/www.climateassembly.scot/statement-of-response (accessed 14.01.25)

inevitable in government-initiated climate assemblies, insofar contemporary democratic states must operate under the structural constraints of capitalist political economies (Dryzek 1996; Fraser 2022). But the field is exploring options. For example, a national climate assembly initiated by civil society and academia in Sweden was organised in 2024 with the express goal of including systems thinking (Stockholm Resilience Centre 2023). However, the Global Assembly was also initiated and organised by civil society and had systemic ambitions which were not delivered (Chapters 3, 5, and 9). Non-governmental climate assemblies are thus not guaranteed to achieve this either and may also find it harder to influence policy –albeit they may have other crucial impacts on opinion-formation, public deliberation, political discourse and democratic culture. Consequently, it is likely that we will need a mixture of different initiators and organisers of climate assemblies (Chapter 2), which throws into relief questions about their democratisation and independence.

3.2 Democratising climate assemblies

Regardless of who is involved in initiating and organising the climate assembly there needs to be more opportunities for the members themselves to have input into decisions about the functioning of the assembly. For instance, assembly members could have more influence over the agenda (Chapter 2), information (Chapter 5), witnesses (Chapter 4), facilitation and decision-making processes (Chapter 3), media strategy (Chapter 6) and relations with stakeholders and broader publics (Chapters 7 and 9). This would place additional demands on participants, organisers and resources, and compound the challenge of scope and time outlined earlier, but it could have significant benefits. In addition to improving their experience, this would ensure that the recommendations are more authentic expressions of the will of the assembly members, as they would relate to their priorities rather than those of assembly commissioners and organisers (Richardson 2010). Emerging research from climate assemblies suggests that assembly members have the desire and ability to make these decisions on the functioning of a climate assembly (Elstub et al. 2021b).

There have been some tentative efforts to democratise some aspects of climate assemblies in this manner, such as the North of Tyne Climate Assembly in the UK, where assembly members were given some say over the remit and the information they needed to address it (King & Wilson 2023), but there needs to be considerably more experimentation on how to govern climate assemblies democratically. In doing so, lessons should be learned from consensus conferences, a mini-public format which usually gives the participants more say over key decisions (Hendriks 2005), although with fewer numbers of participants than typically found in climate assemblies. The field can further benefit from cross-fertilisation with research and practice on self-governance in social movements and commons-based organising (Fischer 2017; Bollier and Helfrich 2019).

The democratisation of climate assemblies is not just related to their internal dimensions, but also inextricable from their positioning and relationships within existing governance systems. What should be the status of these new civic institutions with regards to the state and civil society? And how may that affect their change-making orientation and capacity? (Elstub and Escobar forthcoming). At face value, their independence seems an enabling condition. It can allow them to set their own terms and protect them from co-option by state powers or undue influence by corporate interests. This may suggest that anchoring them in civil society is best for democratisation and to avoid the trappings of being too close to centres of power. However, seeking to exercise influence from the outside, in an international political economy warped by state-enabled corporate interests (Streeck 2024), seems insufficient and potentially counterproductive –for example, if it undermines the field's credibility and thus capacity to democratise climate governance and advance climate action.

This would, therefore, suggest that it is better to anchor these new civic institutions on the realm of the state. But what about the risks of political co-option and bureaucratic overreach, and ultimately loss of independence? The concept of independence is not always useful in governance contexts. By definition, and particularly when it pertains to the environment, governance is about interdependence –often considered the most consequential factor in effective governance (Innes and Booher 2010). Autonomy, understood as agency within interdependence, seems more apt to describe the desirable status for climate assemblies. Independence denotes being detached and uninfluenced, and arguably thus disconnected and potentially lacking relevance and impact. In contrast, autonomy foregrounds agency, but recognises that it is exercised in the context of relationships shaped by evolving constraints and affordances. A promising area for exploration is to conceive climate assemblies as "public-commons" partnerships that combine state and citizen control (Bollier and Helfrich 2019). No single model, however, is suitable for every context. Developing climate assemblies is context-dependent and must respond to the idiosyncrasies of the political system in question. For example, in places where the state suffers from corruption or mistrust, civil society may be better placed; and in places where civil society lacks capacity, the state may be more suitable. Whichever the anchoring, the autonomy of these civic institutions must pursue connection without co-option and critical distance without irrelevance –a difficult balance to strike.

The key conclusion here is that the field needs to invest more in understanding how to navigate the politics of interdependence. We see value in experimentation with diverse ways of anchoring climate assemblies, but later we will also argue that institutionalisation is a crucial part of moving the field forward. First, however, we reflect on the current geographic spread of climate assemblies and the need to overcome Eurocentrism.

3.3 Developing climate assemblies across the globe

Advocating the global spread of climate assemblies may be criticised as a neocolonial project –yet another wave of uncritical exportation of democratic structures. This, however, assumes that other parts of the world do not have their own diverse traditions of democratic assembling and deliberation, which is patently not the case (Curato *et al.* 2024; Isakhan and Stockwell 2012). What we are advocating is the need to build on those foundations to explore and strengthen the global potential of climate assemblies to democratise climate governance.

Whilst we have seen a rapid increase in the number of climate assemblies, this has primarily been a European trend, and only parts of Europe at that.[2] Given the global nature of the climate challenge and the required response, if climate assemblies are to be a civic institution that enables the global public to act, their development needs to occur more evenly across Europe and further develop in other continents too. Without this global dimension, climate assemblies will remain too peripheral to make a genuine difference to the climate emergency. Whilst this development is not inevitable, there is some cause for optimism. Research to date, and in this book, has shown that climate assemblies do work in a range of political and climate governance systems.

For example, in Chapter 8 we see the process work, all be it with limitations, in the illiberal context of Hungary. Recently climate assemblies have taken off in Japan, with over 15 occurring so far, primarily in urban local climate governance (Kainuma et al. 2024) and there has also been one in Washington, USA (Zimmer 2024). Since 2022, Brazil has organised climate assemblies in Francisco Morato[3], Salvador[4], and Toritama[5], and hosted the Young People's Climate Assembly in Recife[6] and the Climate Assembly of Amazonian Cities[7]. The Global South has organised environmental mini-publics since 2014 (i. e. deliberative polls, consensus conferences, citizens' panels) in Uganda, Ghana, Tanzania, Senegal, Malawi and Uruguay, as well as more recent climate assemblies in Beirut (Lebanon), Auroville (India), Bogotá (Colombia) and the Maldives (Curato et al. 2024, 86 – 87; Mellier and Smith 2024). More research on these cases, and others as they emerge, is clearly required to understand how climate assemblies operate across a range of sociopolitical contexts.

While the emergence of climate assemblies across continents and countries is necessary, it is not sufficient for climate assemblies to become the civic institutions re-

2 See KNOCA's climate assembly map (available at: https://www.knoca.eu/climate-assemblies#Map-of-climate-assemblies accessed 21.06.24).

3 See https://participedia.net/case/13161 (accessed 21.06.24).

4 See https://participedia.net/case/13208 (accessed 21.06.24).

5 See https://participedia.net/case/13162 (accessed 21.06.24).

6 See https://deliberabrasil.org/projetos/jovens-no-clima-recife/ (last accessed 14.01.25)

7 See https://deliberabrasil.org/projetos/primeira-assembleia-cidada-sobre-o-clima-em-cidades-amazonicas/ (last accessed 3.02.25)

quired to address the climate and ecological crisis. Climate change is a global problem in need of global solutions, and it requires democratic transnational governance (Stevenson and Dyzek 2014). Chapters 3 and 9 on the Global Assembly and Chapter 5 on the European's Panel on Climate Change and Health, in this volume, demonstrate the distinct challenges of transnational climate assemblies, operating at levels of climate governance where the public sphere still needs development. These cases themselves built on previous cases of transnational mini-publics such as Worldwide Views (Rask et al. 2019; see Chapter 1). Further research and learning on global climate assemblies is being promoted by the Democratic Odyssey[8] and GloClan[9] networks. This is a crucial area for research and practice because a global response to climate change requires imagining and developing a global demos, connected to a network of globally-oriented local demoi. The question is whether climate assemblies can enable this work in collaboration with, or in spite of, existing global institutions that have failed so far.

3.4 Broader public engagement with climate assemblies

As with mini-publics in general, one of the main limitations of climate assemblies is that they involve small numbers of participants. So, while the assembly members themselves typically become more informed about environmental and climate issues, non-participants do not (Lafont 2019). Therefore, if a democratic mandate for climate action is to be cultivated via a climate assembly, they need to be far more effective at engaging multiple publics, and not just the assembly members. One of the cases covered in this book, the French Citizens' Climate Convention, demonstrates that climate assemblies can be high profile in the right circumstances. Rozencwajg *et al.* (Chapter 7) make the case that this was partly due to the assembly forming numerous connections with a variety of climate governance actors. We argue that, broadly, more public engagement with climate assemblies could be generated around determining the remit of the assembly, the information that is fed into the process, and the scrutiny and endorsement of the resulting recommendations.

First, regarding public input to a climate assembly remit, Pfeffer (Chapter 2) emphasises the importance of "societal relevance" to the agenda in instances where system disruption is required, but further indicates that government should have more of an agenda-setting role if policy-influence is required. In some circumstances at least, large scale digitally-enabled public consultation about a climate assembly's remit is necessary to get a sense of what issues resonate most with the public. This could be done through an online platform connected to the climate assembly like in the Citizen Observatory in Madrid (Ganuza and Ramos 2024) and the Estonian Citizens' Assembly (Jonsson 2015). The Scottish Climate Assembly sought to do this through online consul-

8 See https://democraticodyssey.eui.eu/home (accessed 21.06.24).

9 See https://glocan.org/ (accessed 21.06.24).

tation over three weeks before the assembly. Despite very limited time, 450 participants registered, contributing 230 ideas and over 1,000 comments, which were thematically analysed in a report that fed into agenda-setting (Scotland's Climate Assembly 2021, 116). There are risks of capture in this type of digital engagement, although we have not yet seen that in cases like this perhaps due to the low public profile of the online strand and indeed the assembly. These risks go beyond agenda-setting and matter in all facets of online participation in an assembly. Without careful design, digital engagement can fail to include a diversity of the population and over-represent the interests of certain groups and organised interests. Nevertheless, digital infrastructure and participation are key planks for advancing climate assemblies' connection to their publics, mobilising collective intelligence, and functioning as catalysts for broader public deliberation and action (e.g. Barandiaran *et al.* 2024). This should be a priority area for research and development because it relates to many of the challenges mapped in this collection across the internal and external dimensions.

Second, this book has shown the profound effect that the information provided in a climate assembly has on the process. Tilikete (Chapter 5) argues that the information not only frames how climate change is considered in the assembly but also determines the role of the assembly in climate governance. Salamon *et al.* (Chapter 4) favour an egalitarian approach to information provision which prioritises fair and equal participation of all citizens. Enabling the public to feed information into a climate assembly can help promote this egalitarian approach as well as diversifying the information and perspectives that the assembly members can consider in arriving at their recommendations. There are issues with dealing with the volume of information that can be submitted and more research and experimentation is required. But lessons can be learned from the Irish climate assemblies which allowed online information submissions from the public, and indeed from recent proposals about uses of Artificial Intelligence in assemblies (McKinney 2024). There could be dedicated sessions in a climate assembly to deliberate on these public inputs, but there are challenges in including perspectives from "the harder to reach, and potentially disinterested" members of the public (Devaney *et al.* 2020: 1978). Reducing barriers to participation in digital crowdsourcing is another key dimension of the agenda to shore up our public spheres as part of broader democratic renewal. This further emphasises a recurring theme in our conclusions: climate assemblies cannot succeed as civic oases amidst democratic desertification.

Third, there should also be more opportunities for the public to engage with the recommendations of climate assemblies. Public scrutiny and endorsement of these would enhance democratic legitimacy but also put more pressure on institutions to translate them into policy (Carrick and Elstub 2023) and to provide a public mandate for climate action (Howarth et al. 2020). Again, lessons can be drawn from the Irish experience, where referendums have followed citizens' assemblies on six occasions (Harris 2019) and from other countries, including the USA, Finland, and Switzerland, where citizen initiatives have been preceded by a mini-public evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the options on the ballot (Jäske and Setälä 2019). Where formal votes to endorse climate assembly recommendations are not in place, members of

the public can demonstrate their support (or lack of) through other types of participation such as the civil society campaign in favour of the proposals by Scotland's Climate Assembly (Andrews et al. 2022), in everyday talk including social media, and through mobilisation and protest. Former assembly members are also increasingly involved in fostering public support by setting up associations and networks that monitor impacts, promote climate assemblies, and campaign for institutional action (see Bryant *et al.* 2025). This is the case, for example, in the aftermath of the French Citizens' Climate Convention (Chapter 7) and the Spanish Climate Assembly –where members are also collaborating to develop a European network[10].

This point demonstrates the need for climate assemblies to be linked with other democratic innovations such a referendums, citizen initiatives, participatory budgeting, collaborative governance, and digital crowdsourcing. Each democratic innovation has the potential to enact different types of democratic norms, so we need to go beyond just climate assemblies to democratise environmental and climate governance (Elstub and Escobar 2019). The point also highlights the need for democratic innovations, including climate assemblies, to be linked in appropriate ways with 'claimed spaces' such as interest groups and social movements, which in themselves enact different democratic norms to these democratic innovations (Beetham 2012). By the same token, climate assemblies have not yet tapped into the capacity of the commons as an alternative paradigm to state- and market- led climate action (Henderson and Escobar 2024). More research is required on how best to develop these connections with the aim of democratising and strengthening environmental governance.

Better communication is also required to foster broader public engagement with climate assemblies. Chapters 6 and 8 demonstrate both the importance and difficulty of achieving this given the political economy of traditional and new media in each country –i. e. who controls them and how they shape public discourse. Oross and Boda (Chapter 8) suggest that, in some contexts, a climate assembly may not get much media coverage precisely because it is focusing on environmental issues, and Fleuss and Suiter (Chapter 6) highlight the extreme challenges of disinformation on climate change. As difficult as the conditions of the mediatised public sphere may be, there is still plenty to improve regarding basic communication by climate assemblies. The process generally needs to be further disseminated so that the public are aware of it and understand the logic behind its main elements. Furthermore, climate assembly organisers need to employ far more effective approaches to communication than most have done to date and invest more of their resources in this aspect of the assembly process. We need considerably more research on what would constitute an effective media strategy for a climate assembly in different media systems. The challenges here should not be underestimated as research indicates that the media are more likely to cover climate assemblies when they influence policy, but that policy influence is

10 See https://journal.platoniq.net/es/wilder-journal-2/interviews/teresa-arnal-climate-civic-assembly/ (accessed 5.02.25)

more likely when the public are aware of them (Carrick and Elstub 2023). This is a vicious circle that can be turned into a virtuous circle.

3.5 Institutionalising climate assemblies

We think that the potential for climate assemblies to help democratise climate governance will be maximized if they are 'institutionalised', rather than continuing only as one-off and ad hoc processes as they have been predominantly to date. We follow Huntington (1968: 12) in defining institutionalisation as "the process by which organisations and procedures acquire value and stability." We argue that a climate assembly would be institutionalised if there were rules and procedures regarding their initiation, their governance and funding, and how the assemblies' recommendations are dealt with. This would reduce the tendency of climate assemblies to be malleable by politicians. In many of the cases considered in this book –e.g. EU, France, Hungary, UK– it has been politicians who have initiated the climate assembly, decided the level of funding, often determining its agenda, and deciding whether to respond to the climate assembly publicly, while also choosing whether to implement the recommendations and which ones. In cases where climate assemblies are initiated by civil society –e.g. the Global Assembly and the German Climate Assembly– politicians can easily choose whether to ignore or engage with them. There is a case to be made for external checks and balances on climate assemblies –as for any other democratic institutions– but their current subservience to formal power-holders undermines their potential as consequential civic institutions in environmental governance.

We appreciate that institutionalisation is unlikely to be enough unless it supports the embedding of these new civic institutions across administrative, political and civic cultures (Bussu *et al.* 2022). Nevertheless, we think that institutionalisation would be an important first step in decreasing the level of discretion that politicians and other formal power-holders have over all these aspects of climate assemblies –and this may, in turn, make embeddedness over time possible. Climate assemblies could then become more autonomous and thus more able to advance the assembly democratisation we advocated earlier. This could also enable climate assemblies to choose to focus on adaptation and systemic issues, which we also supported. Moreover, institutionalisation of climate assemblies could raise their profile within climate governance systems, as they gain more stability and status. This could also lead to more media exposure and, subsequently, greater public awareness. However, there is a risk that their routinisation could make them even less newsworthy, and perhaps more open to co-option by powerful interests as permanency creates incentives to invest in targeted lobbying and other forms of political influence. Much more research on the institutionalisation of climate assemblies is certainly required. This is now becoming possible as cases of institutionalised climate assemblies start to emerge in Europe.

For example, the permanent climate assembly in Brussels (Belgium) commenced in 2023 and membership will rotate annually with each iteration of the assembly ad-

dressing a sub-theme of local climate policy selected by previous members. A commission has also been established to monitor the government's response to the recommendations (Citizens' Climate Assembly 2024). In the Basque Country, the Citizens' Assembly on Energy and Climate Transition has recently been included in a new Law that aims to boost public participation in climate governance[11]. One of the novelties is that the assembly will be connected to municipal climate commissions across the Basque Country so that its recommendations reach the relevant governance levels and actors. In Milan (Italy), the 2022 Air and Climate Plan included the creation of the Permanent Citizens' Assembly on Climate, which will renew its membership annually and will collaborate with the municipal administration to inform the implementation and evaluation of the Plan until 2030.[12]

Although Ireland has not created a permanent climate assembly, citizens' assemblies have become an established feature of its national government. Climate change was one of the topics discussed in the first Irish Citizens' Assembly (2016–2018) and in 2022 the government commissioned a Citizens' Assembly on Biodiversity Loss[13] and a parallel Children and Young People's Assembly on the same topic.[14] Beyond environmental governance, a growing number of mini-publics are being institutionalised at various levels in Belgium, France, Australia, Canada, United States, Colombia, and Austria (OECD 2021). There is therefore a limited but increasing pool of cases to study forms and effects of institutionalisation across a range of contexts. Ongoing mixed methods research (Escobar 2022) over the next decade should provide the comparative and longitudinal evidence needed to inform the development of permanent climate assemblies.

It is important that these five normative developments of climate assemblies advance in practice in tandem. They mutually reinforce internal and external dimensions crucial to climate assemblies becoming civic institutions that can make a difference. Without these normative developments occurring there is every chance that the current climate assembly trend will dissipate, as climate governance stakeholders conclude that they can make little difference to meaningful climate action. An alternative scenario is that the use of climate assemblies does continue but, without heeding calls for reform, they remain relatively impotent, and do not democratise climate governance or advance climate action. Indeed, without these changes to practice they could make climate governance worse. As reflected in our discussion in this chapter and across

11 See https://www.ihobe.eus/news/the-basque-government-approves-the-draft-energy-transition-and-climate-change-law-to-achieve-climate-neutrality-in-the-basque-country-before-2050 (accessed 5.02.25)

12 See https://www.poliedra.polimi.it/en/project/permanent-citizens-assembly-climate/ (accessed 5.02.25).

13 See https://citizensassembly.ie/previous-assemblies/citizens-assembly-on-biodiversity-loss/ (accessed 5.02.25)

14 See https://cyp-biodiversity.ie (accessed 5.02.25)

the book, the benefits of climate assemblies are not a given. They can be detrimental to climate governance when they obscure and stifle more progressive climate discourses from prevailing, or if they detract attention and resources from other potential courses of collective action (Hammond 2020; Machin 2023).

4 Conclusion

Climate assemblies are being increasingly incorporated into environmental and climate governance. This development in practice is proceeding ahead of the research, and we have sought to address this gap in this book by assessing the extent to which they are new civic institutions capable of democratising climate governance and advancing climate action. We focussed on the internal dimensions of climate assemblies, which include their design and operation; the external dimensions, which include relationships to climate governance actors; and the relationship between these two dimensions. In doing so we have considered numerous cases of climate assemblies from various European countries at different levels of governance, from the local to the global. We find that on all aspects of a climate assembly the internal and external dimensions are inextricably linked i. e. its design, and operation is influenced by its place in the political system and vice versa, its place in the political system is influenced by its design and operation. Both dimensions should therefore be considered in conjunction in research and practice.

In this chapter we have considered the extent to which climate assemblies 'work'. In some respects, there is evidence that they do in the sense that assembly members become more informed about climate action, are able to deliberate on the topic, and develop proposals that would take us beyond the status quo. Yet, the problem is that they are inevitably operating in flawed political and climate governance systems. There is only so much that we can expect from one democratic innovation in addressing these systemic flaws. As a result, we have advocated for five normative developments that should happen to maximise the potential for climate assemblies to 'work' in democratising climate governance and advancing climate action. These include climate assemblies continuing to spread geographically and through different levels of governance, focusing more on climate adaptation and systemic issues, democratising climate assemblies to give assembly members more control, engaging broader publics beyond the participants, and institutionalising climate assemblies to give them value, autonomy, stability, and status. Whilst these proposals are normative, we drew on emerging empirical examples. Through these proposals we seek to inform the practice of climate assemblies, but also the research agenda.

In sum, the jury is still out on the extent that climate assemblies can promote the democratisation of climate governance and accelerate climate action as important civic institutions for a climate-changed world. The evidence to date, and the chapters in this book, indicate that there is promise here and many of their main limitations relate to failures of the governance systems in which they operate. Climate assemblies are un-

avoidably tethered to those systems through complex interdependence and thus face the same constraints as the powers that authorise them and translate their work into action. That is why it is difficult to imagine how climate assemblies can change the status quo if economic and political systems remain unchanged. It seems unfair to expect climate assemblies to play a meaningful role without addressing the structural foundations for that change. Nevertheless, support for such political and economic transformations seems to be growing amongst citizens around the world (Ipsos UK 2024), and climate assemblies could be one of the catalysts for that change.

We think that those who would dismiss climate assemblies after barely a decade of experimentation are misguided. If we are building new civic institutions for a climate-changed world, we must keep in mind that institution-building takes time to bed in and is concomitant to other social, political, economic, and cultural developments. This runs against the grain of much of our mediatised fast politics that seems more open to seasonal fashion than sustained reform and innovation. We therefore urge for patience with climate assemblies to enable further research and experimentation. We understand the frustrations given the increasing urgency of the climate and ecological crisis, but we warn against abandoning the progress that has already been made with climate assemblies. We have argued for developments that could maximise their potential and make them an established and meaningful avenue to give publics around the world a more powerful voice in climate governance and, ultimately, in building a more desirable future.

Box 10.1 Following up: Networks and resources

Networks and databases:

- Knowledge Network on Climate Assemblies (KNOCA) https://www.knoca.eu
- Global Citizens' Assembly Network (GloCAN) https://glocan.org
- CLIMAS https://www.climas-project.eu
- Participedia https://participedia.net
- DemoReset https://www.demoreset.org/en/
- LATINNO https://www.latinno.net/en/
- Democracy R&D https://democracyrd.org
- DemocracyNext https://www.demnext.org
- Deliberative Integrity Project https://deliberativeintegrityproject.org
- Bürguerrat https://www.buergerrat.de/en/news/climate-action-through-citizens-assemblies/climate-assemblies-worldwide/
- Federation for Innovation in Democracy (FIDE) https://www.fide.eu
- OECD https://www.oecd.org/en/topics/sub-issues/open-government-and-citizen-participation/innovative-public-participation.html

Practical guides:

- KNOCA: https://www.knoca.eu/guidance
- CLIMAS. Methodological guidelines and manual for setting-up and facilitating Climate Assemblies https://citizen-assembly.com/manual-for-setting-up-and-facilitating-climate-assemblies

- Basque Centre for Climate Change: https://info.bc3research.org/2023/11/27/bc3-launches-a-pioneering-guide-for-the-design-organization-and-facilitation-of-climate-citizens-assemblies/
- Involve: https://www.involve.org.uk/resource/innovations-local-climate-assemblies-and-juries-uk
- Extinction Rebellion: https://extinctionrebellion.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/The-Extinction-Rebellion-Guide-to-Citizens-Assemblies-Version-1.1-25-June-2019.pdf
- DemocracyNext: https://www.demnext.org/uploads/DemocracyNext-Assembling-an-Assembly-Guide-print-version.pdf
- newDemocracy and United Nations Democracy Fund: https://www.un.org/democracyfund/sites/www.un.org.democracyfund/files/newdemocracy-undef-handbook.pdf
- OECD: https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/evaluation-guidelines-for-representative-deliberative-processes_10ccbfcb-en.html
- Marcin Gerwin: https://citizensassemblies.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Citizens-Assemblies_EN_web.pdf
- Oliver Escobar and James Henderson: https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/376107/9789240081413-eng.pdf?sequence=1

References

Andrews, Nadine, Stephen Elstub, Scott McVean, Scott, and Gemma Sandie. 2022. *Scotland's Climate Assembly Research Report – process, impact and Assembly member experience.* Scottish Government Research.

Barandiaran, Xabier E., Antonio Calleja-Lopez, Arnau Monterde and Carol Romero. 2024. *Decidim, a technopolitical network for participatory democracy: Philosophy, practice and autonomy of a collective platform in the age of digital intelligence.* Springer.

Beetham, David. 2012. "Evaluating new vs old forms of citizen engagement and participation."In *Evaluating Democratic Innovations: Curing the Democratic Malaise*, edited by Brigitte Geissel and Kenneth Newton. Routledge.

Boeckmann, Melanie, and Hajo Zeeb. 2014. "Using a Social Justice and Health Framework to Assess European Climate Change Adaptation Strategies.' *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 11(12): 12389 – 12411.

Böker, Marit, and Stephen Elstub. 2015. "The possibility of critical mini-publics: Realpolitik and normative cycles in democratic theory", *Representation 51* (1): 125 – 144.

Bollier, David and Silke Helfrich. 2019. *Free, Fair, and Alive: The Insurgent Power of the Commons.* New Society Publishers.

Boswell, John, Rikki Dean, and Graham Smith. 2023. "Integrating Citizen Deliberation into Climate Governance: Lessons on Robust Design from Six Climate Assemblies." *Public Administration* 101 (1): 182 – 200.

Boykoff, Maxwell, and Justin Farrell. 2019. "Climate change countermovement organizations and media attention in the United States." In *Climate Change Denial and Public Relations: Strategic Communication and Interest Groups in Climate Inaction*, edited by Núria Almiron and Jordi Xifra. Routledge.

Bussu, Sonia, Adrian Bua, Rikki Dean and Graham Smith. 2022. "Embedding participatory governance." *Critical Policy Studies*, 1 – 13.

Bryant, Peter, Morten Friis and Graham Smith. 2025. *Supporting members after the climate assembly ends: How to nurture action.* Knowledge Network on Climate Assemblies.

Cairney, Paul, Irina Timonina, and Hannes Stephan .2023. "How can policy and policymaking foster climate justice? A qualitative systematic review." *Open Research Europe,* 51(3): 1 – 42.

Carrick, Jayne and Stephen Elstub .2023. “The Impact of Climate Assemblies on Formal and Informal Publics Spheres: The Case of Climate Assembly UK.” In *The Impact of Democratic Innovations*, edited by Vincent Jacquet, Matthew Ryan and Raymond van der Does R. ECPR Press.

Citizens’ Climate Assembly. 2024. Available at: https://www.assembleeclimat.brussels/ (accessed 13.06.24).

Conway-Lamb, Wendy. 2024. “Pluralizing climate change adaptation: Mapping discourses in Vietnam.” *Climate and Development*, 1 – 12.

Curato, Nicole, Graham Smith and Rebecca Willis. 2024. *Deliberative democracy and climate change: Exploring the potential of climate assemblies in the Global South.* International IDEA.

Curato, Nicole and Marit Böker.2016. “Linking Mini-Publics to the Deliberative System: A Research Agenda.” *Policy Sciences* 49 (2): 173 – 90.

Devaney, Laura, Pat Brereton, Diarmuid Torney, Martha Coleman, Constantine Boussalis and Travis G. Coan .2020. “Environmental literacy and deliberative democracy: a content analysis of written submissions to the Irish Citizens’ Assembly on climate change.” *Climatic change*, 162:1965 – 1984.

Duvic-Paoli, Leslie-Anne. 2022. “Re-imagining the making of climate law and policy in citizens’ assemblies.” *Transnational Environmental Law* 11 (2): 235 – 261.

Dryzek, John S. 1996. *Democracy in capitalist times: Ideals, limits, and struggles.* Oxford University Press.

Dryzek, John S. and Robert Goodin. 2006. “Deliberative Impacts: The Macro-Political Uptake of Mini-Publics.” *Politics and Society* 34 (2): 19 – 244.

Dryzek, John S. and Simon Niemeyer. 2019. “Deliberative Democracy and Climate Governance” *Nature Human Behavior* 3 (5): 411 – 413.

Dryzek, John S. and Jonathan Pickering. 2019. *The politics of the anthropocene*, Oxford University Press.

Elstub, Stephen. 2006. “A double-edged sword: The increasing diversity of deliberative democracy.” *Contemporary Politics 12* (3 – 4): 301 – 319.

Elstub, Stephen. 2014. “Minipublics: Issues and Cases.” In *Deliberative Democracy: Issues and Cases*, edited by Stephen Elstub and Peter McLaverty. Edinburgh University Press.

Elstub, Stephen, and Oliver Escobar. forthcoming. “Special Issue – Citizens’ Assemblies in Climate Governance: An Analysis of Barriers and Enablers for Change.” *Environmental Science and Policy.*

Elstub, Stephen, David M. Farrell, Jayne Carrick and Patricia Mockler. 2021a. *Evaluation of Climate Assembly UK*, Newcastle upon Tyne: Newcastle University.

Elstub, Stephen, David M. Farrell, Jayne Carrick and Patricia Mockler. 2021b. “The Scope of Climate Assemblies: Lessons from the Climate Assembly UK.” *Sustainability*, 13 (20): 11272.

Escobar, Oliver. 2015. “Scripting deliberative policy-making: Dramaturgic policy analysis and engagement know-how.” *Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis*, 17, 269 – 285.

Escobar, Oliver. 2017. “Making it official: Participation professionals and the challenge of institutionalizing deliberative democracy.” In *The professionalization of public participation,* edited by Laurence Bherer, Mario Gauthier and Louis Simard. Routledge.

Escobar, Oliver. 2019. “Facilitators: The micropolitics of public participation and deliberation.” In *Handbook of Democratic Innovation and Governance*, edited by Stephen Elstub and Oliver Escobar. Edward Elgar.

Escobar, Oliver. 2022. “Mixed methods.” In *Research Methods in Deliberative Democracy,* edited by Selen A. Ercan, Hans Asenbaum, Nicole Curato and Ricardo F. Mendonça. Oxford University Press.

Escobar, Oliver and Adrian Bua. (2025) “Democratic innovation for change: A participatory corrective to deliberative hegemony.” *Politics*, forthcoming.

Escobar, Oliver and Stephen Elstub. 2019. “Introduction to the Handbook of Democratic Innovation and Governance: The field of democratic innovation”. In *Handbook of Democratic Innovation and Governance*, edited by Stephen Elstub and Oliver Escobar. Edward Elgar.

Fischer, Frank. 2017. *Climate Crisis and the Democratic Prospect.* Oxford University Press.

Fraser, Nancy. 2022. *Cannibal capitalism: How our system is devouring democracy, care, and the planet – and what we can do about it.* Verso.

Ganuza, Ernesto and Alfredo Ramos. 2024. “Hacking democratic innovations: the problem of agency in deliberative systems.” *Critical Policy Studies*, 1 – 18.

Habermas, Jürgen. 2023. *A new structural transformation of the public sphere and deliberative politics.* Polity.
Hammond, Marit. 2020. "Democratic deliberation for sustainability transformations: between constructiveness and disruption." *Sustainability: Science, Practice and Policy* 16 (1): 220 – 230.
Harris, Clodagh. 2019. "Mini-publics: Design choices and legitimacy." In *Handbook of Democratic Innovation and Governance*, edited by Stephen Elstub and Oliver Escobar. Edward Elgar.
Harris, Clodagh. 2021. "Looking to the future? Including children, young people and future generations in deliberations on climate action: Ireland's Citizens' Assembly 2016 – 2018." *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research 34* (5): 677 – 693.
Hausknost, Daniel. 2020. "The environmental state and the glass ceiling of transformation." *Environmental Politics.* 29(1): 17 – 37.
Henderson, James and Oliver Escobar. 2024. *Reviving the commons? A scoping review of urban and digital commoning.* Data Civics Observatory – Edinburgh Futures Institute.
Hendriks, Carolyn. 2005. "Consensus conferences and planning cells: Lay citizen deliberations." In *The Deliberative Democracy Handbook: Strategies for Effective Civic Engagement in the 21st Century*, edited by John Gastil and Patrick Levine. Josey-Bass.
Himmelroos, Steffan. 2017. "Discourse quality in deliberative citizen forums: A comparison of four deliberative mini-publics." *Journal of Public Deliberation* 13 (1): Article 3.
Howarth, Candice, Peter Bryant, Adam Corner *et al.* 2020. "Building a Social Mandate for Climate Action: Lessons from COVID-19." *Environmental and Resource Economics* 76: 1107 – 1115.
Huntington, Samuel P. 1968. *Political Order in Changing Societies.* Yale University Press.
Innes, Judith E. and David E. Booher. 2010. *Planning with complexity: An introduction to collaborative rationality for public policy.* Routledge.
Ipsos UK. 2024. *Earth for All 2024 Survey.* Earth4All and Global Commons Alliance. https://earth4all.life/global-survey-2024/
Isakhan, Benjamin and Stephen Stockwell. 2012. *The Edinburgh companion to the history of democracy.* Edinburgh University Press.
Jäske, Maija and Maija Setälä. 2019. "Referendums and citizens' initiatives." In *Handbook of Democratic Innovation and Governance*, edited by Stephen Elstub and Oliver Escobar. Edward Elgar.
Jonsson, Magnus E. 2015. "Democratic innovations in deliberative systems – the case of the Estonian citizens' assembly process." *Journal of Public Deliberation*, 11 (1): article 7.
Kainuma, Mikiko, Hideyuki MoriNaoyuki Mikami, Kenji Asakawa, Shuzo Nishioka, Aditi Khodkeand Tomoko Ishikawa. 2024. "Establishing the use of climate citizens' assemblies in Japan: their significance and challenges." *Sustainability Science 19* (1): 89 – 97.
King, Martin and Rob Wilson. 2023. *North of Tyne Combined Authority Citizens' Assembly: Evaluation Report.* North of Tyne Combined Authority.
Kulha, Katriina, Mikko Leino, Maija Setälä, MMaija Jäske, Steffan Himmelroos. 2021. "For the Sake of the Future: Can Democratic Deliberation Help Thinking and Caring about Future Generations?" *Sustainability* 13, 5487.
Lafont, Cristina. 2019. *Democracy without shortcuts: A participatory conception of deliberative democracy.* Oxford University Press.
Machin, Amanda. 2023. "Democracy, Agony, and Rupture: A Critique of Climate Citizens' Assemblies." *Politische Vierteljahresschrift*, 1 – 20.
MacKenzie, Michael K. and Mark E. Warren. 2012. "Two Trust-based Uses of Minipublics in Democratic Systems." In *Deliberative Systems: Deliberative Democracy at the Large Scale*, edited by John Parkinson and Jane Mansbridge. Cambridge University Press.
Mckinney, Sammy. 2024. "Integrating Artificial Intelligence Into Citizens' Assemblies: Benefits, Concerns and Future Pathways." *Journal of Deliberative Democracy*, 20, 1 – 12.
McKinnon, Catriona. 2022. *Climate change and political theory.* Polity.
Mellier, Claire, and Stuart Capstick. 2024. How can citizens' assemblies help navigate the systemic transformations required by the polycrisis? Centre for Climate Change and Social Transformations.

Mellier, Claire and Graham Smith. 2024. “Activism and Climate Assemblies.” In *Civic Activism in an Intensifying Climate Crisis*, edited by Erin Jones and Richard Youngs. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Niemeyer, Simon. 2013. “Democracy and climate change: what can deliberative democracy contribute?” *Australian Journal of Politics & History 59* (3): 429 – 448.

OECD. 2021. “Eight Ways to Institutionalise Deliberative Democracy.” Public Governance Policy Papers, No. 12. Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development.

Rask, Mikko, Bjørn Bedsted, Edward Andersson and Liisa Kallio. 2019. “Democratic Innovation in Transnational and Global Governance.” In *Handbook of Democratic Innovation and Governance*, edited by Stephen Elstub and Oliver Escobar. Edward Elgar.

Scotland’s Climate Assembly. 2021. *Recommendations for Action.* Laid before the Scottish Parliament on 24th June 2021.

Smith, Graham. 2021. *Can Democracy Safeguard the Future?* Polity Press.

Smith, Graham. 2024. *We Need To Talk About Climate: How Citizens’ Assemblies Can Help Us Solve The Climate Crisis.* University of Westminster Press.

Stevenson, Hayley and John S. Dryzek. 2014. *Democratizing Global Climate Governance.* Cambridge University Press.

Stockholm Resilience Centre. 2023. “First Swedish national citizen assembly on climate could show the way to transformation” Available: https://www.stockholmresilience.org/news-events/general-news/2023-11-27-first-swedish-national-citizen-assembly-on-climate-could-show-the-way-to-transformation.html (accessed 21.06.24).

Storm, Servaas. 2009. “Capitalism and climate change: Can the invisible hand adjust the natural thermostat?” *Development and Change 40* (6): 1011 – 1038.

Streeck, Wolfgang. 2024. *Taking back control? States and state systems after globalism.* Verso.

Thompson, Andrew G. H., Oliver Escobar, Jennifer Roberts, Stephen Elstub, and Nicole Pamphilis. 2021. “The Importance of Context and the Effect of Information and Deliberation on Opinion Change Regarding Environmental Issues in Citizens’ Juries.” *Sustainability* 13: 9852.

Thorman, Daniel and Stuart Capstick. 2022. “Planning and Assessing the Impact and legacy of Climate Assemblies.” KNOCA Briefing No.4.

Trebeck, Katherine and Jeremy Williams. 2019. *The economics of arrival: Ideas for a grown up economy.* Policy Press.

Walker, Edward T. 2014. *Grassroots for Hire: Public Affairs Consultants in American Democracy.* Cambridge University Press.

Willis, Rebecca, Nicole Curato, and Graham Smith. 2022. “Deliberative Democracy and the Climate Crisis.” *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change.*

Wright, Erik Olin. 2010. *Envisioning real utopias.* Verso.

Zimmer, Katarina. 2024. “Can Citizens’ Assemblies Heal America’s Broken Democracy?” *Atmos.* Available: https://atmos.earth/can-citizens-assemblies-heal-americas-broken-democracy/ (accessed 21.06.24).